

*Counterfutures* is a multidisciplinary journal of Left research, thought, and strategy. It brings together work from across Aotearoa New Zealand's Left, aiming to intervene in, and inaugurate, debates about how to understand and influence our society, politics, culture, and environment.



## counterfutures

LEFT THOUGHT AND PRACTICE AOTEAROA

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*The NZ Dairy Industry*

*Māori Marx*

*Envisioning Socialism*

*Feminine Praxis*

*Pity, Hate, Resentment*

*Populism Through the Breach*

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The past three-and-a-half decades of neoliberal orthodoxy in New Zealand have been marked by the rapid expansion and intensification of the New Zealand dairy industry. In the years since direct agricultural subsidies and supports were removed in the mid-1980s, the national dairy herd has more than doubled and the area given over to dairying has increased by some 750,000 hectares. This relentless drive to intensify has come at a simply enormous environmental cost: New Zealanders, present and future, are being systematically dispossessed of cherished freshwater ecosystems and endemic biodiversity. In this paper, I argue that this is but the latest episode in a long history of often-violent dispossession that has been crucial to the historical development of capitalist agriculture in New Zealand. In so doing, I draw on Marx's theory of primitive accumulation.

## Dairying, Dispossession, Devastation: Primitive Accumulation and the New Zealand Dairy Industry, 1814–2018

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MATTHEW WYNYARD

New Zealand has long enjoyed an enviable, if largely undeserved, reputation as being somehow pristine or unspoilt, or, in now-threadbare marketing jargon, ‘clean, green and 100 percent pure’. Such myths have become increasingly difficult to sustain in recent years in light of the rapid expansion and intensification of the dairy sector and the unfolding ecological catastrophe that has followed. This period has also been marked by a groundswell of public concern about the health of New Zealand’s freshwater ecosystems; indeed, a nationwide poll conducted by Colmar Brunton in December 2018 found that freshwater pollution was the principal concern of those surveyed, outstripping concerns over the cost of living, housing, child poverty, the health system, and climate change. Eighty-two percent of survey participants reported being very concerned or extremely concerned about freshwater pollution in New Zealand.<sup>1</sup>

These widespread and serious ecological consequences of New Zealand’s recent dairy boom have garnered international attention, with a number of high-profile international media organisations highlighting the rapidly widening gulf between

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1 ‘Water pollution is now New Zealander’s Number One Concern,’ *Fish & Game*, accessed 8 May 2019, <https://fishandgame.org.nz/news/water-pollution-is-now-new-zealanders-number-one-concern/>

New Zealand's clean and green reputation and reality.<sup>2</sup> Among them, a recent article in *The Guardian* highlighted the extent to which many New Zealanders feel that something is 'being lost', that they are rapidly being deprived of the ability, for example, to 'swim, fish and gather food from their rivers, lakes and streams'.<sup>3</sup> This is especially so for Māori for whom awa and roto are at once intimately intertwined with identity and 'an integral part of the spiritual and physical sustenance of the people'.<sup>4</sup>

In this paper, I focus on this sense of loss or, rather, dispossession and argue that the recent dairy boom has involved the systematic despoliation of New Zealand's freshwater ecosystems for the private gain of those with a stake in the dairy industry. Moreover, I argue that this is but the latest chapter in a long history of often-violent dispossession that has been crucial to the historical development of capitalist agriculture in New Zealand. While this sense of loss or dispossession may be discomfortingly novel to many in contemporary New Zealand, it is likely also to be devastatingly familiar to many iwi, hapū, and whānau whose treasured lands and waters

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2 See, for example, Charles Anderson, 'New Zealand's Green Tourism Push Clashes With Realities,' *The New York Times*, 17 November 2012, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/17/business/global/new-zealands-green-tourism-push-clashes-with-realities.html>; 'Dairy Farming is polluting New Zealand's water,' *The Economist*, 16 November 2017, <https://www.economist.com/asia/2017/11/16/dairy-farming-is-polluting-new-zealands-water>; Naashon, Zalk, 'Why are New Zealand's waters so polluted?' *Al Jazeera*, 1 September 2017, <https://www.aljazeera.com/blogs/asia/2017/08/zealand-waters-polluted-170831090454283.html>

3 Eleanor Roy, 'Their birthright is being lost: New Zealander's fret over polluted rivers,' *The Guardian*, 4 March 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/mar/04/their-birthright-is-being-lost-new-zealanders-fret-over-polluted-rivers>

4 Leigh-Marama McLachlan, 'Water Fools? – The river is me,' *Radio New Zealand*, 20 April 2017, <https://www.radionz.co.nz/programmes/water-fools/story/201841025/water-fools-the-river-is-me>. Regarding the intimate bonds between Māori and their awa see, for example, *Ruruku Whakatupua Te Mana o te Awa Tupua: The Whanganui River Deed of Settlement*, 5 August 2014, <https://www.govt.nz/treaty-settlement-documents/whanganui-iwi/>; Her Majesty the Queen in right of New Zealand and Waikato-Tainui, *Deed of Settlement in relation to the Waikato River*, 17 December 2009, <https://www.govt.nz/treaty-settlement-documents/co-management-of-waikato-and-waipā-rivers/waikato-tainui-waikato-river/>

have long been captured, enclosed, and systematically degraded by those seeking profits from the land. In making this argument, I draw on Marx's theory of primitive accumulation.

## So-called primitive accumulation

In part eight of *Capital* volume one, Marx highlights the violence that characterises the transition to the capitalist mode of production: the myriad forms of predation, thievery, force, fraud, and oppression that establish the preconditions for continuous capital accumulation. For Marx, the routine operation of capitalism requires an initial burst of violence, an 'original', 'previous', or 'primitive' accumulation that is not the result of the capitalist mode of production but, rather, its starting point.<sup>5</sup> Primitive accumulation describes the processes through which various lands and resources are forcibly torn away from their original owners and inhabitants, privatised, and brought into the cycle of capital accumulation. These processes have the dual effect of creating 'free' proletarians (free, that is, insofar as they do not possess any means of subsistence other than to sell themselves as labour), essential to capitalist social relations on the one hand while simultaneously incorporating the soil and other natural resources into the capitalist system on the other.<sup>6</sup> Capitalism, Marx concludes, comes into being 'dripping from head to toe, from every pore with blood and dirt'.<sup>7</sup>

For Marx, the violence that characterised the transition to capitalism

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5 Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, volume I (London: Penguin Books, 1976), 873; *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy* (London: Allan Lane, 1973), 459–460. See also, Massimo De Angelis, 'Marx and Primitive Accumulation: The Continuous Character of Capital's "enclosures,"' *The Commoner* 2 (2001): 5; Sylvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2004), 12; David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 143.

6 Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, 895. See also, Matthew Wynyard, *The Price of Milk: Primitive Accumulation and the New Zealand Dairy Industry, 1814–2014* (PhD thesis, University of Auckland), 2, 9–11, 26–31.

7 Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, 926.

would recede as the system matured; once developed, the very organisation of the capitalist system removes all resistance. ‘The advance of capitalist production develops a working class which by education, tradition and habit looks upon the requirements of that system as self-evident laws. . . . The silent compulsion of economic relations sets the seal on the domination of the capitalist over the worker’.<sup>8</sup> This is not to suggest that force, fraud, and oppression disappear altogether; rather, as Marx puts it, ‘direct extra-economic force is still of course used, but only in exceptional cases’.<sup>9</sup>

A number of Marxist scholars have argued that the varied mechanisms of primitive accumulation have remained central to capitalism throughout its historical trajectory. Sylvia Federici, among them, argues that Marx was mistaken in his assumption that the ‘blood and fire’ would diminish as capitalism matured: ‘a return of the most violent aspects of primitive accumulation has accompanied every phase of capitalist globalization’, continuous violence, enclosure, expropriation, war, and plunder are ‘necessary conditions for the existence of capitalism at all times’.<sup>10</sup>

The past three-and-a-half decades of neoliberal orthodoxy have been marked by the ongoing penetration of market relations into ever more aspects of social and economic life. This era of market triumphalism has also witnessed a renewed interest in the processes through which formerly unowned, communally owned, or state-owned natural resources, lands, things, and ideas are captured, enclosed, and utilised for private profit.<sup>11</sup> Many authors have turned to Marx’s theory of primitive accumulation to explain these processes. A flourishing and rapidly expanding literature has developed which draws on Marx’s concept to explain myriad phenomena including the conversion of common, collective, and state property rights into exclusive private property; the suppression of rights to the commons; the escalating degradation of land, air, and water; the colonial, neocolonial,

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8 Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, 899. See also, Federici, *Caliban*, 12; Wynyard, *The Price of Milk*, 29.

