Modern European Philosophy

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Abstract

This chapter reviews four books published in 2018 which are not readily categorized as works in 'modern European philosophy': Gurminder K. Bhambra, Kerem Nişancloğlu, and Dalia Gebrial's edited volume *Decolonising the University*, Chantal Mouffe's *For a Left Populism*, Cinzia Arruzza, Tithi Bhattacharya, and Nancy Fraser's *Feminism for the 99%*, and Andreas Malm's *The Progress of this Storm*. Yet their uneasy relationship to this philosophy is precisely the reason they constitute a significant contribution to it. The philosophical originality and critical purchase of these books proceed from the fact that each is a singular case of philosophy's dependence on 'non-philosophy'; each exposes the impossibility of viewing philosophy as a self-sufficient discipline. In particular, they are a timely reminder that the best political philosophy is produced through actually existing social movements to change (which ecologically now means simply saving) the world. The chapter is divided into six sections: 1. Introduction; 2. Decolonizing Philosophy: *Decolonising the University*; 3. Anti-Post-Politics: *For a Left Populism*; 4. Anti-Post-Marxism: *Feminism for the 99%*; 5. Anti-Postmodernism: *The Progress of This Storm*; 6. Conclusion.

1. Introduction

In last year's modern European philosophy chapter for the *YWCCT*, Lucie Mercier and I took the occasion of two significant anniversaries within Marxism (150 years since the publication of Marx's *Capital* and 100 years since the Russian Revolution) to revisit the meaning of 'Marxist philosophy', insofar as this philosophy remains tethered to the intractable question of its very possibility. Each in its own way, the works we examined exemplified the twofold tension at the heart of 'Marxist philosophy': first with

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transformative political practice, and second with the history of philosophy. Marxism has and will always have an unsettled relationship with philosophy: simultaneously inside and outside philosophy, it constitutes a host of problems for philosophy that, more often than not, can only be articulated with philosophy. This deeply ambiguous situation has prompted some Marxists, such as Georges Labica, to state that Marx's 'science of history' (his materialism) relegates all philosophy to ideology, rendering the notion of a 'Marxist philosophy' absurd, whereas it incited others, such as Herbert Marcuse, to contend that Marx allows us to realize philosophy as a concrete mode of human existence, one which makes visible the distress of our contemporary moment.

This year's chapter reframes, modifies, and expands this problematic. Like last year's, it considers what might be called the 'philosophy–non-philosophy relationship': all four books under consideration here generate substantial and provocative philosophical insights because they are *not* (commonly construed) philosophical works. This point is not made to appeal to inter- and cross-disciplinarity. Rather, the point is that *Decolonising the University* philosophizes more about education, *For a Left Populism* and *Feminism for the 99%* more about politics, and *The Progress of This Storm* more about mind and environment than the majority of works in 2018 in the philosophy of education, political philosophy, and so on, by virtue of *their immanence to the concrete distress* of their historical presents. In this sense, this chapter agrees with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *What Is Philosophy?* (1996), but on the condition that the 'non-philosophical' and 'non-philosopher' are explicitly understood as bearers of transformative political practice: 'The non-philosophical is perhaps closer to the heart of philosophy than philosophy itself [. . .] the philosopher must become non-philosopher, so that non-philosophy becomes the ground and the people of philosophy' (*What Is Philosophy?*, pp. 41, 109). This is all the more crucial with modern *European* philosophy: the future relevance of this field is bound to the non-philosophical, not because this practical wellspring will help secure its European status, but because it has the potential to foster its destruction. The future of philosophy hinges on its decolonization, and the fight against neoliberalism—thematized by all of these books—is part and parcel of this.

2. Decolonizing Philosophy: Decolonising the University

Decolonising the University is an edited collection that brings together nineteen different authors doing decolonial work within the 'home of the coloniser'.

The result is an impressive volume that reflects seriously, but encouragingly, on the current state of decolonizing work to transform the Western neoliberal university. It is grounded by a series of concrete political and pedagogical agendas and strategies, guided by the need 'to question the epistemological authority assigned uniquely to the Western university as the privileged site of knowledge production and to contribute to the broader project of decolonising through a discussion of strategies and interventions emanating from within the imperial metropoles' (p. 3). Gurminder K. Bhambra, Dalia Gebrial, and Kerem Nişancıoğlu use their introduction to insist on a decolonial politics based in various forms of anti-racist critique and activism. They situate their argument in the imperative, after Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, to go beyond '"decolonization as a metaphor"', but are also careful to problematize any substantive claims which might reduce decolonial rubrics 'to a historically specific and geographically particular articulation of the colonial project' (pp. 4–5).

As is to be demanded from a text that is grounded in plurality and positionality, individual chapters vary greatly in terms of scope, methodology, epistemology, and tone, but they are held together by a shared commitment to transformative political practice. The false idol of diversification comes in for particular scrutiny in many of the chapters; for instance, Rosalba Icaza and Rolando Vázquez maintain that '[t]he "exhibition" of diversity is another form of exclusion' (p. 118). Another unifying theme is the unrelenting push of the Western neoliberal university towards marketization, financialization, opaque manageriality, and increased reliance on precarious and exploited labour. In particular, John Holmwood takes a detailed look such changes in US and UK higher education, charting the rise and intensification of the neoliberal model. Holmwood contrasts current market-governed Western institutions with 'the public university' grounded in public goods and social rights. He stresses the evolution of university education as primarily an 'individual choice'—i.e. a personal investment in making oneself more marketable. These developments, he argues, are 'not neutral with regard to issues of race and ethnicity' (p. 44). Holmwood ultimately makes the point that it is precisely the claim to 'race blindness' which allows the neoliberal university to perpetuate structural racism. He pays particular attention to inclusions of overseas students and changes to fees/funding that use claims of formalized equality to conceal the drive for increased profit and maintain existing racialized structural inequalities. In short, 'personal responsibility is the ideology that maintains the status quo, not the means of challenging it' (pp. 43–47).

