for Steve and Rick

# THE END OF CAPITALISM
## *(as we knew it)*

A Feminist Critique
of Political Economy

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# Class and the Politics of "Identity"

Recent episodes of restructuring in industrialized societies seem to have been largely a negative experience for the "working class."[1] In the eyes of many observers, capital has achieved a new ascendancy, whether by virtue of its increased mobility and internationalization, or by virtue of a complex transition in society as a whole. By contrast, and by extension, workers have experienced declining standards of life and work, a decrease in bargaining leverage, and a general waning of effective militancy.

Given the new economic conditions that are widely acknowledged to characterize the 1980s and 1990s, many have given the restructured working class an unpromising political prognosis. The industries that were bastions of working-class militancy have declined, while at the same time we have seen the rise of high technology and service industries without the long tradition of solidarity and the unambiguous "working-class" image of traditional industrial jobs. The influx of women into the labor market and the increase in part-time and temporary jobs have created a labor force that is less likely to experience work as the primary basis of identity (Clark et al. 1986: 30). In general, then, it seems that in spite of (and perhaps even because of) the rapid proletarianization of women, both the work experience and the consciousness traditionally associated with the "working class" have declined, and with them the possibility of a viable politics of class.

Many recent studies of industrial change directly or indirectly communicate a discouraging picture of the potential for a contemporary class politics. In Los Angeles, for example, Soja (1989: 208) argues that industrial and urban restructuring have created a regional labor market

[1] Massey notes that "'industrial restructuring' is a process of class restructuring; it is one of the mechanisms by which the social structure is re-shaped, social relations changed and the basis for political action broken down or reconstructed" (1983: 74).



"more occupationally differentiated and socially segmented than ever before." The resultant demoralized and "K-marted" labor force experiences greater "social control than [has] hitherto marked the historical geography of capitalism" (Soja 1989: 207, 221). According to Storper and Scott (1989: 35) the successful development of "flexible production complexes" has occurred in "places without a prior history of Fordist industrialization, where the relations of production and work could be reconstructed anew." In many of these places, "neo-conservative attitudes about work and life have become remarkably pervasive." For Thrift (1987: 207), who sheds light on the dual processes of class formation and industrial change by examining the "new middle classes" emerging in late twentieth century capitalist societies, "the heroic age of class struggle has been replaced by a more prosaic age of class dealignment." In each of these cases, the decline of militant class politics is traced to the changing structure of industries and occupations, among other forces.

It would seem that capitalist industrial restructuring has broken down the "unity" of the working class, allowing differences to be played upon to the benefit of capital. Women are implicated in this process as the decline of traditional class politics has been accompanied by a realignment of gender and class. McDowell (1991: 417) argues that "the feminization of the labour market is amongst the most far-reaching of the changes of the last two decades." While men are increasingly subject to the terms of the feminized labor market, with its proliferation of part-time and temporary jobs, women have become a central component of the restructured labor force. Women and men constitute a "new" working class, one that has lost its industrial muscle:

> In the present era, it seems as if the interests of working class men and women are drawing closer together as both sexes are adversely affected by the reconstruction of large areas of work as "feminine." In this latest round in the continuous struggle over the control of women's labour, the majority of women *and* men are losing. Capital is the beneficiary. (McDowell 1991: 416)

At the moment, opportunities for working-class solidarity are overshadowed and perhaps jeopardized by the greatly increased demands on women both in the labor market and in the domestic realm, where social supports that were the hallmark of "patriarchal capitalism" have been withdrawn (McDowell 1991). For McDowell (1990) and Johnson (1990), the new sexual division of labor associated with restructured capitalist industry has intensified women's exploitation and reconstituted and reasserted gender oppression in the workplace and at home.

What we find interesting and alarming in the restructuring research program is that it has created, as one of its byproducts, a discourse

of working-class decline and disempowerment. This discourse is often associated with intimations of the decreasing social importance and political relevance of class.[2] Narratives tracing the misfortunes of the traditional working class coalesce with images of economic development "beyond" class, producing a vision of the decline of class politics as a potent social force.

It is our view that images of class powerlessness, decline, and irrelevance have discursive as well as nondiscursive origins, and it is the former that we wish to address. In particular, we wish to focus on the role of particular conceptions of class in generating the disheartening prognoses for class politics that have emerged from the restructuring research program. In the discussion that follows, we first consider some of the ways in which class is understood in contemporary political economy and then present an alternative Marxian conception of class. In each case, we are attentive to the ways in which concepts of class are embedded in visions of society and implicated in conceptions of the political subject.

In the latter part of the chapter, we explore some ways in which an alternative theory of class and an associated re-theorization of social and personal "identity" can make visible a politics of class that is largely invisible in restructuring research. As one of the byproducts of our discussion, we suggest a new dimension to the articulation of gender and class. This is put forward not as a general resolution to the troubles that have plagued this relationship in theory, but as an example of the different political insights that may accompany a reconceptualization of class.

[2] Interestingly, these disclaimers about the relevance of class within the contemporary social context are not accompanied by any diminution in the number of references to class in the abstract (often in the company of race, gender and, more recently, sexuality) as a key axis of individual identity. It is almost as though, having been eradicated as a meaningful category of conjunctural social analysis, class makes its reappearance as an ontological given of "the social." In the current environment of discursive enforcement, it is difficult for social analysts to avoid affirming (by reference to the race-class-gender-sexuality nexus) a commitment to the ontological priority of these constituents of identity. The emptiness and unquestioned selectivity of this commitment is cause for reflection in this and subsequent chapters.

In remarking the peculiar absence of class in theories and analyses of contemporary subjectivity, we are not alone. Wendy Brown, among others, notes that the recitation of the "multiculturalist mantra, 'race, class, gender, sexuality'" (1995: 61) is generally associated with a silence about class. Nevertheless she detects some ways in which nonclass identity politics "are partly configured by a peculiarly shaped and peculiarly disguised form of class resentment" (p. 60), testifying to the effectivity of class despite its hidden and inarticulate position.



## Class defined: problems of social and personal identity

Various concepts of class coexist within Marxian political economy, often within the writings of the same person. Without attempting an exhaustive survey, we can perhaps safely generalize that most Marxists understand the term "class" as referring primarily to a social group. Individuals are members of a class by virtue of some commonality, either structurally or experientially defined.

Three shared attributes and experiences are commonly invoked in defining social groups as classes. One of these is *power*, with control over the labor process and/or domination in other aspects of social life distinguishing ruling classes from the ruled. Classes may also be distinguished on the basis of *property ownership*, especially of the means of production. Finally, classes are defined by their relation to *exploitation*, the question of whether they produce surplus labor or appropriate it. All or several of these dimensions may be embraced in the term "relations of production," which is the most familiar marker of Marxian conceptions of class (Wolff and Resnick 1986).

Very often, two or all three of these dimensions are linked in a composite conception of class. Walker (1985: 169–70), for example, invokes what he calls the "classic triad – extraction of surplus, ownership of means of production, and control of the labor process" in characterizing Marx's "bare bones" definition of class. Massey (1984: 31), in a variation on this theme, sees two of the three dimensions entailing the third. She defines the bourgeoisie as having ownership and possession (the latter involving control of the labor process), while the working class is excluded from both. By virtue of this dual exclusion, the bourgeoisie is able to extract surplus value from the working class.

In general, there is dissatisfaction with a simple conception of society structured by two major classes that are constituted by the relations of production. While this conception is used as a kind of foundation, most social analysts go beyond it to embrace the complex multiplicity of classes and class locations in the historical setting of particular social formations. One of the most influential mappings of contemporary class structure is that developed by Wright (1978). Massey (1984) appropriates and modifies Wright's triangular representation of three major classes outlined by Marx – the bourgeoisie, the working class, and the petty bourgeoisie.[3] Along the axis between the bourgeoisie and the working class are many intermediate locations, distinguished

[3] Members of the petty bourgeoisie have both ownership and possession of the means of production which confers no control over the labor of others, since they have no employees.

by degrees of economic ownership and of possession, from managing director to production supervisor to laborer. Along the axis between working class and petty bourgeoisie are workers with varying degrees of control over the labor process, from self-employed to semi-autonomous worker to laborer. And along the axis between the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie are those with greater or less control over the labor of others. The proliferation of intermediate class locations refines and complicates the conception of class.[4]

While this type of elaboration is intended to rectify the over-simplifications of the two-class model, other formulations attempt to go beyond what is seen as the economism of theorizing class solely in terms of relations of production. Presuming that in order to be a class a group of individuals must achieve a unity other than a shared location in an economic structure, these formulations are concerned with "class formation" as a complex process involving political, cultural, ideological, and other forces (Wright 1985). Most often invoked are political processes, which may raise consciousness and help to transform a class-in-itself into a class-for-itself. Following Laclau (1977) and Thompson (1963) among others, many see classes as social groups constituted as an "effect of struggle," sometimes in the workplace but often in the arena of the community or the local or national state. And, increasingly, place is coming to be seen as an important constituent of actual classes (see, for example, Walker 1985; Thrift and Williams 1987; Massey 1984).

In general, these formulations create images of classes defined initially (or in the last instance) by the economy and comprised of individuals with "objective" (albeit sometimes ambiguous or contradictory) locations in the relations of production. But these objective conditions are understood as defining class only in the narrowest sense. A full or complex conception of class takes into account the ways in which groups are formed and the subjective bases of group identification:

> production relations indicate the sites of class relations in the economic structure, but those sites do not designate whole classes as integral, empirical groups of men and women. The fact that people occupy similar

[4] In his subsequent work (for example, *Classes* [1985]) Wright dropped this framework for theorizing "contradictory class locations" in part because it emphasized the role of domination rather than exploitation in defining classes. Building on the work of Roemer (1982) Wright has been concerned to specify class locations on the basis of different kinds of exploitation arising from inequalities in the distribution of productive assets (i.e., property relations) (1985: 71–2). Individuals can occupy contradictory locations in which they are *exploited*, because they are excluded from ownership of the means of production, and yet are "opposed to workers because of their effective control of organization and skill assets" (1985: 87).



> places in the relations of production does not in itself imply any other empirical level of coherence, still less any kind of necessary political unity about pre-given common interests. Wright talks of class capacities, the social relations *within* a class which determine how internally coherent it is. All of which means . . . that "whole classes" are rarely actual political subjects . . . (Massey 1984: 43)

From our perspective, these interesting and complex conceptions of class contribute to a number of theoretical and political problems, including difficulties in conceptualizing class transformation and in theorizing individual and group identity in relation to class. If we define class in terms of power over the labor process, ownership of (industrial) property, and exploitation, how do we understand a situation in which one of these dimensions changes? When a capitalist industry is nationalized, for example, citizens and workers become owners of means of production. But what are the implications of this change in ownership for the production and appropriation of surplus labor in value form (that is, capitalist exploitation) and for worker control of the labor process? Neither democratic control of the workplace nor the end of capitalist exploitation necessarily or even readily follows from the nationalization of a particular industry or of an entire industrial system. A change in ownership, even a radical one, may not mean a transformation in other dimensions of class. Such a change confronts the analyst with a choice between theorizing an ambiguous instance (neither wholly capitalist nor wholly socialist, for example) or giving one aspect of the composite conception priority in the definition of class. Either choice may have profound political consequences. In the case of the former Soviet Union, for example, those who refused to emphasize ownership tended to see socialism as something that was yet to be achieved and the existing regime as something to mobilize against. Those, on the other hand, who saw ownership as the principal dimension of class were more likely to support and defend the existing regime (Resnick and Wolff 1994).

Similar problems arise when we attempt to understand individual class positions and social groups using a composite definition. If industrial workers experience only one or two of the three conditions of class specification – workers, for example, who have surplus value extracted from them and own no means of production but control their own labor process – are they less "authentic" members of the working class? What about individuals who are exploited in a capitalist labor process and also own a small business?[5]

Other problems of seemingly even greater moment arise when we

[5] These are similar to the problems that Wright's (1985) concept of "contradictory class locations" is able to address.

consider workers who are not involved in the production of surplus value at all – such as those involved in the distribution and exchange of commodities, or the circulation of finance and property, or those not in the paid workforce who labor in the domestic realm or voluntary sector. Many of these problems and questions associated with class analysis have arisen with greater urgency since recent episodes of industrial restructuring have appeared to complicate the social and economic terrain. As more and more people hold down two jobs, as more women enter the paid workforce, as work practices are changed to include the decision making input of workers, as the "informal sector" and hidden workforce increases, so traditional class mappings seem less and less relevant. Below we offer an alternative Marxian conception of class that may help to circumvent these conceptual and political dilemmas.

## A different conception of class

As an alternative to layered and complex ways of defining class as a social *grouping*, we define class simply as the social *process* of producing and appropriating surplus labor (more commonly known as *exploitation*) and the associated process of surplus labor distribution (following Resnick and Wolff 1987). The importance of the relationship between our conception of class and the problematic to which we apply its analytics should not be underestimated. Our political and theoretical interest is in creating alternative (and potentially emancipatory) economic futures in which class diversity can flourish. Thus we are attracted to explicating class as a process and to highlighting its many different contemporary and potential forms. Others who undoubtedly share our emancipatory hopes are interested in class analysis for very different reasons such as, for example, a means of explaining (and contributing to eradicating) income and resource inequalities between social groups (Wright 1985: 65, 1993: 28). This problematic leads to a different conceptualization of class and its politics. In our view, neither approach is "right" or "wrong," but each class discourse has different implications and effects. We are interested in pursuing the class analytics developed by Resnick and Wolff because of the kinds of politics it helps us envision (which will become more visible by the end of this book).

By offering a "bare bones" definition of class as a social process of surplus labor appropriation and distribution, we hope to counteract the tendency to emphasize the social effectivity of property ownership, domination, and consciousness while ignoring exploitation. For a moment, then, we wish to hold exploitation up to the light and to analyze – rather than presume – its relations to power, ownership, consciousness, and other social dimensions.



In *Capital*, Marx explored the specifically capitalist form of the class process, focusing in Volume I on the conditions of existence of capitalist exploitation (the production and appropriation of surplus labor in value form) and in Volume III on distributions of surplus value to various social uses and destinations. This dual focus enabled him to theorize some of the ways in which capitalist exploitation was both constituted by, and constitutive of, other aspects of social existence.

Marx's work generated a new and widespread understanding that processes of production frequently involve the performance and appropriation of surplus labor. Individuals produce more than is necessary to sustain them at a socially adequate level, and their "surplus labor" is appropriated, in a variety of forms, by other individuals and groups (sometimes including the performer of surplus labor her or himself).[6] We theorize contemporary processes of producing and appropriating surplus labor (class exploitation) as an aspect of social experience which is dimly and often unconsciously experienced and whose effects are often unrecognized and uncontested.

By producing a knowledge of exploitation as a social process, we hope to contribute to a more self-conscious and self-transformative class subjectivity and to a different politics of class activism and social innovation. Such a politics might not be concerned to eradicate all or even specifically capitalist forms of exploitation but might instead be focused on transforming the extent, type, and conditions of exploitation in particular settings, or on changing its emotional components or its social effects. It might not necessarily invoke the emancipatory agency

6 The concept of surplus labor is highly abstract in the context of this general definition. Part of the theoretical work involved in any class analysis of a particular social site involves specifying the boundaries and other distinctions between necessary and surplus labor. Cameron (1995) and Hotch (1994) provide interesting examples of this type of theoretical endeavor. In Hotch's study of self-employment, which she theorizes as involving an "ancient" class process in which surplus labor is "self-appropriated" in the context of independent commodity production, the division between necessary and surplus labor is constituted as a moveable boundary, which shifts as the individual worker attempts to negotiate the difficult terrain of self-employment. If things are going well, the necessary component of the worker's labor may expand, as the worker enjoys a higher standard of living; but when things go badly, those means of subsistence may be cut back as the worker attempts to secure her continued existence as a self-employed worker by, for example, investing more money in her business. Thus, expenditures on child-care and recreation (representing the *necessary* or subsistence portion of the worker's labor) may decrease while expenditures on advertising and work-related phone calls (representing the *surplus* labor component, which is above and beyond the costs of reproducing the worker) may show a corresponding increase.

of a mass collective subject unified around a set of shared "interests" but could arise out of momentary and partial identifications between subjects constituted at the intersection of very different class and nonclass processes and positions (see chapter 8 and Gibson-Graham 1995a).[7]

Though concepts of class and exploitation have tended to be associated with capitalism, Marx and Marxists have identified a variety of non-capitalist forms of exploitation including ancient, primitive communist, feudal, slave, and communal class processes.[8] We distinguish, in addition, two distinctive moments within any class process, the *exploitative class process*, where surplus labor is produced and appropriated, and the *distributive class process*, where appropriated surplus labor is distributed to a variety of social destinations.[9] This proliferation and expansion of class categories facilitates the analysis of different forms and different moments of the class process, making possible the development of a complex knowledge of class and suggesting a range of noncapitalist class alternatives.