9 Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, 899.

10 Federici, *Caliban*, 12–13.

11 Derek Hall, ‘Rethinking Primitive Accumulation: Theoretical Tensions and Rural South East Asian Complexities,’ *Antipode* 44, no. 4 (2012): 1188–1208.

and imperial accumulation of natural resources; and the suppression of alternatives to capitalist production and consumption.<sup>12</sup>

## The dispossession of Māori land and the origins of capitalist agriculture

Primitive accumulation has long been crucial in establishing and re-establishing the conditions necessary to profitable agriculture in New Zealand. The first requirement was, of course, land and the wholesale and systematic dispossession of Māori land in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was essential to the establishment and ongoing development of capitalist agriculture in New Zealand. The first dairy cattle were brought to New Zealand by Samuel Marsden in 1814 and, soon after, the pressure on Māori land began to grow. The dispossession of Māori land began with large-scale land grabbing in Te Waipounamu, where millions of acres of communally owned Māori land were swallowed up into enormous estates by a rapacious few. In Te Ika-a-Māui, where Māori were better placed to oppose the greed of settlers and the Crown, a far greater degree of force, fraud, and oppression was required to separate iwi, hapū, and whānau from their ancestral rohe. The dispossession of Māori land in Te Ika-a-Māui involved war, raupatu, the forced conversion of communal title to individual private property,<sup>13</sup> and myriad other grubby practices, including the forced sale of land to defray survey costs, excessive Crown purchasing, the compulsory acquisition of 'uneconomic' interests (that is, the forced purchase of small holdings in order to create parcels of land adequate to

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12 Wynyard, *The Price of Milk*, 19; Hall, 'Rethinking Primitive Accumulation,' 1188–1208; Harvey, *The New Imperialism*, 145; Michael Webber, 'Primitive Accumulation in Modern China,' *Dialectical Geography* 32, no. 4 (2008): 299–320.

13 Wynyard, *The Price of Milk*, 58–86; 'Plunder in the Promised Land,' in *A Land of Milk and Honey: Making Sense of New Zealand*, eds. Avril Bell, Vivienne Elizabeth, Tracey McIntosh, and Matthew Wynyard (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2017), 23–36.

capitalist agriculture), and the taking of land for public works.<sup>14</sup>

This systematic and wholesale dispossession of Māori land was absolutely central to the development of capitalist agriculture in New Zealand. Quite simply, without land for pasture there could be no pastoral farming. With regard to the development of the dairy industry, land in the fertile, flat, and high-rainfall areas of Taranaki and Waikato were crucial—and there the dispossession of Māori land was achieved with the crudest simplicity. In Waikato 1,202,172 acres of the most fertile land were confiscated; in Taranaki 1,275,000 acres were taken.<sup>15</sup> The ostensible justification for raupatu may have been ‘rebellion’ by Māori but the desire for land was palpable in the language used by the lawmakers referring to ‘vast tracts of land, lying unoccupied, useless and unproductive’.<sup>16</sup>

From the early 1880s onwards, with millions of acres of fertile land newly available to settlers and with the advent of refrigeration allowing for the development of an export market, there was a massive proliferation of dairy farms and factories in Waikato and Taranaki. Formerly the bastions of Māori independence, these regions have remained the major North Island dairying centres for much of the history of the industry in New Zealand, at least until the systematic dispossession and degradation of the

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14 For a full catalogue of Crown complicity in the wholesale dispossession of Māori land see the various deeds of settlement signed between iwi (or, in Crown terms, Large Natural Groupings) and the Crown: <https://www.govt.nz/treaty-settlement-documents/>. See, for example, Tūhoe Me Te Uru Taumatua Rāua Ko Te Kaurauna, *Te Whakatauna o Nā Tohe Raupatu Tawhito: Deed of Settlement of Historical Claims*, 4 June 2013, <https://www.govt.nz/treaty-settlement-documents/ngai-tuhoe/>; Her Majesty the Queen in right of New Zealand and Waikato-Tainui, *Deed of Settlement*, 22 May 1995, <https://www.govt.nz/dmsdocument/3778-waikato-tainui-deed-of-settlement-22-may-1995>; Te Ātiawa and the Crown, *Deed of Settlement of Historical Claims*, 9 August 2014, <https://www.govt.nz/dmsdocument/5839-te-atiawa-taranaki-deed-of-settlement-9-aug-201>

15 ‘Confiscated Native Lands and other Greivances. Royal Commission to Inquire into Confiscations of Native Lands and other Grievances alleged by Natives (Report of),’ *Appendix to the Journal of the House of Representatives* (1928 Session 1. G. – 07).

16 ‘New Zealand Settlements Act, 1863,’ *The Press*, volume III, issue 327, 17 November 1863, 3, <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/CHP18631117.2.10>; see also, Wynyard, ‘Plunder in the Promised Land,’ 19.



freshwater commons allowed for the expansion of the industry into the arid Canterbury Plains.<sup>17</sup>

## Massey's ghosts

Of course, farming requires more than just land and, at various moments in the historical development of capitalist agriculture in New Zealand, various forms of 'force, fraud and oppression' have been central in overcoming obstacles to profitability. Two examples from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century illustrate the diversity of mechanisms available; both involve a remarkable level of violence (social and ecological, respectively), and both involve William F Massey, dairy farmer, sectarian bigot, and prime minister of New Zealand from 1912 to 1925.<sup>18</sup> The first such obstacle to profitability was the 1913 watersiders' strike; the second, declining soil fertility. The solution to the first lay in the violent suppression of workers' rights; the solution to the second involved a grubby colonial resource grab and the utter devastation of the natural environment of Nauru, once, but never again, known as Pleasant Island.

Given his politics generally and his open antagonism towards organised labour more specifically, Massey's response to the 1913 watersiders' strike was always going to be robust. The strike began on 13 October 1913, when Wellington shipwrights struck against a wage cut; Wellington watersiders held a stopwork meeting to discuss support for the shipwrights and upon returning to work they found themselves locked out. The United Federation of Labour called for a general strike and urged the watersiders to occupy the wharves. On 24 October, the Union Steam Ship Company attempted to break the strike and process ships at the wharves with 'scab' labour; the striking workers broke through the gates and occupied the wharves and

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17 Wynyard, *The Price of Milk*, 264–268, 278–286.

18 W. J. Gardner, 'The Rise of W. F. Massey, 1891–1912,' *Political Science* 13, no. 1 (1961): 3–30; *William Massey* (Wellington: A. H. & A. W. Reed, 1969); James Watson and Lachy Patterson (eds.), *A Great New Zealand Prime Minister? Reappraising William Fergusson Massey* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2011), 15.

sympathetic strikes followed in all ports.<sup>19</sup>

The impact of the strike on the dairy industry was far-reaching and immediate. There was a rapid accumulation of butter and cheese in the available storage facilities across the country, which caused a shortage and then a glut on the British market, impacting on the returns for New Zealand dairy farmers.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps unsurprisingly, many responded with enthusiasm when Massey approached the New Zealand Farmers' Union (the forerunner to Federated Farmers) about the availability of men to work the wharves and to act as special constables to suppress striking workers. Massey had wanted to use the military, but was convinced otherwise by Colonel Edward Heard, who suggested the government raise a force of 'special mounted constables' from among Massey's farming constituents instead.<sup>21</sup>

In the days and weeks that followed, large numbers of dairy farmers from Taranaki and Waikato were recruited to work the wharves or to act as 'special constables' (or 'Massey's Cossacks', as they came to be known). Many armed themselves with stockwhips, clubs, and batons and rode to the main centres to put down the strike and steady the flow of butter and cheese out of the country. There were a number of confrontations, melees, baton charges, riots, and small-gun battles, throughout which the strikers fared poorly.<sup>22</sup> The combined use of 'scab' labour and armed 'specials' was enough to break the strike. In the 'ordinary run of things', Marx contends, labour accepts the demands of capital and primitive accumulation is not required. Class struggle, such as the watersiders strike, represents a refusal

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19 Tony Simpson, *The Road to Erewhon* (Auckland: Beaux Arts, 1976), 39; M. Fairburn, 'The Farmers Take Over,' in *The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand*, ed. K. Sinclair (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1990), 198; W. B. Sutch, *Poverty and Progress in New Zealand: A Re-Assessment* (Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1969), 155; Wynyard, *The Price of Milk*, 127.

20 H.G. Philpott, *A History of the New Zealand Dairy Industry* (Wellington: Department of Agriculture, 1937), 141.

21 Richard Hill, *The Iron Hand in the Velvet Glove: The Modernisation of Policing in New Zealand, 1886–1917* (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1995), 305–309.

