> J.K. Gibson-Graham: The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It). A Feminist Critique of Political Economy, Minneapolis: UMP 2006 [EA 1996], S. vii—xxxvi; 1—23.

Introduction to the New Edition: Ten Years On

A startling thing happened just as we were preparing to write the introduction to this new edition of *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It)*. We had traveled to England to give the opening lecture for a workshop called "Contesting Capitalism: Practices and Strategies," hosted by the Collective for Alternative Organisation Studies (CAOS) at the University of Leicester Management Centre. On the day before the workshop, we walked into the Centre to meet our hosts and were welcomed into an entirely friendly intellectual and political environment—one in which thinking about and experimenting with alternatives to conventional capitalism were the order of the day (and the plan for the decade or decades to come).[1] The next day was even more astonishing. We encountered sixty to seventy workshop participants, including local activists and social scientists from the United Kingdom and Europe, and soon realized that while Leicester might be institutionally advanced, it is in no way isolated: individuals and groups are pursuing research on all manner of alternatives, from cooperatives to local currencies to community credit institutions to commons restoration. Moreover, their studies are being conducted in a spirit of openness to possibility, rather than in the more familiar negative spirit in which co-optation, failure, and falling short are expected and confirmed. Alternatives, whatever that disputed term might be taken to mean, are no longer simply jottings in the margins of a central

[1] We had been invited by Colin Williams and Valerie Fournier of CAOS and Gibson Burrell, head of the rapidly expanding management program. In light of the huge share of the United Kingdom undergraduate population that majors in business, the vice chancellor of the university is supporting the creation of a program in critical management and has hired Burrell, a well-known critical management scholar, to head up its development.

text about global neoliberalization; they are to be considered in their own right, with their own specific and contingent problems and successes, achievements and shortcomings, disappointments and hopeful surprises.

The call for papers issued by CAOS should have prepared us for this—respondents were asked for contributions that would not only (1) document already existing alternatives to capitalism as an invitation to create new ones, but also (2) open up a discursive space in which they might be considered viable, successful, and even transformative. This latter objective requires thinking in new ways about economy, politics, and the role of social scientists in producing the conditions for change, something people seemed ready and able to do.

The workshop in Leicester cast into bold relief the changed landscape of social studies of economy since *The End of Capitalism* was published. In 1996, at the height of the academic obsession with capitalist globalization, it would have been virtually impossible to convene a group of geographers, sociologists, anthropologists, management scholars, and activists to discuss economic alternatives.[2] But times have changed and with them our own situation. As a wonderfully honest assistant professor said to us recently, "Ten years ago we all thought you were crazy. Now everybody is into this." The double exaggeration notwithstanding, her point is well taken: we are just two of the many people involved in a loosely stitched-together conversation about economic alternatives and related topics. Research grants are being won, articles written, books published, conferences convened. New research programs, in other words, are being developed and implemented.

One of the spurs of academic interest in economic alternatives and experiments is arguably the new political imaginary that has emerged from the World Social Forum and the performatively designated "movement of movements." Perhaps the most frequently acknowledged wellspring of that imaginary is the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico, which initiated a politics of "place-based globalism," as Michal Osterweil (2004) has dubbed it. As a movement, the Zapatistas have distinguished themselves by the constructive content of their actions, their ongoing ethical project of self-transformation, their continual search for ways to exercise power, and their freedom to act, which arises from practices of autonomy and self-determination. Focusing on the *here* and *now* as the place and time of transformative action, the Zapatistas have energized others around the world while sustaining their local orientation.

[2] Indeed, in 2001 at a Geographies of Global Change workshop convened by David Angel at Clark University, very few participants (Andrew Leyshon and Julie Graham) were interested in "diverse economies," whereas many signed on to a research collaboration on geographies of neoliberalism.

If you had asked us in 1996 where we would like to be in ten years—what kind of academic and political environment we would like to be operating in—we would have identified exactly the things we have described here: a new academic conversation collaboratively associated with a new economic politics. As we were writing *The End of Capitalism* we had in mind an ultimate audience (though not a proximate readership) of local economic activists who saw no alternative to producing capitalism with a human (or perhaps a green) face. The book tried to address what we saw as blocking their transformative ambitions: familiar understandings of capitalism as a naturally dominant form of economy, or as an entire system of economy, coextensive with the social space. In the vicinity of such understandings, we feared, projects of noncapitalist development—whatever those might be—would always be consigned to the interstices, or to the future, or to prefiguration. They were marginalized, in other words, part and parcel of a politics of postponement. Through a critique of existing conceptions of economy and capitalism, we hoped to make room for new economic representations, ones that would be more friendly and fostering to an innovative and transformative economic politics. To see such a politics emerging, and to see an academic interest in and collaboration with its emergence, is more than we dared to hope for yet exactly what we wanted.

After *The End of Capitalism*

Since the publication of *The End of Capitalism,* we have been engaged in a collaborative project that seems guaranteed to occupy us for the rest of our lives, long or short as those might be. The general goal of this project is to create or reveal landscapes of economic difference and to engender or discover there all sorts of strangely familiar beings, connected in innovative ways. More specifically, we are hoping to enable ourselves and others not only to imagine but also to strengthen and build noncapitalist enterprises and spaces. Whereas in *The End of Capitalism* we had offered a critique of existing representations of economy and capitalism, in this new phase of our work we hope to perform alternative economies in place.

As we embarked on this collective effort, a comment by Fredric Jameson both spoke to us and provoked us:

> It seems to be easier for us today to imagine the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and of nature than the breakdown of late capitalism; perhaps that is due to some weakness in our imaginations. (1994, xii)

Determined as we were to reinvigorate our economic imaginations and also to enact alternative economies, we have ended up (so far) with a

collaboratively designed project that has four distinct yet overlapping phases. The first, addressed in *The End of Capitalism,* involves *deconstructing the hegemony of capitalism* to open up a discursive space for the prevalence and diversity of noncapitalist economic activity worldwide. The second, tentatively begun in *The End of Capitalism,* requires *producing a language of economic difference* to enlarge the economic imaginary, rendering visible and intelligible the diverse and proliferating practices that the preoccupation with capitalism has obscured; we see this language as a necessary contribution to a politics of economic innovation. The third, explored in subsequent action research, is the difficult process of *cultivating subjects* (ourselves and others) who can desire and inhabit noncapitalist economic spaces. To frame this cultivation process, we step aside from the familiar structural vision of capitalism with its already identified and interested subjects, developing a vision of the "community economy" as an ethical and political space of becoming. In this communal space, individual and collective subjects negotiate questions of livelihood and interdependence and (re)construct themselves in the process. Finally, there is the actual practice, under way in ongoing action research, of *building community economies* in place. The latter three phases have become the diverse economies/community economies project that is the subject of a new book, *A Postcapitalist Politics* (2006).

To ground the diverse economies/community economies project, we have initiated action research in Australia, the United States, the Philippines, and Indonesia (see www.communityeconomies.org). Though these projects necessarily differ from place to place, they share three core elements:

- a politics of language—developing new, richer local languages of economy and of economic possibility;
- a politics of the subject—cultivating ourselves and others as subjects of noncapitalist development; and
- a politics of collective action—working collaboratively to produce alternative economic organizations and spaces in place.

In what follows, we briefly describe and reflect on each of these political moments.[3]

[3] The rest of this introduction can be seen as a condensed verstion of key arguments contained in *A Postcapitalist Politics,* including excerpts from the actual text.

A politics of language: diverse economies/community economies

As we argued in chapter 5 of ***The End of Capitalism,*** any contemporary economic politics confronts an existing object: an economy produced, through particular modes of representation and calculation, as a bounded sphere "whose internal mechanisms and exchanges separate it from other social processes" (Mitchell 2007). This economy is not simply an ideological concept susceptible to intellectual debunking, but a materialization that participates in organizing the practices and processes that surround it, while at the same time being organized and maintained by them. A project of instituting a different economy must restore this obdurate positivity to its negative grounding. It must, in Laclau's terms (1990), produce a "dislocation," enabling a recognition that "other economies are possible." Something outside the given configuration of being must offer itself as an element or ingredient for a new political project of configuring. For us this dislocating element has been an economic language that cannot be subsumed to existing ways of thinking economy, and instead signals the ever-present possibility of remaking economy in alternative terms.

The conceptual resources for different languages of economy are abundantly available. Alongside the hegemonic discourse of economy, many counterdiscourses have arisen from alternative traditions of economic thought (for example, classical political economy, feminist economics, economic anthropology, geography, and sociology) and from working-class, third-world, and social and community movements (for example, the feminist, socialist, cooperative, and local sustainability movements).[4] Yet while there exists a substantial understanding of the extent and nature of economic difference, what does not exist is a way of convening this

[4] The most controversial but also the most successful counter to dominant economic thinking has been spearheaded by feminist activists and economists, who point to the significant amount of labor (much of it performed by women) expended on unpaid and non-market-oriented activities such as housework, volunteering, child-rearing, and care for the elderly and infirm. Empirical work on this topic has established that in both rich and poor countries, 30 to 50 percent of economic activity is accounted for by unpaid household labor (Ironmonger 1996; Luxton 1997). There is now a call for the system of national accounts to be revised so that the total measure of economic performance, gross economic product, includes both gross market product and gross household product (Ironmonger 1996, 38–39; Folbre 2001).

A second challenge to the hegemony of the "capitalist economy" is presented by the vast literature on the informal economies of both "less" and "more" developed nations. The informal sector is usually defined as comprising market and nonmarket economic activities that are unregulated or even unrecognized by the state. The pressure to recognize that livelihoods are sustained by a plethora of economic activities has largely come from the global "south," though there is increasing evidence of the variety and magni-

knowledge to destabilize the received wisdom of capitalist dominance and unleash the creative forces and subjects of economic experimentation.

Our intervention has been to propose a language of the *diverse economy* as an exploratory practice of thinking economy differently in order to perform different economies.[5] The language of the diverse economy widens the identity of the economy to include all of those practices excluded or marginalized by the theory and presumption of capitalist hegemony. The objective is not to produce a finished and coherent template that maps the economy "as it really is" and presents (to the converted or suggestible) a ready-made "alternative economy." Rather, our hope is to disarm and dislocate the naturalized dominance of the capitalist economy and make a space for new economic becomings—ones that we will need to work to produce. If we can recognize a diverse economy, we can begin to imagine and create diverse organizations and practices as powerful constituents of an enlivened noncapitalist politics of place.

We began constructing our language by surveying a variety of economic traditions and languages and conceptualizing three differentiated practices:[6]

- different kinds of *transaction* and ways of negotiating (in)commensurability;
- different types of *labor* and ways of compensating it; and
- different forms of economic *enterprise* and ways of producing, appropriating, and distributing surplus.

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tude of noncapitalist economic relations and nontransacted subsistence practices pursued in the industrialized economies of the "north" (Williams 2005; Emery and Pierce 2005).

A third language of economic difference comes, perhaps surprisingly, from Marx. In *Capital,* Marx foregrounded capitalism against the background of feudal, slave, and independent production, as well as the nonexploitative relations he identified with communism. Following Resnick and Wolff (1987), since the publication of *The End of Capitalism* we have engaged in theoretical and empirical explorations of these different class processes, focusing especially on the processes and politics of surplus distribution that were initially broached in chapter 8 of *The End of Capitalism* (Gibson-Graham, Resnick, and Wolff 2000, 2001; Gibson-Graham 2003; Gibson-Graham and O'Neill 2001). In Gibson-Graham (2006) we focus attention on the politics and economics of surplus as they participate in shaping community economies.

5 In *The End of Capitalism* we affirmed our intention to produce a discourse of economic difference as a contribution to a politics of economic innovation, but had not yet envisioned the language of the "diverse economy." For the most part, economic difference has only ever been framed in the familiar terms of market versus state (this is what gives us the "third way" and the "social economy" as "the" alternatives), or in the evaluative hierarchies of traditional and modern, backward or developed, that permeate and perpetuate the project of capitalist development.

6 Clearly more dimensions of difference could be added, for example, finance, property, and resource ownership.

Transactions	Labor	Enterprise
MARKET	WAGE	CAPITALIST
Alternative Market Sale of public goods Ethical "fair-trade" markets Local trading systems Alternative currencies Underground market Co-op exchange Barter Informal market	*Alternative Paid* Self-employed Cooperative Indentured Reciprocal labor In-kind Work for welfare	*Alternative Capitalist* State enterprise Green capitalist Socially responsible firm Nonprofit
Nonmarket Household flows Gift giving Indigenous exchange State allocations State appropriations Gleaning Hunting, fishing, gathering Theft, poaching	*Unpaid* Housework Family care Neighborhood work Volunteer Self-provisioning labor Slave labor	*Noncapitalist* Communal Independent Feudal Slave

Figure I.1. *A diverse economy. The figure is designed to be read up and down the columns, not across the rows. Thus, for example, noncapitalist activity may be market-oriented.*

Our current representation of what we have called the diverse economy is shown in Figure I.1. In this figure, what is often seen as the *economy,* that is, formal markets, wage labor, and capitalist enterprise, is merely one set of cells in a complex field of economic relations that sustain livelihoods in regions around the world. Realizing that in both rich and poor countries the bottom two-thirds of the diagram accounts for well over 50 percent of economic activity, we cannot help but be struck by the discursive violence enacted through familiar references to "capitalist" economies and societies.