For us, creating a knowledge of class implies not only a concern

[7] This vision suggests the possibility of a complex rethinking of the social constitution and political potential of existing organizations that are currently identified with class politics (such as trade unions, business associations, or welfare rights groups) (see chapter 9 and Annunziato 1990, DeMartino 1991).

[8] Keeping in mind that each of these class processes is constituted in specific discursive and social contexts, so that it is impossible to provide a generic definition that will always "hold true," it might perhaps still be useful to offer an abstract description here of the class processes on this nondefinitive and openended list. Class processes are often distinguished from one another by the manner in which surplus labor is appropriated (Resnick and Wolff 1987: 309) and/or the way that one of the overdetermined circumstances of the appropriation has historically become associated with each. For example, in the ancient (or independent) class process a "self-employed" worker may appropriate her own surplus labor in value or use value form (see, for example, Hotch 1994). In a primitive communist class process the producers collectively appropriate their own surplus labor (Amariglio 1984). In a feudal class process the surplus labor of one individual or group is appropriated under conditions of fealty and mutual obligation in use value form, in return for the provision of means of subsistence. In a slave class process the surplus labor of the slave is appropriated by the master under conditions of servitude and the absence of freedom of contract. A communal class process involves the collective appropriation of surplus labor that has been produced by (some or all) members of the community. Finally, when we refer to capitalism as we prefer to understand it (rather than as it usually appears) we are referring to a class process in which surplus labor is appropriated from wage laborers in value form.

[9] This distinction is based upon that specified by Resnick and Wolff, who distinguish the "fundamental class process" of producing and appropriating surplus labor from the "subsumed class process" of surplus labor distribution (1987: 117–24). The different terminology we employ reflects our relative levels of comfort with the connotations of the two sets of terms, rather than an attempt to dissociate ourselves from the theoretical perspective of Resnick and Wolff.



about exploitation and economic difference but a commitment to an anti-essentialist theoretical position (see chapter 2). We do not wish to contribute to another Marxist knowledge that justifies itself by claiming that class is more fundamental or influential than other aspects of society and that, therefore, a knowledge of class has more explanatory power than other knowledges. Historically, such attempts to marginalize or demote other social processes and perspectives have created irresolvable conflicts and antagonisms between Marxism and other discourses of social transformation. At the same time, however, we do not wish to subordinate or subsume class to other social aspects such as power or property or consciousness or agency or struggle. We therefore theorize class as a process without an essence; in other words, class processes have no core or condition of existence that governs their development more closely than any other and to which they can be ultimately reduced.

We understand class processes as overdetermined, or constituted, by every other aspect of social life. By this we mean that we "think" the existence of class and of particular class processes by initially presuming overdetermination rather than by positing a necessary or privileged association between exploitation and some set of social processes (such as control over the labor process or consciousness or struggle or ownership, to rename the familiar few). In this initial presumption, class is constituted at the intersection of all social dimensions or processes – economic, political, cultural, natural – and class processes themselves participate in constituting these other dimensions of social existence.[10] This mutual constitution of social processes generates an unending sequence of surprises and contradictions. As the term "process" is intended to suggest, class and other aspects of society are seen as existing in change and as continually undergoing novel and contradictory transformations.

Theorizing class as an overdetermined social process rather than as a social grouping has certain implications for the nature and purpose of class analysis. Rather than involving the categorization of individuals and the disaggregation of societies into social groups, an overdeterminist class analysis examines some of the ways in which class processes participate in constituting and, in turn, are constituted by other social and natural processes. Class analysis theorizes society and subjectivity from the "entry point" of class, an entry point being an analytical starting place

[10] Such a presumption represents an epistemological choice on our part rather than an ontological commitment. We make no claims that class, or overdetermination, is implicated in the nature of being. But we are interested in operating within a discursive field in which essentialisms are not presumed as given in any sense. This reflects our political interest in creating space for thinking and enacting change in all social dimensions.

that reflects the concerns and preoccupations of a particular knower (Resnick and Wolff 1987). It yields a distinctive and partial kind of knowledge of the constituents and effects of class processes but does not accord explanatory privilege to the process of class.

Yet the process of producing an overdeterminist knowledge is itself contradictory. In a sense, the actual analysis of a particular class process involves the violation of the initial presumption of overdetermination. Examining, for example, the role of property law or of heterosexual norms and practices as conditions of existence of capitalist exploitation, we may come into conflict with the presumption of ceaseless change and transformation of each of these social aspects. We may posit for the moment processes that exist outside overdetermination (that is, not in change and not in contradiction) so that we can consider the ways in which these processes interact:

> Discourse is an attempt to freeze, to handle the ceaseless revolutions implicit in the concept of overdetermination, to do so by denying them in the fashioning of meaning . . . Discourse is an attempt to proceed *as if* – as if the objects it treats were secured, self-identical, reliable. (DeMartino 1992: 339–40)

Overdeterminist discourses cannot "reflect" overdetermination any more than essentialist discourses can correspond to the true state or essential nature of the world. But a form of social explanation that starts from the initial presumption of overdetermination will differ from one that starts from the initial presumption of essence (that is, from the founding presumption that a complex reality can be analyzed to reveal a simpler reality, an essential attribute, or a set of fundamental causes at its core). An overdeterminist discourse produces necessity (in the form of a determinate relationship between events or objects) as an effect of analysis rather than as an initial predication (DeMartino 1992).[11] In this way, causation/determination becomes a specific discursive effect rather than a pre-analytical ascription of ontological privilege.

[11] This distinguishes overdeterminism from, for example, critical realism, which incorporates into its epistemology the understanding that deep ontological structures participate in "generating social phenomena" (Bhaskar 1989: 3). In the terms of critical realism these underlying (or necessary) mechanisms that generate events and appearances are the "real" (Magill 1994: 115). In his considered discussion of the critical realists' preoccupation with deep structures and generative mechanisms, Magill offers a useful critique (though not from an overdeterminist perspective) of the resort in social sciences to a founding ontology. See also Barnes (1996: 15–23).



## Alternative conceptions of social and individual identity and their implications for class politics

Like class defined as a social grouping, class defined as a social process is associated with particular ways of theorizing both society and political subjectivity. Through their distinctive treatments of these theoretical objects, the two ways of defining class yield very different implications for the nature and viability of class politics.

The Marxian conception of a class as the "conscious coming together of those who are similarly situated by production relations" (McIntyre 1991: 153) has historically been associated with images of industrial society as a centered unity. Society is typically theorized as a homogeneously or hegemonically capitalist formation centered on an industrial economy, with class theorized as a social relation originating in that center.

Perhaps because of its association with structural and systemic images of the social totality, "capitalism" in these conceptions tends to take up the available social space, incorporating the noneconomic dimensions of social life such as culture and politics as well as noncapitalist economic realms such as household production. Whether they are integrated with the economy through structural articulations, systemic logics, or hegemonic practices, these other aspects of society are colonized to some extent by the capitalist sector. Thus, social formations incorporating capitalist class processes are often theorized as *capitalist* formations, domestic labor is seen as *capitalist* reproduction, and the state and other institutions as implicated in *capitalist* regulation.

Such unitary and centered conceptions of capitalist society have fostered a conception of class as a (binary or expanded) structure founded in the relations of *capitalist* production. They have also given class struggle a leading role in social change. In a social "system" or coherent formation centered on an industrial capitalist economy, projects of class transformation are privileged sites of social transformation. The "working class" becomes the "subject" of history, the collective agent of fundamental change.

Because transformative efforts are seen as directed at systemic or hegemonic objects (for example, capitalist societies in their entirety), class transformation is often portrayed as a difficult, indeed, nearly impossible task. The politics of class transformation is enabled only at particular historical moments – usually those in which structural crisis (weakness) and working-class mobilization (strength) coincide. Given the heroic role it is asked to play, class struggle is often viewed as a military confrontation in which an army of workers is strategically deployed (Metcalfe 1991). Such a concerted and coordinated effort

is required to confront the hegemonic unity of a coherent capitalist formation.

Social theorists have challenged images of social singularity (Laclau and Mouffe 1985) and, more particularly, the notion of a homogeneously capitalist society centered on an industrial economy, with its privileged role for working-class actors, its military metaphors of struggle, and its holistic conceptions of social transformation (of capitalist society into something else). Yet this vision, or elements of it, retains a degree of influence in political economy and other domains of social and cultural thought (see chapters 2 and 7). We are concerned to explicitly divorce class from structural or hegemonic conceptions of capitalist society because of the ways in which such conceptions discourage a politics of local and continual class transformation and make it difficult to imagine or enact social diversity in the dimension of class.

Concepts like the "mode of production" and the French regulationists' "model of development" tend, by virtue of their structural integrity, to confer unity and stability on otherwise amorphous social formations (see chapter 7). At the same time, by virtue of the centrality they accord to production, they identify the politics of class as the "structural politics" of the singular social. In the familiar script for class politics, the unified and coherent society can be ameliorated and reformed through everyday political activities but can only be transformed through systemic upheaval (for example, the breakdown of a social logic or structure in the context of a coordinated transformative struggle).

In order to liberate class politics from these restrictive yet privileged scenarios, we wish to understand society as a complex disunity in which class may take multiple and diverse forms. Primitive communist, independent, slave, feudal, capitalist, and communal class processes can, and often do, coexist. In this conception, then, an "advanced" industrial social formation is not a coherent and stable unity centered on capitalist class relations. It is a decentered, fragmented, and complexly structured totality in which class and other processes are unevenly developed and diverse.

An industrialized social formation may be the site of a rich proliferation of class processes and a wide variety of class positions – producer, appropriator, distributor, or receiver of surplus labor in a variety of forms. Class processes are not restricted to the industrial or even the capitalist economy. They occur wherever surplus labor is produced, appropriated, or distributed. The household is thus a major site of class processes, sometimes incorporating a "feudal" domestic class process in which one partner produces surplus labor in the form



of use values to be appropriated by the other (Fraad et al. 1994).[12] The state may also be a site of exploitation, as may educational institutions, self-employment, labor unions, and other sites of production that are not generally associated with class.

Because class is understood as a process that exists in change, the class "structure" constituted by the totality of these positions and sites is continually changing. Projects of class transformation are therefore always possible and do not necessarily involve social upheaval and hegemonic transition. Class struggles do not necessarily take place between groups of people whose identities are constituted by the objective reality and subjective consciousness of a particular location in a social structure. Rather, they take place whenever there is an attempt to change the way in which surplus labor is produced, appropriated, or distributed.

## Classing Sue and Bill

When the systemic representation of a homogeneous capitalist social formation is replaced with the alternative conception of a decentered and complex heterogeneity, class like other processes becomes visible as heterogeneous and unevenly developed. Independent, communal, capitalist, slave, feudal, and other class processes – obscured by the conception of a singular and systemic social identity – can be acknowledged and theorized as constituents of contemporary social formations.

Like the "identity" of social formations, individual class identity can be understood as decentered and diverse. Individuals may participate in various class processes, holding multiple class positions at one moment and over time. To exemplify the notion of multiple and fractured class identity at both the personal and social levels, we recount below the stories of a Philippines-born nurse, Sue, and her white Australian coal miner husband, Bill.

Sue and Bill met while Bill was recuperating from a football injury in a large Brisbane hospital several years after Sue migrated to Australia as a trained nurse. They married and sometime later moved to rural Queensland to take advantage of jobs opening up (for men) in the modern "open cut" mines. Bill is currently a coal hauler, a job for which he has no formal qualifications. He is defined by the company as a wages worker (in other words, he plays no supervisory role). With overtime and weekend

[12] The use of the term "feudal" in the household context has provoked controversies that are explored in chapter 9.

work, he earns about $65,000 per annum, well above what truck drivers in other industries earn and on a par with senior university professors. At his mine, a profit-sharing scheme has been introduced to encourage productivity gains and discourage industrial disruption, so Bill receives an additional payment to complement his wage. Bill has saved part of his income and invested his savings. He owns a block of rental units on the coast and a portfolio of shares in leading companies operating in Australia (some productive, others financial).

As a country boy by origin, Bill is a strong supporter of the conservative National Party, but as a coal miner he is required to belong to the United Mineworkers Federation of Australia. This industrial union is one of the more militant worker organizations in the Australian economy. In his time off from work, Bill runs his own small business shooting wild pigs and arranging for them to be frozen and shipped to market. His role at home is very traditional. The only domestic work Bill regularly performs is keeping the yard tidy, putting out the garbage, and driving the kids to sporting activities on the weekends. Bill keeps tabs on his income and allocates a weekly portion to Sue for housekeeping purposes and a monthly amount to be sent to her family who own a small business back in the Philippines.

If we understand class as a social group, Bill's class location is difficult to ascertain. He is a wage laborer from whom surplus value is derived. He has little control over his own labor process. Yet he owns shares in productive capitalist enterprises and receives a small share in the profits made by the mining company that employs him. He is a member of two political organizations with quite antithetical philosophies and is active in both. If we were to give priority to his role in the relations of production at the mine, we might be tempted to see his actions in the Mineworkers Federation as being in his "true" class interests, explaining his participation in the National Party as a product of a "false consciousness." But if we were to give priority to his relations of production as a pig shooter or to his distribution of funds to another small business overseas, the opposite might apply. Bill's membership in the "working class" can only be secured by emphasizing some of the relations in which he participates and de-emphasizing others: that is, by ranking the components of his experience in a hierarchy of importance, or by reducing his total social experience to a set of fundamental or essential elements.

Sue's story is even more difficult to tell in traditional class terms. Sue is a Filipina and a trained nursing sister who had to give up paid employment when she moved with Bill to the remote mining town. She is now a full-time carer for her husband and three children. She shops for



provisions, produces food, clean clothes, and an orderly and comfortable environment, and is the primary manager of family relationships with friends and service providers. In addition she takes some financial responsibility for the education and welfare of her extended family members in the Philippines and is active as a volunteer social worker in the local support group for Filipina wives of Australian miners. In fact, Sue is the classic multiskilled flexible worker. Her hours of work are usually longer than Bill's. When Bill is on day shift, she rises to cook his breakfast at 5 a.m., and when he is on afternoon shift, she irons and does other chores in the evening while waiting for him to come home at midnight. When Bill goes off pig shooting on weekends, Sue takes over his parenting role, driving children to sporting events and supporting their leisure activities. Bill and Sue have a joint bank account and they jointly own the block of rental units on the coast. At the same time Sue is dependent on her relationship to Bill for access to the company-owned house in which they live and for the means of her domestic production. She is not a member of a political party but votes for the National Party along with her husband. While she is from a more economically privileged background and a different language group than many other Filipina women in the town, Sue identifies with this group, under the pressure of the inadvertent as well as outright racism of her "host" society.