22 Hill, *The Iron Hand*, 306–316; Simpson, *The Road to Erewhon*, 39–40; Wynyard, *The Price of Milk*, 124–131.

of that acceptance; primitive accumulation resurfaces to reimpose 'the ordinary run of things'.<sup>23</sup> Direct extra-economic force of the very type that Marx described was used to remove an 'obstacle' to the ongoing profitability of the dairy sector in New Zealand and to restore the conditions necessary to capital accumulation.

According to his biographer, Massey's greatest gift to New Zealand farmers was a share in the phosphate-rich island of Nauru.<sup>24</sup> Phosphate, applied as fertiliser to New Zealand pastures, was crucial to ongoing economic prosperity in New Zealand in the post-war era. Nauru was annexed by Germany in 1888 and remained a German 'possession' until the First World War; phosphate was discovered on the Island in 1900 and commercial exports began in 1907. Not long after the outbreak of war, Massey was alerted to the abundance of phosphate on the island.<sup>25</sup>

Throughout the war, Massey lobbied the Imperial Office in London for a share of Nauru's phosphate. At the Imperial Conference at Versailles at the conclusion of the war, Nauru was carved up between New Zealand, Australia, and the UK, who together signed the Nauru Island agreement in 1919, giving them not only exclusive entitlement to Nauruan phosphate, but also the right to purchase the mineral at cost price, well below the market rate.<sup>26</sup> For decades afterwards Nauru was systematically plundered of guano and rock phosphate without regard to the Indigenous people or the Nauruan environment. Here again, 'force, fraud and oppression' played a central role in removing an 'obstacle', this time declining soil fertility, to the ongoing profitability of capitalist agriculture in New Zealand.

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23 Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, 899; de Angelis, 'Marx and Primitive Accumulation,' 16.

24 Gardner, *William Massey*, 25.

25 Barrie Macdonald, *Massey's Imperialism and the Politics of Phosphate* (Palmerston North: Massey University, 1982), 4.

26 MacDonald, *Massey's Imperialism*, 10; Christopher Weeramantry, *Nauru: Environmental Damage under International Trusteeship* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1992), 11; Nancy Viviani, *Nauru: Phosphate and Political Progress* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1970), 43; John Gowdy and Carl McDaniel, 'The Physical Destruction of Nauru: An Example of Weak Sustainability,' *Land Economics* 75, no. 2 (1999): 333–338.

The total cost-value of phosphate mined on Nauru between 1922 and 1966 was approximately £60 million at the time.<sup>27</sup> Had Nauruan phosphate been sold on the open market and not at cost price, it might have fetched as much as £167 million; in actual fact, however, Nauru received only £4,196,277 for all of the phosphate mined during the years before its independence in 1968.<sup>28</sup>

The environmental and social impacts of phosphate mining on Nauru were utterly devastating. The interior of the island was, quite literally, ‘ripped out’.<sup>29</sup> The mined-out area, an elevated plateau known colloquially as ‘Topside’ comprising 80 percent of the Nauruan land mass, was left uninhabitable, inaccessible, and completely unusable for agriculture, horticulture, or any other productive use.<sup>30</sup> Much of Nauru’s endemic biodiversity is lost, more still is endangered. The climate has changed and there are frequent droughts. Without land on which to produce, Nauruan people were forced to import food; healthy staples such as coconut, pandanus, pawpaw, breadfruit, and beach almond were replaced with cheap, salty and fatty canned foods; even freshwater had to be imported.<sup>31</sup> Not surprisingly, this had adverse impacts on the health of the Nauruan people, who now have very high rates of diabetes, heart disease, and hypertension and significantly lower life expectancy than other Pacific peoples.<sup>32</sup>

Nauruan phosphates were essential to the growth of capitalist agriculture in New Zealand in the post-war period. The steadily increasing application of phosphatic fertiliser to pastures in New Zealand played a

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27 Weeramantry, *Nauru*, 367.

28 Viviani, *Nauru*, 186–187; Weeramantry, *Nauru*, 367, 369; Wynyard *The Price of Milk*, 198–203.

29 Mary Nazzal-Batayneh, ‘Nauru: An Environment Destroyed and International Law,’ *lawanddevelopment.org*, accessed 24 June 2019, <http://www.lawanddevelopment.org/docs/nauru.pdf>

30 Gowdy and McDaniel, ‘The Physical Destruction of Nauru,’ 334.

31 Gowdy and McDaniel, ‘The Physical Destruction of Nauru,’ 334; Nazzal-Batayneh, ‘Nauru’; Weeramantry, *Nauru*, 31.

32 Gowdy and McDaniel, ‘The Physical Destruction of Nauru,’ 334; Wynyard, *The Price of Milk*, 198–203.

central role in the post-war boom and delivered to many New Zealanders a standard of living that was the envy of the world. The dairy industry, which is more input intense than most other land uses, is implicated as the major source of demand for Nauruan phosphates. Similarly, the rapid increase in the application of nitrogenous fertiliser has underpinned the current dairy boom, only, this time, surging production has failed to improve the living standards of most New Zealanders and the environmental devastation has occurred much closer to home.<sup>33</sup>

## Neoliberalism and the New Zealand dairy industry

Like so many of this country's contemporary problems, the origins of New Zealand's freshwater catastrophe lie in the large-scale and global reorganisation of the accumulation process embodied in the shift towards neoliberalism. This shift, under way globally since the mid-1970s, has been characterised by, among other things, the restoration and proliferation of primitive accumulation as a central strategy of accumulation.<sup>34</sup> If, as Marx argues, the 'force, fraud and oppression' that characterised the dawn of capitalism recedes to some extent with the maturing of capitalist social relations, then neoliberalism marks a new dawn.<sup>35</sup> The following paragraphs chart the resurgence of primitive accumulation as a central strategy of accumulation in contemporary New Zealand. It begins with the election of the fourth Labour government (FLG) on Bastille Day in 1984 and ends with nearly half of our lakes and around 90 percent of our lowland rivers polluted and some 2,788 species threatened with extinction.<sup>36</sup>

When the FLG swept to power on 14 July 1984, the guillotine fell

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33 Wynyard, *The Price of Milk*.

34 Midnight Notes Collective, 'Introduction to the New Enclosures,' *Midnight Notes* 10 (1990): 1–9.

35 Wynyard, *The Price of Milk*, 230.

36 Mike Joy, 'The dying myth of a clean, green Aotearoa,' *New Zealand Herald*, 25 April 2011, [https://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=3&objectid=10721337](https://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/news/article.cfm?c_id=3&objectid=10721337)

not only on the Muldoon-led National government but also on a complex framework of protections that had held in check the worst excesses of capitalist predation for much of the post-war period.<sup>37</sup> Agriculture was among the first targets for reform.<sup>38</sup> Prior to 1984, New Zealand agriculture was shielded by an array of protections including input subsidies, interest-rate concessions, irrigation and electricity subsidies, production subsidies, development schemes, and state control of key financial and research services.<sup>39</sup> All of these were swept away in a deregulatory blitzkrieg that left New Zealand producers totally exposed to the vicissitudes of world markets.<sup>40</sup>

The impacts were felt almost immediately. During the FLG's first term in office, farmers' net incomes declined by as much as a third and many farmers were forced to reduce expenditure on inputs such as fertiliser, which meant reduced carrying capacity, declining productivity, weak cash flow, and an accumulation of debt.<sup>41</sup> When interest rates rose, farmers were forced to further curtail spending and cut stock numbers in order to service debt. Many farmers were left over-exposed and thousands faced the very real prospect of being forced off the land through mortgagee sale.<sup>42</sup> Exactly how many farmers lost their farms as a direct result of deregulation is not

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37 Wynyard, *The Price of Milk*, 232, 235.

38 Jane Kelsey, *The New Zealand Experiment: A World Model for Structural Adjustment* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1995), 95; Marcia Russell, *Revolution: New Zealand from Fortress to Free Market* (Auckland: Hodder Moa Beckett, 1996), 101; Wynyard, *The Price of Milk*, 236.

39 Paul Cloke, 'State Deregulation and New Zealand's Agricultural Sector,' *Sociologia Ruralis* 29, no. 1 (1989): 36; Paul Cloke and Richard Le Heron, 'Agricultural Deregulation: The Case of New Zealand,' in *Regulating Agriculture*, eds. Terry Marsden, Philip Lowe, and Sarah Whatmore (London: David Fulton Publishers, 1994), 112; Wynyard, *The Price of Milk*, 236.

40 Cloke, 'State Deregulation,' 38; Cloke and Le Heron, 'Agricultural Deregulation,' 113; Kelsey, *The New Zealand Experiment*, 95.