Similar themes are examined by Angela Last. She analyses 'internationalization' as both a tactical broadening of the student market by metropole institutions and a mode of demonstrating 'research excellence' (inevitably measured by reductive criteria). She discusses the difficulties of international academic research and publishing, contending that, amongst other imperial tendencies, academics in both the global North and South face continued pressures to publish within the global North (p. 209). An increased demand for (fashionable and marketable) transregional and interdisciplinary projects is accompanied by unreasonable individual publication and financial targets rendering truly collaborative decolonizing work almost impossible (p. 217). It is through a recourse to 'care' that Last offers some possibilities for resistance and change (pp. 118–224).

The opening chapter, by Gebrial, is a case study of the recent campaign at Oxford University to remove the statue of the imperialist and racist magnate Cecil Rhodes from a university building. Uniting behind this demand, campaigners stood in solidarity with the 2015 movement to remove a Rhodes statue from South Africa's Oriel College, from which they took the name Rhodes Must Fall. The overview of the Rhodes Must Fall Oxford (RMFO) campaign in *Decolonising the University* highlights the privileged place granted to the mainstream media, over and above any discussion of debates internal to the institution. In doing so, Gebrial draws out the irony of one primary reaction to RMFO—the levelling of accusations of censorship against the movement: 'where great concern was expressed over whether the removal and recontextualization of Rhodes's statue would erase "history", little curiosity was ever shown towards what histories were and continue to be suppressed by the statue's very existence as a glorifying tribute' (p. 27).

Rosalba Icaza and Rolando Vázquez share their experiences of decolonializing diversity initiatives at the University of Amsterdam. They offer a useful analytic framework for thinking through and carrying out decolonizing research through pedagogies of 'positionality', 'participation', and 'transition' (pp. 119–20). A similar theme is taken up by Carol Azumah Dennis, who explores the under-studied relationship between the political and the pedagogical by insisting on the continuity between them (pp. 190–202). Dennis speaks of 'invading the space of the "unmarked scholar"' (p. 192), and draws upon Ubuntu pedagogy in order to reflect on how we might ground education as '"knowledge-as-intervention-in-reality", not "knowledge-as-a-representation-of-reality"' (pp. 201–02). Concluding with ten action points, her opening recommendation for decolonizing pedagogy is to 'establish a space within which it is possible to speak about decolonisation. This may require a rejection of the most readily and easily available spaces,

necessitating the deliberate cultivation of an undercommons, or an otherwise space' (p. 202). The double movement of infiltration of the institution and departure from its self-defined boundary is evident in other chapters of *Decolonising the University*. For example, in 'Asylum University', Kolar Aparna and Olivier Kramsch provide a rich discussion of marginality through their experiences of engaging the refugee community in, through, and beyond the university (pp. 93–105).

For our direct purposes, *Decolonising the University* is crucial for three reasons. First, the editors single out modern European philosophy as the only academic discipline to receive (or, better, to require) a dedicated chapter; second, whereas philosophy *should* be the disciplinary home for a metacritique of knowledge production, *Decolonising the University* clearly demonstrates that it is not; and third, an array of concepts emerges from this volume which contain a wealth of philosophical potential, but which are either underdeveloped or outright neglected within the modern European philosophical canon. These concepts include the aforementioned 'ubuntu' (Dennis), 'asylum' (as a philosophical lens of interpretation), 'openness' (interrogated in terms of pedagogical practices), Sylvia Wynter's conception of the 'demonic ground', Enrique Dussel's notion of 'analectics', 'storytelling' (as an indigenizing and decolonizing pedagogic method), 'undone science' (used to reframe colonial violence and institutional racism from outside academic thought), 'refusal' (a strategy imbued with power and nuance), and, as previously mentioned, the 'unmarked scholar'.

In their chapter 'Decolonising Philosophy', Nelson Maldonado-Torres, Rafael Vizcaíno, Jasmine Wallace, and Jeong Eun Annabel We explore possible avenues for new philosophical production, particularly through contributions from Asian and Latin American philosophical traditions. They begin their chapter by arguing that specific scrutiny of philosophy is warranted because '[it] remains a bastion of Eurocentrism, whiteness in general, and white heteronormative male structural privilege and superiority in particular'; hence, 'it becomes all the more necessary not simply to diversify philosophy, but to decolonise it' (pp. 64–65). Uncoincidentally, philosophy maintains a seemingly 'special place among the discourses in the liberal arts because it focuses on the roots of the university at large: reason' (p. 66). The 'sanctity' of modern European philosophy is fuelled by the privilege accorded to it as the ground of knowledge production, rendering its decolonization all the more urgent, and yet it was, from the nineteenth century onwards, at the vanguard of bracketing various 'decolonial [turns] [. . .] that challenged modernity/coloniality' (p. 68), choosing instead to give other 'turns', such as the transcendental, linguistic, and phenomenological, pride

of place on the intellectual and political horizon. This was later exacerbated by the continental/analytic 'split' in philosophy, wherein adherents to the former, especially Marxists, found themselves excluded from Anglo-American philosophy departments during and after the Cold War, leaving the disciples of the latter, with their fetishization of formal logic, the perfect custodians (to this day) of resistance against decolonization.

Maldonado-Torres, Vizcaíno, Wallace, and We demonstrate how European colonization laid the groundwork for 'philosophical production in Latin America [being] often looked at as if it is either too indistinguishable from European thought, although dependent and inferior, or too different and exotic (especially Indigenous philosophies), to the point where it is not taken as legitimate philosophy' (p. 75). The importance of Dussel's aforementioned concept of 'analectics' is that, as an essential register of Latin American liberation philosophy, it constitutes a 'serious attempt to dwell in the constitutive outside of modernity' (p. 76). It has the capacity, therefore, to decolonize philosophy, insofar as it departs from 'the zone of violence and ontological erasure' of the colonial 'underside of modernity' (p. 77). Yet far from privileging a 'pure position of exteriority' (p. 76), the analectic method—demonstrated by its confrontation with, for instance, Frankfurt school critical theory—generates new, transdisciplinary forms of knowledge because it unavoidably 'dislodges' modern European philosophy 'from the very start' (p. 79). It is not anti-dialectical per se, but rather dialectically enriches 'dialectics [. . .] with "the affirmation of the Exteriority of the Other"', which carries with it the possibility of a truly *other* world' (p. 77). In other words, analectics discloses that decolonizing philosophy is a necessarily transdisciplinary struggle: it requires modern European philosophy to 'engage in an open dialogue with other geographies of reason' (p. 79). *Decolonising the University* is consequently a significant philosophical contribution to the non-philosophical.