If we emphasize Bill's role in the construction of Sue's class identity, she might be seen as a member of the working class by virtue of her marriage, her reproductive role, and her allegiance to the wage-earner social set. Before she moved to the mining town, however, she was employed as a nurse in a supervisory position that distinguished her from those with no control over their own labor or that of others. And before she migrated to Australia she was the relatively well off daughter of a member of the petit bourgeoisie in the Philippines. Given that one of these "class locations" belongs to her husband, one to her past, and one to her father, class as a social category would not seem directly relevant to an understanding of Sue.

From a class process perspective, however, it is not difficult to ascertain Sue's class position, nor is it necessary to ignore or demote any of Bill's experiences in order to "place" him with respect to class. Sue is engaged in a "feudal" exploitative class process of surplus labor production and appropriation in her role as wife and mother in the household (see chapter 9 and also Fraad et al. 1994). Her labor is appropriated by Bill in return for the provision of shelter and access to the commodified means of domestic production. A host of cultural, familial and companionship practices also provide conditions of existence of Sue's exploitation, as does the widely held view that Bill "brings in

the money" and therefore deserves to be served and sustained. Sue is also involved in a volunteer class process in which her surplus labor is appropriated by members of the Filipina group in town. A host of discourses about race, dependency, solidarity and national loyalty provide conditions of existence of this form of exploitation. Sue's lack of public political involvement is influenced by her participation in both these class processes as well by a whole set of other processes, including the social construction of a racialized "Asian" identity and an "emphasized" femininity[13] and motherliness in the unique culture of the mining town.

From this perspective, then, Sue is engaged in two class processes that are involved in constituting her complex subjectivity and overdetermined by her role in the traditional gender division of labor and by the racialized construction of "otherness." When her experience is theorized in this way, her occasional struggles with Bill over his performance of household chores can be seen as struggles over the degree of exploitation she is willing to accept at home. In other words, Sue is not unconcerned with class, nor is she apolitical as her husband and his union mates think. Rather, she is intermittently involved in a non-solidary politics of class.

While a class process approach makes visible the role of class in constituting Sue's subjectivity, it allows us to theorize Bill's class identity without giving priority to one aspect of his activity and experience. Bill performs surplus labor that is appropriated from him in the capitalist exploitative class process as surplus value. He also receives a distributed profit share as well as dividend checks, thus participating in a capitalist distributive class process.[14]

As a self-employed pig shooter and marketer, he is involved in an independent class process in which he produces, appropriates and distributes his own surplus labor. In the home, he appropriates the unpaid labor of his wife in a feudal exploitative class process that is a familiar if not dominant constituent of the contemporary Australian household. The political processes in which Bill participates are influenced by his participation in all these different class processes as well as by other processes, like the social construction of hegemonic masculinity,[15] white supremacism and the ideology of

[13] Defined by Connell (1987: 183) as involving compliance with the subordination of women to men and accommodation to the interests and desires of men.

[14] Bill's positioning as a recipient of distributed surplus value helps to ensure the smooth functioning of coal extraction and softens the impacts of his alter positioning as an exploited worker.



solidarity among the working class. Like the social formation of which he is a part, Bill is a contradictory and fragmented social site, the intersection of many different class (and nonclass) processes. No one of these processes defines his true identity or his "class" interests, though each participates in doing so, along with many other class and nonclass processes.

To search for Bill's true and singular class identity in this complex and shifting intersection would involve a quest for the type of "regulatory fiction" that Butler (1990: 339) sees gender coherence to be. Both rely on a conception of identity as singular, homogeneous, and fixed rather than multiple, fragmented, and shifting.[16]

The involvement of Sue and Bill in a variety of different class processes has changed over time and overlapped in different ways. In their adult lives, however, they have never not been engaged in class processes. In fact, these involvements have participated in constituting them as acting and powerful subjects in many political arenas, both publicly (at the mine site, the hospital, the school, or the community center) and privately (in the home and family).

Because their relationships to class have not constituted them as members of a particular social group (the "working class," for example), a class analysis of Sue and Bill does not threaten to subsume or subordinate their identities as gendered or ethnic or otherwise differentiated subjects, nor does it necessitate positing a unified class identity. This by now familiar decentered approach to identity and class has a variety of implications for understanding class politics, some of which we explore below as we examine several dimensions of women's involvement in the politics of class.

## Women, households, and class

Largely because class debates have concentrated upon the definition and nature of *capitalist* classes, women have often found themselves in a

[15] Connell (1987: 183) notes that "hegemonic masculinity" is always constructed in relation to subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women. In mining communities, where there is very little tolerance for any subordinated masculinities, the very hegemony of a certain masculine identity is of course itself constituted by class and geography.

[16] In Butler's (1990: 337) words, "If the inner truth of gender is a fabrication and if a true gender is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies, then it seems that genders can be neither true nor false but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity."

problematic position *vis-à-vis* class. Those women not in the capitalist labor force have assumed class positions only through their relations to others (usually husbands or fathers).[17] The wives of workers, for example, are often considered vicarious members of the "working class." Their intermittent, muted, or absent class militancy has been attributed to their socialization as unassertive "conservators" or as denizens of a private sphere with "backward" political and social concerns.

As workers in the domestic economy, women have often been theorized as engaged in a nonclass process of "reproducing" the capitalist workforce – feeding, clothing, nurturing, cleaning – performing a socially necessary (if hugely undervalued) function:

> the home is a key site of the day-to-day and generational reproduction of labour-power (which) is oriented towards fulfilling the needs of capitalist production. (Mackenzie and Rose 1983: 159)

Many authors have characterized the home as a separate "sphere" of reproduction and consumption. Here domestic labor (largely performed by women) organizes the consumption of the commodities produced in a capitalist labor process. Women's work in service to capitalism is performed under the governance of patriarchy, a system of rules and practices of gender domination.

Certain feminists have attempted to redress the secondary status of the reproductive or patriarchal sphere, which seems ordained to serve capitalism just as many women serve men. Arguing against the tendency to subordinate patriarchal oppression to class exploitation, these theorists have generated a "dual systems" approach that takes a variety of forms. In one form of dual systems theory, patriarchy is transported into the sphere of class. Capitalism and patriarchy are viewed as two systems of social relations that interact in every domain of social life; gender relations are thus "*part of* the 'relations of production'" (Connell 1987: 45) and patriarchy cannot be relegated to a separate sphere.

In a second form of dual systems theory, class is transported into the sphere of patriarchy. The household is theorized as the locus of a patriarchal or domestic "mode of production" (see, for example, Folbre 1987; Delphy 1984; Delphy and Leonard 1992) that functions according to a logic distinct from that of the capitalist mode of production but

[17] In categorizations of social class such as that of the British Registrar General, married women and widows are classified according to the occupations of their husbands (Krieger and Fee 1993: 68). This assumption of homology has carried over into views on political subjectivity. Pratt and Hanson (1991: 245) argue that "traditionally, women's class consciousness has simply not been theorised; it was presumed that a woman's subjectivity (at least that related to class) could be 'read off' that of her relevant patriarch (husband or father)."



that interacts with the latter to constitute the social whole. Most of these conceptualizations have foundered on the difficulty of theorizing patriarchy as a system or social structure (Connell 1987: 46).[18] If patriarchy is a mode of production, what are its laws of motion and how do they interact with those of capitalism? Such questions have proved quite intractable. Theorists have also been concerned about what may appear as an attempt to colonize the household as a domain of class. Given the history of feminist struggles against the totalizing ambitions of traditional Marxism, feminist analysts have tended to theorize patriarchy and gender domination as socially pervasive while giving class a more restricted domain (Connell 1987).

It seems to us, however, that excluding class from the household has the effect of making invisible the production, appropriation, and distribution of surplus labor (and the struggles over these class processes) that go on in that particular social site. We would therefore like to renegotiate the relationship between class and the household, divorcing household and other class processes from the idea of economic and social "systems" or structures. Our intention is not to displace or replace gender relations as a category for household analysis. Instead, we wish to add the dimension of exploitation or class.

In our understanding, industrial social formations are the sites not just of capitalist class processes but of noncapitalist class processes as well. The household, then, can be seen as involved not only in capitalist reproduction but also in the reproduction of noncapitalist class processes such as the independent class process of self-employment and "self-exploitation" (Gabriel 1990; Hotch 1994). More importantly for our purposes, it can be constituted as an autonomous site of production

[18] Not to mention the conceptual problems associated with the potentially infinite replication of "systems" that structure different types of social advantage. Alluding to the "enormous . . . political impact of black women's critique of the racist and ethnocentric assumptions of white feminists," Barrett and Phillips note, for example, that "the social structural models of society that had been organized around the two systems of sex and class found a third axis of inequality hard to accommodate; the already acute difficulties in developing a 'dual systems' analysis were brought to a head with the belated recognition that ethnic difference and disadvantage had been left out" (1992: 4).

It is interesting to note that despite Connell's awareness of the theoretical difficulties attending the multiplication of social structures, in his recent and exciting book *Masculinities*, he constitutes an "ontoformative gender order" which displays tendencies toward crisis (1995: 83–4) and in which a variety of masculinities and femininities exist as "configurations of gender practice." The purpose of this (from our perspective) very worthwhile but problematic theoretical attempt to proliferate and differentiate masculinities is ultimately to provoke "a transformation of the whole (gender order) structure" (1995: 238).

in its own right in which various class processes are enacted. And according to Fraad et al. (1994) it has become an important zone of class conflict over the past 25 years.

The (white) heterosexual household in industrial social formations has often been a locus of what we have called a feudal domestic class process (see chapter 9), in which a woman produces surplus labor in the form of use values that considerably exceed what she would produce if she were living by herself. When her partner eats his meals, showers in a clean bathroom, and puts on ironed clothes, he is appropriating her labor in use value form. Throughout much of the twentieth century, this form of exploitation has seemed fair and appropriate because the man generally worked outside the household to procure the cash income that was viewed as the principal condition of existence of household maintenance.[19] Even when it did seem unfair (in cases, for example, where the woman worked outside the home or where it was recognized that some women worked longer hours and that they had no vacations and were not permitted to retire), the lack of alternatives for women often kept them from attempting to transform their class positions. Familiar cultural presumptions about the natural or divine origins of women's household role had a similar effect.

During the past 25 years, however, women's household exploitation has increasingly been seen as unfair and as something to be struggled over. This change has to do with many things, including the second wave of feminism and heightened feelings of equality and commensurability brought about by women's greatly increased participation in waged work (not to mention the increased pressures on their time). For a variety of reasons, then, some women now feel entitled to an equal domestic load and to a democratic decision-making process about the allocation of the various types of domestic work. In many households, the issue of household-based exploitation is on the table and the feudal domestic class process is in crisis (Hochschild 1989; Fraad et al. 1994).

Many feudal households have broken up and their members have re-established themselves in independent households as "self-exploiting"

[19] Increasingly research into the domestic situations of families of different races, classes, sexualities and localities over the course of industrial history is pointing to the atypical nature of the one breadwinner household. From our perspective this research highlights the multiple class processes that always have and continue to take place in households despite the dominance of a particular discourse around the normality of the male breadwinner and female domestic carer (Delphy and Leonard 1992: 132–3).



performers and appropriators of domestic surplus labor.[20] According to a study by Burden and Googins (1987), establishing an independent household is a way for some women to achieve a reduced work week. Married mothers in this study spent 85 hours per week on job and family responsibilities, while single mothers spent 75 hours per week on these tasks. Other households have instituted communal class processes whereby all members perform surplus labor and jointly appropriate it, democratically allocating both work and the fruits of work (Kimball 1983). In heterosexual communal households, which are less likely than feudal ones to be structured around the priority of the male's career, difficulties may arise over how to challenge traditional gender roles that undermine communalism. Men, for example, may confront the loss of public and private status associated with being the higher wage earner as they opt for more flexible working hours that allow an equal role in child-care and domestic labor. Women confront the mixed emotions associated with relinquishing the role of primary caregiver to children and quality controller over household cleanliness and atmosphere.

The communal household is not without class antagonism and conflict. Indeed, the negotiation of work and space, both physical and personal, may be more difficult under its rather experimental conditions.[21] Clearly the historical difficulties of the feudal household and more recent problems with establishing communal households have contributed to the accelerated growth of independent households where class and gender conflicts are resolved through the establishment of solo householding. In these households, there is no gender division of labor to negotiate and the adult householder is in sole charge of the production, appropriation, and distribution of her/his own surplus labor.

"Restructured" households are often seen as the outcome (or casualties) of struggles against patriarchy and gender oppression. We might see them as also the outcome of struggles around class. Though they have not

[20] See Cameron (1995) for detailed case studies of independent forms of surplus labor appropriation and distribution in single and multiple-resident households.

[21] In a fascinating study of gender identity and class as a process Cameron (1995) describes the case of a marriage that broke up over the gender implications of a communal class process. In this household the husband began to assume a greater responsibility for domestic labor upon retirement. His wife relinquished her command of the kitchen, shopping and other tasks and continued to work in the paid workforce. She found that her loss of a domestic subjectivity (especially the more public role as cook) was too much to bear. The loss of femininity and power that it signified forced her out of the household, ultimately out of the marriage and into a solo domestic situation where her gender identity is being reshaped around an independent domestic class process.

articulated their goals in the language of class, many women have become uncomfortably conscious of their exploitation in the household as well as of their gender oppression in the same domain (Hochschild 1989). Gendered class struggles over the performance, appropriation, and distribution of surplus labor have contributed to the growth of households where communal class processes are in place (Kimball 1983) and to the more rapid rise of independent households where class conflicts have been resolved through gender separation.

This narrative of transition in household class relations in industrial societies has a number of distinctive elements. Rather than being seen as governed by a hegemonic structure or set of rules like a patriarchal mode of production, the household is represented as a social site in which a wide variety of class, gender, racial, sexual and other practices intersect. Because this site is not subsumed to an overarching and stable social system (capitalism or patriarchy being the usual suspects) it can be theorized as a locus of difference and constant change. Each local instance is constituted complexly and specifically, unconstrained by a generic narrative or pattern from which it may only problematically stray.

In the context of systemic or hegemonic social representations, a local politics of "resistance" is often portrayed as relatively powerless in relation to the hegemonic structure; even when struggles are deemed successful, their successes may be negated on the theoretical level where the "system" or hegemonic formation is reasserted fundamentally untouched. By contrast, in the world of our narrative, where class is not constituted within a social structure, class politics in the form of individual struggles over exploitation is an ever-present experience with significant (though not unidirectional) transformative effects.

This is not to say that the narrative of crisis in the feudal household, which provides a single story of household development and differentiation, is not itself a form of hegemonization. It could certainly be displaced by other representations in which households were always already differentiated from each other (making the feudal household visible, say, as a white middle-class fantasy or regulatory fiction). Cameron (1995) has recently told a number of household stories in which each household comprises many different class processes at any one moment, and these interact with gender, sexual and power relations in contradictory ways (rather than lining up quite so neatly as they do in the narrative above). In Cameron's representation, household exploitation and heterosexual gender difference lose the negative taints that have accrued to them through their longstanding associations with hegemony, domination and oppression, becoming visible as highly differentiated, quite fragmentary and continually under renegotiation.



But, of course, how one chooses to represent a social site has to do with any number of things, including the politics that one is interested in promoting.[22] The story of "*the* crisis" in "*the* feudal household" may speak to political subjects already constituted by existing feminist discourses as concerned with inequalities in household labor, while Cameron's work is more oriented to promoting an alternative vision of female subjectivity and agency as a counter to prevalent (feminist) theories that constitute women as dominated, devalued or oppressed and as only powerful if they are engaged in specific practices of resistance, or resistance to specific practices.

## Conclusion

The notion of the "working class" as the collective subject of history can be seen as the effect of Marxist and non-Marxist discourses about the principal and defining role of industrial capitalism in structuring developed western social formations. These discourses of "capitalist development" have fostered a conception of society as structured by two major classes defined objectively by capitalist relations of production and subjectively by the political and cultural experience of industrialization.