41 Cloke, 'State Deregulation,' 41–42.

42 N. Taylor, M. Abrahamson, and T. Williams, *Rural Change: Issues for Social Research, Social Assessment and Integrated Rural Policy* (Christchurch: Centre for Resource Management, University of Canterbury and Lincoln College, 1987), 6; Cloke, 'State Deregulation,' 43.

known.<sup>43</sup> Federated Farmers estimates that 800 farmers were ‘forced’ from the land;<sup>44</sup> many others were, however, ‘assisted’ or ‘encouraged’ from the land by the banks.<sup>45</sup>

The removal of subsidies, coupled with declining real wool prices, hit sheep farmers particularly hard. Large areas of hill country became uneconomical to farm. Between 1983 and 1993, the number of sheep farms fell by nearly 35 percent and the land used for sheep farming fell by 32 percent. Large numbers of farmers made the switch from sheep to dairy.<sup>46</sup> The number of dairy farms increased by 6.2 percent between 1983 and 1993, the area used for dairying increased by 21 percent, and the national dairy herd increased from 3.1 million cows and heifers to 3.6 million.<sup>47</sup> Stocking rates and herd sizes also increased, and, crucially, the industry expanded most quickly in low-rainfall, irrigation-dependent areas long thought unsuitable for dairying, including Canterbury, Otago, and Hawke’s Bay.<sup>48</sup>

The main reason behind the switch to dairying was its much greater profitability when compared with meat and wool. Dairying also provides regular cash flow: cows are milked daily while with meat and wool the returns are much slower in coming. This was particularly important in the context of deregulation when interest rates were high and budgeting difficult.<sup>49</sup> Conversions continued at great pace throughout the mid-1990s: 299 farms made the switch from meat and wool to dairy in 1994/1995 and a further 226 followed in 1995/1996. Many of these conversions were on marginal, hilly, and dry land not typically associated with dairying. North

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43 Neal Wallace, ‘Rude awakening,’ *Otago Daily Times*, 24 May 2014, <http://www.odt.co.nz/lifestyle/magazine/303362/rude-awakening>

44 Federated Farmers, *Life After Subsidies: The New Zealand Farming Experience 20 Years Later* (Wellington: Federated Farmers of New Zealand, 2005), 3.

45 Wallace, ‘Rude awakening.’

46 Richard Willis, ‘Farming,’ *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 42, no. 1 (2001): 55–65.

47 Willis, ‘Farming,’ 56–58.

48 Willis, ‘Farming,’ 58.

49 Willis, ‘Farming,’ 58; ‘Enlargement, Concentration and Centralisation in the New Zealand Dairy Industry,’ *Geography* 89, no. 1 (2004): 83–88.

Island farmers sold their small but expensive farms in order to finance new dairying ventures in the South Island where land was much cheaper, but where water was scarce.<sup>50</sup>

The conversion of sheep to dairy and the rapid expansion of the industry more generally following the removal of subsidies and other supports for agriculture has had two distinct and devastating sets of consequences for the freshwater commons in New Zealand. On the one hand, increasingly intensive dairy farming has had the catastrophic environmental impact detailed briefly above and to which we will return below. On the other hand, the expansion of the industry into low-rainfall and irrigation-dependent regions such as Canterbury, Otago, and Hawke's Bay has involved the capture and enclosure of the freshwater commons for the private gain of those with a stake in the dairy industry. In keeping with the neoliberal backdrop of these shifts and changes, while the profits accrue privately, the costs, the simply enormous social and environmental costs, accrue to us collectively.

## Fonterra and the race to the bottom

The New Zealand dairy industry has been completely dominated by Fonterra since its formation in October 2001 through the merger of the New Zealand Dairy Group, Kiwi Co-operative Dairies, and the New Zealand Dairy Board.<sup>51</sup> At that time, Fonterra comprised 13,000 farmer

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50 Willis, 'Farming,' 58.

51 Fonterra emerged after a long period of consolidation in the New Zealand dairy Industry. Improvements in transportation and advances in large-scale processing technologies drove a long trend toward consolidation. In 1935 there were over 400 dairy cooperatives in New Zealand; by 1960 there were 180. Mergers and acquisitions continued as industry interests sought 'economies of scale'. Fonterra was created through the merger of Kiwi Co-operative Dairies, New Zealand Dairy Group, and the New Zealand Dairy Board in 2001. The new company was better placed to do business in a global industry dominated by large-scale agricultural firms. See Wynyard, *The Price of Milk*, 255–261.



shareholders producing 96 percent of New Zealand's raw milk.<sup>52</sup> Fonterra's dominance has subsided somewhat since its formation, yet it remains New Zealand's largest dairy producer, retaining an 82 percent market share as of 2017.<sup>53</sup> In 2018, Fonterra became the world's fifth-largest dairy company, with annual turnover of \$US14.7 billion.<sup>54</sup> Fonterra is the world's largest exporter of dairy products with an estimated one billion daily customers in 140 countries worldwide.<sup>55</sup> It is, quite simply, a juggernaut of global agri-capitalism.

Fonterra has long striven to be 'the lowest cost supplier of commodity dairy products'.<sup>56</sup> Low-cost production is essential to Fonterra given the lower-value markets that it targets in South, East, and South-East Asia, the Middle East, North Africa, and Latin America. Targeting these markets instead of the more valuable, but heavily tariffed, dairy markets of Europe, Japan, and North America has dramatically impacted on the shape, scale, and intensity of the dairy industry in New Zealand. More than 75 percent of New Zealand dairy produce is exported as bulk commodities such as milk powder to developing countries in Asia, the Middle East, Latin America,

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52 Wynyard, *The Price of Milk*, 258, 260; Camilla Ohlsson, *New Zealand Dairy Cooperatives: Strategies, Structures, and Deregulation* (MA thesis, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, 2004); Lewis Evans, *Structural Reform: The Dairy Industry in New Zealand* (Tokyo: APEC High Level Conference on Structural Reform, 2004).

53 'New Zealand Dairy Companies Review,' *TDB Advisory* (April 2018), 6, <https://www.tdb.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/TDB-Dairy-Companies-Review-2018-1.pdf>

54 Peter Coppes, Saskia van Battum, and Mary Ledman, *Global Dairy Top 20: A Shuffling of the Deck Chairs* (Raboresearch, 2018).

55 'Our Markets,' *Fonterra: Dairy for Life*, accessed 24 June 2019, <https://www.fonterra.com/nz/en/about/our-markets.html>

56 Ohlsson, *New Zealand Dairy Cooperatives*, 26; Mairi Jay, 'The Political Economy of a Productivist Agriculture: New Zealand Dairy Discourses,' *Food Policy* 32, no. 2 (2007): 266–279; Wynyard, *The Price of Milk*, 261.

and, increasingly, Africa.<sup>57</sup> New Zealand farmers, totally exposed to the vagaries of world markets and in competition with subsidised producers elsewhere, have had little choice but to farm more and more intensively.

The total number of dairy cattle in New Zealand in 1985/1986, when subsidies were removed, was 2,321,012. Approximately 1,008,142 hectares were used for dairying and the average size of a dairy herd was 147 cows. In 2001, when Fonterra was formed, the national dairy herd comprised 3,692,073 cows grazing on 1,404,930 hectares and the size of the average herd had nearly doubled to 271 cows. In 2017/2018, the most recent year for which statistics are available, the national dairy herd numbered 4,992,914 cows, 1,755,418 hectares are given over to dairy production, and the average herd size has increased to 431 cows.<sup>58</sup> That same season, New Zealand farmers produced 20.7 billion litres of milk containing 1.84 billion kilograms of milk solids.<sup>59</sup>

Dairy farms use significantly more fertiliser than any other land-use type. The rapid expansion and intensification of the New Zealand dairy industry has also involved a massive surge in the use of synthetic nitrogenous fertilisers based on fossil fuels. As with phosphate, the application of nitrogenous fertiliser to dairy pastures allows for increased productivity and greater profitability. Nitrogenous fertilisers provide for faster rates of grass growth providing extra feed for dairy cattle year-round, which means that farmers can increase stocking rates, calve earlier, and make more high-quality silage, thereby extending the period of lactation.<sup>60</sup>

In the years between 1990 and 2004, the application of nitrogenous

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57 Mairi Jay and Munir Morad, 'Crying Over Spilt Milk: A Critical Assessment of the Ecological Modernization of New Zealand's Dairy Industry,' *Society and Natural Resources* 20, no. 5 (2007): 473; 'Making a difference in Africa,' *Fonterra: Dairy for Life*, accessed 24 June 2019, <https://www.fonterra.com/nz/en/what-we-stand-for/global-reach/making-a-difference-in-africa.html>

58 *New Zealand Dairy Statistics 2017/2018* (Hamilton: LIC Dairy New Zealand, 2018), 7.