Considering for a moment just the market-oriented enterprises in the right-hand column of Figure I.1, we recognize in the bottom cell the presence of commodity-producing enterprises of a noncapitalist sort. This should not be surprising—commodities are just goods and services produced for a market; they can be produced in a variety of exploitative or nonexploitative noncapitalist organizations. On the exploitative side, slave modes of producing and appropriating surplus where workers lack freedom of contract are arguably growing—for example, in the United

States prison system and in the sex and domestic service industries worldwide (Bales 1999). In addition, feudal surplus appropriation via payments of rent goes on in tenant farming and in many household-based businesses (Kayatekin 2001). But there are also nonexploitative forms of surplus appropriation in the noncapitalist cell: consider the large population of self-employed or independent producers who appropriate and distribute the wealth they produce, and the growing number of collectives and cooperatives that jointly appropriate their surplus and distribute it in ways decided on by the collective membership.

Moving up one cell, we are reminded that difference *within* the category of capitalist enterprise is as important as the differences between enterprise forms or class processes. Increasingly "alternative" capitalist firms distinguish themselves from their mainstream capitalist counterparts in that part of their production process, their product, or their appropriated surplus is oriented toward environmentally friendly or socially responsible activity. State capitalist enterprises employ wage labor and appropriate surplus but have the potential to produce public goods and distribute surplus funds to public benefit. Nonprofit enterprises similarly employ wage laborers and appropriate their surplus, but by law they are not allowed to retain or distribute profits. Like other capitalist enterprises, these different forms of organization are scattered over the economic landscape. In this representation, no system or unified economy covers the social space and thus necessarily dominates other forms of economy.

Elaborating a vision of the "diverse economy" is one of our strategic moves against the subordination of local subjects to the discourse of (capitalist economic) globalization. Each of our action research projects starts with an inventory by community researchers of local economic practices and organizations that modifies and expands Figure I.1. This process yields a wider field of economic possibility and a revaluation of the local economy in terms of economic resources (as opposed to economic deficiencies) available for projects of economic invention.

Representing the diverse economy is a deconstructive process that displaces the binary hierarchies of market/nonmarket and capitalism/noncapitalism, turning singular generalities into multiple particularities, and yielding a radically heterogeneous economic landscape in preparation for the next phase of the projects—the construction of "community economies" in place. In the terms of our language politics, this constructive process entails (1) articulation, or making links among the different activities and enterprises of a diverse economy, and (2) resignification, or convening these activities/enterprises under the signifier of the "community economy." As a practice of development, constructing a community economy is an ethical project of acknowledging relationships and making

connections, rather than a technical project of activating generic logics of growth.

Unlike the proliferative fullness of the diverse economy, the community economy is an emptiness—as it has to be, if the project of building it is to be political, experimental, open, and democratic.[7] A community economy is an ethical and political space of decision, not a geographic or social commonality, and community is its outcome rather than a ground. The practice of the community economy is a fluid process of continual resignification, discarding any fantasy that there is a perfect community economy that lies outside of negotiation, struggle, uncertainty, ambivalence, and disappointment, discarding the notion that there's a blueprint that tells us what to do and how to "be communal." Indeed, it is a recognition that there's no way *not* to be communal, *not* to be implicated with one another, that recalls us to the political task of "building a community economy."

A politics of the subject

A language of the diverse economy/community economy has the potential to offer new subject positions and prompt novel identifications, multiplying economic energies and desires. But the realization of this potential is by no means automatic. Capitalism is not just an economic signifier that can be displaced through deconstruction and the proliferation of signs. Rather, it is where the libidinal investment is. In the face of a new discourse of the diverse economy, participants in our projects can easily recognize the activities and enterprises it names, but they cannot readily identify with the alternative subject positions it avails. Most of them get up in the morning wanting a job—and if not wanting one, feeling they need one—rather than an alternative economy. (Much as, on the left, we get up in the morning opposing capitalism, not imagining practical alter-

[7] For the minimalism and "emptiness" of the abstract community economy, we are indebted to Jean-Luc Nancy (1991a, 74), who theorizes community starting from a prereflective recognition of the interdependent coexistence that is entailed in all "being"—something he calls "being-in-common" that constitutes "us all" (Nancy 1991b). Recognition of economic being-in-common is a precondition for a politics aimed at building and extending community economic practices. In approaching the task of signifying the community economy, however, we must keep in mind the ever-present danger that any attempt to fix a fantasy of common being (sameness), to define the community economy, to specify what it contains (and thus what it does not) closes off the space of decision and the opportunity to cultivate ethical praxis. The space of decision as we have identified it is the emptiness at the center of the community economy; it constitutes the community economy as a *negativity* with potential to become, rather than a *positivity* with clear contents and outlines.

natives. In this sense, it is partly our own subjection—successful or failed, accommodating or oppositional—that constructs a "capitalist society.")

One of the most important elements of our action research projects is something we've come to call "a politics of the subject" (Gibson-Graham 2006). What this means to us minimally is a process of producing something beyond discursively enabled shifts in identity, something that takes into account the sensational and gravitational experience of embodiment. If to change ourselves is to change our worlds, and if that relationship is reciprocal, then the project of history making is never a distant one, but always right here, on the borders of our sensing, thinking, feeling, moving bodies.

As a history-making practice, the project of building an alternative economy also involves new practices of the self, producing different economic subjects through a micropolitics or ethics of self-transformation. We saw such a politics emerge in Argentina after the economic crisis, when hundreds of thousands of people became unemployed. Some people began engaging in barter, meeting their neighbors and figuring out what they could do for each other, creating neighborhood organizations and projects. Then they started taking over the abandoned factories and production sites in all sectors of the economy as documented in the film *The Take*. But they had to remake themselves to do this. When they started, they were like the rest of us. They wanted jobs, not a community economy. As one Argentine worker said, "If they had come to us with fifty pesos and told us to show up for work tomorrow, we would have done just that."[8]

What did the Argentine movement of unemployed workers (MTD) do to transform themselves into community economic subjects? They created a cooperative radio station, they went to the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, they opened a school to teach themselves how to make their own history, they took over factories and learned how to run them. In carrying out all these activities, they were engaged in "a struggle against themselves" (Chatterton 2005, 557, quoting Colectivo Situaciones), refusing a long-standing sense of self and mode of being in the world, cultivating new forms of sociability, happiness, and economic capacity (Colectivo Situaciones 2004, 13). It is as though the MTD had taken up the challenge of economic subjectivity that Foucault had identified many years earlier and made it the touchstone of their movement:

> The political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the economy . . . but to liberate us both from the

[8] Representative from the Argentine movement of unemployed workers, Amherst, Massachusetts, 2003.

> economy and from the type of individualization that is linked to the economy. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries. (Foucault 1983, 216)

In fostering this process of transformation, we have addressed the revolutionary arts of self-cultivation, not only to those aspects of self that could be seen as accommodating and embodying capitalism but also to our oppositional and anticapitalist selves. What practices of thinking and feeling, what dispositions and attitudes, what capacities can we cultivate to displace the familiar mode of being of the anticapitalist subject, with its negative and stymied positioning? How do we become not merely opponents of capitalism, but subjects who can desire and create "noncapitalism"? For us and for those we work with, changing ourselves has meant not only adopting new ways of thinking and feeling, but giving up old ones as well: not imagining we know what is powerful or superior; not dismissing the "alternative" as subordinate, dependent, merely complementary; becoming more interested in fostering positive interactions between things than in knowing which are bad or dominant.

A politics of collective action

We have conceptualized the construction of community economies under the rubric of "collective action," a concept that rests on a reworking of familiar understandings of both collectivity and agency. The "collective" in this context does not suggest the massing together of like subjects, nor should the term "action" imply an efficacy that originates in intentional beings or that is distinct from thought. We are trying for a broad and distributed notion of collective action, in order to recognize and keep open possibilities of connection and development. In our view, the collectivities involved in constituting community economies include ourselves and other researchers who are engaged (often collaboratively with the participants) in theorizing and analyzing individual projects, thereby making them available and transportable as models or inspirations; and the action involved is the effectivity and extension (in time and space) of the heterogeneous collectivity, including the performativity of the often tacit knowledge that it generates and brings to bear in world-changing experiments.[9]

A "politics of collective action" is what we have called our conscious and combined efforts to build a new kind of economic reality. This politics can be engaged here and now, in any place or context. It requires

[9] We are indebted to Callon (2005a) for important aspects of this conceptualization.

an expansive vision of what is possible, the courage to make a realistic assessment of what might stand in the way of success, and a decision to go forward with a mixture of creative disrespect and protective caution. In our research we have documented many cases of economic experimentation in which collective actions are taken to transform difficult or dire (or merely distasteful) situations by enhancing well-being, instituting different (class) relations of surplus appropriation and distribution, and promoting community and environmental sustainability. Each of these experiments can be seen as enrolling a language of economic diversity and prompting new forms of identification and desire. Each is enacted in place, understood not as the grounded specificities of locale but as the unmapped possibilities that are present in every situation—if only we are ready to encounter them.

Our action research projects are attempting to take up the ethical challenge of being together in the world, to consider the forms of our interdependency. With our academic and community-based collaborators, we have tentatively identified *necessity, surplus, consumption,* and *commons* as four ethical coordinates or foci for organizing our discussions and negotiations around building a community economy. The questions we have used as a focus for reflection and decision making include the following: What are our needs and how can they be met? What is surplus to our needs and how should it be generated, pooled, distributed, and deployed? What resources are to be consumed and how should this consumption be distributed? What is our commons and how should it be renewed, sustained, enlarged, drawn down, and/or extended to others? Through answering these questions and others that arise, we are collectively attempting to affirm and perform other economies.

Frequently asked questions/frequently offered comments

Over the ten years since the publication of *The End of Capitalism,* we have encountered both academic and nonacademic audiences, in print and in person, who have brought us their questions, comments, confusions, and disagreements. Often these are addressed to the "postcapitalist" project we have just been describing, but they have nevertheless prompted us to modify, extend, or make more explicit the stances and arguments of *The End of Capitalism.* Frequently asked questions and frequently offered comments have pushed us to tangle with issues we were hoping to skirt, to reflect on things we had thought were settled, and to be open to ideas we had never before considered. Most important, they have brought us into communication and connection with others, guiding us toward an engagement with some of the most overworked and overworried areas of contemporary social thought. No matter how

frustrating it may sometimes feel to confront the "same old" questions yet again, the confrontation is always productive. At the very least, it discloses, in our interlocutors and in ourselves, the ambivalences and resistances that are the best spurs to theoretical reflection.

For the most part, we have not wanted (only) to counter comments and criticisms, but to take them to heart and treat them as resources for theoretical development. This hasn't always been easy to do, not because of the intrinsic difficulty of the process but because we ourselves are standing in the way. To feel gratitude for critical interventions, to acknowledge our interdependence with others and our dependence on their intellectual offerings, has required a protracted (if intermittent) practice of self-cultivation. Attempting to observe without judgment our own reactive and defensive impulses, we have at the same time tried to cultivate an appreciation for the generosity and collegiality of our critics and questioners. This dual practice has produced for us a new relationship to criticism, to the review process, to our work, and to ourselves; it has also yielded many of the ideas that we are now gratefully depending on. Ultimately it has enabled us to discern and embrace the nondefensive reasons for responding to criticisms and queries—principal among these being the desire to render our thinking useful to our questioners and others.

In this introduction to the new edition of *The End of Capitalism,* we can explore just a few of the comments we encounter on a regular basis. Not surprisingly, they deal with issues we didn't theorize adequately, as well as others we thought we had (theoretically) disposed of. Many of the former type circle around power in its various modes and manifestations—the power of capitalism, of localities, of alternative initiatives, of those inside and outside the academy. Interestingly, however, just as many are epistemological in nature. These call into question our theoretical categories and concepts, as well as the understanding of knowledge that grounds them. We'll start with these latter challenges centering on the powers of language and thought as they go to the political heart of our project.

Concepts and categories

Questions about categories and concepts present both ethical and epistemological issues, including the problem of the "universals" invoked in any social analysis. We are often asked about the provenance and purview of our "class" categories, for example—categories drawn from Marx that highlight the production, appropriation, and distribution of surplus (labor) in slave, feudal, capitalist, independent, communal, and other forms (Gibson-Graham, Resnick, and Wolff 2000, 2001). The prevailing concern is that we are importing nineteenth-century European

categories into times and places where they did not originate and where they may have colonizing effects.[10] In responding to this concern, we have had to negotiate the twin perils of historicism and theoreticism, wanting to affirm neither that categories must always be derived locally and can never be extended or transported, nor that categories are somehow fully extractable from history and location. Following Ceren Özselçuk, we have used the Marxian class categories not to reflect a transhistorical mode of social organization, but to "inaugurate the conceptual space" (2005, chapter 2, 11) for a distinctive political project, one that is interested (in both senses of the word) in the economics and ethics of surplus appropriation and distribution: "the universalizing aspiration to read ... class processes into multiple spaces and temporalities is not grounded in a humanist project [i.e., one that posits an essential human nature] but in a politically informed theoretical project" (12).[11] Our critics and our experience teach us that such a project will not be welcome in every context, and that it poses dangers and difficulties, of which the risk of (being perceived as) colonizing is only one. Reflecting on our efforts to promote an ethical practice of surplus appropriation and distribution among social groups and organizations, we seldom find ourselves in a position to make a colonizing move, if that implies a greater power imposed on a lesser one. We are more likely to be precariously perched in a friendly struggle, attempting to persuade others to take seriously our language of class and the analyses and actions that follow from it.