The discourse of class which has depicted class as the central social relation of contemporary societies is now contributing to its marginalization. Critics of Marxism proclaim the death of class, while Marxist theorists of contemporary capitalism lament working-class demobilization. From our perspective, what has died or been demobilized is the fiction of the working class and its mission that was produced as part of a hegemonic conception of industrial capitalist development. As this conception has been devalued by criticism and other historical processes, and as multiple social "centers" and contending forces have seized the historical stage, the "working class" has been peripheralized and demoted. Discursive moves to displace the economic essence of society have displaced as well its agents of transformation. Now the militaristic image of a massive collectivity of workers all defined by a similar relation to industrial capital is part of a receding social conception and politics of change.

Despite the waning theoretical and political fortunes of the "working class," class itself may still be theorized as present and pervasive. Monolithic images of the "working class" associated with craft unionism and Fordist industries may no longer be recognized by social theorists or those who labor. They may not work to mobilize resistance and impulses

[22] See, for example, chapter 9 for a conceptualization of feudal households that is overdetermined by union and community politics in Australian coal-mining towns.

toward social transformation or play a leading role on the stage of social theory. But class is not thereby necessarily diminished as an intelligible constituent of social development and political change. Instead, the role of class as a social process may be recast in different social and theoretical settings, ones in which new political opportunities may emerge.

For us, the question today is not whether class is a concept with continuing relevance, for discourses of socioeconomic differentiation[23] and surplus labor appropriation are still, and perhaps will always be, involved in the constitution of social knowledges and political subjects. Our question is, how can theorizing class as a process of production, appropriation, and distribution of surplus labor add dimensions to theories of society and to projects of social and economic innovation?[24] How may it contribute to conceptualizing and constituting decentered and multiple selves that are always in some ways political (powerful) subjects (Kondo 1990)?

A view of social subjects as multiply constituted by class processes as well as other social processes does not allow us to presume certain "class interests" or "class capacities," nor does it lead to a theorization of likely "class alliances." At the same time, it does not preclude the envisioning of collective action. In the alternative space we see for a politics of class we may encounter and even foster the partial identification of social subjects around class issues and the formulation of strategic solidarities and alliances to effect class transformation. Importantly though, we are always aware that these solidarities are discursively as well as nondiscursively constructed and that a class "identity" is overdetermined in the individual social subject by many other discourses of identity and social differentiation.[25] This conception of class also allows us to see many non-class-oriented social movements as having profound effects on class transformations, possibly liberating the potential for the

23 In the emerging discourse of social polarization, for example, class has become a prominent social descriptor, as images of a growing "underclass" and shrinking middle class proliferate in various discursive settings.

24 In a forthcoming edited collection (Gibson-Graham et al. 1997) we present a number of different class analyses that may contribute to imagining alternative class futures.

25 Many of the "failures" of class politics have grown out of an inability to recognize subjects as positioned in gendered or racialized discourses as well as multiple class discourses, and the tendency to ignore the sometimes contradictory overdeterminations between these discourses. We are thinking here of the very problematic relationship that has existed between the formal labor movement and women and minorities. Historically, in solidary movements of all kinds, there has been a tendency to theorize sameness as the basis of unity and solidarity, with a consequent denial or elision of difference that has had problematic and divisive effects. As Hotch notes, "theorizing unity instead of difference has an effect, but that effect may not be unifying" (1994: 26).



development of class diversity in ways that targeted "class politics" has not.[26]

Our purpose here is not to create a "better" form of knowledge or one that will lead to a "better" politics of change. We are interested in producing a class knowledge that is one among many forms of knowledge and not a privileged instrument of social reconstruction. But we also have an interest in posing alternative economic futures. Towards this end we argue that a new knowledge of class may contribute to a revitalized politics of class transformation.

26 For example, the women's movement and the environmental movement have generated new discourses of social and ecological identity that have had major impacts upon exploitative class processes in the household and distributive class processes within the enterprise (see chapters 8 and 9). There are ways, then, that we can identify these movements as also class movements without claiming them as such. Indeed, thinking about the impacts of the various strategies of these movements from a class entry point is a useful way to start building points of collective identification and group action. Sullivan (1995) urges feminists, for example, to specify the differences between forms of prostitution practiced under varying legal, economic, racialized and discursive relations rather than simply adopting universalizing positions about the "wrongness" of prostitution – with all the familiar accompanying assumptions about women who work as prostitutes. An analysis of the many different class processes operating within the sex industry (see, for example, that of van der Veen 1995) and their conditions of existence would be an interesting place to begin building collective feminist and class-oriented actions.

# 4

# How Do We Get Out of This Capitalist Place?

> Writing has nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come.
>
> (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 4–5)

Geographers – of which I am one (or, more accurately, two) – have ambivalent feelings about the proliferating references to space in contemporary social theory. And, indeed, the profusion of spatial metaphors is remarkable (as well as frequently remarked). Discursive space is "occupied," speaking positions are "located" or "situated," "boundaries" are "transgressed," identity is "deterritorialized" and "nomadic." Theory flows in and around a conceptual "landscape" that must be "mapped," producing "cartographies" of desire and "spaces" of enunciation. If space is currently where it's at, perhaps it is not surprising that professional geographers occasionally feel displaced. It seems we are all geographers now.

The spatialization of theoretical discourse owes something to structuralist theories in which linguistic or social elements are seen as defined relationally, via a "synchronic" articulation. But it is usually attributed more directly to poststructuralists like Foucault (see, for example, 1980) and Deleuze and Guattari (1987) as well as to "pre-poststructuralists" like Althusser and Gramsci, and the Marxian tradition to which they belong.[1] Indeed, the spatial metaphors associated with Marxian analysis – "colonization," "penetration," "core and periphery," "terrains of struggle" – are not dissimilar to those of poststructuralism.[2] Both types of theory represent space constituted by or in relation to "Identity"[3] or Form. While poststructuralist theory is concerned with problematizing the fixing of Identity and tracing the performance space of multiple



and fluid identities, Marxian theory has generally been focused upon the performance space of one type of Form – the mode of production or, more particularly, Capitalism.

After struggling for so long to erect and strengthen the ramparts of an academic identity in the shadow of more established disciplines, geographers now find all sorts of strange beings camped outside or scaling the battlements eager to assume the language of geography, if not to take up positions in its defense. For one who has dwelt protected within the disciplined space of geography, this invasion is welcome. Indeed, it is the wordy invaders who have kindled in me, for the first time, an interest in "space" – a core, even foundational, concept within my professional dwelling place. But while "we" all might be geographers – or at least explorers – now, some disciplinary geographers (despite feeling partially vindicated) are worried.

Massey (1993: 66) is concerned that the proliferation of metaphorical uses of spatial terms has blurred important distinctions between different meanings of space. And Smith and Katz are alarmed at the use of spatial metaphors in contemporary social and cultural (not exclusively poststructuralist) theory that take as their unexamined grounding a seemingly unproblematic, commonsense notion of space as container or field, a simple emptiness in which subjects and objects are "situated" or "located." These metaphorical attempts to contextualize, relativize and de-universalize social sites and speaking positions inadvertently invoke a standpoint at a set of coordinates, a location in a naturalized and asocial "absolute" space. Yet the very conception of absolute space, they caution, is *itself* socially produced and historically specific: the representation of space as an infinite, prior and neutral container or grid, in which discrete entities operate independently of one another and of space itself, gained ascendancy with the philosophers Newton, Descartes and Kant and was "thoroughly naturalized" with the rise

1 See Smith (1984) for a discussion of Marxian references to space.

2 Ferrier (1990) points out that spatialization and, in particular, cartography are actually central to modernist forms of representation and subjectivity, and instrumental to modernist projects of subjugation. She argues that precisely for this reason cartography has become an important metaphor within contemporary projects of rethinking.

3 Here I refer to Identity (or the Idea) in the symbolic domain, implying the quest for ultimate definition or for the fixing of signifier to signified. In this chapter, as in this book, I move between three "types" of identity in order to develop their overlaps, connections, and contradictions: *Identity* as defined above, the *identity* of "the social" as a complex totality (often referred to as society and sometimes divided into culture, economy and polity) and individual *identity*, that which constitutes subjectivity and agency. In this chapter I play with these three senses of identity, slipping between and among them with barely a warning. I hope that this little game will be more productive than confusing for the reader.

of capitalism between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries (Smith and Katz 1993: 75–6). By proliferating spatial metaphors without problematizing the representation of space, social theorists reproduce a view of space that is "politically charged in its contemporary implications as much as in its historical origins" (p. 76).[4] An understanding of space as a coordinate system in which locations are clearly defined and mutually exclusive has contributed, for example, to an "identity politics (that) too often *becomes* mosaic politics" (p. 77, emphasis theirs), that is, a politics of competition and fragmentation.[5]

In *The Production of Space* Henri Lefebvre, the Marxist theorist of space and spatiality, expresses a related but more extreme disapproval of the appropriation of spatial metaphors by philosophers, especially poststructuralist ones:[6]

> Consider questions about space, for example: taken out of the context of practice, projected onto the place of a knowledge that considers itself to be "pure" and imagines itself to be "productive" (as indeed it is – but only of verbiage), such questions assume a philosophizing and degenerate character. What they degenerate into are mere general considerations on intellectual space – on "writing" as the intellectual space of a people, as the mental space of a period, and so on. (Lefebvre 1991: 415)

Suspecting the dissociation of conceptual space from "lived" space (which he identifies as a pre-discursive terrain of production), Lefebvre sees philosophers' production of mental space as only "apparently extra-ideological" (1991: 6). While poststructuralist theorists might imagine

4 Smith and Katz see it, paraphrasing Lefebvre, as a "conception of space appropriate for a project of social domination," one that "expresses a very specific tyranny of power" (p. 76). In Rose's (1996) reading, Smith and Katz argue that "spatial metaphors which refer to absolute space are regressive because absolute space serves to freeze and thus to sanction the socio-spatial or theoretical status quo" (pp. 2–3).

5 This depiction bears some affinity to Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) discussion of the essentialism of the fragments. When the structural essence of the social (e.g., the capitalist mode of production) is discursively displaced by a heterogeneous multiplicity of social sites and practices – as, according to Laclau and Mouffe, it is in the work of Hindess and Hirst – the essentialism of the totality is effectively replaced by an essentialism of the elements; in other words, each part of the "disaggregation" takes on a fixed and independent identity rather than being relationally defined. In an overdeterminist Althusserian conception, by contrast, "far from there being an essentialist *totalization*, or a no less essentialist *separation* among the objects, the presence of some objects in others prevents any of their identities from being fixed" (p. 104).

6 In particular, he was concerned with the spatial language of Foucault, Derrida, Kristeva and Lacan and their promotion of "the basic sophistry whereby the philosophico-epistemological notion of space is fetishized and the mental realm comes to envelop the social and physical ones" (1991: 5).



themselves to be undertaking transgressive acts via their work, Lefebvre remains convinced that this work, by detaching mental/conceptual space from social/material space, unwittingly reproduces the "dominant ideas which are perforce the ideas of the dominant class" (p. 6). The familiar implication here is that only through the dialectic of practice and reflection, that is, at the intersection of language and social action, will true (read revolutionary) spatial and social understandings be produced.

While Lefebvre berates philosophers and cultural theorists for their failure to recognize the lived materiality of space as the appropriate basis of all discursive representations in mental space, Smith and Katz warn against the failure to situate spatial metaphors in an historical materialist (and therefore relative) frame. Together they are concerned that discursivity and materiality be made to touch lest spatial metaphors be rendered complicit in capitalist reproduction.

For these Marxists and geographers alike there appears to be a concern that the materiality, sociality, and produced nature of space might be ignored by those who so readily employ spatial metaphors in poststructuralist discourse. Their concern is traced to the worrying political implications of somehow disregarding "reality."[7] Without a true grounding in the material social world, they wonder, how can spatial representations become appropriately (rather than regressively) political?[8]

As battles between metaphor and materiality, discourse and reality rage in and around us, and "the enemy" infiltrates our disciplinary boundaries, what better time might there be for a jump into space? An engagement with space allows us to confront some of the political and epistemological concerns about the relationship between discursivity, materiality, and politics that have arisen in the clashes between modern and postmodern feminist and urban discourses. It opens up possibilities of thinking from the outside in, both from the poststructuralist encampments into the protected dwelling of geography, and from the space of formlessness into the space of Form: "The outside insinuates

7 In Rose's view, there is for all these geographers "a real space to which it is appropriate for metaphors to refer, and a non-real space to which it is not" (1996: 3).

8 This is a question that is interestingly parallel in structure to one often posed to feminist poststructuralists: without a true grounding in the materiality of women's experience, how can poststructuralist feminist theoretical interventions avoid functioning in service of a dominant masculinism? In the current context it is the dangers of fragmentation (for the left and for feminism) that are seen to open "us" up to the enemy – revealing the modernist vision of solidary resistance and organization that provides the foundations of this critique. As a geographer and feminist not overly worried by the prospect of fragmentation (see Gibson-Graham 1995), I am of course not alone. Soja and Hooper, for example, welcome the proliferation of discursive spatialities and the new "postmodernized and spatialized" politics of difference (1993: 184).

itself into thought, drawing knowledge outside of itself, outside what is expected, producing a hollow which it can then inhabit – an outside within or as the inside" (Grosz 1994: 9).

By examining the spatial images that have been employed in feminist analyses of the body and the city, we may trace the political effects of privileging the materiality of women's experience and capitalist social relations. At the same time, we may discover some of the political potential of an alternative conceptualization in which discourse and other materialities are effectively intertwined.

## Rape space, modern space

Recent feminist theorizations of the body employ and also challenge the familiar spatial language of "inside/outside," "surface/depth," "emptiness/fullness," "dwelling." Spatial knowledges of women's bodies and female sexuality have of course both philosophical and activist origins. For the moment, I would like to explore feminist knowledge of the body gained through women's activism around rape.

The prevailing (though not exclusive) feminist language of rape situates it as a fixed reality of women's lives – a reality founded upon the assumed ability of the (male) rapist to overcome his target physically (Marcus 1992: 387). Creating a public knowledge of rape as a "reality" has been one of the projects of anti-rape activists and policymakers, and making rape visible in the community constitutes a significant victory for feminist politics.

Sharon Marcus is a feminist who challenges the self-evidently progressive and productive nature of this understanding born of action and experience (a so-called engagement with the real). She argues that the cost of feminist success has been the widespread acceptance of a language of rape which

> solicits women to position ourselves as endangered, violable, and fearful and invites men to position themselves as legitimately violent and entitled to women's sexual services. This language structures physical actions and responses as well as words, and forms, for example, the would-be rapist's feelings of powerfulness and our commonplace sense of paralysis when threatened with rape. (Marcus 1992: 390)

More importantly for the argument being developed here, this "rape script" portrays women's bodies and female sexuality in spatial terms as an empty space waiting to be invaded/taken/formed:

> The rape script describes female bodies as vulnerable, violable, penetrable, and wounded; metaphors of rape as trespass and invasion retain this definition intact. The psychological corollary of this property metaphor characterizes female sexuality as inner space, rape as the invasion of this inner space, and anti-rape politics as a means to safeguard this inner space from contact with anything external to it. The entire female body comes to be symbolized by the vagina, itself conceived as a delicate, perhaps inevitably damaged and pained inner space. (Marcus 1992: 398)



This knowledge of woman's body space is not an artifact of purely philosophical reckoning but is a representation of the "reality" of women's bodies *vis-à-vis* men's. That this representation is informed by a movement from the concrete experience of rape victims and rapists to the abstract positioning of woman–space as absence/negativity and man–space as presence/positivity would attest to its legitimacy as true knowledge in Lefebvre's frame of reference.[9] Marcus's point, though, is that the language of rape is performative in the sense that it participates in constituting the condition it purports to describe. The rape script tends to defer and confine practical intervention to the postrape events of reporting, reparation and vindication, thereby blocking – or at least failing to encourage – an active strategy of rape prevention.[10] Thus much feminist knowledge of rape is bound by the language it employs to a perpetuation of victim status for women.