3. Anti-Post-Politics: For a Left Populism

For a Left Populism charts a different (patently Eurocentric, first of all) route. It is an unmistakable descendant of the political philosophy which Chantal Mouffe, with Ernesto Laclau, introduced in their acclaimed *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (1985). Indeed, *For a Left Populism* should be read as the *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* for the early twenty-first century, when neoliberalism is not only consolidated as the global predominant political and economic ideology, but is now historical enough to have been beset by a series of systemic crises, largely of its own

making. Following *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, *For a Left Populism* is driven by an appeal to overcome the 'essentialist perspective dominant in left thinking'; Marxism's 'class essentialism' (p. 2) is the clear target here. *For a Left Populism*, like *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, is therefore a decidedly, and unapologetically, post-Marxist piece of political philosophy: the thirty-three years separating these two works have done little to make Mouffe waver in her commitment to a political discourse analysis based in post-structuralism, coupled with a singular appropriation of the concept of 'hegemony' at the core of Antonio Gramsci's philosophy.

Both works are purportedly guided by an 'alternative "anti-essentialist" approach apt to grasp the multiplicity of struggles against different forms of domination', struggles whose overriding political character is best grasped as a 'radicalization of democracy' (p. 2). This radicalization—an 'emancipatory project' for Mouffe—departs in significant ways from traditional socialist (Marxist) political projects. It rejects the notion that the state must be eliminated (p. 3), and not only accepts but embraces the liberal-democratic philosophical tradition, albeit in a highly modified form: economic liberalism and its grounding in capitalism are scrapped, but political liberalism and its ideals of freedom, equality, and popular sovereignty are to be rescued from neoliberalism's ongoing assault on them. This rescue will in turn yield a transformation of these ideals. Mouffe is not calling for a simple return to the postwar consensus between capital and labour (p. 52); the radicalization of democracy is more than a return to the Keynesian welfare nation-state.

Against the contemporary 'post-political' conjuncture underwritten and enforced by neoliberalism, where 'rational' policies are elaborated by technocratic experts (p. 4) wedded to the ongoing march of privatization and financialization, and expressly against the various right-wing populisms offering false solutions to the crises born of neoliberalism, Mouffe insists on 'the need to break with the post-political consensus and to reaffirm the partisan nature of politics in order to create the conditions of an "agonistic" debate about possible alternatives' (p. 5). Neoliberalism and its crises have created a new historical conjuncture—a populist moment—which has, to date, been dominated by the right. It is thus imperative to establish a left alternative—a 'left populism'—'understood as a discursive strategy of construction of the political frontier between "the people" and "the oligarchy"' which 'around democracy as the hegemonic signifier, [creates] a chain of equivalence among the manifold struggles against subordination' (pp. 5–6). Determinate empirico-social categories—first and foremost 'class'—no longer hold pride of place. Instead, a 'left populism' is a fundamentally 'transversal' movement that understands 'the people' as 'a discursive

construction resulting from a "chain of equivalence" between heterogeneous demands whose unity is secured by the identification with a radical democratic conception of citizenship and a common opposition to the oligarchy' (p. 80).

Neoliberalism is transforming the contemporary historical moment into a post-democratic era, one that '[erodes] the two pillars of the democratic ideal: equality and popular sovereignty' (p. 13). In short, the defining feature of post-democracy is the collapse of the agonistic relationship between political liberalism (rule of law, separation of powers, and individual freedoms) and the democratic tradition (equality, popular sovereignty) (p. 14). The constitutive tension between these two traditions—which 'defines the originality of liberal democracy as a *politeia*, a form of political community, that guarantees its pluralistic character' (p. 15)—is being torn asunder by neoliberalism:

> The current situation can be described as 'post-democracy' because in recent years, as a consequence of neoliberal hegemony, the agonistic tension between the liberal and democratic principles, which is constitutive of liberal democracy, has been eliminated. With the demise of the democratic values of equality and popular sovereignty, the agonistic spaces where different projects of society could confront each other have disappeared and citizens have been deprived of the possibility of exercising their democratic rights. To be sure, 'democracy' is still spoken of, but it has been reduced to its liberal component and it only signifies the presence of free elections and the defence of human rights. What has become increasingly central is economic liberalism with its defence of the free market, and many aspects of political liberalism have been relegated to second place, if not simply eliminated. This is what I mean by 'post-democracy'. (p. 16)

A left populism—which today can be seen in Greece's Syriza, Spain's Podemos, and Britain's Labour—must learn how to articulate a response to today's post-democratic situation, and do so in a way that exposes its fundamental difference from right populism, a difference which 'lies in the composition of the "we" and in how the adversary, the "they", is defined' (p. 23). The difference between right and left populism comes down to the fact that the latter 'wants to recover democracy to deepen and extend it' (p. 24).

How do we realize a democratic-emancipatory transition from neoliberalism? Mouffe points in a very surprising direction in order to answer

this question: Margaret Thatcher. Again echoing *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (written during the height of Thatcher's neoliberal offensive), Mouffe suggests that the constitution of a new historical bloc (Gramsci), one that would realize a new hegemonic radicalization of democracy, might follow the strategic example set by Thatcherism in the early 1980s, wherein established social-democratic values were successfully uprooted—'discursively reconfigured'—by the new common sense (Gramsci) of individual liberty (Friedrich Hayek was Thatcher's philosophical inspiration) (pp. 30–31). Within the span of just a few years, 'the idea of democracy [became] secondary to the idea of individual liberty' (p. 31), with the extent of the consent manufactured within the British public exemplified by the near-wholesale acceptance of the neoliberal model by Tony Blair and 'New Labour' by the 1990s (Thatcher famously stated that this was her greatest achievement) (p. 32).