Underlying this discussion are certain fundamental epistemological questions about the status of theoretical categories and theory in general. Readers may have already realized that we are inclined to view categories and concepts as emerging from the concerns of the theorist, rather than as authorized by the objects of theory, including particular times and places. This is not to say that things, beings, processes, and places have no influence on how we think about them, but that they do not generally speak clearly and conceptually for themselves. Theory, then, has an independent and even an adventurous role to play. Successful theory "performs" a world; categories, concepts, theorems, and other technologies

[10] Our defensiveness on this question has been manifest in waffling responses: on the one hand, capitulation (we should withdraw our categories from places and times where they do not belong); on the other hand, defiance (all categories are necessarily colonizing, as is any political project). It has taken some concerted theoretical work (largely by others) to extricate us from this embarrassing dilemma, in particular the work of Yahya Madra and Ceren Özselçuk.

[11] Özselçuk continues: "To undercut such a politically motivated theoretical agenda and argue for the delimited use of any concept ... within its 'proper' historical context is a self-negating ambition. Refutation of the universal use of concepts could only be sustained through the invocation of another universalist claim: that every specific historical context has its own exclusive set of concepts" (2005, chapter 2, 12).

of theory are inscribed in worlds they presuppose and help to bring into being (Callon 2005b). Thus the ability of theory to describe and predict is not an outcome of accurate observations/calculations, but a measure of the success of its "performation." With this understanding of the performativity of theory, we have engaged in theorizing and researching diverse and community economies, hoping to help bring these into being by providing technologies for their conceptualization and enactment.

But the embrace of performativity renders the objections of others both salient and probing. If our categories are potentially implicated in shaping our worlds, care and conscience are required in their deployment. Summoned to the court of theoretical self-consciousness, we are called upon to justify the use of terms like "economy" and "noncapitalist" and to acknowledge that many other categories similarly need justification.[12] Why, we are asked (and in turn ask ourselves), do we continue to use the term "economy" with its implication of a world neatly divided into spheres—society, culture, economy, nature? What about "noncapitalist," a capitalocentric term if ever there was one? Though the reasons for retaining these exemplary "misnomers" are complex and divergent, both involve "starting where you are," one of our time-honored theoretical practices.

In the case of "economy," we are hoping to take advantage of the fact that a distinctive economic sphere has been performed and made "true," coming into existence as something widely acknowledged and socially consequential, something that participates in organizing life and things within and around it (Gibson-Graham 2005a). As a powerful everyday concept, "the economy" has libidinal and affective purchase; people pay attention when we start playing around with it—thinking about it differently, for instance, or working to build a different economy. Adopting a category that has become common sense, we are attempting to make it "useful" for projects of noncapitalist development. If we abandon the concept, and resort (out of purism?) to an ontology that doesn't involve an "economy," we are at risk of being ignored. But by placing "economy" alongside "diverse" and "community," we draw on resonant contemporary values of social inclusion and interdependence, transforming the "economy concept" into a platform for ethical approaches to surviving and thriving.

Our resort to the term "noncapitalist" and even "noncapitalism" is supported by a different sort of reasoning, grounded in the deconstructive project of theorizing a "diverse economy." In that project, we start with

[12] The most often challenged term is "community," with its presumption of commonality, repression of difference, and practices of exclusion. We have briefly address these issues earlier in this introduction (see note 7).

the binary hierarchy of capitalism/noncapitalism and work to identify the similarities between, and differences within, the two categories. This deconstructive process explodes the binary, yielding a queer or radically heterogeneous landscape of economy and a new ground for pluralistic economic politics (Sedgwick 1990, 1993). But producing/disclosing heterogeneity is always unfinished, and discursive moves to subordinate or subsume difference continually reassert themselves. The term "noncapitalist" signals the ongoing and incomplete nature of this project, reminding us that many different economic forms exist in the shadow of capitalism until we do the discursive and political work to bring them to light, to establish their credibility, vitality, and viability. In this sense, Figure I. 1, with its highlighting of capitalism (and use of the term "noncapitalism") represents deconstruction in process; the proliferation of difference is under way, but not yet (and perhaps never entirely) free of binary difference and the forms of dominance it relentlessly inscribes.[13]

Theorizing the "alternative"

A small war is going on in the Leicester Management Centre over the word "alternative," which makes up part of the name of CAOS and is therefore the bearer of some nomenclatural consequence. The concerns expressed are familiar and their formulations largely indisputable. "Alternative" subordinates what it designates to the "mainstream." It stabilizes major categories and marginalizes minor ones. It affirms the dominant by identifying the deviant. It limits difference while trying to name it.

From an "alternative" perspective, however, these objections are off the mark. The word is not wimpy but threatening. It signals that there's something wrong with the status quo and that the advocate hopes to change things. By posing a challenge to the mainstream, self-designated alternatives stimulate an oppositional reaction. Moreover, the term seems to activate a quest for purity that can overshadow curiosity and experimentation. What we have found most problematic are the kinds of questions it tends to generate, questions taking the form, "Is soy milk really alternative?" In its vicinity, fears of co-optation become more powerful

[13] Figure I.1 raises many questions and authorizes quite a number of confusions, despite its popularity. Perhaps the most common confusion stems from the tendency to read across the figure, which is organized in vertical columns, so that noncapitalist comes to mean nonmarket (see, for example, Smith and Stenning 2006, 4). This obscures the existence of market-oriented slave, feudal, independent, and collective enterprises that the figure is designed to highlight. Another confusion stems from the proliferation of categories in the figure, sometimes seen as an ontological claim that actual social practices and sites take simple and distinct forms. This reading treats differentiation as though it were an obstacle to, rather than a prerequisite for, theorizing combination, connection, articulation, and hybridization.

than desires for connection, and moralizing judgments are solicited in place of realistic assessments of successes and failures.

But as we all have learned by now, every term has its dangers. These are just the ones "alternative" presents us with, things that have to be militated against and struggled with in the streets of language politics. In certain contexts we may wish to forswear the term—Michael Garjian doesn't call his E2M business model "alternative" (though it's anything but mainstream) because he doesn't want to signal "radical" or "marginal" or, god forbid, "communist" (www.e2m.org, Gibson-Graham 2006). In other cases, "alternative" offers just what's needed—Colin Williams uses the term to position CAOS within Leicester's critical management program and also in relation to the mainstream business schools that Leicester itself is alternative to. What's problematic, it appears, is not the word itself, but the idea that it will always work for us, that it can, in other words, be context-free.

Capitalism has no outside and related matters of concern and consequence

Something context-free is loose in the land and terrorizing the inhabitants. To our chagrin, this creature is called "capitalism," the first edition of *The End of Capitalism* notwithstanding. We can only hope that this new edition will be more efficacious!

On a recent visit to the MacArthur Program on Peace and Justice at the University of Minnesota, we faced considerable incredulity from our audience when they realized we were theorizing capitalism as having an "outside" and, what's more, a constitutive one. Puzzled, we wondered to ourselves why anyone who opposed capitalism would theorize it as all-embracing, leaving nothing outside it.[14] We were used to the anti-essentialist assertion that capitalism "overdetermines" everything else, and the symmetrical assertion that everything simultaneously overdetermines capitalism (*The End of Capitalism,* chapter 2). Thus nothing is untouched by capitalism, yet capitalism itself is shaped by, and indeed would not exist without, its constitutive outside. We were used to the statement that "discourse has no outside" and to the same being said for power. Again these simply meant to us that nothing is untouched by power or discourse. But the fact that capitalism has usually been endowed with systemic embodiment gives its lack of an outside a more menacing portent. Unlike social processes of discourse and power that

[14] Hardt and Negri's *Empire* provides the most well-known recent rendition of this conception of capitalism, offering a version of Marx's argument that "capitalism digs its own grave" as a way out of the carceral containment (Gibson-Graham 2003; Žižek 2000).

can affect other processes without literally containing them, in this latest frightening incarnation capitalism has become a leviathan that swallows its neighbors and cohabitants. Where we might stand to combat capitalism or to construct something "noncapitalist" is not at all clear.

We have attempted to deal with this by now familiar problem by cutting capitalism down to size (theoretically) and refusing to endow it with excessive power. In *The End of Capitalism* we are careful, for example, not to enlarge capitalism by conflating it with commodity production or market activity more generally. For us, capitalism is defined as a social relation, or class process, in which nonproducers appropriate surplus labor in value form from free wage laborers. The appropriated surplus is then distributed by the appropriators (the capitalist or board of directors of the capitalist firm) to a variety of social destinations. In this rendition, capitalism becomes recognizable as a set of practices scattered over a landscape in formal and informal enterprise settings, interacting with noncapitalist firms as well as all other sites and processes, activities and organizations.

In practical terms, the theoretical downsizing of capitalism entails multiplying the number of questions that are open to empirical investigation. If we accurately apprehend the interests of our (inter)disciplinary communicants, many of these questions will concern the spatialization of capitalism and its various forms of articulation with noncapitalist sites and practices (see, for example, Smith and Stenning 2006; Pavlovskaya 2004). We might note that neither topic is open to pursuit if capitalism has no outside—that is, if it lacks delineation and specification. But if capitalism does have a "constitutive outside . . . the logic of capital, far from dictating the laws of movement in every area of social development, is itself contingent, since it depends on processes and transformations which escape its control" (Laclau 1990, 23). This "escape" opens up many avenues for empirical inquiry. To take just one example, in the recent work of Colin Williams (2005) the "increasing commodification of social life" (something often reductively attributed to capitalism) becomes a question for investigation, rather than a theoretical presumption.

Recognizing the contingency of capitalism expands the number of empirical questions we can ask and thus fosters the expansion of economic knowledge. At the same time it multiplies points of political intervention into capitalist organizations and spaces. This begs questions of the power of capitalism, of the "noncapitalist," of community economies, economic alternatives, local initiatives, action research—indeed, it invokes all the questions and comments about a postcapitalist politics that have been the most fraught and fruitful promptings of our theoretical extensions. In the rest of our discussion we address some of these.

The limits of community economies

Perhaps concerned that an overly sanguine assessment will undermine the survival chances of community economies, many critics have pushed us to theorize their limitations and to observe their failures (and not just their successes) on the ground. There is a worry, for example, that "systems of accumulation at the national and international scales" constitute limits that may render community economies a mere "palliative to a deeper malaise" (Kelly 2005, 41). Considering the Philippines in particular, Kelly cites the "highly inequitable wealth distribution, the power of private wealth to overcome the public good and the situation of the Philippines in the global economy" as "fundamental circumstances that present limits to community economies" (41) and to their ability to "create, capture and circulate value" (41). Here we discern a divergence in theoretical orientation manifest in the different language we would use to characterize these important phenomena. Whereas Kelly identifies them as fundamental limits, thereby presumptively circumscribing (limiting) the potential success of community economies, we have tended to speak of them as challenges, problems, barriers, difficulties—in other words, things to be struggled with, things that present themselves as more or less tractable obstacles in any political project.[15]

Many of our critics, it seems, have a theoretical predilection for "fundamental" structures and systems of power, whereas we lean toward an ethical/political view of economic determination. This is something we share with the groups we have worked with and with many proponents of place-based globalism. Like the alliance of slum dwellers in Mumbai, India, which has been one of the inspirations for our thinking about place-based politics, our action research projects are more concerned with theorizing *conditions* of possibility than *limits* to possibility, seeing the latter theoretical path as perhaps prematurely foreclosing on an open and uncertain future. The alliance is embarked on a transformation of the conditions of poverty by the poor themselves. They understand their organization as practicing a politics of patience against the tyranny of the emergency (Appadurai 2002). Their self-theorizing is couched in a milieu of dynamic activism rather than a systemic representation in which a local entity faces a global or national power structure. While they expect to confront obstacles, difficulties, threats of annihilation, and co-optation, they treat these as everyday political challenges rather than as limits to politics.

[15] No different from any other problems we might encounter, like finding someone with their hand in the till—we don't have to theorize this as coming up against the "limit" of a greedy human nature.

Perhaps, however, we do not need to dispense with limits. A more generous approach to our critics' concerns would be to acknowledge and theorize limits but to treat them as "positively charged"[16]—in other words, contributing to energies and prompting strategies that may transcend/transform them. As wisdom has it, "through striving to overcome weakness we make ourselves strong."[17] Or "freedom is what you do with what has been done to you."[18] Certainly the story of Mondragón, the thriving complex of cooperatives in the Basque region of Spain, could be read as the construction of a community economy in the face of the limits posed by physical isolation and fascist persecution (Gibson-Graham 2003). And in the Philippines case, we can see the global political economy that is facilitating and necessitating international contract migration as also offering the opportunity of marshaling savings to promote alternative local economies (Gibson, Law, and McKay 2001; Gibson-Graham 2005c). In this story, the very limit to local agency/power has become a catalyst for economic self-determination.