Marcus argues that the "truth" of victimhood should not be accepted but should continually be resisted and undermined. Her argument points up the problems with Lefebvre's view that "space (is) *produced* before being *read* . . . (it is produced) in order to be *lived* by people with bodies and lives in their own particular urban context" (1991: 143). According to Marcus, lived space is as much discursively as nondiscursively

9 In Lefebvre's frame (one shared by many who do not identify with the poststructuralist camp), it is knowledge gained in and through an interaction between "reality" and "reflection" that affords "scientific understanding." This process of knowledge production is contrasted to that which involves analysis of texts/writing alone – a process which is destined, in Lefebvre's view, to reproduce an ideological understanding.

10 That is, prevention beyond the legal deterrence of laws that are supposedly designed to persuade men not to rape or measures such as better street lighting which are designed to increase the public surveillance of male sexuality (Marcus 1992: 388). Klodawsky (1995) makes the point that the institutional forms taken by the anti-rape movement have tended to privilege service provision (in part because these projects can access government funding) over feminist projects addressed to changing the social conditions (including the socialization of men) that produce rape. It would seem that Marcus's argument is addressed to this tendency or imbalance within the movement against gendered violence but is specifically focused on the performative effects of a language of rape in the constitution of both female and male subjectivities: "The gendered grammar of violence predicates men as the subjects of violence and the operators of its tools, and predicates women as the objects of violence and the subjects of fear" (p. 393). It is this grammar that the focus on post-rape service provision or on increased surveillance and control over men fails to challenge.

produced. She urges us to produce a different discourse of female spatiality/sexuality, thus enabling a different female materiality/liveability.

A parallel construction of woman's body and female sexuality may be found in certain (feminist) knowledges of the city. Again, these knowledges are often based upon both the experience of women in the city and on contemporary theories of urban structure. From behavioral geographic research into gendered activity patterns and social networks a picture has been developed of women inhabiting certain spaces of the city – domestic space, neighborhood space, local commercial space, while men are more prevalent inhabitors of the central city, industrial zones and commercial areas. In urban studies women are often situated within the theoretical spaces of consumption, reproduction and the private, all of which are mapped onto the suburb (Wilson 1991, Saegert 1980, England 1991).[11] As vacuous spaces of desire that must be satisfied by consumption, women are positioned in one discourse as shoppers, legitimately entering the economic space of the city in order to be filled before returning to residential space where new and ultimately insatiable consumer desires will be aroused (Swanson 1995). As hallowed spaces of biological reproduction, women's bodies are represented in another urban discourse as empty, needful of protection in the residential cocoon where they wait, always ready to be filled by the function of motherhood (Saegert 1980).[12] Vacant and vulnerable, female sexuality is something to be guarded within the space of the home. Confined there, as passive guardians of the womb-like oasis that offers succor to active public (male) civilians, women are rightfully out of the public gaze (Marcus 1993).

In this type of urban theory the spatiality of women's bodies is constituted in relation to two different but perhaps connected Forms or Identities, that of the Phallus and that of Capital. These discourses of gender difference and capitalist development associate "woman" with lack, emptiness, ineffectiveness, the determined. As we have already seen in the rape script which is articulated within the broader hegemonic discourse of gender, woman is differentiated from man by her passivity, her vulnerability, ultimately her vacuousness. She is indeed the symbol of "absolute space," a homogeneous inert void, a container, something that

[11] Rose (1993) provides an excellent critical summary of the activity space literature. She notes that this literature, like much of feminist geography, draws largely upon the experience of white middle-class women in constructing the urban Woman, obscuring the very different geography of black urban women.

[12] In an intriguing reading of the film and novel *Rosemary's Baby*, Marcus (1993) alludes to the punishment that might befall any woman who deserts the fecundity and safety of the suburbs and the single-family house for the sterility and danger of the inner city and apartment living, yet proceeds to get pregnant and have a baby. (The devil takes such an out-of-place woman, or at least her child.)



can only be spoken of in terms of the object(s) that exist(s) within it.[13] Inevitably, the object that exists within/invades/penetrates the inert void – bringing woman into existence – is the Phallus. Woman is necessarily rape space in the phallocentric discourse of gender.

In the urban script which is articulated within the broader hegemonic discourse of Capitalism, woman is constituted as an economic actor allocated to the subordinate functions of the capitalist system. As consumer she is seen to participate in the realization of capitalist commodities, putting them to their final, unproductive uses; under the influence of capitalist advertising and mood manipulation she translates her sexual desires into needs which must be satisfied by consumption. This transfiguration of private into public desire is enacted in consumption spaces – the shopping mall, the high street, the department store – horizontal, sometimes cavernous, "feminized" places within the urban landscape. Represented as maker and socializer of the future capitalist workforce, woman plays a part in the dynamic of social reproduction. In her role of bearing children, ministering to their needs and assisting the state in their education and social training, woman is portrayed as an unpaid service worker attending to the requirements of capital accumulation. Within her limited field of action in the sphere of reproduction, resistance is possible – she may organize around local community and consumption issues – but the rules are made by Capital.

In this urban discourse woman is represented as an active player rather than a passive container; she is a crucial constituent of capitalist social relations, though not situated at the center of accumulation, nor cast as the subject of history.[14] The discourse of Capitalism renders the space of woman no longer homogeneous and void. Instead woman–space is "relative space," given form by multiple (subordinated) roles, each situated in relation to capitalist production. Women's economic bodies are portrayed as complements to men's economic bodies, adjuncts with important reproductive, nurturing and consumption functions. Indeed, woman becomes "positive negative space," a background that "itself is a positive element, of equal importance with all others" (Kern 1983: 152).

[13] This is the Newtonian notion of space as a void, the "plenum of matter" (Kern 1983: 153; Smith and Katz 1993: 75).

[14] This role is taken by man as the producer of commodities, the producer of surplus value, situated in the sphere of production, as a member of the working class. Of course recent episodes of industrial restructuring have altered the gendered face of the capitalist workforce. Women are increasingly occupying the sphere of production and the vertical concrete and glass spaces of economic power (McDowell 1994). However, a new urban discourse which dislodges the extremely gendered code that is mapped onto the suburb/sphere of reproduction/space of consumption is only beginning to emerge (Cameron 1995; Huxley 1995; Bell and Valentine 1995).

Like the structured backgrounds of cubist painting, woman–space as relative space is more visible, less empty, more functional than is absolute space.[15] But woman–space is still defined in terms of a positivity that is not its own. Whether as absolute or relative space, woman is presented as fixed by, or in relation to, an Identity/Form/Being – the Phallus or Capital.

In an attempt to address women's oppression, feminists may celebrate shopping, birth, homemaking, the fecund emptiness of woman's body, the shopping mall, the suburban home, the caring and nurturing functions, the woman–space. But in doing so they accept the boundaries of difference and separation designated by the discourses of capitalism and binary gender. Another feminist strategy has been to attempt to ignore or even reverse the spatialized binary by claiming back men's economic and urban space as rightfully women's. Women (particularly white female-headed households) have begun to desert the suburbs and, as one of the main groups involved in gentrification, have reasserted their right to a central location in the city (Rose 1989).[16] Women have successfully fought for child-care centers, vacation programs for school-age children, better community care for the elderly and disabled so that they can temporarily free themselves from the role of carer and claim a rightful place in the capitalist paid workforce (Fincher 1988). Indeed, the fact that such services are better provided for in cities contributes to the feminization of households in central urban areas. Significant though all these changes have been for women in the city, these strategies rest upon the assumption that women remain the carers, the supplementary workers in a capitalist system, who, if they undertake labor in the "productive" spheres of the economy must also provide the "reproductive" labor. The central city is one space that allows the (exhausted) middle-class superwoman to function – it has become the site of a new "problem that has no name."[17]

Similar strategies of reversal are represented in "Take back the night" rallies and other urban actions where women have claimed their right to the city streets, pressing for better lighting, better policing of public

[15] Kern (1983) argues that absolute space has more in common with the insignificant backgrounds of classical portraiture which serve only to contain and set off the foregrounded subject.

[16] Even in the face of foreboding and paranoid cautionary fables such as *Rosemary's Baby*.

[17] Marcus (1993) notes that after the publication of her bestseller, *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan was able to move out of the suburbs, the condemned site of women's unnamed oppression, and into an apartment in Manhattan. In the 1960s, unlike the 1990s, such an urban location represented an escape from the "problem that had no name."



transport, guarded parking stations, and other mechanisms of public surveillance of men's behavior (Worpole 1992). As the geography of women's fear has been made visible, so has the "reality" of male sexuality and the "inevitability" of violence against women been accepted. While greater public surveillance is advocated, women are simultaneously warned not to trespass into public space where, on the streets at night or on public transport after work hours, they are most certainly "asking" to become players in a rape script.[18]

Feminist strategies of celebration and reversal are all contributing to changes in the liveability of urban space for women. But what might be the cost of these changes if they rest upon the acceptance of both the Phallus and Capital as the "Identities" which define women/space, if they force women/space into the victim role that the sexual rape script allocates and the subordinate role that the economic urban script confers? What potentialities are suppressed by such a figuring of women and space? Perhaps we can only answer these questions by looking to alternative notions of Identity to see how they might differently configure women/space, as well as other possibilities they might entail.

## Rethinking the space of Form: "air against earth"

Both absolute and relative conceptions of space rely upon the logic of Identity, presence or Form to give meaning to space. Absolute space is the emptiness which is the "plenum of matter" (Kern 1983: 153), "a passive arena, the setting for objects and their interactions" (Massey 1993: 76). Absolute space invokes a stable spatial ontology given by God, the Phallus, Capital, in which objects are fixed at an absolute location. Relative space comes into existence via the interrelations of objects (Massey 1993: 77). It invokes a fluid spatial ontology, continually under construction by the force fields established between objects. In Marxian formulations, all locations in absolute space are rendered relative by the dynamic historical structuring and restructuring of "capitalist patriarchy and racist imperialism" (Smith 1984: 82–3; Smith and Katz 1993: 79).

Not only is relative space historically and socially constructed, but space has its own effectivity:

> Could space be nothing more than the passive locus of social relations,

[18] In exposing the contradictions associated with this geography of fear, feminists have broken down the inside/outside distinction, citing the higher incidence of rape inside the home than outside it (Valentine 1992).

> the milieu in which their combination takes on body, or the aggregate of the procedures employed in their removal? The answer must be no. Later on I shall demonstrate the active – the operational or instrumental – role of space, as knowledge and action, in the existing mode of production. (Lefebvre 1991: 11)

Massey's development of Lefebvre's vision through the geological metaphor of sedimentation and layering has been influential in theorizing the effectivity of socially produced space (1984, 1993):

> no space disappears completely, or is utterly abolished in the course of the process of social development – not even the natural place where that process began. "Something" always survives or endures – "something" that is not a *thing*. Each such material underpinning has a form, a function, a structure – properties that are necessary but not sufficient to define it. (Lefebvre 1991: 403)

> What takes place is the interrelation of the new spatial structure with the accumulated results of the old. The "combination" of layers, in other words, really does mean combination, with each side of the process affecting the other. (Massey 1984: 121)

What is interesting in all these spatial conceptions is the prevalence of the image of space as ground or earth (Lefebvre's "material underpinning") – something which gives the ahistorical Identity located in absolute space a "place to stand" or the historically grounded Identity of relative space a "terrain" to (re)mold. But what effect does this reliance upon Identity and the metaphor of grounding have? What violence might it do to space?

Amongst other poststructuralist theorists who challenge the metaphysics of presence in western post-Enlightenment thought, Deleuze and Guattari employ a spatiality that appears divorced from the positive form of Identity. Rather than positing earth, ground, and fixity in a locational grid, their space evokes air, smoothness and openness:

> The space of nomad thought is qualitatively different from State space. Air against earth. State space is "striated" or gridded. Movement in it is confined as by gravity to a horizontal plane, and limited by the order of that plane to preset paths between fixed and identifiable points. Nomad space is "smooth," or open-ended. One can rise up at any point and move to any other. Its mode of distribution is the *nomos*: arraying oneself in an open space (hold the street), as opposed to the logos of entrenching oneself in a closed space (hold the fort). (Massumi 1987: xiii)

In the wild productions of "rhizome" thought, Deleuze and Guattari splinter Identity into disorder, chaos, multiplicity, heterogeneity, rupture, and flight. It is mapped rather than traced: "The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 12). And mapping, as Carter has argued, is not about location and discovery (of already established identity) but about exploration and invention: "To be an explorer was to inhabit a world of potential objects with which one carried on an imaginary dialogue" (1987: 25).[19]



These images of space as air and openness, enabling exploration and liberating potentiality, evoke feminist and postmodern uses of chora to represent space (Grosz 1995; Lechte 1995):[20]

> *chora* is fundamentally a space. But it is neither the space of "phenomenological intuition" nor the space of Euclidean geometry, being closer to the deformations of topological space. Indeed, the *chora* is prior to the order and regulation such notions of space imply. It is an unordered space. Although Kristeva herself says that the *chora* "preceded" nomination and figuration, this is not meant in any chronological sense. For the *chora* is also "prior" to the ordering of chronological time. The *chora*, therefore, is not an origin, nor is it in any sense a cause which would produce predictable effects. Just the reverse: the *chora*, as indeterminacy, is a harbinger of pure chance. (Lechte 1995: 100)

Chora is the term Plato uses to denote the space of movement between being and becoming – "the mother of all things and yet without ontological status":

> Chora then is the space in which place is made possible, the chasm for the passage of spaceless Form into a spatialized reality, a dimensionless tunnel opening itself to spatialization, obliterating itself to make others possible and actual. (Grosz 1995: 51)

The femininity of chora lies in its immanent productiveness. But it is this very quality that Grosz argues has been undermined by phallogocentrism.

[19] Others, particularly postcolonial analysts, have convincingly demonstrated the ways in which mapping has been used as a graphic tool of colonization and imperial power (Blunt and Rose 1994; Harley 1988).

[20] Having assumed the status of a "master term" within French poststructuralist thought, *chora* is of interest because of the way in which it cannot be contained within the logos of any text under examination but is, nevertheless, necessary to the operations of that text.

For Derrida and Kristeva such a term highlights the limits or excess of a system of thought, the vulnerable point at which to focus the most productive deconstruction (Grosz 1995: 48).

Within phallocentric thought chora became appropriated as the space of Form/the Father/Production – the space which is the condition of man's self-representation and the condition of Identity. Chora as the space of indeterminacy/enabling/engendering/the mother was denigrated, represented "as an abyss, as unfathomable, lacking, enigmatic, veiled, seductive, voracious, dangerous and disruptive" (Grosz 1995: 57), cast out without name or place.

Feminist poststructuralists have been keen to point out the violence that has been done to women, and now to space, by phallocentric modernist discourse:

> (The) enclosure of women in men's physical space is not entirely different from the containment of women in men's conceptual universe either: theory, in the terms in which we know it today, is also the consequence of a refusal to acknowledge that other perspectives, other modes of reason, other modes of construction and constitution are possible. Its singularity and status, as true and objective, depend on this disavowal. (Grosz 1995: 56)

How might we proceed now to reclaim the feminine aspect of chora, to conceptualize a pregnant space, a space of air, a space of potentiality and overdetermination?