59 *New Zealand Dairy Statistics 2017/2018*, 5.

60 *Growing for Good: Intensive Farming, Sustainability and New Zealand's Environment*, (Wellington: Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment/Te Kaitiaki Taiao a Te Whare Pāremata, 2004), 92.

fertiliser on New Zealand farms increased by some 770 percent. Most of the nitrogenous fertiliser used on New Zealand dairy farms is synthesised from Taranaki natural gas and much of it ends up in the country's lakes, rivers, streams, and in the sea.<sup>61</sup> This massive surge in the use of nitrogenous fertiliser on New Zealand farms, and the rapid expansion and intensification of the dairy sector more broadly, has had devastating impacts on the environment and on biodiversity in New Zealand. The ecological impacts of intensive dairy farming are many, varied, and catastrophic and include the pollution of surface water and ground water from effluent and the runoff of excess fertiliser, significant biodiversity loss, soil erosion, soil contamination, the draining of wetlands and the removal of lowland forests for the ongoing expansion of the industry, damage to the structure of soils, and significant greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, agriculture contributes as much as 54 percent of all New Zealand's greenhouse gas emissions, 43 percent as methane, largely from ruminant flatulence, and 11 percent as nitrous oxide, caused when animal urine interacts with microbes in the soil.<sup>63</sup>

The widespread and serious degradation of New Zealand's land, air, and water is a clear, contemporary example of primitive accumulation. The peoples of New Zealand, now and in the future, are being systematically dispossessed of irreplaceable natural resources, resources that are absolutely crucial to the ongoing well-being of the country as a whole.<sup>64</sup>

## Intensive dairying and the destruction of land and water

The relentless prioritisation of European-style pastoral farming, including dairying, over all other land uses has long been implicated in the devastation

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61 Joy, 'The dying myth.'

62 Jay and Morad, 'Crying Over Spilt Milk,' 472; Wynyard, *The Price of Milk; The State of New Zealand's Environment 1997* (Wellington: Ministry for the Environment/Manatū Mō Te Taiao and GP Publications, 1997).

63 *Water Quality in New Zealand: Land Use and Nutrient Pollution* (Wellington: Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment/Te Kaitiaki Taiao a Te Whare Pāremata, 2013).

64 Wynyard, *The Price of Milk*, 268.

of the land in New Zealand, which has undergone an almost total loss of endemic, land-based biodiversity.<sup>65</sup> Between 1840 and 2000, eight million hectares of mostly lowland conifer and broadleaf forest were cleared to make way for pasture.<sup>66</sup> In Waikato, home to 22.7 percent of the national dairy herd, lowland native forest has been reduced to just 18 percent of its former extent since the onset of colonisation.<sup>67</sup> Indeed, Mike Joy notes that today one can drive for an hour in any direction from cities such as Ōtautahi (Christchurch) and Te Papa-i-Oea (Palmerston North) and not see a single, naturally occurring plant or animal.<sup>68</sup> In recent decades, the relentless prioritisation of the dairy industry over other land uses has also been responsible for the wide-ranging and rapid devastation of New Zealand's freshwater ecosystems. The ongoing and systematic degradation of the freshwater commons dispossesses New Zealanders of cherished natural resources; waterways so affected can no longer provide food, nor a place for play, wonder, or reflection. This destruction of awa and roto has taken place against a backdrop of increased public and scientific awareness of environmental matters more broadly and, indeed, the intensification and expansion of the dairy industry has not slowed with the growing knowledge of its ecological consequences; rather, it has accelerated.

The impact of intensive dairying on freshwater ecosystems has been known since before the removal of subsidies in the mid-1980s.<sup>69</sup> In 1993, when the national dairy herd was slightly over half its current size, the then Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) and the Ministry for

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65 Jay, 'The Political Economy of a Productivist Agriculture,' 267.

66 John Dawson, 'Loss of Conifer–Broadleaf Forests,' in *Tē Ara – The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, accessed 24 June 2019, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/interactive/11674/deforestation-of-new-zealand>

67 Jay, 'The Political Economy of a Productivist Agriculture,' 267.

68 Joy, 'The dying myth'; *New Zealand's 100% Pure, Clean-Green Myth* (Wellington: Forest and Bird, 2011).

69 E. White, 'Eutrophication in New Zealand Lakes,' *Water in New Zealand's future: Proceedings of the Fourth National Water Conference* (Auckland: Institute of Professional Engineers New Zealand Technical Group on Water, 1982); R. Wilcock, 'Agricultural Runoff: A Source of Water Pollution in New Zealand,' *New Zealand Agricultural Science* 20 (1986): 98–103.

the Environment (MfE) jointly commissioned the first comprehensive study of New Zealand's freshwater resources in relation to agricultural production.<sup>70</sup> It found many lowland rivers in a perilous condition with high concentrations of nitrogen and phosphate leading to eutrophication, low levels of dissolved oxygen, and high counts of faecal coliform, a potentially harmful bacterium. Many lowland rivers and streams were found to be increasingly unsuitable for use in water supply, irrigation, or industry; the aesthetic value of waterways was being diminished and many waterways, even in 1993, were found to be unsuitable for contact recreation.<sup>71</sup> The authors of the 1993 report go on to urge a fundamental re-evaluation of farming systems and farm practices.

Further reports followed in 1997 and 1999, both charting the steadily deteriorating condition of New Zealand's lowland streams and rivers due, in large part, to increased pollution from intensive dairy farming.<sup>72</sup> MfE's 1999 report expresses serious concern over the effect of dairy-farm effluent, including faeces, urine, wash-down water, spilled milk, and various chemicals, pathogens, and toxins on surface water and ground water.

The impacts of dairy-farm effluent on surface water are many, varied, and severe.<sup>73</sup> When dairy farm effluent discharges to surface water, sediment in the effluent can adversely impact on the colour, clarity, and temperature of waterways, smothering water plants and diminishing the capacity of the waterway to support native fish such as inanga, kōkupu, and kōaro. Organic matter in dairy effluent consumes oxygen when it breaks down, oxygen that is essential to the survivability of native plants, animals, and

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70 *New Zealand Dairy Statistics 2017/2018*, 7.

71 Christine Smith, *Towards Sustainable Agriculture: Freshwater Quality in New Zealand and the Influence of Agriculture* (Wellington: Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, 1993), vii, 1.

72 Ministry for the Environment, *The State of New Zealand's Environment 1997* (Wellington: Ministry for the Environment/Manatū Mō Te Taiao and GP Publications, 1997); *Resource Management Act Practice and Performance: Are Desired Environmental Outcomes Being Achieved* (Wellington: Ministry for the Environment/Manatū Mō Te Taiao, 1999).

73 *Resource Management Act Practice and Performance* 3.

invertebrates. Organic matter in effluent also causes the growth of bacterial and fungal slimes, raising pH levels in waterways to the detriment of native species. Nitrogen in the form of ammonia is highly toxic to aquatic life and micro-organisms in the water make it unsafe for drinking or for recreation.<sup>74</sup> The discharge of effluent to waterways is also deeply offensive to people, Māori in particular.

When discharged on land, the ecological impacts of dairy-farm effluent are potentially even more severe and can include runoff into surface water and penetration of the surface-soil layer leading to the contamination of groundwater and the deterioration of the soil structure.<sup>75</sup> As the authors of the 1999 report put it, ‘compared with the certain, immediate and reversible effects of discharges to surface water, groundwater contamination from discharge to land is relatively uncertain, long term, and irreversible. Nitrate leaching from agricultural soils . . . is regarded as the greatest contamination threat to groundwater’.<sup>76</sup> In the six years separating the 1993 report from MAF and MfE and the 1999 report, the total dairy herd in New Zealand increased in size by more than 530,000 cows and heifers.<sup>77</sup> In the twenty years since the latter report, New Zealand dairy farmers have added an additional 1.72 million cows to the land.<sup>78</sup>

Just as farmers have continued to intensify, freshwater ecologists, environmental scientists, and others have continued to note the spiralling consequences of this relentless drive for profit. Guy Salmon, for example, argues that the New Zealand dairy industry is bent on expansion and intensification with total disregard to the environmental impact: ‘the bottom line is that this huge industry is exploiting this country, using it as a polluted, low-cost growing platform for its aggressive expansion into

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74 *Resource Management Act Practice and Performance* 3.

75 *Resource Management Act Practice and Performance* 3.

76 *Resource Management Act Practice and Performance* 3; see also, Wynyard, *The Price of Milk*, 271.

77 *New Zealand Dairy Statistics 2017/2018*, 7.