Localism/scale

Closely related questions about the power and efficacy of our interventions are posed in the language of scale. How can these small and local efforts make a difference? Aren't they ultimately subsumed within the global order of neoliberal capitalism? We have devoted considerable time and developed some theoretical muscle wrestling with this daunting vision, drawing on our experience and understanding of second-wave feminism (Gibson-Graham 2002, 2005c).

Most theories of scale are dominated by a vertical ontology (Marston 2000) that presumes a hierarchy of scales from global to local, mapped onto a hierarchy of power in which macro forces operate to constrain everyday practices. Change that does not address the top of the hierarchy is ultimately contained. This worldview demands that local initiatives "scale up" before they can be seen as transformative.

In response to this limiting requirement, thinkers who are interested in expanding political possibility have proffered flat ontologies that do not presume nested scales and hierarchies of power. We are no exception. Our alternative "flat" spatial imaginary is an aspect of the feminist political imaginary that informs what we refer to above as "place-based

[16] For this Deleuzian formulation, we are indebted to the Rutgers University students in Kevin St. Martin's graduate geography seminar on Community and Economy.

[17] Again this came from the seminar cited in note 16. This process, of course, is never risk-free. What doesn't kill us makes us stronger, but there's always the chance of getting killed.

[18] Cornel West, radio interview on the hundredth anniversary of Jean-Paul Sartre's birth.

globalism" (Osterweil 2004). Second-wave feminism transformed and continues to transform lives and livelihoods around the world to different degrees and in different ways, rendering the life experiences of many women literally unrecognizable in the terms of a generation ago.[19] Yet the politics of feminism bears little resemblance to revolutionary politics as it is traditionally practiced.

Feminism linked feminists emotionally and semiotically, rather than primarily through organizational ties. It did not rely on (yet did not eschew) coordinated actions and alliances. The globalization of a feminist politics did not involve organization at the global scale to challenge global structures of patriarchal power.[20] The movement achieved global coverage without having to create global institutions, though some of these did indeed come into being. Ubiquity rather than unity was the ground of its globalization.

We are intrigued at the way the loosely interrelated struggles and happenings of the feminist movement were capable of mobilizing social transformation at such an unprecedented scale, without many of the "necessaries" we have come to associate with political organization. The complex intermixing of alternative discourses, shared language, embodied practices, self-cultivation, emplaced actions, and global transformation associated with second-wave feminism has nourished our thinking about a politics of economic possibility—impressing us with the simple ontological contours of a feminist imaginary: *if women are everywhere, a woman is always somewhere, and those places of women are transformed as women transform themselves*. The vision of feminist politics as grounded in persons yet (therefore) potentially ubiquitous has been extended in our thinking to include another ontological substrate: a vast set of disarticulated "places"—households, neighborhoods, localities, ecosystems, workplaces, civic organizations, public arenas, urban spaces, diasporas, regions, government agencies, occupations—related analogically rather than organizationally and connected through webs of signification. A feminist spatiality embraces not only a politics of ubiquity (its global manifestation) but a politics of place (its localization in places

[19] We recognize that we are risking the charge of naïve optimism here, while simultaneously courting its perverse pleasures.

[20] While global women's movements have devoted much energy to "engendering" global development processes through international conferences and commissions, feminists have not fixated on the global as the ultimate scale of successful activism (Harcourt 2005). In confronting imperial globalization, they are continuing their orientation to the local, the daily, the bodily, recognizing that transforming the world involves transforming sites, subjects, and practices worldwide. That this place-oriented activism may involve them in global movements (of migrant workers, for example) is not a contradiction, but simply a confirmation that places are constituted at the crossroads of global forces (Massey 1999, 2005).

created, strengthened, defended, or transformed). This powerful imaginary gives us the perhaps unwarranted confidence that a place-based economic politics has the potential to be globally transformative.

Our (mis)placed confidence stems from other sources as well, especially theoretical work to uncouple size and power (placing us in a position to study their interactions) and to develop ontologies of unpredictability. We have taken as inspiration the truisms that big things start small, and that path dependency and uncertainty (including uncertainty about the scale of effects) mark the trajectory of any initiative or experiment. We have refused to treat the local as a container/limit, preferring to treat it as the (only possible) starting place. We have drawn encouragement from scholars like Bruno Latour and Michel Callon, who argue that "reversals of balances of power can come from anywhere. . . . [T]hey can propagate via the transporting and transposition of solutions conceived of in one place" (Callon 2005a, 16).

Academy/community

Invariably questions about power and research ethics have been raised in connection with our action research projects. Some have expressed concern that because of our partisan interest in alternative economies, the research design has involved "manipulation" or possibly "indoctrination" of research subjects. There is suspicion that our attempt to bring diverse economic practices into visibility and encourage the construction of community enterprises has "engineered" the very responses that support our thesis. To this last accusation we plead guilty. Our research interventions are indeed a form of political and, we hope, performative action.

In its traditional guise, participatory action research tries to break down the power differential between the researched and the socially powerful by enabling the oppressed to become researchers of their own circumstances (Freire 1972). In our poststructuralist participatory action research, we accept that power can never be banished from any social process. Power circulates in many different and incommensurate ways and there are always ***multiple*** power differentials at play (Allen 2003).

From the outset, we have seen our projects as aimed at mobilizing desire for noncapitalist becomings. What the projects have helped us recognize is that desire stirs and is activated in embodied interactions and settings in which power circulates unevenly and yet productively across many different registers of being. Early on in the training of community researchers in one of our projects, we stumbled onto something that alerted us to the fickle nature of power and desire. In our initial attempt to produce an "equal" interchange between the academics with "formal knowledge" and the community members with "embodied knowing,"

we never offered a textbook definition of *economy* or *capitalism,* but instead spent a lot of time demystifying "the economy," showing the contradictions in mainstream representations and conceptions. In hindsight, we realized that this withholding on our part, rather than creating a pure space of equality, was contaminating the research process with power in interesting ways. It made us intriguing, attaching the community researchers to us and to the mysteriousness of our formal knowledge and hidden desires.

Gabriela Delgadillo, one of the academic researchers who had been a Lacanian analyst in her native Bolivia, understood this in terms of the relationship between analyst and analysand. The goal of the analyst is not to become the analysand's equal, but to move the analysand away from the project of shoring up his or her fantasies and into the difficult process of analysis—producing "truth," in other words, a different, more distanced relation to fantasy. To get the analysand interested in this process, the analyst must come to inhabit the space of desire, which is what we were inadvertently doing in our project. Our refusal to define the economy or capitalism had the effect of making our knowledge desirable.

Under Gabriela's tutelage, we began to see the "inequality" between academic and community researchers as constitutive of our work, rather than as a hindrance or detraction. The relationship between academic and community member is eroticized by inequality, by the way "they" invest our peculiar status and formal knowledge with power, and that is in part what made our conversations work. A seductive form of power (Allen 2003) drew them to us and our project, even as it prompted them to mock, berate, and belittle the university and those working within it. We realized that, far from attempting to achieve a pristine interaction untainted by power, we needed to mobilize and direct power, and to make sure that it was used to foster rather than kill what we hoped to elicit—passionate participation in our project.

Thinking more generally about the role of academics and academic work in a politics of collective action, the injunction to "start where you are" reminds us that there is no privileged social location from which to embark on building a community economy. For us this means that our academic location is no more or less suitable as a starting place than our other social locations as women, citizens, middle-aged adults, yoginis, local residents, workers, and bearers of racial privilege. The extended and complex collectivities engaged in building community economies cannot be recognized in simple relational oppositions like academy/community. While the capabilities we bring to bear may be shaped by our academic training, and some of the networks we are embedded in may be constituted through our academic activities, these particularities distinguish

us within but do not separate us from the communities we are working with. Instead they enable us to connect in particular ways.

As social scientists we may want, for example, to treat social projects and innovations (or indeed any social site) as "experiments," to use Callon's term (2005a; Callon and Caliskan 2005). What this means minimally is that we treat them as instances to learn from, rather than things to be "put in their place" through moral judgment or incorporation into a theoretical macronarrative as case or countercase. Characterizing the U.S. health-care system as an "immense uncontrolled experiment, housing a vast collection of different, potentially informative ways of working" (2004, 286), Donald Berwick attests that "every process produces information on the basis of which it can be improved."[21] We often ignore this information because it is not what we are looking for. But as social researchers interested in economic alternatives, this is just the kind of knowledge we are seeking to produce. By processing and purveying such information for an organization or project, by formalizing and making transportable its experience and strategies (Callon 2005c), the researcher can enable self-reflection among participants, foster a productive redirection of energies, and legitimize the organization in a wider social context. All of these contribute to its strength and viability, to the expanded performation of the model and practices it embodies.

Rather than working *on* the organization or project, the social scientist works *alongside it,* collaborating wittingly or unwittingly with the other members of a "hybrid research collective": researchers from various disciplines, funders, activists, clients, implicated bystanders, whoever is involved in the project and producing knowledge about it (Callon 2005b). The social scientist so engaged is always already an activist, part of a collective agency, without needing to change hats or stray outside the walls of the academy.

Why do these things always fail?

Ending our FAQs with this "question" might seem facetious if it weren't so frequently addressed to us, along with its declarative companion, "You guys are so optimistic." Literal-mindedly we try to respond by pointing to all the successes of alternatives, all the failures of the mainstream, or perhaps to a definition of success that has set the bar impossibly high. But it would probably be more appropriate to ask the questioners to look at themselves as theorists and observers. Upon self-inspection, they might find a theoretical investment in failure—on the simplest level, for example, it is easy to see that failed alternatives shore up a vision of structural

[21] He is quoting George Box here, but does not provide a source.

power. It's not surprising that these projects are unsuccessful or co-opted, because anything in relation to capitalism is understood to be dominated, if not actually controlled by it.

We have assiduously espoused the alternative view that co-optation does not automatically happen in the vicinity of power; that one resists co-optation not by distancing oneself from power, but through the vigilant practice of not being co-opted—in other words, self-consciously and diligently maintaining the integrity of a project. Interestingly, though, this and related views are often held to be (overly) optimistic. Many times we have demurred in response to this "accusation," murmuring obscurely that we are not optimistic but hopeful. Given present circumstances, we would be crazy to offer an optimistic prognosis for the world and its denizens, but we can learn to call forth hope from our world-battered sensibilities. According to Isabelle Stengers, hope is "the difference between *probability* and *possibility*" (2002, 245), and being hopeful is a matter of including possibility in our world and worldview.[22]

A similar complaint about our orientation to the world is that we are overly positive, celebratory, Pollyanna-ish. Everything is beautiful in its own way (sing along, please) in this best of all possible worlds. We take this comment seriously, as it is frequently and fervently offered. There is something slightly off or even offensive in our focus on possibilities and potentials at the expense of present suffering; in our interest in promoting and performing success rather than predicting failure; in our lack of participation in the important project of documenting exploitation, oppression, and environmental degradation. Certainly there is no shortage of these and other harms in the world; it seems ignorant or callous not to bear witness, not to make them more present in our work. Again we want to respond in a clarifying way, and also to consider the possibility that our orientation is something we might want to change.[23]

We have found that the failure to condemn certain practices is sometimes viewed as whitewashing or even celebration. But we practice non-

[22] Callon and Caliskan (2005, 40) offer the following as a "law" of possibility: "Not everything is possible, but there is no universal rule to indicate a priori what is possible and what is not."

[23] The impulse to reorient does not usually arise in response to people who, in our view, misread our work, or who argue that we are blind or misguided because we are not focused on what they deem to be important—the familiar "argument" against someone else's project that it is not similar enough to one's own, or that they don't offer a balanced view of things (usually, in our case, that we do not give enough air time to the downside of economic life). Nor is it a response to those who accuse us of "celebrating noncapitalism," confusing the discriminating analytical practice of looking for good or hopeful things in the noncapitalist sector with the embracing moral judgment that the noncapitalist sector is good. What we want to acknowledge here is something else: that people are differentially tuned to forms of suffering and injustice, whether out of prac-

condemnation, or normative agnosticism, in certain contexts for particular reasons. The language of the diverse economy, for example, recognizes the contemporary prevalence of indentured labor as a form of remunerated labor, and theft as a mode of transaction. Each is a site in which the sociality and interdependency of economic relation is not hidden, but is violently and coercively present. It is difficult to imagine the place of these practices in a community economy. Yet if we must necessarily "start where we are" to build ethical economies, what is the usefulness of simply judging such practices for their divergence from certain values? It would seem more positive and pragmatic to treat the *existing* situation as a (problematic) resource for projects of *becoming,* a place from which to build something more desirable in the future. A community might decide that theft is a legitimate mode of redistribution when it involves reclaiming a commons that has been unlawfully taken, as in land, mineral or maritime resources, or intellectual property. Likewise for organized Filipino migrant workers in the Asia Pacific region, indentured labor is not simply to be condemned and eradicated (though that is one of their organizational goals), but is also a resource for generating surplus and mobilizing subjects to build community enterprises back home. On what basis might we preemptively exclude or include such activities in strategies of building community economies? We do not blithely condone all nonmarket transactions (including theft) or celebrate noncapitalist forms of exploitation (like indentured servitude, a form of slavery) but we also do not prejudge the ways that such practices may be enrolled in projects of community.