> In order for [sexual] difference to be thought and lived, we have to reconsider the whole problematic of *space* and *time* . . . A change of epoch requires a mutation in the perception and conception of *space–time*, the *inhabitation of place* and the *envelopes of identity*. (Irigaray, quoted in Grosz 1995: 55)

> Becomings belong to geography, they are orientations, directions, entries and exits. (Deleuze and Parnet 1987: 3)

Feminist theorists urge us to think woman and space outside of that discourse in which Identity, or the Phallus, gives meaning to everything – to think outside the discourse in which woman can only be given shape by Man and in which space is an empty container that can only be given shape by matter.[21] To this urging can be

[21] ". . . identities based on spatial containment, substances and atoms belong to the *masculine imagery*, and what is missing from our culture is an alternative tradition of thinking identity that is based on fluidity or flow. It is important to note that Irigaray is not making an experiential claim: she is not asserting that women's true identity would be expressed in metaphors and images of flow. What she is claiming, by contrast, is that identity as understood in the history of Western philosophy since Plato has been constructed on a model that privileges optics, straight lines, self-contained unity and solids . . . the Western tradition has left unsymbolised a self that exists as self not by repulsion/exclusion of the not-self, but via interpenetration of self with otherness" (Battersby [1993: 34] on Irigaray).



added the encouragement, offered by anti-essentialist Marxism, to think economy and space outside the discourse in which Identity, or Capital, is the origin of social structure and intelligibility – to think outside the discourse of woman's economic subordination to Man and of urban women operating in a terrain defined by capitalist social relations.

## Pregnant space, postmodern space

Geographic and feminist projects of representing space find a number of parallels within the visual arts. Impressionism and Cubism, for example, are two interrelated art movements which mirror the possibilities and potentialities of, as well as the impossibilities and barriers to, thinking a postmodern pregnant space. In the paintings of the Impressionists space was, for the first time, constitutive – the background, full of haze, mist, smoke, light, crowded in on the subject, claiming equal status and attention from the painter and gazer (Kern 1983: 160). Cubism took one step further, instating space with geometric form, leveling space and material object to the point of complete interpenetration. In this genre Form was both disintegrated and reFormed in every constituent space (Kern 1983: 161–2).

Cubism, however, evokes a closed system of determination in which space is defined by the presence of a positive Being, no matter how fragmented and indistinct. Cubist painting can thus be seen to represent the quintessential space of modernism, paralleling in the visual realm the discursive space of phallocentrism and the economic space of capitalism. In the discourse of hegemonic Capitalism, for example, all space is constituted by the operations of capital:

> It is not Einstein, nor physics and philosophy, which in the end determine the relativity of geographical space, but the actual process of capital accumulation. (Smith 1984: 82–3)

> The new space that thereby emerges [in the moment of the multinational network, or what Mandel calls "late capitalism"] involves the suppression of distance . . . and the relentless saturation of any remaining voids and empty places, to the point where the postmodern body . . . is now exposed to a perceptual barrage of immediacy from which all sheltering layers and intervening mediations have been removed. (Jameson 1991: 412–13)

> It is here that we can begin to see the relation between capitalism and the construction of everyday life as a transit-mobility which constructs the

space for the free movement of capital and for the capitalization, rather than the commodification, of everyday life. For within that transit-space, people are not the producers of wealth but a potential site of capital investment. People become capital itself. And within these circuits, the only thing that they can be sure of is that capitalism is going first-class. (Grossberg 1992: 328)

Although "we gotta get out of this place" (Grossberg 1992) we are caught in a space of no escape.

By contrast, the space of the Impressionists could be seen to represent one of those points of excess within modernism. Amidst modernist and realist attempts to replicate the fracturing of light to heighten the experience of color, Impressionists such as Monet and Pissaro painted evanescent atmospheric effects (reminiscent of Turner, a British forerunner) in which form and order are "destroyed." Space is constituted by the random distribution, disorder and chance of smoke, streams of sunlight, steam and clouds (Lechte 1995: 101). Here we see space represented as an open system of disequilibrium and indeterminacy, a random but productive *process* (Serres, cited in Lechte 1995). In this chora-like image of positive immanence and potentiality it might be possible to see postmodern becomings that are not devoid of political in/content.

How might we, for example, appreciate differently the spatiality of female sexuality and potential new ways for women to dwell in urban space? Marcus provides some guidance:

> One possible alternative to figuring female sexuality as a fixed spatial unit is to imagine sexuality in terms of time and change . . . Rather than secure the right to alienate and own a spatialized sexuality, antirape politics can claim women's right to a self that could differ from itself over time without then having to surrender its effective existence as self. (Marcus 1992: 399–400)

Marcus appears to be arguing for a multiplicity of female sexualities that may coexist within any one individual. In her vision, the spatiality of female sexuality can be dissociated from the notion of a fixed, immobilized cavity defined in relation to the inevitably invading, violent penis. Instead, female sexual space can be conceived in multiple ways – as surface, as active, as full and changing, as many, as depth, as random and indeterminate, as process.[22]

How might this respatialization of the body contribute to new geographies for women in the city? It might lead us to identify the

[22] Marcus goes on, in fact, to rewrite the rape script in the light of this conception, and I draw upon her "revised rape script" in chapter 6. In this chapter, it is her rethinking of the spatiality of the body that I am interested in.



multiple urban spaces that women claim, but not solely in the name of consumer desire or reproductive/biological function. Here one could think of the heterotopias of lesbian space, prostitution space, bingo space, club space, health spa, body building and aerobics space, nursing home space, hobby space – all terrains of public life in which women's agency is enacted in an effective, if indeterminate manner.[23] One could identify the ways in which such spaces are regulated and ordered by dominant discourses of heterosexuality, health, youth, beauty, and respectability and influenced by discourses of transgression.[24] One could explore and map an urban performance space of women that is defined in terms of positivity, fullness, surface and power. But in order for such a reinscription not to fall back into simply celebrating woman–space in the city,[25] theoretical work must continually and repeatedly displace (rather than only reverse) the binary hierarchy of gender.

One strategy of displacement might lead us to deconstruct and redefine those consumption and reproductive spaces/spheres that are the designated woman–space in the discourse of urban capitalism. Within geography, for example, the urban restructuring literature points to the massive involvement of women in the paid workforce where they are active in a variety of economic roles apart from that of final consumer or reproducer of the capitalist labor force. Feminist geographers and sociologists are researching women in office space (Pringle 1988), in finance space (McDowell 1994), in retail space (Dowling 1993), in ethnic small business (Alcorso 1993), in industrial space (Phizacklea 1990) – again all public arenas in which women's

[23] Some of this work is currently being done by feminist geographers. Many of the early studies in feminist geography have, however, reproduced a phallocentric discourse by accepting the representation of women's bodies as vulnerable and women's spaces as subordinate (see Rose 1993: 117–36).

[24] In a project which "reflects the intense realism underpinning any queer utopian impulse" (p. 30), Moon et al. (1994) detach the suburban house from its pre-eminent representation as a container for heterosexual couples and their families. Redefining the house as a (not exclusively but nevertheless) queer space, where all manner of sexual practices and relations are enacted, they simultaneously redefine space as something that cannot be definitively dedicated to particular activities or exhaustively structured by a single form or "identity," such as the heterosexual family: "Queer lives and impulses do not occupy a separate social or physical space from straight ones; instead, they are relational and conditional, moving across and transforming the conventional spaces that were designed to offer endless narcissistic self-confirmation to the unstable normative systems of sex, gender and family" (p. 30). This space is open, full of overlaps and inconsistencies, a place of aleatory relations and redefinitions, never fully colonized by the pretensions of a singular identity.

[25] As Soja and Hooper (1993: 198) suggest, the task is not to "assert the dominance of the subaltern over the hegemon" but to "break down and disorder the binary itself."

agency is enacted.[26] In some texts we may even see glimmers of spaces beyond or outside capitalism, where women operate in noncapitalist spaces of production and contribute to the reproduction of noncapitalist economic forms.[27]

Despite these glimmers, what characterizes much of the restructuring literature is an overriding sense of "capitalocentrism" in that women's entry into the paid labor force is understood largely in terms of the procurement by capital of cheaper, more manipulable labor. Capital has positioned the superexploited female worker just as it has produced women's roles as reproducers (of the capitalist workforce) and consumers (of capitalist commodities). Any attempt to destabilize woman's position and spatiality within urban discourse must dispense with the Identity of Capitalism as the ultimate container[28] and constituter of women's social and economic life/space.

It would seem that the rethinking of female sexuality and the creation of alternate discourses of sexuality and bodily spatiality are well in advance of the rethinking of economic identity and social spatiality (Grosz 1994b). Indeed, even the most innovative cultural and poststructuralist theorists tend to leave this terrain untouched:

> Individuals do not appear to appropriate capital but to be appropriated to it. People are caught in its circuits, moving in and out of its paths of mobility, seeking opportunistic moments (luck, fate, fame or crime) which will enable them, not to redistribute wealth, but to relocate themselves within the distributional networks of capital. (Grossberg 1992: 328)

[26] In a related move Staeheli (1994) attempts to break down the public/private binary that often underpins a vision of women as largely excluded from the public sphere. Arguing that the boundary between public and private is "fuzzy" and always being (re)constructed, she dissociates public acts from public spaces and public identities, dissolving the notion of a public (political) sphere in which they all come together, and hoping thereby to liberate the transgressive political potential of public acts in private spaces (e.g., home-based political organizing involving neighbors and children) and private acts in public ones (e.g., breast-feeding in restaurants). In a similarly disruptive piece entitled "Semipublics" Moon (1995) explores the very public nature of what is ostensibly private, arguing that "not just some but *all* sexualities in our culture are phantasmatically staged in public." Whereas the "audience-orientation and public-directedness" of the "bourgeois conjugal bedroom" is nominally associated with privacy, very private acts of transgressive sexuality are "relegated to the scandalous realm of 'sex in public'" (pp. 2–3).

[27] See, for example, Katz and Monk (1993) and chapter 10 below.

[28] So that household labor and self-employment (which may be understood as outside capitalist relations of production) are seen as somehow taking place "within capitalism," as are noncapitalist forms of commodity production (e.g., independent or communal production).



> The capitalist relation consists of four dense points – commodity/consumer, worker/capitalist – which in neoconservative society are effectively superposed in every body in every spacetime coordinate. When capital comes out, it surfaces as a fractal attractor whose operational arena is immediately coextensive with the social field. (Massumi 1993: 132)

Despite the postmodern interest in chora, in nomadology and smooth space, the identity of Capital confronts us wherever we turn. Do we only ever dwell in a capitalist space? Can we ever think outside the capitalist axiomatic?

> The economy constitutes a worldwide axiomatic, a "universal cosmopolitan energy which overflows every restriction and bond," (Marx) a mobile and convertible substance "such as the total value of annual production." Today we can depict an enormous, so-called stateless, monetary mass that circulates through foreign exchange and across borders, eluding control by the States, forming a multinational ecumenical organization, constituting a supranational power untouched by government decisions. (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 453)

Here Deleuze and Guattari are difficult and elusive. Their capitalist axiomatic is all-pervasive and innovative, seemingly able to coopt and reterritorialize all lines of flight out of its territory into new opportunities for self-expansion, able to set and repel its own limits (1987: 472). Yet at the same time they reserve a space for the minority, for the becoming of everybody/everything outside the totalizing flow of capital:

> The undecidable is the germ and locus par excellence of revolutionary decisions. Some people invoke the high technology of the world system of enslavement: but even, and especially, this machinic enslavement abounds in undecidable propositions and movements that, far from belonging to a domain of knowledge reserved for sworn specialists, provides so many weapons for the becoming of everybody/everything, becoming-radio, becoming-electronic, becoming-molecular . . . 68 Every struggle is a function of all these undecidable propositions and constructs revolutionary connections in opposition to the conjugations of the axiomatic. (1987: 473)

In the footnote to this statement the authors mention the domain of "alternative practices" such as pirate radio stations, urban community networks, and alternatives to psychiatry (1987: 572). Here we catch a minimal glimpse of what might lie outside the flows of Capital. The capitalist axiomatic closes and defines – in the sense of fully inhabiting – social space (evoking the closure and definition of Cubism), yet it is also in motion, providing a space

of becoming, of undecidability. This space is reminiscent of the constitutive (pregnant) space of the Impressionists. It is a space of mists and vapors, of movement and possibility, of background that might at any moment become foreground – a "space of excess" and indeterminacy within the modern space of fullness and closure.[29]

If we are to take postmodern spatial becomings seriously then it would seem that we must claim chora, that space between the Being of present Capitalism and the Becoming of future capitalisms, as the place for the indeterminate potentiality of noncapitalisms.[30] In this space we might identify the range of economic practices that are not subsumed to capital flows.[31] We might see the sphere of (capitalist) reproduction as the space of noncapitalist class processes that deterritorialize and divert capitalist flows of surplus value (see chapter 9). We might see the sphere of (capitalist) consumption as the space of realization and consumption of commodities produced under a range of productive relations – cooperative, self-

29 Negri offers images of capitalism expanding to encompass and cover every social and cultural domain but stretching so much in the process that it begins to thin and tear, creating openings for resistance and "islands of communism" (1996: 66).

30 Here we may enter a space resembling Bhabha's third space "beyond the discursive limits of the master subject" (Blunt and Rose 1994), or the "thirdspace of political choice" depicted by Soja and Hooper (1993: 198–9) (drawing on Foucault's [1986] notion of heterotopia) which is a place of enunciation of a "new cultural politics of difference." Such a space also resembles Rose's (1993) "paradoxical space," a space that is productive of multiple and contradictory identities, or that of de Lauretis who discovers in the "elsewhere" or "space-offs" of hegemonic discourses the interstices in which the "subject of feminism" may emerge (quoted in Rose 1993: 139–40).

31 See Arvidson (1996) for an attempt to theorize urban development in Los Angeles outside a vision of hegemonic capitalism. While theorists of capitalism have come to acknowledge that capitalist spaces are "coinhabited" by noneconomic relations (including racism, sexism, heterosexism, and so on), the space-economy itself is most commonly represented according to what Rose calls the "masculinist" principles of exhaustiveness and mutual exclusivity. Thus capitalism generally covers the entire social space (see Massumi above, for example, where capital is "coextensive with the social field") and tends not to coexist with noncapitalism in the same location. To undermine the closures and exclusions of these colonizing representations, Rose calls at one point upon the work of Mackenzie (1989a), which questions the neat spatial and social "dichotomies of the divided city" (p. 114, cited in Rose 1993: 135). Mackenzie's work on women's labor in informal networks destabilizes the familiar division of the city into spaces of (capitalist) production and reproduction, discovering activities which are neither, taking place in spaces usually identified with one or the other. So unusual is it for economic representations to be set outside the imperial space of the master term that Mackenzie is at a loss to name and conceptualize these noncapitalist activities. She prefers to let them go "conceptually unclad . . . so to speak" (1989b: 56).



employed, enslaved, communal as well as capitalist.[32] What violence do we do when we interpret all these spaces as existing *in* Capitalism, as cohering within the coded flows of axiomatic capital? We risk relegating space/life to emptiness, to rape, to non-becoming, to victimhood.

32 Daly offers a similar vision of a rich and pregnant economic space: "Economic identity must always be regarded as provisional and contingent. This is why I want to talk about the economic as a space rather than a model: not a given space, but a space of possibilities dominated by a proliferation of discourses which are always capable of subverting and rearticulating the identities that exist there . . . It is clear . . . that a whole range of radical enterprises exist within the sphere of the market, including: credit unions, co-operatives of every type, housing associations, radical journals/literature, alternative technology, alternative forms of entertainment, etc., as a counter-enterprise culture; none of which can be regarded as having an unequivocal status as "capitalist" (1991: 88).

reference and ontology, and why they call forth in him a spirit so heavily burdened, these are considerable and very interesting questions. Ones not to be taken up here.[17]

Derrida calls attention to his constatives, the way the performative calls attention to itself. But he cannot help himself, he must utter them, he points to their deconstructibility but leaves them undeconstructed. Weary and diffident though his gesture may be, it is nonetheless forceful. It leaves us with a particular set of tasks and problems, whether political or deconstructive (not to say that these are necessarily two different things). I wish to take advantage of this diffident constative, this quasiconstative, and the force that it cannot not possess, to point to the creation here – in this chapter and indeed in this book – of a blackboard image of something other than capitalism existing and thriving on the contemporary economic scene. It's provisional and unassuming, it's clunky and unrefined – the image of noncapitalist forms of production and exchange, of noncapitalist modes of surplus labor appropriation and distribution, all those unfleshed out feudalisms, slaveries, household economic practices, intrafirm relations. But a ready option afforded by language (though undermined by deconstruction) is the possibility of ontologizing the specter. Here we do it not because we have to ("the metaphysics of presence cannot be fully evaded/expunged") or because we need to ("politics requires strategic essentialism") but perhaps because we have a great desire – to take particular advantage of the force of language, not to let the opportunity pass. What is provisional is nevertheless powerful, that's about as ontological as I want to get for now.