For Mouffe, we should 'learn from' and 'follow' (p. 35) Thatcher's route, 'adopting a populist strategy, but this time with a progressive objective, intervening on a multiplicity of fronts to build a new hegemony aiming at recovering and deepening democracy' (p. 35). 'This', she maintains, 'will necessitate a far-reaching transformation of the existing relations of power and the creation of new democratic practices, but I contend that it does not require a "revolutionary" break with the liberal-democratic regime' (p. 36). Indeed, revolution is unequivocally ruled out as a means of radicalizing democracy throughout *For a Left Populism* (Mouffe unambiguously 'rejects the false dilemma between reform and revolution' (p. 45)). What is instead necessary is democracy's 'recovery' (p. 37) from its command and perversion by neoliberalism, and thereby the restoration of the agonistic tension of politics itself.

Precisely what Mouffe means by 'radicalizing democracy'—or more specifically, the 'radicalization' of the 'ethico-political principles' of liberal democracy, 'liberty and equality for all' (p. 39)—is again animated by the non-/anti-revolutionary position which she and Laclau first articulated in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (for her, 'revolution' is synonymous with the 'total refoundation' (p. 40) and 'total rupture' (p. 46) of the prevailing hegemonic order). Radicalizing democracy denotes the 'fight for [the] effective implementation' of freedom, equality, and popular sovereignty 'through an immanent critique that mobilizes the symbolic resources of the democratic tradition' (p. 40). The 'role played by the signifier "democracy" in the political imaginary' (p. 41) is of tantamount importance: it functions as the 'discursive "exterior" from which the discourse of subordination can be interrupted' (p. 42), and, when restored alongside its

rightful identity with equal rights, will 'command a very different politics and inform different socioeconomic practices than when democracy was articulated with the free market, private property and unfettered individualism' (p. 44). The objective is not 'the *seizure* of state power but, as Gramsci put it, one of "*becoming* state"', such that 'radicalizing democracy' is in fact an engagement 'with the diverse state apparatuses in order to transform them, so as to make the state a vehicle for the expression of the manifold of democratic demands' (p. 47). 'What is important [. . .] is the recognition that "democracy" is the hegemonic signifier around which [. . .] diverse struggles are articulated and that political liberalism is not discarded' (p. 51). In other words, there is for Mouffe 'no necessary relationship between capitalism and liberal democracy', 'no reason to assume that the working class has an *a priori* privileged role in the anti-capitalist struggle' (pp. 48–49). 'Indeed, there are no *a priori* privileged places in the anti-capitalist struggle' (p. 48), which, as we will see, stands in clear opposition to the arguments of Arruzza, Bhattacharya, and Fraser's *Feminism for the 99%* and Malm's *The Progress of This Storm* (on the condition that any '*a priori*' is already always understood, after Michel Foucault, as a historical *a priori*).

Anyone familiar with Mouffe's work is familiar with the influence wielded by poststructuralism and Gramsci's political philosophy (to be clear, Mouffe's 'Gramsci' is shorn of his dedication to Marxist—communist—revolution, registered by the political concept of hegemony). *For a Left Populism* is no exception: the conceptual presence of 'discursive constructions' and 'imbrications' of multiple social agents in plural and competing power relations, and thereby hegemonic projects situated in different historical blocs, is palpable. But in order to realize the full range of philosophical influences on *For a Left Populism*, and with it on Mouffe's work more generally, it is necessary to cast light on other figures (both acknowledged and not) which play a decisive role. When, for instance, Mouffe argues for the centrality of representation to the 'radicalization of democracy' (e.g. 'representative institutions play a crucial role' in fostering the 'conflictual dimension' of politics (p. 55), or a 'pluralist democratic society which does not envisage pluralism in a harmonious anti-political form and where the ever-present possibility of antagonism is acknowledged cannot exist without representation' (p. 56)), it is impossible not to detect the 'battleground of ideas' of Max Weber's political philosophy, and, more fundamentally, the friend/enemy distinction at the heart of Carl Schmitt's (who, curiously, is only mentioned in passing at the beginning of *For a Left Populism*). To state that 'it is urgent to restore the agonistic dynamics constitutive of a vibrant democracy' (p. 56), or that 'agonistic confrontation [. . .] is the very

condition of a vibrant democracy' (pp. 56–57), is to reproduce, albeit in a modified form, the theoretical function of Schmitt's friend/enemy distinction.

This is evidenced by Mouffe's appendix, 'An Agonistic Conception of Democracy', with its construction of a conceptual difference between 'agonism' and 'antagonism'. Mouffe undeniably inverts Schmitt's position on liberal pluralism: for Schmitt, liberalism is the depoliticizing discourse *par excellence* as it denies the friend/enemy distinction, whereas for Mouffe democratic pluralism is necessarily conflictual—and therefore political—because it institutionalizes 'an adversary whose existence is perceived as legitimate' (p. 91). Yet this inversion is still predicated on an ontological baseline (somewhat supra-historical, which threatens the historicity of her avowed 'anti-essentialism') of a 'we'/ they' distinction which is unmistakably Schmittian: 'the necessarily conflictual nature of pluralism' (p. 92), the 'ineradicability of antagonism' (p. 93), the 'political frontier separating the "we" from the "they"' as 'decisive in the construction of a "people"' (p. 63), and so forth. Indeed, the concept of the 'citizen'—central to Mouffe's project to radicalize democracy—is unintelligible in isolation from the agonistic confrontation.