Where to? Some thoughts on research

We have written this introduction to the new edition of *The End of Capitalism* as also an introduction to a research program and political project that has evolved in the wake of the first edition. *The End of Capitalism* can be read as an attempt to transform familiar theoretical certainties about capitalism—its powers and extent, its nature and effects—into empirical questions susceptible to answers both various and changing. The goal was to foster the expansion of our politicized and practical knowledge of capitalism, as well as of existing noncapitalist economic

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ticed empathy, politics, or personal experience, and that we cannot help but be sensitive to their sensitivities. One friend, for example, was unable to enjoy the globalization chapter (chapter 6) of *The End of Capitalism* because we used "rape" metaphorically and our tone was light, even flippant—we might revisit and reconsider this strategy if given a chance to revise the book. In *A Postcapitalist Politics* (2006), we take up the issue of emotional stances and orientations more generally, in part because our stance in *The End of Capitalism* was clear and consistent, but largely unexamined.

organizations and practices. In particular, we were trying to promote a knowledge environment hospitable to economic alternatives, to facilitate their emergence and expand their performance. Along the way we have joined with a growing group of others in geography and other disciplines interested in developing the same sort of project.

Because the research program is in its infancy, avenues for exploration seem infinite, while actually researchable questions seem thin on the ground. Participating in recent gatherings of like-minded people, however, has yielded a plethora of theoretical and empirical research possibilities, activating our instincts for collating and cataloging. What are the various routes to making our economic rethinking a performative success? How have other research programs and theoretical projects actually produced and maintained particular economies? What knowledge struggles have been and continue to be involved in their installation and performance? For those who want to posit a power structure, what everyday practices go into constructing it? If capitalism lacks an interior logic of self-maintenance and expansion, where do we look for the power of capitalism (Mitchell 2002, 271)? What is the relationship of particular alternative enterprises to capitalist enterprises, and how could the latter help sustain the former? How have other social and economic innovations spread and been replicated? What forms of spatialization are associated with community economies in addition to local development? What are the dynamics of diverse economies and community economies, once we forswear logics of development? Can we model those dynamics? How can we develop an "economics of surplus" that is useful in constructing community economies? What organizational structures and modes of governance are at work in alternative economic organizations? How can the difficulties and obstacles facing particular projects be turned into resources and strengths?[24]

What we have come to realize or reaffirm in the ten years since the publication of *The End of Capitalism* is that pursuing these types of questions and the knowledge they yield will bring about the end of capitalism as we knew it.

Acknowledgments

Our debts of gratitude are too numerous and dispersed to contain in a small space at the end of this introduction. Here we can simply gesture to the community closest in, the other members of the Community Economies Collective and especially Jenny Cameron and Stephen Healy,

[24] How is strength acquired through "successive compositions of small weaknesses"? And how have new worlds emerged from small differences (Callon and Caliskan 2005, 48)?

without whom we could not have pursued our theoretical and action research. We affirm once again the evolving third person (plural or singular) that our collaboration has become over its soon-to-be thirty years of existence. Finally, we are very grateful to the University of Minnesota Press for publishing this new edition of ***The End of Capitalism*** and to Minnesota and other publishers of books and journals for the excerpts from previously published works that have made their way into this introduction.

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1

Strategies

Understanding capitalism has always been a project of the left, especially within the Marxian tradition. There, where knowledges of "capitalism" arguably originated, theory is accorded an explicit social role. From Marx to Lenin to the neo-Marxists of the post-World War II period, theorists have understood their work as contributing – whether proximately or distantly – to anticapitalist projects of political action. In this sense economic theory has related to politics as a subordinate and a servant: we understand the world in order to change it.

Given the avowed servitude of left theory to left political action it is ironic (though not surprising) that understandings and images of capitalism can quite readily be viewed as contributing to a *crisis* in left politics. Indeed, and this is the argument we wish to make in this book, the project of understanding the beast has itself produced a beast, or even a bestiary; and the process of producing knowledge in service to politics has estranged rather than united understanding and action. Bringing these together again, or allowing them to touch in different ways, is one of our motivating aspirations.

"Capitalism" occupies a special and privileged place in the language of social representation. References to "capitalist society" are a commonplace of left and even mainstream social description, as are references – to the market, to the global economy, to postindustrial society – in which an unnamed capitalism is implicitly invoked as the defining and unifying moment of a complex economic and social formation. Just as the economic system in eastern Europe used confidently to be described as communist or socialist, so a general confidence in economic classification characterizes representations of an increasingly capitalist world system. But what might be seen as the grounds of this confidence, if we put aside notions of "reality" as the authentic origin of its representations?

Why might it seem problematic to say that the United States is a Christian nation, or a heterosexual one, despite the widespread belief that Christianity and heterosexuality are dominant or majority practices in their respective domains, while at the same time it seems legitimate and indeed "accurate" to say that the US is a capitalist country?[1] What is it about the former expressions, and their critical history, that makes them visible as "regulatory fictions,"[2] ways of erasing or obscuring difference, while the latter is seen as accurate representation? Why, moreover, have embracing and holistic expressions for social structure like patriarchy fallen into relative disuse among feminist theorists (see Pringle 1995; Barrett and Phillips 1992) while similar conceptions of capitalism as a system or "structure of power" are still prevalent and resilient? These sorts of questions, by virtue of their scarcity and scant claims to legitimacy, have provided us a motive for this book.[3]

The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It) problematizes "capitalism" as an economic and social descriptor.[4] Scrutinizing what might be seen as throwaway uses of the term – passing references, for example, to the capitalist system or to global capitalism – as well as systematic and deliberate attempts to represent capitalism as a central and organizing feature of modern social experience, the book selectively traces the discursive origins of a widespread understanding: that capitalism is the hegemonic, or even the only, present form of economy and that it will continue to be so in the proximate future. It follows from

[1] For one thing, an ambiguity exists in the former instances (between, for example, the reference to a population and its heterosexual practices, and the reference to a regime of compulsory heterosexuality) that does not exist in the latter. This suggests that the "dominance" of capitalism might itself be undermined by representing capitalism as a particular set of activities practiced by individuals.

[2] Butler (1990) uses this term with respect to the "fiction" of binary gender and its regulatory function as a support for compulsory heterosexuality. No matter how much the New(t) Right in the US wants to impose the "truth" of a Christian heterosexual nation, this fiction is actually the focus of considerable contention.

[3] The list of questions could be extended. How is it, for example, that "woman" as a natural or extradiscursive category has increasingly receded from view, yet "capitalism" retains its status as a given of social description? The answer that presents itself to us has to do with the feminist politics of representation and the vexed problem of gender (and other forms of personal) identity. The question of social identity has not been so extensively vexed (despite the efforts of Laclau and Mouffe, among others) but is perhaps ripe for the vexing.

Many people have observed that the economic and social realms are sometimes accorded the status of an extratextual reality. Butler notes, for example, that the domain of the social is often seen as "given or already constituted." She suggests a reinfusion of what she calls "ideality," with its implications of "possibility" and "transformability," into feminist representations of the social (1995: 19–20).

this prevalent though not ubiquitous view that noncapitalist economic sites, if they exist at all, must inhabit the social margins; and, as a corollary, that deliberate attempts to develop noncapitalist economic practices and institutions must take place in the social interstices, in the realm of experiment, or in a visionary space of revolutionary social replacement.

Representations of capitalism are a potent constituent of the anticapitalist imagination, providing images of what is to be resisted and changed as well as intimations of the strategies, techniques, and possibilities of changing it. For this reason, depictions of "capitalist hegemony" deserve a particularly skeptical reading. For in the vicinity of these representations, the very idea of a noncapitalist economy takes the shape of an unlikelihood or even an impossibility. It becomes difficult to entertain a vision of the prevalence and vitality of noncapitalist economic forms, or of daily or partial replacements of capitalism by noncapitalist economic practices, or of capitalist retreats and reversals. In this sense, "capitalist hegemony" operates not only as a constituent of, but also as a brake upon, the anticapitalist imagination.[5] What difference might it make to release that brake and allow an anticapitalist economic imaginary to develop unrestricted?[6] If we were to dissolve the image that looms in the economic foreground, what shadowy economic forms might come forward? In these questions we can identify the broad outlines of our project: to discover or create a world of economic difference, and to populate that world with exotic creatures that become, upon inspection, quite local and familiar (not to mention familiar beings that are not what they seem).

The discursive artifact we call "capitalist hegemony" is a complex

[4] Though we refer on almost every page of this book to capitalism, we find ourselves loath to define it, since this would involve choosing among a wide variety of existing definitions (any one of which could be seen as our "target") or specifying out of context a formation that we wish to understand as contextually defined. One familiar Marxist definition, however, involves a vision of capitalism as a system of generalized commodity production structured by (industrial) forces of production and exploitative production relations between capital and labor. Workers, bereft of means of production, sell their labor power for wages and participate in the labor process under capitalist control. Their surplus labor is appropriated by capitalists as surplus value. The capitalist mode of production is animated by the twin imperatives of enterprise competition and capital accumulation which together account for the dynamic tendencies of capitalism to expand and to undergo recurring episodes of crisis.

[5] Which we hesitate to call "socialist" because of the emptiness of the term in a context where the meaning of capitalism is called into question. Conversely, of course, the "death" of socialism is one of the things that has made it possible to question and rethink capitalism (since each has largely been defined in opposition to the other).

[6] The metaphor of the brake is drawn from Haraway (1991: 41–2).

effect of a wide variety of discursive and nondiscursive conditions.[7] In this book we focus on the practices and preoccupations of discourse, tracing some of the different, even incompatible, representations of capitalism that can be collated within this fictive summary representation. These depictions have their origins in the diverse traditions of Marxism, classical and contemporary political economy, academic social science, modern historiography, popular economic and social thought, western philosophy and metaphysics, indeed, in an endless array of texts, traditions and infrastructures of meaning. In the chapters that follow, only a few of these are examined for the ways in which they have sustained a vision of capitalism as the dominant form of economy, or have contributed to the possibility or durability of such a vision. But the point should emerge none the less clearly: the virtually unquestioned dominance of capitalism can be seen as a complex product of a variety of discursive commitments, including but not limited to organicist social conceptions, heroic historical narratives, evolutionary scenarios of social development, and essentialist, phallocentric, or binary patterns of thinking. It is through these discursive figurings and alignments that capitalism is constituted as large, powerful, persistent, active, expansive, progressive, dynamic, transformative; embracing, penetrating, disciplining, colonizing, constraining; systemic, self-reproducing, rational, lawful, self-rectifying; organized and organizing, centered and centering; originating, creative, protean; victorious and ascendant; self-identical, self-expressive, full, definite, real, positive, and capable of conferring identity and meaning.[8]

The argument revisited: it is the way capitalism has been "thought" that has made it so difficult for people to imagine its supersession.[9] It

[7] The latter including, among other things, working-class struggles and the forms of their successes and defeats. To take another example, the technologies of communication and replication that are used to trumpet the triumph of global capitalism are themselves nondiscursive conditions of "capitalist hegemony."

[8] This list of qualities should not be seen as exhaustive. Indeed one could certainly construct a list of equal length that enumerated capitalism's weaknesses and "negative" characteristics: for example, images of capitalism as crisis-ridden, self-destructive, anarchic, requiring regulation, fatally compromised by internal contradictions, unsustainable, tending to undermine its own conditions of existence. That these opposing lists do not negate (or even substantially compromise) each other is one of the premises of this discussion. (In fact, "weaknesses" or problems of capitalism are often consonant with, and constitutive of, its perceived hegemony and autonomy as an economic system.)

[9] Except, of course, as the product of evolutionary necessity or the millennial project of a revolutionary collective subject. At this moment on the left, when these two familiar ways of thinking capitalist supersession are in disrepair and disrepute, there are few ways of conceptualizing the replacement of capitalism by noncapitalism that we find persuasive.

is therefore the ways in which capitalism is known that we wish to delegitimize and displace. The process is one of unearthing, of bringing to light images and habits of understanding that constitute "hegemonic capitalism" at the intersection of a set of representations. This we see as a first step toward theorizing capitalism without representing dominance as a natural and inevitable feature of its being. At the same time, we hope to foster conditions under which the economy might become less subject to definitional closure. If it were possible to inhabit a heterogeneous and open-ended economic space whose identity was not fixed or singular (the space potentially to be vacated by a capitalism that is necessarily and naturally hegemonic) then a vision of noncapitalist economic practices as existing and widespread might be able to be born; and in the context of such a vision, a new anticapitalist politics might emerge, a noncapitalist politics of class (whatever that may mean) might take root and flourish. A long shot perhaps but one worth pursuing.