[17] In one who has untiringly taken on the task of destabilizing western metaphysics and philosophy, the tiredness evident in the blackboard chapter seems particularly uncharacteristic. It is interesting to think about why Derrida might have the energy to take on all of western thinking but might evince such world-weariness and lassitude in thinking about the world; one is tempted to adduce a "reality" effect, a sense of hefting the weight of the ontological, that is different from the massive but feather-light project of deconstructing philosophy. Marxism and world political economy have long been associated with, and cannot be divested of without deconstructing, the weight and gravity of "reality."

# 11

# Waiting for the Revolution . . .

This chapter has a surplus of titles. The grand title is "Rethinking Capitalism," affirming a connection with contemporary projects to rethink received concepts and, indeed, to question the entire epistemic foundation that has rendered them prevalent and effective. The tantalizing title is "How to smash capitalism while working at home in your spare time" (this one was used at a conference hosted by *Rethinking Marxism*).[1] Last but not least there's the querulous title: "Why can feminists have revolution now, while Marxists have to wait?" This title has drawn the most criticism (since it tends to obscure the diversity within feminism and Marxism as well as the commonalities between them) but it has also provoked the greatest recognition and alignment. Despite its flippancy and falsifications, the question points to the proximity of social transformation for certain feminisms – the image of gender as something always under (re)construction, of social transformation taking place at the interpersonal level as well as the level of society as a whole. By contrast with these feminist visions, Marxism seems quite distant from both personal and social transformation.

As a Marxist I often feel envious of the feminists within and around me. My feminism reshapes the terrain of my social existence on a daily basis. Why can't my Marxism have as its object something that I am involved in (re)constructing every day? Where is my lived project of socialist construction? Certainly my sense of a socialist absence is not just a sign that Marxism is moribund while feminism, by contrast, is full of vitality. On the contrary, in academia where I am situated, Marxism appears to be thriving. It has to do, I believe, with some-

[1] Where the first version of the chapter was presented. This may explain why the chapter reads as a Marxist speaking to an audience of Marxists.

thing else – with the fact that what Marxism has been called upon to transform is something that cannot be transformed – something I will call Capitalism.[2]

Let me say this again slightly differently. Marxism has produced a discourse of Capitalism that ostensibly delineates an object of transformative class politics but that operates more powerfully to discourage and marginalize projects of class transformation.[3] In a sense, Marxism has contributed to the socialist absence through the very way in which it has theorized the capitalist presence.

Without defining Capitalism at this point, I wish to identify some of the special characteristics that give it the power to deflect socialist (and other progressive) transformations. Unlike many concepts associated with radical politics today, most prominently perhaps race, gender, and sexuality, the concept of capitalism (and by extension the concept of class, for which it is a sign in places where the term "class" cannot be used)[4] is not at the moment subject to general contestation and redefinition. Indeed there seems to be a silent consensus – within Marxism at least – that a single meaning can be associated with the word. Thus when we call the United States a capitalist country, we do so without fear of contradiction. This is not because we all have the same understanding of what capitalism is (for there may be as many capitalisms in the Marxist community as there are Marxists) but because the meaning of capitalism is not a focus of widespread rethinking and reformulation. Instead the word often functions as a touchstone, a discursive moment at which we invoke a common Marxist heritage, creating a sense of shared world views and signaling that at least *we* haven't forgotten the existence of class.

In the context of poststructuralist theory both the political subject and the social totality have been rent apart and retheorized

[2] For those who have read the chapters of this book in sequence it will by now have become clear that I am referring not to "actually existing capitalism" but to prominent ways of representing capitalism within Marxist (and some nonMarxist) discourses of economy and society. To emphasize the discursive nature of my object I will, in this concluding chapter, give capitalism the respect it deserves and refer to it as Capitalism.

[3] Certainly Marxism has produced many different representations of capitalism, some of which owe a substantial debt to nonMarxist theory. In this book I have constituted Capitalism as a distillation of these or, perhaps more accurately, as the residue of a filtration process that has captured certain salient elements of various Marxist theories and analyses. It is this specific residue, rather than a set of attributes common to all Marxist representations of capitalism, that I am concerned with here.

[4] In certain realms of feminist thought, for example, "class is definitely non grata as a topic" but one "may creditably speak of 'proletarianization' in the context of global capitalism" (Barrett 1992: 216).



as open, continually under construction, decentered, constituted by antagonisms, fragmented, plural, multivocal, discursively as well as socially constructed. But Capitalism has been relatively immune to radical reconceptualization. Its recent development has been duly charted and tracked within the confines of traditional modernist conceptions (for example, regulation theory)[5] that have remained largely unchallenged by postmodern critical thought. Indeed, rather than being subjected to destabilization and deconstruction, Capitalism is more likely to be addressed with honorifics that evoke its powerful and entrenched position. It appears unnamed but nevertheless unmistakable as a "societal macrostructure" (Fraser and Nicholson 1990: 34), a "large-scale structure of domination" (Deutsche 1991: 19), "the global economy" or "flexible accumulation" (Harvey 1989), "post-Fordism" or even "consumer society." Often associated with an adjective that evokes its protean capacities, it emerges as "monopoly capitalism," "global capitalism," "postindustrial capitalism," "late capitalism." Like other terms of respect, these terms are seldom defined by their immediate users. Rather they function to express and constitute a shared state of admiration and subjection. For no matter how diverse we might be, how Marxist or postMarxist, how essentialist or antiessentialist, how modernist or postmodernist, most of us somewhere acknowledge that we live within something large that shows us to be small – a Capitalism, whether global or national, in the face of which all our transformative acts are ultimately inconsequential.[6]

In the representations of capitalism developed by economic theorists such as Michel Aglietta, David Harvey, Ernest Mandel, and Immanuel Wallerstein and drawn upon by a wide range of social and cultural analysts, we may see that Capitalism has a number of prominent discursive forms of appearance. I call these discursive features of Capitalism "unity," "singularity," and "totality." These features can be distinguished from each other (though none of them ever truly exists alone) and taken together (as they seldom are in particular textual settings) they constitute Capitalism as "an object of transformation that cannot be transformed." I want now to consider each of these dimensions of Capitalism in turn.

## Unity

The birth of the concept of Capitalism as we know it coincided in

[5] See chapter 7.

[6] At least where capitalism is concerned.

time with the birth of "the economy" as an autonomous social sphere (Callari 1983; Poovey 1994). Not surprisingly, then, Capitalism shares with its more abstract sibling the qualities of an integrated system and the capability of reproducing itself (or of being reproduced). Like the economy, Capitalism is more often portrayed as a unified entity than as a set of practices scattered over a landscape. Represented as an organism or "system" through which flows of social labor circulate in various forms, it regulates itself according to logics or laws,[7] propelled by the life force of capital accumulation along a preordained (though not untroubled) trajectory of growth.[8]

In company with and sometimes as an alternative to organicist conceptions, the unity of Capitalism is often represented in architectural terms. Capitalism (or capitalist society) becomes a structure in which

7 For theorists who do not wish to accord the economy the capacity to author its own causation, recognizing in this theoretical move one of the major buttresses of economic determinism (Amariglio and Callari 1989: 43) and of essentialist social theory in general (see chapter 2), the regulatory mechanisms allowing for the reproduction of capitalism may be transported outside the economy itself, so that social conditions and institutions external and contingent, rather than internal and necessary, to the capitalist economy are responsible for its maintenance and stability (see, for example, the work of the French regulation school, including Aglietta 1979, Lipietz 1987, or that of economists who theorize "social structures of accumulation," e.g., Gordon et al. 1982). Despite the expulsion of the regulatory mechanism from the economy itself, its function is unchanged, so that capitalism remains a society-wide system that has a propensity to be reproduced. Such reproductionism may characterize even hegemonic (in the Gramscian sense) conceptions of capitalism that attempt to theorize rather than presume capitalist dominance.

8 See chapter 5. Within the organismic economy, a variety of processes may be seen as regulating capitalist reproduction and development and/or producing the integration that allows the economy to function as a unified system. The capitalist economy is seen as integrated and disciplined by the processes of the market, by competition, by the profit rate and its conditions, by the law of value or the laws of capital accumulation, all of which can be theorized as generating unity of form and movement in the economic totality. Donna Haraway notes that the functionalism inherent in organicist social conceptions has been a brake upon conceptions of the future. We are not only constrained in the present, by what the economy (here capitalism) permits and requires, but in the future, by the way its drive toward survival and self-maintenance crowds out alternative possibilities. Even when regulatory functions are externalized to dispel functionalism and attenuate economic determinism in Marxist economic discourse, the totality is still capable of being regulated (see note 7) and of being integrated and bounded in the process of regulation. Its telos is reproduction whether the mechanism guaranteeing reproduction is internal or external. Many Marxists have sidestepped the charge of functionalism by focusing on the contradictions of capitalism, but often their theories of capitalist crisis and breakdown have been imbued with an organicist conception of capitalism as a unified body/subject to life-threatening illnesses or even to death (the ultimate confirmation of organic wholeness as a form of existence).



parts are related to one another, linked to functions, and arranged "in accordance with an architecture that is internal as well as external, and no less invisible than visible" (Foucault 1973: 231).[9] The architectural/structural metaphor confers upon Capitalism qualities of durability, stability and persistence, giving it greater purchase on social reality than more ephemeral phenomena.

While Marxist conceptions usually emphasize the contradictory and crisis-ridden nature of capitalist development, capitalist crisis may itself be seen as a unifying process. Crises are often presented as originating at the organic center of a capitalist society – the relationship between capital and labor, for example, or the process of capital accumulation – and as radiating outward to destabilize the entire economic and social formation. Reconsolidation or recovery is also a process of the whole. So, for many observers of the post-World War II period, when the "long boom" ended in the crisis of Fordism, an entire Fordist "model of development" was swept aside. After a time of instability and turmoil, this society-wide structure was replaced with its post-Fordist analogue, consummating a grand economic, cultural and political realignment (see Harvey 1989; Grossberg 1992: 325–58).[10]

What is important here, for my purposes, are not the different metaphors and images of economy and society but the fact that they all confer integrity upon Capitalism. Through its architectural or organismic depiction as an edifice or body, Capitalism becomes not an uncentered aggregate of practices but a structural and systemic unity, potentially

9 Regulation theory and social structures of accumulation (SSA) theory (see note 7 above) represent two recent attempts to understand capitalism in terms of a structural model of development. Though both theoretical traditions attempt to theorize capitalist economies as the product of history and contingency rather than of logic and necessity, their analyses of particular capitalist formations conceal a structural essence of the social. This a priori and unified structure is laid bare during times of crisis and becomes particularly visible in the process of theorizing a new "model of development" or SSA, when theorists step forward to identify the new regime of accumulation, the new mode of regulation, the new labor accord, the new industrial paradigm, the new form of the state, putting flesh on society's bare bones. With the consolidation of a new model of development or SSA, the abstract and skeletal structure is once more clothed in a mantle of regulatory social practices and institutions. In this way, history is framed as a succession of analogous social structures rather than as a dynamic, contradictory and openended process that has no telos or prespecified form (see chapter 7 and Foucault 1973).

10 Interestingly, even Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 160–2) use the language of social structures of accumulation theory and regulation theory – including the term Fordism – to describe the hegemonic formation they see as structuring economic and social space in the postwar period. In doing so, they uncharacteristically fail to dissociate themselves from the a priori conceptions of social structure and totality that have accompanied these theories from their inception.

co-extensive with the national or global economy as a whole.[11] As a large, durable, and self-sustaining formation, it is relatively impervious to ordinary political and cultural interventions. It can be resisted and reformed but it cannot be replaced, except through some herculean and coordinated struggle.

Understood as a unified system or structure, Capitalism is not ultimately vulnerable to local and partial efforts at transformation. Any such efforts can always be subverted by Capitalism at another scale or in another dimension. Attempts to transform production may be seen as hopeless without control of the financial system. Socialisms in one city or in one country may be seen as undermined by Capitalism at the international scale. Capitalism cannot be chipped away at, gradually replaced or removed piecemeal. It must be transformed in its entirety or not at all.

Thus one of the effects of the unity of Capitalism is to present the left with the task of systemic transformation.

## Singularity

If the unity of Capitalism confronts us with the mammoth task of systemic transformation, it is the singularity and totality of Capitalism that make the task so hopeless. Capitalism presents itself as a singularity in the sense of having no peer or equivalent, of existing in a category by itself; and also in the sense that when it appears fully realized within a particular social formation, it tends to be dominant or alone.

As a *sui generis* economic form, Capitalism has no true analogues. Slavery, independent commodity production, feudalism, socialism, primitive communism and other forms of economy all lack the systemic properties of Capitalism and the ability to reproduce and expand themselves according to internal laws.[12] Unlike socialism, for example, which is always

[11] These formulations, especially the vision of the economy as co-extensive with the nation state, attest to the overdetermination of Marxism by classical political economy and its descendants.

[12] This does not mean that these other forms have not been implicated in images of organic unity and reproducibility, for "pre-capitalist" modes of production have often been viewed as organic, stable and self-reproducing and also as revitalized by internally generated crises. But these images of organic societies have not for the most part been associated with conceptions of the economy as a special and autonomous social sphere, one that not only determines itself but by virtue of that capability tends to exert a disproportionate influence on other social locations. Moreover, when theorists of noncapitalist modes of production have attempted to conceptualize them as functioning according to laws of motion, crisis and breakdown, they have had difficulty specifying a regulatory logic with the same degree of closure as that associated with Capitalism. Theories of patriarchy as capitalism's dual have foundered on the difficulty of generating systemic laws (see chapters 2 and 3).



struggling to be born, which needs the protection and fostering of the state, which is fragile and easily deformed, Capitalism takes on its full form as a natural outcome of an internally driven growth process.

Its organic unity gives capitalism the peculiar power to regenerate itself, and even to subsume its moments of crisis as requirements of its continued growth and development. Socialism has never been endowed with that mythic capability of feeding on its own crises; its reproduction was never driven from within by a life force but always from without; it could never reproduce itself but always had to be reproduced, often an arduous if not impossible process.[13]

Other modes of production that lack the organic unity of Capitalism are more capable of being instituted or replaced incrementally and more likely to coexist with other economic forms. Capitalism, by contrast, tends to appear by itself. Thus, in the United States, if feudal or ancient classes exist, they exist as residual forms; if slavery exists, it exists as a marginal form; if socialism or communism exists, it exists as a prefigurative form. None of these forms truly and fully coexists with Capitalism. Where Capitalism does coexist with other forms, those places (the so-called Third World, for example, or backward regions in what are known as the "advanced capitalist" nations) are seen as not fully "developed." Rather than signaling the real possibility of Capitalism coexisting with noncapitalist economic forms, the coexistence of capitalism with noncapitalism marks the Third World as insufficient and incomplete. Subsumed to the hegemonic discourse of Development, it identifies a diverse array of countries as the shadowy Other of the advanced capitalist nations.