78 *New Zealand Dairy Statistics 2017/2018*, 7.

overseas commodity markets'.<sup>79</sup> Salmon goes on to note the environmental and public-health impacts of increasingly intensive dairy farming in Waikato and Canterbury. These include the high concentrations of microbial pathogens, including cryptosporidium, giardia, salmonella, and campylobacter, in Waikato rivers, the loss of streamside vegetation and wetland habitats, the siltation of streams and the impact on biodiversity, and the growing threat of toxic nitrate contamination of groundwater.<sup>80</sup>

Salmon documents the decline of the Waikākahi Stream in South Canterbury, once pristine, 'cool, clear, spring-fed . . . shaded with tussocks, flax and native shrubs . . . abundant with fish and wildlife'.<sup>81</sup> Spring-fed streams like Waikākahi were highly valued by Kāi Tahu whanui; the catchment of Waikākahi contained significant wetlands which nurtured important taonga species such as tuna (eels) and kākahi (freshwater mussels). Many nohoanga and pā sites were once sustained by the Waikākahi and the taonga species that thrived there.<sup>82</sup> Over the course of the recent dairy boom, the entire catchment of the Waikākahi was converted to dairy, the impact simply devastating. 'Today it is turbid, heavy with silt, nutrient enriched and thick with faecal coliforms. The streamside vegetation has been replaced with grass and stock trampled mud, the wetlands have been drained'.<sup>83</sup>

Mike Joy, too, has drawn attention to the spiralling costs of intensive dairy farming. According to Joy, and mentioned above, some 2,788 species—35 percent of all native species—are now listed as threatened. Worse, as science has been critically underfunded in recent decades, many more species, perhaps as many as 4,000, are listed as data deficient. If science was appropriately resourced, Joy contends, it is likely that the number of

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79 Guy Salmon, 'New Zealand's Biggest Polluter Gears up for More: Is Dairy Intensification Sustainable,' *Maruia Pacific* (1999): 4–7.

80 Salmon, 'New Zealand's Biggest Polluter,' 4–5.

81 Guy Salmon, 'How Dairying Destroyed the Waikākahi,' *Maruia Pacific* (1999): 1.

82 E. Williams, *The Cultural Health of the Waitaki Catchment* (Canterbury: Tipa and Associates Working with: Te Runanga o Moeraki, Te Runanga o Waihao, Te Runanga o Arowhenua, Te Runanga o Ngai Tahu, 2015), 105.

83 Williams, *The Cultural Health of the Waitaki Catchment*, 105.

species listed as threatened would double.<sup>84</sup> All of New Zealand's terrestrial mammals and frogs are currently listed as threatened with extinction. More than 50 percent of all bird, freshwater fish, and reptile species are threatened, as are over 80 percent of vascular plants and marine invertebrates. Some 25 percent of all marine fish species and approximately 30 percent of freshwater invertebrates are now classed as threatened. Over 90 percent of the country's wetlands are gone and 68 percent of all identified ecosystems are under threat. Most lowland rivers are no longer suitable for swimming, many with high concentrations of faecal contamination. Almost half the country's lakes are polluted. Between 18,000 and 30,000 people contract waterborne diseases in New Zealand each year.<sup>85</sup>

The widespread, serious, and ongoing degradation of New Zealand's freshwater resources is robbing the peoples of New Zealand of cherished commons, of mahinga kai, of rich repositories of tribal history and knowledge, of spaces of play and contemplation. This is not to blame all farmers but, rather, the system within which they produce. Many farmers were left exposed to the vicissitudes of world markets by the neoliberal reforms of the 1980s and the rush to intensive dairying is nothing other than a strategy of survival. Successive New Zealand governments from the mid-1980s onwards have, to varying degrees, enabled and facilitated the expansion and intensification of the industry. None more so, perhaps, than the fifth National government (FNG), that played a central role in facilitating the accelerated expansion of dairying into low-rainfall, irrigation-dependent regions such as Canterbury, Otago, and Hawke's Bay.

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84 Joy, 'The dying myth'; Joy, *New Zealand's 100% Pure*.

85 Joy, 'The dying myth'; Joy, *New Zealand's 100% Pure*; Wynyard, *The Price of Milk*, 278.



## The fifth National government and the privatisation of freshwater resources

As mentioned above, the initial expansion of the New Zealand dairy industry was facilitated by the primitive accumulation of Māori land in Taranaki and Waikato. These regions, with high rainfall, high sunshine, and where the topography is flat to rolling, have remained major centres for dairying ever since. Indeed, Waikato and Taranaki retain the greatest concentrations of dairy herds in New Zealand (28.7 percent and 14 percent respectively) and are home to 32.3 percent of all dairy cows (22.7 percent and 9.6 percent respectively).<sup>86</sup> Much of the recent expansion of the industry has, however, been into Canterbury and Otago, long thought unsuitable for dairying due to comparatively low rainfall. Here too, the mechanisms of primitive accumulation have proven central, this time through the privatisation of formerly unowned or communally owned freshwater resources and the forced removal of regulatory oversight.

In 2001, when Fonterra was formed, 15 percent of dairy farms and a little over 20 percent of dairy cows were located in Te Waipounamu.<sup>87</sup> By 2017/2018, that had all but doubled to 27.7 percent of dairy herds and 40.9 percent of all dairy cows.<sup>88</sup> The number of dairy cows in the arid Canterbury region increased nearly four-fold over the same period, from approximately 254,000 in 2000/2001 to over 950,000 in 2017/2018.<sup>89</sup> The obstacles to farming in Canterbury, Otago, and other low-rainfall regions have been overcome by large-scale irrigation schemes, with water rights granted by regional authorities. The FNG, formed in 2008 with support from ACT, United Future, and the Māori Party, was instrumental in facilitating the expansion of intensive dairying into the Canterbury plains

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86 *New Zealand Dairy Statistics 2017/2018*, 13.

87 *New Zealand Dairy Statistics 2000/2001* (Hamilton: Livestock Improvement Corporation Ltd, 2001), 11–12.

88 *New Zealand Dairy Statistics 2017/2018*, 13.

89 *New Zealand Dairy Statistics 2000/2001*, 12; *2017/2018*, 14.

and beyond; the privatisation of freshwater and the removal of regulatory oversight were crucial.<sup>90</sup>

Central to the FNG's plans for economic growth was a commitment to double the value of food exports by 2025.<sup>91</sup> This was to be achieved by 'unlocking resources': the National-led government was going to examine, and where possible remove, 'regulations that may be preventing natural resources from being used productively'.<sup>92</sup> Among the resources it was seeking to 'unlock' was freshwater in Canterbury. In his opening statement to parliament in 2010, the then prime minister, John Key, signalled his government's intention to irrigate the Canterbury Plains and so facilitate the expansion of intensive dairying in the region. The government, Key stated, would 'take action to remove particular regulatory roadblocks to water storage and irrigation in Canterbury'.<sup>93</sup> Among the roadblocks to which the prime minister was referring were the fourteen democratically elected councillors at Environment Canterbury Regional Council (ECan), the body responsible for environmental management in the Canterbury region, including the processing of resource consents to use Canterbury's vast freshwater resources.<sup>94</sup>

Between 2002 and 2008 the number of consent applications lodged with ECan increased from 2,106 to 3,763 annually, this increase largely driven by the dairy boom and by large-scale irrigation-based development schemes. Tasked with balancing economic development and good environmental outcomes, ECan was unable and, perhaps, unwilling to process the sheer number of consent applications. In 2007/2008, the financial year immediately preceding the election of the National-led government, ECan processed just 29 percent of consents within statutory timeframes established by the

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90 Wynyard, *The Price of Milk*, 278–286.

91 James Morrison, *Making Dairy Farming Work for Everyone: Strategy for Sustainable Dairy Farming 2013–2020* (Hamilton: Dairy NZ, 2013), 27.