In contrast to her unacknowledged dependence on Weber and Schmitt, Mouffe explicitly recognizes and engages other philosophical sources in her construction of 'the people' for left populism. Following her discussion of the 'libidinal investment at work in national [. . .] forms of identification' (p. 71), and hence the need to start at the level of the nation-state when radicalizing democracy, Mouffe draws on Sigmund Freud in order to highlight the importance of affect in the construction of political identities (indeed subjectivity more generally), invokes Baruch Spinoza's distinction between affection (*affectio*) and affect (*affectus*) in his *Ethics* to account for the 'motor of political action' (p. 74), and suggests that Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy of the inscription of discursive practices into language reveals that the allegiance to democratic values is as much, if not more, predicated on affective identification as it is on rational argumentation (p. 75). Building on previous summations of left populism that thematized hegemony (Gramsci) and agonism (Schmitt), we are now presented with a clearly affective articulation:

> A left populist strategy aims at the crystallization of a collective will sustained by common affects aspiring for a more democratic order. This requires the creation of a different regime of desire and affects through inscription in discursive/affective practices that will bring

> about new forms of identification [. . .] practices that would erode the common affects that sustain the neoliberal hegemony and create the conditions for a radicalization of democracy. (pp. 76–77)

This and the other summations of left populism share one common thread: 'post-Marxism'. *For a Left Populism* is shot through with suspicion of 'class' as a useful analytical or empirical category (coupled with depictions of new social movements as not class-based), reductions of the concept of 'revolution' to 'total refoundation' and 'total rupture', defences of the state, and the prioritization of 'ideas' over 'material determinants' (p. 75). It is not named, but it is perfectly clear what the overarching object of this critique is:

> [The 'extreme left'] do not engage with how people are in reality, but with how they should be according to their theories. As a result, they see their role as making them realise the 'truth' about their situation. Instead of designating the adversaries in ways that people can identify, they use abstract categories like 'capitalism', thereby failing to mobilize the affective dimension necessary to motivate people to act politically. They are in fact insensitive to people's effective demands. Their anti-capitalist rhetoric does not find any echo in the groups whose interests they pretend to represent. This is why they always remain in marginal positions. (p. 50)

Left populism, it would seem, is not simply post-Marxist, but a determinate form of anti-Marxism.

4. Anti-Post-Marxism: Feminism for the 99%

One is hard pressed to find a more forceful rebuttal to Mouffe than *Feminism for the 99%: A Manifesto*. Cinzia Arruzza, Tithi Bhattacharya, and Nancy Fraser's urgent and unflinching political statement launches with its declaration of a 'crisis of epochal proportions' (p. 13) and the failure of critical movements, including multiple strands of feminism, to adequately respond to it. They choose the manifesto as their literary form—concise, broadly accessible, and marshalling—and explicitly place their words in dialogue with Marx and Engels's *Communist Manifesto* in a theoretically rich postface. As with the *Communist Manifesto*, *Feminism for the 99%* insists that we attack the root of the problem: it unapologetically identifies capitalism as 'the ultimate basis of oppression in modern society' (p. 59). The authors ground their understanding of the current crisis in its capitalist, systemic nature, arguing that 'although present calamities and sufferings are horrific, what justifies our use of the term "crisis" is something more: the numerous

harms we experience today are neither mutually unrelated nor products of chance' (p. 63). In short, today's crisis is the product of a system and that system can be named.

The manifesto form enables Arruzza, Bhattacharya, and Fraser to map a complex landscape of interrelated problems without losing pace or getting lost in detailed analysis. Inspired by Marx's eleven *Theses on Feuerbach* (where he outlines his reformulation of the concept of materialism), they present their manifesto in eleven theses that outline current conflicts and what is demanded of a new feminism. Presented here, without commentary, these are:

> Thesis 1: A new feminist wave is reinventing the strike.
> Thesis 2: Liberal feminism is bankrupt. It's time to get over it.
> Thesis 3: We need an anticapitalist feminism—a feminism for the 99 percent.
> Thesis 4: What we are living through is a crisis of society as a whole—and its root cause is capitalism.
> Thesis 5: Gender oppression in capitalist societies is rooted in the subordination of social reproduction to production for profit. We want to turn things right side up.
> Thesis 6: Gender violence takes many forms, all of them entangled with capitalist social relations. We vow to fight them all.
> Thesis 7: Capitalism tries to regulate sexuality. We want to liberate it.
> Thesis 8: Capitalism was born from racist and colonial violence. Feminism for the 99 percent is anti-racist and anti-imperialist.
> Thesis 9: Fighting to reverse capital's destruction of the earth, feminism for the 99 percent is eco-socialist.
> Thesis 10: Capitalism is incompatible with real democracy and peace. Our answer is feminist internationalism.
> Thesis 11: Feminism for the 99 percent calls on all radical movements to join together in a common anticapitalist insurgency. (pp. 6, 10, 13, 16, 20, 25, 33, 40, 46, 49, 54)

The introduction and first two theses of *Feminism for the 99%* stage a confrontation between the new feminism animating recent anti-capitalist politics and liberal feminism. Arruzza, Bhattacharya, and Fraser argue that 'although it condemns "discrimination" and advocates "freedom of choice," liberal feminism steadfastly refuses to address the socioeconomic constraints that make freedom and empowerment impossible for the large majority of women' (p. 11). Formal, legal equalities foregrounded by liberal feminism

are, on their own, little but empty obfuscations of existing unequal power structures. Without provisions for accessible, not-for-profit public services, living wages, labour rights, and the valorization of care work, the demands of liberal feminism are 'fully compatible with ballooning inequality' (p. 11). Taking full advantage of the rhetorical power of the manifesto, the authors brand liberal feminism with an overtly provocative characterization: '*equal opportunity domination*' (p. 2).