One effect of the notion of capitalist exclusivity is a monolithic conception of class, at least in the context of "advanced capitalist" countries. The term "class" usually refers to a social cleavage along the axis of capital and labor since capitalism cannot coexist with any but residual or prefigurative noncapitalist relations. The presence and fullness of the capitalist monolith not only denies the possibility of economic or class diversity in the present but prefigures a monolithic and modernist socialism – one in which everyone is a comrade and class diversity does not exist.

Capitalism's singularity operates to discourage projects to create alternative economic institutions and class relations, since these will neces-

[13] Of course, as the only true successor and worthy opponent of Capitalism, socialism is often imbued with some of Capitalism's characteristics. In order to be a suitable and commensurable replacement, for example, socialism has sometimes been theorized as having laws of motion, or a disciplinary and regulatory logic analogous to those of the market, competition, profitability and accumulation that are attributed to capitalism. But these conceptions have never become part of the dominant vision of socialism.

sarily be marginal in the context of Capitalism's exclusivity. The inability of Capitalism to coexist thus produces not only the present impossibility of alternatives but their future unlikelihood – pushing socialist projects to the distant and unrealizable future.[14]

## Totality

The third characteristic of Capitalism, and perhaps its best known, is its tendency to present itself as the social totality. This is most obvious in metaphors of containment and subsumption. People who are not themselves involved in capitalist exploitation nevertheless may be seen to live "in the pores" of capitalism (Spivak 1988: 135) or within capitalism (Wallerstein 1992: 8, Grossberg 1992: 337) or under capitalism. Capitalism is presented as the embrace, the container, something large and full. Noncapitalist forms of production, such as commodity production by self-employed workers or the production of household goods and services, are seen as somehow taking place *within* capitalism. Household production becomes subsumed to capitalism as capitalist "reproduction." Even oppressions experienced along entirely different lines of social antagonism are often convened within "the plenary geography of capitalism."[15]

Capitalism not only casts a wider net than other things, it also constitutes us more fully, in a process that is more like a saturation than like a process of overdetermination. Our lives are dripping with Capitalism. We cannot get outside Capitalism; it has no outside.[16] It becomes that which has no outside by swallowing up its conditions of existence. The banking system, the national state, domestic production, the built environment, nature as product, media culture – all are conditions of Capitalism's totalizing existence that seem to lose their autonomy, their contradictory capability to be read as conditions of its nonexistence. We laboriously pry each piece loose – theorizing the legal "system," for example, as a fragmented and diverse collection of practices and institutions that is constituted by a whole host of things in addition to capitalism – but Capitalism nevertheless exerts its massive gravitational pull.

Even socialism functions as the dual or placeholder of Capitalism

[14] Those who have attempted to theorize social democracy as a transitional or mixed form of economy have encountered serious resistance from a Marxism which sees the welfare state as ultimately subsumed to or necessarily hegemonized by capitalism.

[15] Derek Gregory (1990: 81–2) commenting on Soja's (1989) treatment of "new social movements."

[16] As Gregory notes, even Laclau and Mouffe (1985) "have no difficulty recognizing that 'there is practically no domain of individual or collective life which [now] escapes capitalist relations'" (1990: 82).



rather than as its active and contradictory constituent. Socialism is just Capitalism's opposite, a great emptiness on the other side of a membrane, a social space where the fullness of Capitalism is negated. When the socialist bubble in eastern Europe burst, Capitalism flooded in like a miasma. We are all capitalist now.

It seems we have banished economic determinism and the economistic conception of class as the major axis of social transformation, only to have enshrined the economy once again – this time in a vast metonymic emplacement (Laclau and Mouffe 1985). Capitalism which is a name for a form of economy is invoked in every social dimension. The wealthy industrial societies are summarily characterized as capitalist social formations. On the one hand, we have taken back social life from the economy while, on the other, we have allowed it – under the name of Capitalism – to colonize the entire social space.[17]

This means that the left is not only presented with the revolutionary task of transforming the whole economy, it must replace the entire society as well. It is not surprising that there seems to be no room for a thriving and powerful noncapitalist economy, politics and culture, though it is heartening to consider that these nevertheless may exist.

## Alternatives to Capitalism

I have characterized Marxism as producing a discourse of Capitalism that represents capitalism as unified, singular and total rather than as uncentered, dispersed, plural, and partial in relation to the economy and society as a whole.[18] I do not mean to present Marxism itself as a noncontradictory tradition – clearly Marxism has produced discourses with different and, in fact, opposite characteristics. But I detect the presence and potency of the discourse I call Capitalism in what it makes unimaginable: a contemporary socialism in places like the United States. What strikes me as an inability among Marxists to view our own activities as "socialist construction" is produced in part by a Marxist discourse, one in which capitalism is constituted as necessarily hegemonic by virtue of its own characteristics (in other words, not by virtue of historical processes or contingencies).

[17] So that while things that are associated with economism like class have become distinctly underprivileged, the economy is permitted to reassert itself in a new and more virulent form.

[18] Of course, this characterization presents as a single "discourse" something that could also be seen as scattered instances, tendencies, or remnants. Certainly the features of Capitalism that I have identified are prevalent but are not universal or uncontested. They may be recognizable to us all though none of them may characterize our own conceptions.

As Marxists we often struggle to define the discursive features of Capitalism as illusions or errors. We undermine images of Capitalism's structural or systemic unity. We criticize the ways in which Capitalism is allowed to spill over into noneconomic social domains. Yet even so the hegemony of Capitalism reasserts itself. It is visible, for example, in each new analysis that presents an economy as predominantly or monolithically capitalist. We may deprive Capitalism of self-generating capacities and structural integrity; we may rob it of the power to confer a fictional and fantastic wholeness upon our societies; but Capitalism still appears essentially alone. As the ultimate container within which we live, Capitalism is unable to coexist.

For all its variety, the discourse of Capitalism is so pervasive that it leaves us "embarrassingly empty-handed when trying to come up with a different view of things."[19] Perhaps under these circumstances the way to begin to break free of Capitalism is to turn its prevalent representations on their heads. What if we theorized capitalism not as something large and embracing but as something partial, as one social constituent among many? What if we expelled those conditions of existence – for example, property law – that have become absorbed within the conception of capitalism and allowed them their contradictory autonomy, to become conditions of existence not only of capitalism but of noncapitalism, to become conditions of capitalism's nonexistence? What if capitalism were not an entire system of economy or a macrostructure or a mode of production but simply one form of exploitation among many? What if the economy were not single but plural, not homogeneous but heterogeneous, not unified but fragmented? What if capitalism were a set of different practices scattered over the landscape that are (for convenience and in violation of difference) often seen as the same? If categories like subjectivity and society can undergo a radical rethinking, producing a crisis of individual and social identity where a presumed fixity previously existed, can't we give Capitalism an identity crisis as well? If we did, how might the "socialist project" itself be transformed?

The question is, how do we begin to see this monolithic and homogeneous Capitalism not as our "reality" but as a fantasy of wholeness, one that operates to obscure diversity and disunity in the economy and society alike?[20] In order to begin to do this we may need to get closer to redefining capitalism for ourselves. Yet this is a very difficult thing to do.[21]

If we divorce Capitalism from unity, from singularity, from totality, we are left with "capitalism" – and what might that be? Let us start where

[19] Arturo Escobar (1992: 414) speaking of the attempt to generate alternatives to the dominant discourse of Development.



most people are starting today. One of the things that has produced the sense of capitalism's ubiquity is its identification with the market, a prevalent identification outside Marxism and within Marxism one that is surprisingly not uncommon. And yet of course so many economic transactions are nonmarket transactions, so many goods and services are not produced as commodities, that it is apparent once we begin to think about it that to define capitalism as coextensive with the market is to define much economic activity as noncapitalist.

In this regard, what has for me cast the greatest light upon the discourse of Capitalism (and on the ways in which I have been confined within it without seeing its confines) have been studies of the household "economy" produced by Nancy Folbre (1993), Harriet Fraad et al. (1994), and others. These theorists represent the household in so-called advanced capitalist societies as a major locus of production and make the case that, in terms of both the value of output and the numbers of people involved, the household sector can hardly be called marginal. In fact, it can arguably be seen as equivalent to or more important than the capitalist sector. (Certainly more people are involved in household production than are involved in capitalist production.) We must therefore seek to understand the discursive marginalization of the household sector as a complex effect, one that is not produced as a simple reflection of the marginal and residual status of the household economy itself.

If we can grant that nonmarket transactions (both within and outside the household) account for a substantial portion of transactions and that therefore what we have blithely called a capitalist economy in the United States is certainly not wholly or even predominantly a market economy, perhaps we can also look within and behind the market to see the differences concealed there. The market, which has existed throughout time and over vast geographies, can hardly be invoked in any but the most general economic characterization. If we pull back this blanket term, it would not be surprising to see a variety of things wriggling beneath it. The question then becomes not whether "the market" obscures differences but how we want to characterize the differences under the blanket. As Marxists we might be interested in something other than the ways in which goods and services are transacted, though there is likely to be a

[20] I do not mean to suggest that questions about the ways in which we theorize the economy and society are simply a matter of wilful preference, but rather that they are matters of consequence. And the fact that we are not bound by some "objective reality" to represent the economy in a specified way does not mean that it is a simple or trivial matter to reconceptualize it, or that the economy and its processes are not themselves constitutive of their representations.

[21] Fortunately I am not the only one trying to do it. See, for example, Resnick and Wolff (1987) and McIntyre (1996).

wide variety of those. We might instead consider Marx's delineation of economic difference in terms of forms of exploitation, in other words, the specific forms in which surplus labor is produced, appropriated, and distributed – which indeed was what Marx was concerned to know and transform.

In any particular society we may find a great variety of forms of exploitation associated with production for a market – independent forms in which a self-employed producer appropriates her own surplus labor,[22] capitalist forms in which surplus value is appropriated from wage labor, collective or communal forms in which producers jointly appropriate surplus labor, slave forms in which surplus labor is appropriated from workers who do not have freedom of contract. None of these forms of class exploitation can be presumed to be marginal before we have even looked under the blanket.

Calling the economy "capitalist" denies the existence of these diverse economic and class processes, precluding economic diversity in the present and thus making it unlikely in the proximate future. But what if we could force Capitalism to withdraw from defining the economy *as a whole*? We might then see feudalisms, primitive communisms, socialisms, independent commodity production, slaveries, and of course capitalisms, as well as hitherto unspecified forms of exploitation. Defined in terms of the ways in which surplus labor is produced and appropriated, these diverse exploitations introduce diversity in the dimension of class – and at the same time they make thinkable (that is, apparently reasonable and realistic) the possibility of socialist class transformation.

None of this is to deny the power or even the prevalence of capitalism but to question the presumption of both. It is legitimate to theorize capitalist hegemony only if such hegemony is delineated in a theoretical field that allows for the possibility of the full coexistence of noncapitalist economic forms. Otherwise capitalist hegemony is a presumption, and one that is politically quite consequential.

[22] Ric McIntyre describes in a recent paper (1993: 231–3) the private economy of the state of Rhode Island, where the median establishment size is five. It is unlikely that all of these hire wage labor and participate in capitalist class relations, and highly likely that many of them are the locus of self-employment. What purpose is served by obscuring difference and calling these establishments capitalist, other than to affirm the hegemony of capitalism and the unlikely or marginal existence of anything else?



## Conclusion

One of our goals as Marxists has been to produce a knowledge of capitalism. Yet as "that which is known," Capitalism has become the intimate enemy. We have uncloaked the ideologically-clothed, obscure monster, but we have installed a naked and visible monster in its place. In return for our labors of creation, the monster has robbed us of all force. We hear – and find it easy to believe – that the left is in disarray.

Part of what produces the disarray of the left is the vision of what the left is arrayed against. When capitalism is represented as a unified system coextensive with the nation or even the world, when it is portrayed as crowding out all other economic forms, when it is allowed to define entire societies, it becomes something that can only be defeated and replaced by a mass collective movement (or by a process of systemic dissolution that such a movement might assist). The revolutionary task of replacing capitalism now seems outmoded and unrealistic, yet we do not seem to have an alternative conception of class transformation to take its place. The old political economic "systems" and "structures" that call forth a vision of revolution as systemic replacement still seem to be dominant in the Marxist political imagination.

The New World Order is often represented as political fragmentation founded upon economic unification. In this vision the economy appears as the last stronghold of unity and singularity in a world of diversity and plurality. But why can't the economy be fragmented too? If we theorized it as fragmented in the United States, we could begin to see a huge state sector (incorporating a variety of forms of appropriation of surplus labor), a very large sector of self-employed and family-based producers (most noncapitalist), a huge household sector (again, quite various in terms of forms of exploitation, with some households moving towards communal or collective appropriation and others operating in a traditional mode in which one adult appropriates surplus labor from another). None of these things is easy to see or to theorize as consequential in so-called capitalist social formations.

If capitalism takes up the available social space, there's no room for anything else. If capitalism cannot coexist, there's no possibility of anything else. If capitalism is large, other things appear small and inconsequential. If capitalism functions as a unity, it cannot be partially or locally replaced. My intent is to help create the discursive conditions under which socialist or other noncapitalist construction becomes a "realistic" present activity rather than a ludicrous or utopian future goal. To achieve this I must smash Capitalism and see it in a thousand

pieces. I must make its unity a fantasy, visible as a denial of diversity and change.

In the absence of Capitalism, I might suggest a different object of socialist politics. Perhaps we might be able to focus some of our transformative energies on the exploitation and surplus distribution that go on around us in so many forms and in which we participate in various ways. In the household, in the so-called workplace, in the community, surplus labor is produced, appropriated, and distributed every day by ourselves and by others. Marx made these processes visible but they have been obscured by the discourse of Capitalism, with its vision of two great classes locked in millennial struggle. Compelling and powerful though it might be, this discourse does not allow for a variety of forms of exploitation and distribution or for the diversity of class positions and consciousnesses that such processes might participate in creating.

If we can divorce our ideas of class from systemic social conceptions, and simultaneously divorce our ideas of class transformation from projects of systemic transformation, we may be able to envision local and proximate socialisms. Defining socialism as the communal production, appropriation and distribution of surplus labor, we could encounter and construct it at home, at work, at large. These "thinly defined" socialisms wouldn't remake our societies overnight in some total and millennial fashion (Cullenberg 1992) but they could participate in constituting and reconstituting them on a daily basis. They wouldn't be a panacea for all the ills that we love to heap on the doorstep of Capitalism, but they could be visible and replicable now.[23]

To step outside the discourse of Capitalism, to abjure its powers and transcend the limits it has placed on socialist activity, is not to step outside Marxism as I understand it. Rather it is to divorce Marxism from one of its many and problematic marriages – the marriage to "the economy" in its holistic and self-sustaining form. This marriage has spawned a healthy lineage within the Marxist tradition and has contributed to a wide range of political movements and successes. Now I am suggesting that the marriage is no longer fruitful or, more precisely, that its recent offspring are monstrous and frail. Without delineating the innumerable grounds for bringing the marriage to an end, I would

[23] It is interesting to think about what the conditions promoting such socialisms might be, including forms of communal and collective subjectivity. Ruccio (1992) invokes notions of "community without unity" and "a community at loose ends" as well decentered and complex ideas of collectivity emerging within various left discourses of the 1990s.



like to mark its passing,[24] and to ask myself and others not to confuse its passing with the passing of Marxism itself. For Marxism directs us to consider exploitation, and that is something that has not passed away.

[24] Many Marxists will argue, rightly, that reports of the demise of Capitalism are greatly exaggerated. Likewise, Marxists, postMarxists and nonMarxists may argue that Marxism cannot be divorced from Capitalism, so many and fruitful are the progeny of this marriage and so entrenched its position and descendants. Understanding Marxism as a complex and contradictory tradition, I would say that it has room for all these positions and indeed that it always has. But I also think that space for the vision I am articulating is growing, in part because conditions external to Marxism – including certain trends within feminist thought – have allowed the anti-essentialist strain that has always existed within Marxism to gain both credibility and adherents.