92 John Key, 'Statement to Parliament,' *New Zealand Parliamentary Debates*, accessed 24 June 2019, [https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/hansard-debates/rhr/document/49HansD\\_20100209/volume-660-week-33-tuesday-9-february-2010](https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/hansard-debates/rhr/document/49HansD_20100209/volume-660-week-33-tuesday-9-february-2010)

93 Key, 'Statement to Parliament.'

94 Wynyard, *The Price of Milk*, 280.

Resource Management Act. In 2009, the National-led government launched an investigation into ECan; the investigation was headed by former National party deputy prime minister, Wyatt Creech, himself director of Matamata-based dairy firm, Open Country, which had twice been prosecuted for contaminating Waikato farmland and rivers.<sup>95</sup>

Creech's investigation found that ECan had not been able to process consent applications because the body had adopted a 'laudable' attitude that, as the local environmental regulator, their role was to seek quality environmental outcomes rather than outputs.<sup>96</sup> However 'laudable', this did not square with the interests of the National-led government that was seeking to 'unlock resources' and enclose the freshwater commons in Canterbury for the private benefit of agri-capitalists.<sup>97</sup> In the interests of national 'well-being', the authors of the resulting report proposed further expansion and intensification of dairying and other agriculture and horticulture in the Canterbury region.<sup>98</sup> The report's authors note a 'gap' between 'what needs to be done' and 'ECan's capability to do so';<sup>99</sup> as such, they go on to recommend 'comprehensive and rapid intervention on the part of central government to protect and enhance national well-being'.<sup>100</sup>

This ECan board was to be sacked and replaced with a commission for three years until fresh elections could be held in 2013. Trampling democracy to further the interests of large-scale agribusiness may be primitive accumulation *par excellence*; it is also largely unprecedented in New Zealand history and so required some careful discursive framing to

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95 Colin Espiner, 'Environment Canterbury faces the axe,' *The Press*, 20 February 2010, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/3351860/Environment-Canterbury-faces-the-axe>

96 Wyatt Creech, Martin Jenkins, Greg Hill, and Morrison Low, *Investigation of the Performance of Environment Canterbury under the Resource Management Act and Local Government Act* (Wellington: Ministry for the Environment, 2010), <https://www.mfe.govt.nz/sites/default/files/investigation-performance-environment-canterbury.pdf>

97 Wynyard, *The Price of Milk*, 280.

98 Creech et al., *Investigation of the Performance of Environment Canterbury*, 5.

99 Creech et al., *Investigation of the Performance of Environment Canterbury*, i.

100 Creech et al., *Investigation of the Performance of Environment Canterbury*, i.

sell to the people of the country. Creech himself was ‘very conscious’ of the implications of removing an elected body. Prime Minister Key too noted the gravity of removing an entire council but nevertheless wanted ‘swift action’ to rectify the faults with ECan.<sup>101</sup> On 30 March 2010, the ECan board was sacked and replaced with a commission of seven led by, among others, one-time Young Nat, key Rogernome, and minister of trade and industry, of economic development, and, from 1988, of finance in the fourth Labour government, David Caygill. Within a year it had opened the floodgates, approving 92 percent of consent applications to use or degrade freshwater in Canterbury; indeed, such was the turnaround that National backed away from restoring democracy to the people of Canterbury in 2013.<sup>102</sup>

In 2012, National announced that the commissioners would remain in place until at least 2016. New Zealand’s Human Rights Commission found the further suspension of democracy to be a breach of the government’s commitment to democracy.<sup>103</sup> Prime Minister Key told reporters that, while the government wanted to restore democracy to the people of Canterbury, ‘the job wasn’t done yet’.<sup>104</sup> At the time of the announcement minister for the environment, Amy Adams, and local government minister, David Carter, heaped praise on the commissioners and stressed the importance of freshwater to the Canterbury economy.<sup>105</sup> They would know: both Adams

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101 Paul Gorman and Tracy Watkins, ‘ECan councillors sacked,’ *The Press*, 30 March 2010, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/news/3526047/ECan-councillors-sacked>

102 ‘ECan progress pleases Smith,’ *The Timaru Herald*, 14 September 2011, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/timaru-herald/news/5619589/ECan-progresspleases-Smith>; Wynyard, *The Price of Milk*, 282–283.

103 Rachel Young, ‘Axing ECan elections “undemocratic”,’ *Stuff*, 9 November 2012, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/news/7926305/Axing-ECan-elections-undemocratic>

104 Rachel Young and Lois Cairns, ‘ECan commissioners staying until 2016,’ *The Press*, 7 September 2012, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/news/7631962/ECan-commissioners-staying-until-2016>.

105 Young and Cairns, ‘ECan’.

and Carter have significant agricultural interests in the Canterbury region.<sup>106</sup>

Not long after National announced the further suspension of democracy in Canterbury, *The Press* reported on the motivation behind the decision: ‘the government suspended democracy and restricted legal action in Canterbury to protect an agricultural boom worth more than \$5 billion’; National and several large-scale irrigation firms aimed to almost double the 450,000 hectares of irrigated land in the Canterbury region.<sup>107</sup> The ability to elect ECan councillors will not be restored to the people of Canterbury until October 2019—the damage, however, is already done.<sup>108</sup> In the years between the sacking of the ECan board and the restoration of democracy, Canterbury farmers added an additional 250,000 cows to pastures in the region.<sup>109</sup>

Independent testing of three Canterbury rivers in 2018 indicated the presence of an antibiotic resistant strain of E Coli as well as Shiga-Toxin-producing E Coli, a particularly dangerous bacterium which can cause renal failure, particularly in children.<sup>110</sup> Sampling was conducted near large-scale dairy farms on the Ashley, Selwyn, and Rangitata Rivers and the researchers concluded that contamination of the rivers was primarily due to intensive dairying.<sup>111</sup>

Additional research uncovered potentially dangerous levels of nitrates in

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106 Register of Pecuniary and Other Specified Interests of Members of Parliament: Summary of Annual Returns as at 31 January 2019, <https://www.parliament.nz/media/5566/summary-report-2019-final.pdf>; see also, James Dann, ‘Special Investigation: Adams Family Values,’ *Scoop Independent News*, 14 March 2014, <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/HL1403/S00114/special-investigation-adams-family-values.htm>

107 Young, ‘Axing.’

108 ‘An update on Environment Canterbury’s governance and return to a fully elected council,’ *Environment Canterbury Regional Council*, 23 May 2018, <https://www.ecan.govt.nz/get-involved/news-and-events/2018/an-update-on-environment-canterburys-governance-and-return-to-a-fully-elected-council/>

109 *New Zealand Dairy Statistics 2017/2018*, 14; *New Zealand Dairy Statistics 2010/2011* (Hamilton: LIC Dairy New Zealand, 2011), 14.

110 Kate Gudsell, ‘Kidney failure-causing pathogen found in Canterbury rivers,’ *Radio New Zealand*, 19 December 2018, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/environment/378607/kidney-failure-causing-pathogen-found-in-canterbury-rivers>

111 Gudsell, ‘Kidney failure-causing pathogen.’

Canterbury drinking water, and again researchers concluded that intensive dairy farms are the main source of the contamination. Of 114 sites tested, more than half had nitrate levels in excess of 3.87 milligrams per 1000 millilitres, a level that has been shown to increase the risk of colorectal cancer in humans. Worse, 46 of the sites tested showed nitrate levels above 6 milligrams per 1000 millilitres.<sup>112</sup> Increased nitrate levels in the drinking water of pregnant women, or when mixed with infant formula, can also lead to blue-baby syndrome (methaemoglobinaemia), a potentially fatal condition that can starve newborn babies of oxygen.<sup>113</sup> Such is the concern that the South Canterbury District Health Board has warned pregnant women to monitor nitrate levels in their drinking water.<sup>114</sup>

Pollution of freshwater in parts of Canterbury is set to almost double due to the massive Central Plains Water Scheme which irrigates almost 60,000 hectares between the Rakaia and Waimakariri Rivers. The impact of the scheme on Te Waihora, a once treasured mahinga kai for Kāi Tahu, abundant with pātiki, tuna, and aua, is difficult to fathom. The lake is presently classified as hypertrophic—supersaturated in nitrogen and phosphate. Even without the further intensification made possible by the Central Plains Scheme, ECan estimates the nitrogen load entering

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112 'More wells with nitrate levels above safe standard,' *Radio New Zealand*, 13 June 2019, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/391914/more-wells-with-nitrate-levels-above-safe-standard-forest-and-bird>; 'Canterbury water testing raises health concerns,' *Fish & Game*, accessed 24 June 2019, <https://fishandgame.org.nz/news/canterbury-water-testing-raises-health-concerns/>

113 Conan Young, 'Concerns raised over nitrates' effects on babies,' *Radio New Zealand*, 17 October 2017, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/341701/concerns-raised-over-nitrates-effects-on-babies>; Elena McPhee, 'South Canterbury DHB urges people to monitor their private wells following report on nitrates, E.Coli,' *Stuff*, 17 October 2017, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/health/97994831/south-canterbury-dhb-urges-people-to-monitor-their-private-wells-following-report-on-nitrates-ecoli>

114 McPhee, 'South Canterbury DHB'; 'Cows and Seep: Dairy farming is polluting New Zealand's water,' *The Economist*, 16 November 2017, <https://www.economist.com/asia/2017/11/16/dairy-farming-is-polluting-new-zealands-water>