In this introduction we touch upon the various discursive appearances of capitalism that are given different or more detailed treatment later in the book. The introduction serves to convene them, and in bringing them together to make them susceptible to a single critique. As the prelude to and precondition of a theory of "economic difference," the critique of economic sameness (or of essentialism, to invoke a freighted synonymy) attempts to liberate a heterospace of both capitalist and noncapitalist economic existence. Here, as throughout the book, we draw upon the strategies of postmodern Marxism and poststructuralist feminism to enable both criticism and re-imagination. Somewhat diffidently and rudimentarily, we also take up the challenge of concretely specifying different economic practices that can be seen to inhabit a space of economic diversity, or that might be called into being to fulfill its promises of plenitude and potentiation. Together, the critical project of undermining prevalent practices of capitalist representation, and the more arduous project of generating a discourse of economic difference, constitute the unevenly distributed burden of this book.[10]

Strategy 1: Constructing the straw man

Capitalism's hegemony emerges and is naturalized in the space of its overlapping and intersecting appearances – as the earthly kingdom of modern industrial society; the heroic transformative agent of development/mod-

[10] In this book we give some glimpses of the noncapitalist class relations that inform our anticapitalist imaginary. Extended explorations of these class processes and positions are provided in our co-edited collection which is tentatively entitled *Class: The Next Postmodern Frontier* (in progress).

ernization; a unitary, structured and self-reproducing economic system; a protean body with an (infinite?) repertory of viable states; a matrix of flows that integrates the world of objects and signs; the phallus that structures social space and confers meaning upon social practices and positions (these as well as other representations are explored in later chapters.) Each of these figurings tends to position capitalism – with respect both to other specific types of economy and to the general social space of economic difference – as the dominant economic form. In other words not only is capitalism in itself triumphant, encompassing, penetrating, expansive (and so on), but by virtue of these "internal" capitalist qualities, other forms of economy are vanquished, marginalized, violated, restricted. Different as they may be from one another, they are united by their common existence as subordinated and inferior states of economic being. In this sense, we may speak of the relation of capitalism to noncapitalism in the terms of the familiar binary structure in which the first term is constituted as positivity and fullness and the second term as negativity or lack.

When we say that most economic discourse is "capitalocentric," we mean that other forms of economy (not to mention noneconomic aspects of social life) are often understood primarily with reference to capitalism: as being fundamentally the same as (or modeled upon) capitalism, or as being deficient or substandard imitations; as being opposite to capitalism; as being the complement of capitalism;[11] as existing in capitalism's space or orbit. Thus noncapitalist practices like self-employment may be seen as taking place *within* capitalism, which is understood as an embracing structure or system. Or noncapitalist activity may be elided, as when "commodification" is invoked as a metonym for capitalist expansion.[12] Noncapitalist economic forms may

[11] We are indebted for this definition to the conceptions of phallocentrism of Grosz (1990) and Irigaray.

[12] Despite the general recognition that slave, communal, family, independent and other production relations are all compatible with commodity production, that is, production of goods and services for a market, the commodity is often uniquely associated with capitalism (perhaps because of the prevalent definition of capitalism as involving "generalized" commodity production, referring to the existence of labor power as a commodity). Laclau and Mouffe depict the process of capitalist expansion over the post-World War II period in terms of commodity relations: "this 'commodification' of social life destroyed previous social relations, replacing them with commodity relations through which the logic of capitalist accumulation penetrated into increasingly numerous spheres . . . There is practically no domain of individual or collective life which escapes capitalist relations" (1985: 161). Note here the language of destruction, penetration, capture, replacement, invasion, and the sense that these processes are driven by a logic (in other words they are the phenomenal expressions of an underlying essence). See also chapter 6 on globalization.

be located in "peripheral" countries that lack the fullness and completeness of capitalist "development."[13] Noncapitalism is found in the household, the place of woman, related to capitalism through service and complementarity. Noncapitalism is the before or the after of capitalism: it appears as a precapitalist mode of production (identified by its fate of inevitable supersession); it appears as socialism, for which capitalism is both the negative and the positive precondition.

Capitalism's others fail to measure up to it as the true form of economy: its feminized other, the household economy, may be seen to lack its efficiency and rationality; its humane other, socialism, may be seen to lack its productivity; other forms of economy lack its global extensiveness, or its inherent tendency to dominance and expansion. No other form displays its systemic qualities or its capacity for self-reproduction (indeed projects of theorizing noncapitalism frequently founder upon the analogical imperative of representing an economic totality, complete with crisis dynamics, logics and "laws of motion"). Thus despite their ostensible variety, noncapitalist forms of economy often present themselves as a homogeneous insufficiency rather than as positive and differentiated others.

To account for the demotion and devaluation of noncapitalism[14] we must invoke the constitutive or performative force of economic representation. For depictions of capitalism – whether prevalent and persistent or rare and deliquescent – position noncapitalism in relations of subsumption, containment, supersession, replication, opposition and complementarity to capitalism as the quintessential economic form.[15] To take a few examples from a list that is potentially infinite:

(1) Capitalism appears as the "hero" of the industrial development narrative, the inaugural subject of "history," the bearer of the future, of modernity, of universality. Powerful, generative, uniquely sufficient to

[13] "Development" is not understood here as a process but in another of its meanings as the quintessential form of western society.

[14] Here and throughout, when we refer to noncapitalism, we mean noncapitalist forms of economy, unless otherwise noted.

[15] Of course some of the most famous and seminal representations of capitalism can be found in the *Communist Manifesto*, which came to life as one of the founding documents of a revolutionary political tradition. That the *Manifesto* – and the vision that animated it – functioned powerfully to motivate successful workers' movements is something we do not wish to deny; but the image of two classes locked in struggle has in our view now become an obstacle to, rather than a positive force for, anticapitalist political endeavors. It is difficult for us – and we believe for others – to identify with this image today, though it may still resonate with many.

the task of social transformation,[16] capitalism liberates humanity from the struggle with nature. (In its corresponding role as antihero, capitalist development bears the primary responsibility for underdevelopment and environmental degradation.)

(2) Capitalism is enshrined at the pinnacle of social evolution. There it brings – or comes together with – the end of scarcity, of traditional social distinctions, of ignorance and superstition, of antidemocratic or primitive political forms (this is the famous social countenance of modernization).[17] The earthly kingdom of modernism is built upon a capitalist economic foundation.

(3) Capitalism exists as a unified system or body, bounded, hierarchically ordered, vitalized by a growth imperative, and governed by a telos of reproduction. Integrated, homogeneous, coextensive with the space of the social, capitalism is the unitary "economy" addressed by macroeconomic policy and regulation. Though it is prone to crises (diseases), it is also capable of recovery or restoration.

(4) Capitalism is an architecture or structure of power, which is conferred by ownership and by managerial or financial control. Capitalist exploitation is thus an aspect or effect of domination, and firm size and spatial scope an index of power (quintessentially embodied in the multinational corporation).

(5) Capitalism is the phallus or "master term" within a system of social differentiation. Capitalist industrialization grounds the distinction between core (the developed world) and periphery (the so-called Third World). It defines the household as the space of "consumption" (of capitalist commodities) and of "reproduction" (of the capitalist workforce) rather than as a space of noncapitalist production and consumption.

Capitalism confers meaning upon subjects and other social sites in relation to itself, as the contents of its container, laid out upon its grid, identified and valued with respect to its definitive being. Complexly generated social processes of commodification, urbanization, internationalization,

[16] Anderson depicts capitalism in familiar terms as a relentless transformative force, one that "tears down every ancestral confinement and claustral tradition in an immense clearing operation of cultural and customary debris across the globe" (1988: 318). In a similar vein Spivak evokes capitalism's agency in service of its own imperatives: "To minimize circulation time, industrial capitalism needed to establish due process, and such civilizing instruments as railways, postal services, and a uniformly graded system of education" (1988b: 90).

[17] Acknowledging not only capitalism's agency but its extraordinary creativity and universalizing reach, Haraway invokes a feminist political imaginary by calling for "an emerging system of world order analogous in its novelty and scope to that created by industrial capitalism" (1991: 203). The earthly kingdom of capitalism can only be replaced by its likeness.

proletarianization are viewed as aspects of capitalism's self-realization.

(6) Capitalism's visage is plastic and malleable, its trajectory protean and inventive.[18] It undergoes periodic crises and emerges regenerated in novel manifestations (thus Fordism is succeeded by post-Fordism, organized by disorganized capitalism, competitive by monopoly or global capitalism).

(7) Ultimately capitalism is unfettered by local attachments, labor unions, or national-level regulation. The global (capitalist) economy is the new realm of the absolute, the not contingent, from which social possibility is dictated or by which it is constrained. In this formulation economic determinism is reborn and relocated, transferred from its traditional home in the "economic base" to the international space of the pure economy (the domain of the global finance sector and of the all powerful multinational corporation).

(8) It is but one step from global hegemony to capital as absolute presence: "a fractal attractor whose operational arena is immediately coextensive with the social field" (Massumi 1993: 132), "an enormous . . . monetary mass that circulates through foreign exchange and across borders," "a worldwide axiomatic" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 453) engaged in "the relentless saturation of any remaining voids and empty places" (Jameson 1991: 412), "appropriating" individuals to its circuits (Grossberg 1992: 132). Here the language of flows attests not only to the pervasiveness and plasticity of capital but to its ultimate freedom from the boundedness of Identity. Capitalism becomes the everything everywhere of contemporary cultural representation.

If this catalogue seems concocted from exaggerations and omissions, that will not surprise us.[19] For we have devised it in line with our purposes, and have left out all manner of counter and alternative representations. Indeed, as our critics sometimes charge, we have constructed a "straw man" – or more accurately a bizarre and monstrous being that

[18] Arguments that capitalism is in fact "capitalisms" (see for example Pred and Watts 1992) may actually represent capitalism's chameleon qualities as an aspect of its sameness, its capacity for taking everything into itself. These arguments constitute capitalism as a powerful system that is not delineated by any particular economic practices or characteristics (except power). Everything in its vicinity is likely to be drawn into it, overpowered by it, subsumed to it. In related formulations, homogeneity, even of the economic kind, is not a requirement of a monolithic capitalism, since the nature of capitalism is "not to create an homogeneous social and economic system but rather to dominate and draw profit from the diversity and inequality that remain in permanence" (Berger 1980).

[19] In fact we were inspired to some extent by Foucault in *The Order of Things*, where "orders" or classifications are made to appear strange or ridiculous as part of a strategy of denaturalization.

will never be found in pure form in any other text.[20] The question then becomes, what to do with the monster? Should we refine it, cut it down to size, render it once again acceptable, unremarkable, invisibly visible? Should we resituate it among its alter and counter representations, hoping thereby to minimize or mask its presence in social and cultural thought? These are familiar strategies for dealing with something so gauche and ungainly, so clearly and crudely larger than life.

But of course there are alternative ways of disposing of the creature, perhaps more conducive to its permanent relegation. Might we not take advantage of its exaggerated and outlandish presence, and the obviousness that attends it? We can see – it has been placed before us – that a (ridiculous) monster is afoot. It has consequently become "obvious" that our usual strategy is not to banish or slay it, but rather to tame it: hedge it with qualifications, rive it with contradictions, discipline

[20] Of course this could be said of most representations. Many people have assured us that "nobody" thinks any more that capitalism is heroic, systemic, self-reproducing, lawful, structural, naturally powerful, or whatever it is we are adducing. We have come to identify this "nobody" with the one invoked by Yogi Berra ("Nobody goes there any more. It's too crowded.").

We are reminded of the early 1970s when many people found feminist arguments about the existence of a regime of sexism or male dominance to be paranoid or hyperimaginative. Women often argued, for example, that the men they knew were not "like that" or that particular texts, events or relationships did not display the contours of such a regime. These individuals were quite right to note that what feminists described as male dominance was not ubiquitous or pervasive, and was not fully manifest in the behavior of individual men (as indeed feminist activists were often tempted to adduce), yet that did not mean there were no practices and conditions of male dominance. What it meant was that those practices and conditions were often subtle rather than blatant, slippery rather than firm, invisible as well as visible, or visible only from particular locations. It was no simple matter to "reveal" their existence, tangled as they were with their opposites, their disconfirmations and misrecognitions, their negations, their contradictory effects, their failures, their alternative interpretations, the resistances they called forth, the always different contexts that produced the specificity of their forms of existence.

Perhaps a better way of saying this is that feminists were required to produce a theoretical object (sexism or male dominance or patriarchy or the binary hierarchy of gender) and to constitute it as an object of popular discourse and political struggle. That object was no more self-evident than any other (than, for example, the existence of something called "capitalism" before Marx did his work). In this sense, the burden can be seen to lie with us, to produce the discursive object of our critique. Those who invoke the "straw man" argument are questioning the initiative of constituting this theoretical object (by arguing that our construct is illegitimate in comparison to some other) and calling upon a putative community of understanding (of the real or right way to represent capitalism) to regulate the production of social and economic theory. But they are also reacting against the exaggerated appearance of capitalism as it is portrayed here. Presumably their intention would be to mute and domesticate that appearance rather than to highlight it as an object of criticism and derision.

it with contingencies of politics or culture; make it more "realistic" and reasonable, more complex, less embarrassing, less outrageous. But where does such a process of domestication leave us?

Unfortunately, it does not necessarily address the discursive features and figurings that render capitalism superior to its noncapitalist others. Capitalism might still relate to noncapitalist economic sites (in the so-called Third World and in "backward" regions and sectors in the developed world) through images of penetration. Its body could continue to "cover" the space of the social, so that everything noncapitalist was also capitalist (not of course a reciprocal relation). It could still be inherently capable of initiating thoroughgoing (perhaps dysfunctional) social transformation, relegating noncapitalism to a space of necessary weakness and defeat. It might still be driven by internal dynamics of expansion or regeneration, taking advantage of the relative vitality and longevity such imperatives confer. And it could still figure as a systemic totality, producing economic monism as an implication or effect. It seems quite likely, then, that noncapitalism could continue to be suppressed or marginalized by a tamer beast.