Problematizing the distinction between private and public gender violence, Arruzza, Bhattacharya, and Fraser also discredit 'carceral feminist' responses to sexual violence which rely on a 'mistaken assumption that the laws, police, and courts maintain sufficient autonomy from the capitalist power structures to counter its deep-seated tendency to generate gender violence' (p. 29). They remind us that violence is endemic to capitalism and functions to the benefit of capital, sustaining an essentially coercive system in mutually reinforcing ways, whether it is expressed in intimate partner violence or the public weaponization of rape. Without unearthing these relations, a carceral feminist response only exacerbates other inequalities that perpetuate such violence, not least by disproportionately targeting vulnerable communities. 'One form of violence cannot be stopped without stopping the others' (p. 33).

At the heart of *Feminism for the 99%* is what has come to be known as 'Social Reproduction Theory' (SRT), the theoretical framework of some of the most innovative scholarship in Marxism and feminism today. Drawing on insights and empirical research from across the arts, humanities, and social sciences, SRT not only stresses that the reproduction of capitalism as a whole (how Marx understands 'social reproduction') is predicated on countless 'life-making' activities and institutions outside of the direct capitalist production-process, such as unpaid domestic labour and the family (Marxist feminists have long established this), but contends that, because of this, we must reframe, modify, and expand our understanding of basic categories, such as labour and class, so as to effectively capture—and contest—the complex and dynamic totality that is capitalism. In this sense, to take one example, much of the recent feminist literature on unwaged affective/emotional labour is a vital contribution to our understanding of productive labour; it puts to rest the old, and wholly unproductive, Marxist category of 'unproductive labour'. The category of 'class' is thereby transformed. Quoting Bhattacharya, 'the working class [. . .] must be perceived as everyone in the producing class who has in their lifetime participated in the totality of reproduction of society—irrespective of whether that labour has been paid for by capital or remained unpaid' (Tithi Bhattacharya, ed.,

Social Reproduction Theory: Remapping Class, Recentering Oppression, p. 89). Suffice to say, this passage, and *Feminism for the 99%*, is not guilty of Mouffe's charge of 'class essentialism'.

In the body of the manifesto, the authors thus refer to 'distinctively "modern" forms of sexism' (p. 21) in capitalist societies, forms secured by the incessant severing of profit-making work from all other necessary labour, namely people-making activities. In capitalism, the latter are systemically subordinated to the former. *Feminism for the 99%* establishes the fact that social reproduction is an indelibly feminist issue, as 'in a capitalist society, *the organization of social reproduction rests on gender; it relies on gender roles and entrenches gender oppression*' (p. 22). Our contemporary crisis is fundamentally a crisis of social reproduction: capitalism's valorization of profit-making work over people-making work, epitomized by neoliberalism's increasing refusal to fund—let alone recognize the need for—care institutions, is 'systematically depleting our collective and individual capacities to regenerate human beings and to sustain social bonds' (p. 73).

Feminism for the 99% resolutely announces its solidarity with other anti-capitalist movements. The manifesto demands a feminism that is in thought and action necessarily anti-racist, anti-imperialist, internationalist, environmentalist, universalist, and pro-labour rights. Hence Thesis 8 unpacks the shared history, common foundation, and mutually reinforcing dynamics of racist and sexist control and violence, but also, importantly, recognizes the 'shameful history' of race erasure and racist tropes within the history of feminism (p. 42). Seeking to both remedy this erasure and also expose the roots of and links between misogynist and racist oppression, *Feminism for the 99%* stands firmly in solidarity with (anti-capitalist) anti-racist and anti-imperialist movements in ways that resist 'abstract proclamations of global sisterhood' (p. 45).

The transdisciplinary fabric of Arruzza, Bhattacharya, and Fraser's intervention is promising for modern European philosophy. For instance, it would be interesting to investigate the philosophical concept of 'life' within the terms of SRT, and, at the same time, consider how SRT stands to be critically enriched when it is forced to reckon with this concept—from Hegel's 'idea' to various biopolitical discourses—insofar as this concept may offer SRT with new theoretical and empirical domains heretofore unexplored. The same could be said of the philosophical concept of violence. The movement of *Feminism for the 99%* uses a repeated motif of double refusal, at once the refusal of two polarized options and the refusal of that very polarization. Neoliberalism is set against right populism (p. 62), just as neoliberal co-optation of sexual liberation is set against 'neo-traditional homophobia' (p.

39), but *Feminism for the 99%* negates such 'conflicts'. It 'embodies a refusal to choose sides in this battle' (p. 62). As in Angela Last's contribution to *Decolonising the University*, refusal is politically configured as an affirmative practice. Here refusal is everywhere. Their '*kick-back* feminism' (p. 13) revitalizes the strike as a revelatory action: 'by making visible *the indispensable role played by gendered, unpaid work in capitalist society*, [women's strike activism] draws attention to activities from which capital benefits, but for which it does not pay' (p. 8).

5. Anti-Postmodernism: The Progress of This Storm

The opening salvo of Malm's *The Progress of This Storm: Nature and Society in a Warming World* is that global warming lays waste postmodernism's narrative of the relationship between time and space. If, for postmodernism, time has collapsed into space—if the past and future have collapsed into a present devoid of temporality—global warming is the antithesis of this: it 'supercharges our moment with time [. . .] it is a condition of time and nature conquering ever more space. Call it *the warming condition*' (pp. 7, 11, all emphasis in original). But the real heart of this book is Malm's systematic examination of the relationship between 'the natural' and 'the social' in the heat of our warming condition, an examination which begins with (and ultimately comprises more than half of the book) a trenchant critique of leading social-theoretical interpretations of this relationship.