In the hierarchical relation of capitalism to noncapitalism lies (entrapped) the possibility of theorizing economic difference, of supplanting the discourse of capitalist hegemony with a plurality and heterogeneity of economic forms. Liberating that possibility is an anti-essentialist project, and perhaps the principal aim of this book.[21] But it is no simple matter to know how to proceed. Casting about for a way to begin we have found feminist and other anti-essentialist projects of rethinking identity and social hegemony particularly fruitful.

Strategy 2: Deconstructing the capitalism/ noncapitalism relation

In the writings of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985, for example) we find the identity of "the social" rethought and decentered. Society resists being thought as a natural unity (like an organism or body) or as one that is closed by a structure, like patriarchy or capitalism, around a central antagonism or fundamental relation. Rather society can be seen as transiently and partially unified by temporary fixings of meaning. These are achieved in part through political struggles that change the relationship of social elements one to another.

Often though not always, the elements of society are articulated,

[21] In other words, this is a project of attempting to make difference rather than sameness "obvious," in the way that Sedgwick does for sexuality (1990: 25–6).

"sutured" as moments in a "hegemonic" relational structure. But this articulation is always ever incomplete and temporary, susceptible to subversion by the "surplus of meaning" of its moments (each of which has various "identities" in the sense of being differentiated within alternative relational systems). Thus the term "woman" has a different meaning when it is articulated with "private life" and "marriage" than when it is set in the context of "feminism" and "lesbian," and the latter contextualization is destabilizing to concepts of male prerogative associated with the former.[22] Identity, whether of the subject or of society, cannot therefore be seen as the property of a bounded and centered being that reveals itself in history. Instead identity is open, incomplete, multiple, shifting. In the words of Mouffe (1995) and other poststructuralist theorists, identity is hybridized and nomadic.

Perhaps we may pursue this further, into a region that is somewhat less traveled, to consider what this might mean for the economy, to ask what a hybridized and nomadic "economic identity" might be. If Mouffe and Laclau have rethought the "social," translating what was formerly closed and singular to openness and multiplicity, what implications might such a rethinking have for the "economic"? It might suggest, at the very least, that the economy did not have to be thought as a bounded and unified space with a fixed capitalist identity. Perhaps the totality of the economic could be seen as a site of multiple forms of economy whose relations to each other are only ever partially fixed and always under subversion. It would be possible, then, to see contemporary discourses of capitalist hegemony as enacting a violence upon other forms of economy, requiring their subordination as a condition of capitalist dominance.[23]

In the frame of such a discursivist and pluralist vision, emerging feminist discourses of the noncapitalist household economy can be seen as potentially destabilizing to capitalism's hegemony.[24] By placing the term "capitalism" in a new relation to noncapitalist "household production," they make visible the discursive violence involved in theorizing household economic practices as "capitalist reproduction." The feminist intervention problematizes unitary or homogeneous notions of a capitalist

[22] We are indebted to Daly (1991: 91) for a version of this example.

[23] For a longer and more developed version of this argument, see Gibson-Graham (1995b).

[24] Feminist economics (as well as other branches of feminist social analysis) has focused attention on unpaid household labor and the production and distribution of use values in the household and on the relative absence of these in both mainstream and Marxist discourses of economy (Waring 1988; Beasley 1994). For studies of the household economy and household social relations, see Delphy and Leonard (1992), Folbre (1993), Fraad et al. (1994), among many others.

economy. It opens the question of the origins of economic monism and pushes us to consider what it might mean to call an economy "capitalist" when more hours of labor (over the life course of individuals) are spent in noncapitalist activity.[25] It is possible, then, that such an intervention could mark the inception of a new "hegemonic discourse" of economic difference and plurality.[26]

At the moment, however, the conditions of possibility of such a discourse are decidedly unpropitious. For both as a constituent and as an effect of capitalist hegemony, we encounter the general suppression and negation of economic difference; and in representations of noncapitalist forms of economy, we have found a set of subordinated and devalued states of being. What is generally visible in these representations is the insufficiency of noncapitalism with respect to capitalism rather than the positive role of noncapitalist economic practices in constituting a complex economy and determining capitalism's specific forms of existence.[27]

In encountering the subordination of noncapitalism, we confront a similar problem to that encountered by feminists attempting to reconceptualize binary gender. It is difficult if not impossible to posit binary difference that is not potentially subsumable to hierarchies of presence/absence, sufficiency/insufficiency, male/female, positivity/negation. Thus rather than constituting a diverse realm of heterogeneity and difference, representations of noncapitalism frequently become subsumed to the discourse of capitalist hegemony. To the extent that capitalism exists as a monolith and noncapitalism as an insufficiency or absence, the economy is not a plural space, a place of difference and struggle (for example, among capitalist and noncapitalist class identities). The question then presents itself, how do we get out of this capitalist place?

Here we may fruitfully turn to the work of those feminists who

[25] See Katz and Monk (1993). Of course there are many possible indicators (such as numbers of people working at any one time, or value of output) that could be used to suggest the relative size of the "household economy."

[26] This is just one example of the sort of problem and opportunity that arises when noncapitalist forms of economy are theorized as both existing in society and as suppressed in economic discourse.

[27] This should not be taken to mean that there are no theorists who pursue a "dialectical" conception of capitalism, examining the ways in which capitalist development is a condition of noncapitalist development, but that such approaches are not dominant or even prevalent. Certain postcolonial theorists (Sanyal 1995, for example) argue that capitalist development in the Third World involves the constitution and valorization of noncapitalist economic activities, which articulate with and participate in constituting capitalism itself.

have attempted to (re)theorize sexual difference, to escape – however temporarily and partially – from the terms of a binary hierarchy in which one term is deprived of positive being. For woman to be a set of specificities rather than the opposite, or complement, to Man, man must become a set of specificities as well. If Man is singular, if he is a self-identical and definite figure, then non-man becomes his negative, or functions as an indefinite and homogeneous ground against which Man's definite outlines may be seen. But if man himself is different from himself, then woman cannot be singularly defined as non-man. If there is no singular figure, there can be no singular other. The other becomes potentially specific, variously definite, an array of positivities rather than a negation or an amorphous ground. Thus the plural specificity of "men" is a condition of the positive existences and specificities of "women."[28]

By analogy here, the specificity of capitalism – its plural identity, if you like – becomes a condition of the existence of a discourse of noncapitalism as a set of positive and differentiated economic forms. Feudalisms, slaveries, independent forms of commodity production, non-market household economic relations and other types of economy may be seen as coexisting in a plural economic space – articulated with and overdetermining various capitalisms rather than necessarily subordinated or subsumed to a dominant self-identical being.

But in order for this to occur, capitalism must relate to itself as a difference rather than as a sameness or a replication. For if capitalism's identity is even partially immobile or fixed, if its inside is not fully constituted by its outside, if it is the site of an inevitability like the logics of profitability or accumulation, then it will necessarily be seen to operate as a constraint or a limit.[29] It becomes that to which other more mutable entities must adapt. (We see this today in both mainstream and left discussions of social and economic policy, where we are told that we may have democracy, or a pared-down welfare state, or prosperity, but only in the context of the [global capitalist] economy and what it will permit.) It is here that anti-essentialist strategies can begin to do their work. If there is no underlying commonality among capitalist instances, no essence of capitalism like expansionism or property ownership or power or

[28] Here we may see a feminist argument for anti-essentialist discourses of identity as a political strategy of discursive destabilization, drawn from the work of Irigaray (Daley 1994, Hazel 1994).

[29] This is the problem, for example, with theories of capitalist regulation that array their "models of development" on an invariant social skeleton centered on capital accumulation (see chapter 7), or with representations of capitalist enterprises as centered by an imperative of profitability (see chapter 8).

profitability or capital accumulation,[30] then capitalism must adapt to (be constituted by) other forms of economy just as they must adapt to (be constituted by) it. Theorizing capitalism itself as different from itself[31] – as having, in other words, no essential or coherent identity – multiplies (infinitely) the possibilities of alterity. At the same time, recontextualizing capitalism in a discourse of economic plurality destabilizes its presumptive hegemony. Hegemony becomes a feature not of capitalism itself but of a social articulation that is only temporarily fixed and always under subversion; and alternative economic discourses become the sites and instruments of struggles that may subvert capitalism's provisional and unstable dominance (if indeed such dominance is understood to exist).

Strategy 3: Overdetermination as an anti-essentialist practice

The capitalism whose hegemony is intrinsic never attains full concreteness. Its concrete manifestations, its local and historical contextualizations, are always only modifications or elaborations of a dominance that already (abstractly) exists.[32] When capitalism is unified by an abstract self-resemblance, a conceptual zone is liberated from contradiction. Each time the name of capitalism is invoked, a familiar figure is (re)imposed on the social landscape.

For capitalism to exist in difference – as a set of concrete specificities, or a category in self-contradiction – it becomes necessary to think the radical emptiness of every capitalist instance. Thus a capitalist site (a firm, industry, or economy) or a capitalist practice (exploitation of wage labor, distribution of surplus value) cannot appear as the concrete embodiment of an abstract capitalist essence. It has no invariant "inside" but is constituted by its continually changing and contradictory

[30] The similarity here to anti-essentialist reconceptualizations of "woman" should be apparent. As sexual dimorphism has increasingly become understood as a discursive construct, it has become more difficult to see gender as socially constructed and mutable in contrast to the supposedly immutable (because biologically given) category of sex. Thus, there is a tendency now to recognize as "women" those individuals who are temporarily identified by themselves and others as women (who are, in Althusser's terms [1971], interpellated by the ideology of binary gender) rather than to define the category in some invariant way. No commonality unifies all the instances of "woman" in this anti-essentialist formulation.

[31] This is a project which is arguably being undertaken by those working on capitalist embeddedness or "different capitalisms" (see, for example, Mitchell 1995 and chapter 8).

[32] Usually this dominance is guaranteed by a logic of profitability, a telos of expansion, an imperative of accumulation, a structure of ownership and control, or some other essential quality or feature.

"outsides."[33] In the words of Althusser, the "existing conditions" are its "conditions of existence" (1969: 208). In the terms that Althusser appropriated from psychoanalysis, reappropriated and reformulated by later Althusserians, a capitalist site or practice is "overdetermined": entirely (rather than residually) constituted by all other practices, processes, events.[34] The practice of social theory and analysis involves specifying and exploring some of these constitutive relations. This practice cannot build upon a secure epistemological foundation, or orient itself around an ontological given. It is itself a process of radical construction.

Through the theoretical lens of overdetermination, a capitalist site is an irreducible specificity. We may no more assume that a capitalist firm is interested in maximizing profits or exploitation than we may assume that an individual woman wants to bear and raise children, or that an American is interested in making money. When we refer to an economy-wide imperative of capital accumulation, we stand on the same unsafe ground (in the context of the anti-essentialist presumption of overdetermination) that we tread when we refer to a maternal instinct or a human drive to acquisition. If we define capitalist sites as involving the appropriation or distribution of surplus value, we cannot make any invariant associations between this process and particular structures of ownership, or distributions of power (or anything else), just as when we identify women by the wearing of dresses, we cannot draw any necessary conclusions about what's in the mind or under the skirt.

When Capitalism gives way to an array of capitalist differences, its noncapitalist other is released from singularity and subjection, becoming potentially visible as a differentiated multiplicity. And here the question

[33] This is the meaning of the concept of overdetermination elaborated by Resnick and Wolff (1987). As a theoretical starting place or ontological presumption, overdetermination involves an understanding of identities as continually and differentially constituted rather than as pre-existing their contexts or as having an invariant core. While it is quite common today to recognize "woman" as a term that lacks a stable referent, given the feminist and other work that has gone into producing anti-essentialist conceptions of personal identity, other kinds of identities – especially those that have a certain theoretical standing – may seem more justifiably construed as entailing sameness and invariance as a condition of intelligibility. We do not wish to deny that sameness is one of the conditions of meaning, but we would understand it more as an enabling belief (that we are talking about the same thing) than as an actual state of ontological or conceptual "commonality." Furthermore, we believe that it is as important for leftists to decenter and destabilize "capitalism" as it has been for many feminists to undermine the presumed commonalities of "women."

[34] If overdetermination appears to conflict with the requirement of categorical invariance, that is precisely its function as a positive practice of anti-essentialism (see footnote 33 and chapter 2).

becomes, how might we want to specify their positive (if not finally definitive) beings? For certainly economic space could be divided and differentiated in any number of ways, some of which may be already quite familiar.[35] In this book we have chosen to proliferate differences in the dimension of class, but this is only one potential matrix of differentiation.

Strategy 4: Elaborating a theory of economic difference

Drawing on the Marxian tradition, which they understand as encompassing an existing discourse of economic difference, Stephen Resnick and Richard Wolff distinguish a variety of economic processes including (1) the appropriation of surplus labor and (2) its distribution, which they identify as "class" processes (these are the exploitative and distributive processes that Marx explored in their capitalist forms in volumes I and III of *Capital*). When individuals labor beyond what is necessary for their own reproduction and the "surplus" fruits of their labor are appropriated by others (or themselves), and when that surplus is distributed to its social destinations, then we may recognize the processes of class.[36]

Class processes of exploitation and surplus distribution can be understood as potentially taking place in all sites where work is performed – households, family businesses, communal or collective enterprises, churches, schools, capitalist firms and all the other sites of economic activity that are generally subsumed under the umbrella of "capitalism."[37] But by differentiating and separating the various forms of class processes, we create the possibility of theorizing the interactions between them.