According to Malm, social theory has not come to grips with the historically unprecedented problems created by global warming. If anything, it has exacerbated them: 'just as the biosphere began to catch fire, social theory retreated ever further from sooty matter, into the pure air of text' (p. 21); and, 'global warming is not a discourse. It trivialises the suffering it generates to see it as a text. The excessive temperatures are not a piece of rhetoric' (p. 22). Concomitant with this is the rejection of nature, both as an intelligible concept in its own right, and as an *actually existing thing* 'out there': for Noel Castree, nature is a '"particularly powerful fiction"', such that '"global climate change is an *idea*"' (p. 24); for Donna Haraway, it is '"a powerful discursive construction [. . .] a trope"' (p. 25); for Paul Wapner, it is '"not a self-subsisting entity" but "a contextualized *idea*", "an ideational canvas", "a projection of cultural understandings", "a social construction"' (p. 26), and so forth. In sum, 'what Castree espouses, and others with him, is a form of *constructionism* about nature [. . .] [which] slides into the proposition that nature [. . .] [comes] into the world through our ideas, and that

no other nature exists. It is a constructionism of the idealist, neo-Kantian, distinctly postmodernist brand' (p. 27).

Malm staunchly defends a realist definition of nature. Drawing on Kate Soper's work, he is wedded to the idea that it is essential to ascribe *independence* to nature itself, that 'some sort of distinction between "society" and "nature" remains indispensable, both for research on the history of the fossil economy and for climate science as such' (p. 30). He takes issue with the position (as advocated, for instance, by Bill McKibben and Steven Vogel) that 'nature is now social all the way down' (p. 31), that climate change signals the end of nature, insofar as what is 'natural' today is irreducibly a human-built environment. This is the constructionist position, an extreme idealism and humanism that follows the specious logic that, as Malm puts it, 'when humans come into contact with a landscape, they necessarily change it; by changing it, they build it; therefore humans have built all landscapes on earth' (p. 37). Apparently, '*to affect matter is to build it*' (p. 37).

At a basic level, therefore, 'society' and 'nature' must remain analytically distinguishable from one another, because they are actually distinct from one another. However, and alongside constructionism, a theoretical 'hybridism' has emerged, one whose overriding conviction is that (1) 'society' and 'nature' are impossible to distinguish, and thus that (2) they are in fact one and the same thing (p. 44). There is no more prominent voice behind this position—who more than anyone else is the object of Malm's critique in *The Progress of This Storm*—than Bruno Latour. Latour believes that nature and society have never been separated—hence distinguishable—'in any way, shape or form' (p. 46), hence his renowned claim that 'we have never been modern' (the concept of modernity as characterized by their separation and distinguishability). Graham Harmon—'Latour's faithful squire' (p. 46) and leading figure in so-called 'object oriented ontology' and 'speculative realism'—maintains this line. For Malm, however, the skeleton in the closet of hybridism is in fact an 'extreme' (p. 50) form of Cartesian dualism (i.e. 'substance dualism', the notion that the mind and body are utterly different things), which is ironic given the avowed hostility of hybridist philosophers to Descartes. But, as Malm contends, hybridism is simply the 'flipside' and 'consequence' (p. 51) of substance dualism, because its assertion of the utter indistinguishability of nature and society—one warranting their collapse as intelligible categories—is unconsciously predicated on the (false) notion that they were utterly different in the first place: '*only by postulating nature and society as categories located a universe apart does their combination warrant their collapse*' (p. 49). Malm instead advances what he calls 'substance monist property dualism'—or 'property dualism' for

short—because it allows for the relation between nature and society to be one of both difference and dependence (pp. 53–55).

Just as, in the philosophy of mind, the mind is the domain of intentional thought, something which is by no means reducible to the physical properties of the brain, there can, on the other hand, be no 'mind' without the brain. In other words, 'intentionality is *an emergent property* that cannot be reduced to the bedrock on which it supervenes, and cannot exist without it. All thought is actualised by events in the brain, and all thought has at least one property the matter of the brain cannot have *sensu strictu*' (p. 57). This is the philosophical framework that Malm maps onto the nature–society relation, one that he views as consistent with the dialectical underpinnings of historical materialism: '[Social] relations are exactly as material in substance and utterly unthinkable outside of nature, but they also evince *emergent properties different from that nature*' (p. 58).

The political urgency of this property dualism—the '*urgency* to the study of their difference-in-unity' (p. 61)—is evident: we must maintain an analytical distinction between nature and society, because '*only in this way can we save the possibility of removing the sources of ecological ruin*' (p. 61). Only in this way can we properly historicize what Malm calls 'the fossil economy', systematically detailed in his *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming* (2016). This analogical extension of the mind–body relation to that between society and nature is not without its limits (Malm suggests that 'property *pluralism*' (p. 71) may be a better designation than property dualism, as the former allows for a multitude of ways in which climate change is produced '*right at the interface between society and nature*' (p. 71)), but it is nonetheless useful for us to grasp what Malm calls 'the paradox of historicised nature', which is to say '*the more profoundly humans have shaped nature over their history, the more intensely nature comes to affect their lives*' (p. 76). The response to the ever-increasing imprint 'the social' makes upon 'the natural' is not the utter indistinguishability of the two (hybridism), nor is it the complete control of the natural by the social (constructionism), but rather the vengeful growth of the natural as a distinct category in its own right. But global warming is 'more than the revenge of nature, this is the revenge of historicity *dressed* in nature' (p. 77).

Malm's critique of hybridism is the most philosophically sophisticated of *Progress of This Storm* (its most sophisticated critique is thus not of environmental philosophy but the philosophy of mind), but he also dedicates considerable attention to the cohort of theories known as 'new materialism', which for all its internal differences is unified by the notion that matter itself—matter *qua* matter—has agency: 'matter is the active shaper of the

world' (pp. 79–80). Latour is once again singled out as a leading voice of this school of thought. A cornerstone of Latour's Actor-Network Theory is the notion that objects 'have as much agency as persons' (p. 81), one echoed by other new materialists such as Diana Coole and Jane Bennett (for whom agency is shared among human and nonhuman 'actants' alike—a conceptual replacement of agents). Malm's rebuttal of these positions is straightforward: to have agency is 'intimately tied to *having a mind*', the condition of possibility of intentional acts (pp. 85–86). As Marx and many others maintain, only human beings have the capacity for intentional thought, and therefore only human beings, properly speaking, possess agency. Any theory that proceeds from the stance that 'anything and everything' (p. 89) can have agency drifts into mysticism, such that it is unintelligible (and politically dangerous) to suggest, as Latour does, that rivers have agency and goals (p. 90). The fossil economy is the social *human* origin and motor of global warming; social *human* intentional acts (e.g. lighting coal on a fire) on and with matter, *not matter itself*, are what bear responsibility for the warming condition. In short, as Malm puts it, 'the warming condition is hyper-human' (p. 115).