[35] Theorizing difference in processes of exchange, for example, we are at once confronted with the traditional distinction between commodity and noncommodity exchange; and the domain of commodity exchange is itself fractured by a variety of class relations, since commodities (goods and services transacted in a market) may be produced under familial, capitalist, independent, slave and other relations of production. Certainly, there is "nothing simple" about a commodity.

[36] In this anti-essentialist formulation the appropriation of surplus labor is not conflated with power or property relations in the definition of class (see Wolff and Resnick 1986; Resnick and Wolff 1987; and chapter 3).

[37] As an example of noncapitalist activity subsumed to capitalism, Watts describes contract farmers in Gambia as "nominally independent growers [who] retain the illusion of autonomy but have become in practice what Lenin labeled 'propertied proletarians', de facto workers cultivating company crops on private allotments" (Pred and Watts 1992: 82). While Lenin was interested in demonstrating the extent of capitalist penetration and proletarianization as an indication of revolutionary readiness, it is not clear why Watts would want to argue that these instances of contract farming should be seen as subsumed to, rather than as different from and articulated with, capitalist practices and institutions.

This move also undermines the presumptive or inherent dominance of capitalist class relations. When capitalism is represented as one among many forms of economy (characterized, say, by the presence of wage labor and the appropriation of surplus labor in value form), its hegemony must be theorized rather than presupposed. Economic sites that have usually been seen as homogeneously capitalist may be re-envisioned as sites of economic difference, where a variety of capitalist and noncapitalist class processes interact.

One example may convey some of the potential power of such a re-envisioning. In chapter 6, where we examine discourses of globalization, we briefly consider the international finance sector, which is often represented as the ultimate flowering of capitalism. Yet what can we say is necessarily capitalist about this industry, if we examine – with an eye to theorizing economic difference – its production relations, the sources of its revenues, and the destinations of its loans and investments? To the extent that firms in the finance sector are engaged in commodity production, some will be capitalist sites where surplus labor is appropriated as surplus value from employees whereas others will be sites of independent commodity production – for example, the personal investment manager who is a self-employed entrepreneur and appropriates her own surplus labor – and therefore noncapitalist. Other noncapitalist enterprises within the industry will be the sites of collective production and appropriation of surplus labor.[38] It is not clear what it means to call the industry capitalist given these differences in production relations, except that it entails obscuring rather than illuminating plurality and difference. Moreover the revenues that are accrued by the industry can be viewed as having entirely heterogeneous sources (some are distributions of surplus value in the form of interest payments from capitalist enterprises; some come from noncapitalist enterprises including independent producers, sites of enslavement and sites of collective or communal surplus appropriation; some are consumer interest payments, that is, nonclass revenues in the terms of Resnick and Wolff and therefore neither capitalist nor noncapitalist). Finally, the investment and lending activity undertaken by the industry can be seen as an unruly generative force that is not entirely disciplined by the imperative of capitalist reproduction.

Indeed, it is easy to tell a story that highlights the unprecedented opportunities this industry has created for the development of noncapitalist class relations: for instance, the huge increase in "consumer" credit has made it much easier for small businesses (including collectives and

[38] Partnerships, for example, in which the surplus – including profit – is jointly appropriated and decisions about its distribution are jointly made.

self-employed producers as well as small capitalist firms) to obtain needed inputs like equipment and supplies through credit card purchases. This growth in unmonitored business lending has undoubtedly contributed to the success and viability of a large number of noncapitalist enterprises, and especially to the growing practice of self-employment. Thus even if one theorizes the finance industry itself as thoroughly capitalist, it can be represented as existing in a process of self-contradiction rather than self-replication – in the sense that it is a condition of existence of noncapitalist as well as capitalist activities and relations. A frothy spawn of economic diversity slips out from under the voluminous skirts of the (demon capitalist) finance industry.

In the context of a capitalist monolith, where class is reduced to two fundamental class positions, sometimes supplemented by intermediate or ambiguous class locations, individuals are often seen as members of an objectively defined or subjectively identified social grouping that constitutes their "class." In the discursive space of diverse class processes, on the other hand, individuals may participate in a variety of class processes at one moment and over time. Their class identities are therefore potentially multiple and shifting.[39] Their class struggles (over exploitation, or over the distribution of its fruits) may be interpersonal and may not necessarily involve affiliation with a group.[40] What this means for a politics of class transformation is interesting but of course uncertain. It is clear, however, that a discourse of class exploitation and surplus distribution – and the theoretical vision of the variety of their forms – might enable some individuals to understand their economic experience as both a domain of difference and a region of possibility: the possibility, for example, of establishing communal or collective forms of appropriation, or becoming self-appropriating, or reducing the surplus that is appropriated by others, or changing the destination and size of surplus distributions.[41] How these possibilities might articulate with visions (and realities) of economic "improvement" or "liberation" or "equality" is an open question. The answers to this question are to be

[39] For example, a person may appropriate surplus labor from a partner at home, produce surplus labor at a capitalist place of work, and both produce and appropriate surplus labor as a self-employed entrepreneur. None of these class positions confers a fixed or singular class identity. Within one individual multiple class identities will overdetermine and contradict one another, as well as other positions of the subject.

[40] In chapter 3 we offer an extended discussion of class.

[41] Here we might imagine new sorts of alliances between managers and unions, for example, in capitalist firms, who might have common interests in reducing distributions of surplus value to financiers and instituting an Employee Stock Ownership Plan or other arrangement through which distributions to both unionized and non-unionized employees would be increased (see chapter 8).

constructed not only in theory but also perhaps through an anticapitalist politics of economic innovation.[42]

Strategy 5: Making do with the wreckage and rudiments

This book is founded upon a desire for deliverance from a capitalist present and future that offers little possibility of escape. But to the extent that we gain a certain freedom through the thinking and writing of the book, we lose as a consequence the positive force of our desire. We may struggle and strain to banish a hideous monster from our economic space. But our attempts at banishment and evacuation leave us in an impoverished landscape, full of lackluster abstractions ("difference") and emaciated categories ("noncapitalist class processes"). Freedom from "capitalism" has perhaps become imaginable (freedom at least of a discursive sort). But we leave behind us a creature larger than life and twice as exciting, to enter into a starveling's embrace.

Nevertheless we have embarked, or opened the possibility of embarking, upon a project that has a discernible logic and momentum. That project is to produce economic knowledge within (and by developing) a discourse of economic difference, and specifically a discourse of class.[43] At the outset, class as a category seems mundane and uncompelling, shorn of the consequence and privilege it enjoyed as the principal axis of antagonism in a unified capitalist space. The different forms of class processes are merely part of an "economy" that encompasses innumerable other processes – exchange, speculation, waste, production, plunder, consumption, hoarding, innovation, competition, predation – none of which can be said (outside of a particular discursive or political context) to be less important or consequential than exploitation. Situating and specifying class (and differentiating the many noncapitalist forms of class relations) is a theoretical process that involves discursively constructing the connections and contradictions between class and other social processes and relations, over small or great spans of space and time. In this process, the emaciated class categories will take on flesh. As they become embedded in stories and contexts, their emptinesses will be filled, their skeletal outlines plumped up by their "constitutive outsides." They will gather meaning and visibility, import and inflection. Narratives and

[42] Of course the eradication of capitalism may not be the object of such political projects, once capitalism is dissociated from images of necessary rapacity and predation, and from related tendencies toward economic monism or hegemonism.

[43] In this latter effort we are not alone (see, for example, the journal *Rethinking Marxism*). See also Gibson-Graham et al. (1997) where we bring together writings on class, economic difference, and subjectivity.

social representations of existing and potential alternatives to capitalism may begin to resonate, to generate affect, to interpellate subjects, to ignite desire. In other words, they may become compelling, just as so many representations of capitalism now are.

Here at the outset, however, the Identity of "capitalism" is for us much more compelling than the non-identity of "different class processes." We are still attuned to social narratives and images in which capitalism constitutes a powerful and pervasive presence, one whose social and economic ramifications are largely malign. Such representations call forth intense feelings and interpellate us as revolutionary antagonists to a capitalist economic system. In the absence of a "capitalist system" and the narratives that constitute and attend it, we feel an absence of the political emotions that are traditionally associated with anticapitalist politics. In slaying the capitalist monster, we have eliminated as well the subject position of its opponent.

This suggests that we may need to produce a noncapitalist economic imaginary in the absence of desire (or in the presence of multiple and contradictory desires). Whereas we may "desire" the "capitalist totality" because of the powerful antagonistic sentiments we feel in its vicinity, we may not want to live with it. We may want instead a landscape of economic difference, in the presence of which paradoxically we feel no desire. The process of social representation calls forth and constitutes desiring subjects – persons with economic, professional, sexual, political, and innumerable other compulsions and desires. But the representation of noncapitalist class processes has barely begun. Developing an economic imaginary populated with "friendly monsters" of the noncapitalist sort is itself a project – only minimally engaged in this book but underway in other locations – that has the potential to create new political subjects and desires.

For now, in this book, we will take only a few initial and rudimentary steps. We must starve capitalism's bloated body and invigorate its "constitutive outside" – these are the conditions of both envisioning "different capitalisms" and constituting a positive space of noncapitalist economic difference. Through this project of undermining and construction, we may begin the process of engendering new political visions, projects and emotions. Luckily this is a project we do not undertake by ourselves.

Representations of capitalism as political culture: a road map

We have chosen to focus this book primarily upon representations of capitalism, which we see as a formidable obstacle to theorizing and envisioning economic (and specifically class) difference. In terms of

the strategies set forth in this chapter, then, we have largely pursued strategies 1 through 3. These involve us in delineating the object of our critique (the hideous and hegemonic monster) and in undermining the representational coherences, correspondences and naturalizations that attend it.

So many and mutually reinforcing are the representations of capitalism, and so diverse are their origins and confluences, that we have sometimes felt quite daunted in the face of the capitalist eminence. Much as we now see economic development politics as taking on "the economy" in localized skirmishes, we have seen ourselves as taking on "capitalism" in brief bouts and fragmentary encounters. These small ways of contending with a large creature, linked together as the chapters of a book, may present both gaps and overlaps to a reader. We can only hope that she or he will experience the former as relief and the latter as needed reinforcement.

In a sense, the book starts with chapter 11, which began its life as a talk at a large conference on Marxism. Attempting to understand why there might be so much antagonism to capitalism, but at the same time so little politics focused on constructing noncapitalist alternatives, the chapter addresses the ways in which certain kinds of Marxian economic theory have become an obstacle rather than a spur to anticapitalist political projects. We see chapter 11 as a kind of companion to this first chapter, encapsulating the themes and import of the book. One way to read the book might be to read chapter 11 next.

Chapter 2 finds its companion in chapter 10, in the sense that they are both focused on methods of "deconstruction" and categorical destabilization. In the earlier chapter we explore the Althusserian concept and practice of overdetermination – its potential both for emptying the category "capitalism" and for filling it up differently. Chapter 10 finds in Derrida's recent book on Marx certain instabilities in the category "capitalism" that represent traces of or openings for noncapitalism in the present and proximate future.

Chapter 3 introduces "class" in its anti-essentialist conceptualization, suggesting a range of noncapitalist class relations on the contemporary economic scene. But we must look to chapter 9 for a fully developed exploration of a noncapitalist class process and its interactions with a capitalist one.

In chapter 8, which is also an offspring of chapter 3, we consider distributive class processes and explore capitalism itself as a difference. This chapter represents the capitalist enterprise as a decentered and differentiated site, where the process of exploitation (the production and appropriation of surplus value) can be seen as producing a "condensation" of wealth. Focusing on the enterprise as a collection point

from which wealth is dispersed in any number of directions, it suggests some of the contours of a new class politics of distribution.

In chapter 4 we explore both metaphorical and social space as colonies of capitalism and the phallus, where all objects are located and identified with respect to these master terms. Inspired by feminist representations of space and the body, we attempt to imagine spaces of becoming and difference, perhaps harboring or generative of noncapitalist forms. These themes are taken up in chapter 6 on globalization, where we attempt to undermine the "rape script" that structures globalization stories as narratives of capitalist penetration and dissemination.

In chapter 5 we interrogate the body metaphors that inform economic policy discourse, recognizing in systemic and organicist conceptions some of the origins of economic monism. In addition, we examine the ladder of evolution that sets economic development upon a single path (with capitalist development as its pinnacle). Drawing upon feminist rethinkings of the body and upon nonlinear conceptions of biological evolution, we attempt to undermine the notion of a unitary and centered (capitalist) economy pursuing a unidirectional development trajectory.

Following and extending the arguments of chapter 5, chapter 7 takes on the discourses of Fordism and post-Fordism, scrutinizing not only the conceptions of economic totality they embody but also the economic activism they have engendered. In both theory and practice, these discourses can be seen to be conditions of capitalist reproduction.

Each of these chapters represents a skirmish with the capitalist beast. In every encounter we depict the object of our obsession as powerful and well developed, but we also try to muzzle and silence it. Rather than giving it a platform from which to speak its dominance, as leftists including ourselves have often done, we enshroud it in a productive silence, in order that glimmers and murmurings of noncapitalism might be seen or heard. Perhaps these glimpses and low sounds will be tantalizing (or frustrating) enough to inspire some others to pursue them.