Contra the interwoven positions of constructionism, hybridism, and new materialism (whose sibling posthumanism is also 'preoccupied with liquefying the wall between the human and the nonhuman' (p. 114)), Malm advances a realist epistemology, or 'climate realism' (an admixture of climate science and the critical realism largely inaugurated by Roy Bhaskar's *A Realist Theory of Science* (1995)), whose guiding principle is that 'only on the condition that the factuality of a warming world is independent of the science can its claims be intelligible at all; the results of that science register what it *does not* produce' (p. 128). 'Climate science is critical realism in practice' (p. 130), and those positions that do not proceed from this premise (e.g. constructionism, hybridism, and new materialism) risk complicity with the reactionary ideologies of climate denialism overwhelmingly held by conservative white men in power. Malm's climate realism is explicitly *socialist*, and its tenets can be summarized as follows:

> 1.) social relations have real causal primacy in the development of fossil energy and technologies based on it; 2.) by recursive loops of reinforcement, these relations have been cemented in the obdurate structure of the fossil economy; 3.) that totality has in its turn fired up the totality of the earth system, so that (some) humans have real reasons to be afraid. (pp. 148–49)

The politics of Malm's socialist critical realism are militant: against *For a Left Populism* and with *Feminism for the 99%*, it names that—capitalism—

which must be superseded if nature and society are to survive. Historical materialism is, as a consequence, the interpretative framework appropriate to climate realism: philosophically, Marx's analysis of the social–natural relation is predicated on climate realism's stance that, to quote Bhaskar, "'knowledge follows existence, in logic and in time'" (p. 128); politically, the logical and ontological separation (dialectically, that is) between society and nature is what allows us to 'identify [. . .] points for strategic intervention' (p. 173) in climate change. The separation between nature and society is the condition of 'revolutionary ecological practice' (p. 174). It is this separation—and metabolism—between the social and natural that allows us to appreciate, as mentioned earlier, the paradox of historicized nature. If this comes across as a 'binary' form of thinking and acting, this is because

> In a world like this, where the contradictions between the apex of wealth and the conditions supporting human existence are reaching catastrophic intensity, the instinct of critical scholars should not be to dissolve binaries, but to strive towards *more radical polarisation* so as to clarify the stakes and gather the forces. If the politics of polarity and oppositional ways of thinking are avoided, there will be peace on our way into the abyss. Political warfare against an ever more pestiferous ruling class demands manuals brimful with binaries. (p. 189)

For Malm, 'labour and nature possess an ineradicable *autonomy* from capital', which is to say that both are ontologically (and chronologically) prior to capital and both '[operate] according to their own laws' (p. 197). Drawing on the autonomist Marxist tradition, particularly Antonio Negri's work, and new currents in environmental philosophy and history, Malm acknowledges that there are differences within this shared autonomy (e.g. however conditioned—by capital, feudal relations, and so on—the labourer always has some degree of agency, whereas the 'appropriate formula' for nature is '*autonomy without agency*' (p. 199)). However, from the perspective of capital, and therefore from the perspective of the ongoing history of the fossil economy, labour and nature converge around the same contradictory axis. Capital is, on the one hand, defined by its incessant attempt to emancipate itself from labour and nature: this is its inexorable drive towards technological innovation and automation (machinery), which represents the fantasy of the disappearance of the worker's resistance and nature's autonomy ('automatic machinery is introduced in the hope of annihilating every residue of natural autonomy, of activating the potentialities of material substrata in such a way as to provide capital with a fitting corporeal shape that allows it to produce [. . .] without having to adapt to the swings and

convulsions of external nature' (pp. 200–01)). On the other hand, the 'curse of capital' (p. 211) is that it can only achieve this by doubling down on its dependence on labour and nature: it can only 'emancipate itself from nature in all its sparkling autonomy [. . .] by colonising it' (p. 211). The same, of course, goes for labour. Global colonialism it at the crux of both, historically and today. Suffice to say, labour and nature 'need to shake' off capital; 'both have a capacity for ruling themselves, and the safest way to achieve not so much a future of freedom as *any* future is to institute their full self-government—a definition, if one so wishes, of sustainability' (p. 212).

6. Conclusion

If Malm is correct in asserting that 'the warming condition spells the death of affirmative politics', such that 'negativity is our only chance now' (p. 223), then this constitutes a distinct problem for Mouffe's cautious optimism that 'an ambitious and well-designed ecological project could offer an attractive vision of a future democratic society that might entice some sectors currently within the neoliberal hegemonic bloc' (p. 61). Mouffe suggests that 'the "ecological question"' is 'at the centre' (p. 61) of the radicalization of democracy. But Malm (not to mention Arruzza, Bhattacharya, and Fraser) would balk at the notion that, as Mouffe has it, the neoliberal oligarchy 'could be won over' (p. 61) if and when ecology is brought to the forefront of a counter-hegemonic movement against neoliberalism. For Malm, such a politics of enticement—of 'winning over'—is bankrupt: the now centuries-old devotion of the ruling classes to the fossil economy, the utter indifference of the 1 per cent to their massively disproportionate destruction of the Earth, must be opposed by a radical politics appropriate to the coming storm. 'Dare to feel the panic', Malm states, 'then choose between the two main options: commit to the most militant and unwavering opposition to this system, or sit watching as it all goes down the drain' (p. 226). For its part, modern European philosophy would do well to experience an analogous panic: commit to the most militant and unwavering opposition to the neoliberal university, or. . .

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