Te Waihora will increase by 35 percent over the next 10 to 20 years.<sup>115</sup>

The over-allocation of Canterbury freshwater to large-scale irrigation schemes is also causing some rivers to simply dry up. In recent years, large stretches of the Selwyn River have run dry.<sup>116</sup> Many fish and eels, including at-risk long-fin eels, a taonga species for Kāi Tahu, have perished on the dried-out river bed. In early 2017, some 2,500 fish and 500 eels had to be rescued from the Selwyn River by volunteers, the Department of Conservation, and members of Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu.<sup>117</sup> According to Fish and Game, 134 percent of the groundwater in Selwyn is allocated to irrigation schemes.<sup>118</sup>

## Conclusion

In the closing pages of *Capital* volume one, Marx details the horrors of the transition to the capitalist mode of production, including the fraudulent alienation of land, the theft of the commons, the usurpation of tribal (clan) property ‘and its transformation into private property under circumstances of ruthless terrorism’, and the use of state violence to back these processes.<sup>119</sup> ‘All these things’, Marx concludes, ‘were just so many idyllic methods of primitive accumulation. They conquered the field for capitalist agriculture,

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115 Kate Gudsell, ‘Water Fools? – Worry in Waharoa,’ *Radio New Zealand*, 18 April 2017, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/programmes/water-fools/story/201840731/water-fools-worry-in-waihora>

116 Charlie Mitchell, ‘Road or river? Barren Selwyn reaches new low, swimming spot stagnant,’ *Stuff*, 2 December 2016, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/environment/86992441/road-or-river-barren-selwyn-reaches-new-low-swimming-spot-stagnant>; ‘Rivers Run Dry in Christchurch,’ *Fish & Game*, accessed 24 June 2019, <https://fishandgame.org.nz/news/rivers-run-dry-in-christchurch/>

117 Mitchell, ‘Road or river?’; Charlie Mitchell, ‘Dying eels rescued from dry river,’ *The Press*, 1 March 2017: <https://www.pressreader.com/new-zealand/the-press/20170301>

118 Mitchell, ‘Road or river?’

119 Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, 895.

[and] incorporated the soil into capital'.<sup>120</sup> In reading these last pages of *Capital*, it is difficult not to see the parallels with the historical experience of New Zealand and, indeed, similarly 'ruthless' mechanisms of primitive accumulation have remained essential in establishing and re-establishing the conditions necessary for profitable agriculture in New Zealand.

The alienation of Māori land was essential to the historical development of the New Zealand dairy industry. War and raupatu in Taranaki and Waikato captured the prime dairying land, while elsewhere the usurpation of iwi and hapū land and its transformation into private property involved the indirect violence of the Native Land Court and myriad other coercive practices.

State violence or, at least, state-sanctioned violence has also played a central role in stabilising the conditions for profitable dairy farming in New Zealand. Marx contends that the mechanisms of primitive accumulation resurface periodically to reimpose the 'ordinary run of things' of expanded reproduction. Here, Massey's cossacks played an important role in stabilising the flow of butter and cheese from New Zealand ports. The dispossession of Nauruan phosphates and the systematic degradation of the Nauruan interior also provided stability and prosperity for New Zealanders in the post-war period.

That stability, like so much else, was swept away in the mid-1980s with the 'momentous shift toward greater social inequality and the restoration of economic power to the upper class' embodied in the rise and rise of neoliberalism.<sup>121</sup> In the last three-and-a-half decades, primitive accumulation has resurfaced as a persistent and central strategy of accumulation, one that has driven the massive proliferation and intensification of the New Zealand dairy industry; and so much, so very much, has been lost in the race for profits from the land. The systematic degradation of New Zealand's

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120 Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, 895.

121 David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 26.



freshwater commons and the capture and enclosure of previously unowned water resources for the short-term gain of agricapitalists and dairy farmers is but the latest in a long and violent history of primitive accumulation.

This article gathers together some provisional materials for the construction of a Māori Mārx. I begin by following Marx's thought as he continually complexifies his understanding of the determinants of history in his search for the proper starting place for a materialist dialectics. I leave historical Marx at the close of his life, occupied with the passionate study of Indigenous modes of life. Returning his gaze, I read Marx from an Indigenous perspective, sketching some of the lineaments of a Māori Mārx for whom whakapapa is the central concept. From this perspective, I describe an Indigenous, comparative, and historical materialism, termed 'geometry of life', that seeks the consistency between modes of life and the modes of thinking that emanate within them. I close by suggesting that we must conceive of ourselves as part of the ensemble powers of a proletarian Papatūānuku if we are to conserve the earth and abolish capital.

## Māori Mārx: Some Provisional Materials

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SIMON BARBER

The increasingly likely possibility of planetary ecological collapse makes an urgent demand on our present.<sup>1</sup> The task ahead has two aspects. On the one hand, we must dismantle the machinery of Papatūānuku's, and so our, domination and desecration. Capitalism is incompatible with our continuing to live on this planet. The second task, inseparable and simultaneous with the first, demands that we find new ways of living with each other and the earth. Capitalism renders the world into cheap nature (the earth as raw material, fuel, and dumping ground for the production process) and cheap labour (labour-power paid for at less than the cost of its reproduction) by devaluing both.<sup>2</sup> The more general field of work that goes into maintaining and reproducing workers for capital is externalised by the wage relation. Likewise, the human/nature distinction hides capitalism's parasitic reliance on Papatūānuku for its own functioning. These two moments are aspects of the same process. As Peter Linebaugh

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1 Authorship of this text is, of course, multiple. I would like to thank Miri Davidson, Jack Foster, Campbell Jones, Carl Mika, and an anonymous reviewer for their incredibly generous engagement with earlier versions of this text.

2 These terms are borrowed from Jason Moore, 'The Rise of Cheap Nature,' in *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism* (Oakland: PM Press, 2016).

has said, ‘reproduction precedes social production. Touch the women, touch the rock’.<sup>3</sup>

Capital’s ability to reproduce itself approaches a hard limit in the breakdown not just of the reproduction of workers but in the reproduction of life as a planetary system. Capitalists, spurred by the persistent anxiety of how to preserve class domination in a rapidly collapsing climate, make plans for apocalypse bunkers in Aotearoa New Zealand, or dream of infinite accumulation enabled through intergalactic expansion.<sup>4</sup> We might wish to make different plans and dream different dreams than those of the capitalists. A Māori Mārx—improvised, imagined, collective, ensemble—has a vital contribution to make towards this life-and-death struggle.

In the last few years of his life, Marx’s thought underwent a profound transformation, registered in his focus on the multiple modes of life expressed in non-Western and non-capitalist societies. Marx’s thinking in his final years can be seen as a more expansive arc, curling back alongside the preoccupations of his youth. Marx’s early writings from his time living in Paris from 1843 before his exile in 1845 express dazzling, exploratory, and expansive research and thinking textured by discontinuity and incompleteness. They were worked out with and against the German Idealism of Hegel and the materialism and philosophical anthropology of Feuerbach. The writings of this period also document Marx’s exuberant engagement with French political theory, especially that of utopian socialists such as Fourier and St Simon, as well as his first forays into British political economy. Where Marx returned later in his life to investigate the possible configurations of human existence, he did so not through the figure of the abstract human as derived from philosophical anthropology but through the empirical existence of Indigenous peoples. This work remains a radical open-endedness at the end of Marx’s life. Marx’s hearty engagement with peoples outside and other to his own thinking suggests that another radical

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3 Peter Linebaugh, *The Magna Carta Manifesto: Liberties and Commons for All* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

4 Anna-Maria Murtola, ‘How the Global Tech Elite Imagine the Future,’ *Economic and Social Research Aotearoa*, Report no. 11 (November 2018).

transformation of his thought was under way at the close of his life. One vital conclusion can be drawn from this, one often stubbornly refused by Marxisms of many stripes: Marx himself saw the need for his theory to undergo transformation through engagement with modes of life beyond those of Europe and conceptual frameworks beyond those of European construction.

My aim is not simply to try to simulate for Marx a textual engagement with *te ao Māori*, looking over his shoulder, as it were, as he tried to discern the lineaments of Māori modes of life and thought by reading early anthropological accounts. An attempt to revive only this Māori Mārx would be akin to the rather kitsch act of drawing a moko on Marx's face. This might be useful to Marxism to an extent, providing insight into a terrain that Marx's thinking had entered into but never described. It would remain, however, a perspective limited by Marx's own position. But there is a second, more dimly lit, Māori Mārx that observes the first from a different position. This figure is a Māori reading of Marx, something more difficult for me to construct: a conceptual matrix drawn from a number of Māori thinkers, supported by the fullness of my experience studying at *wānanga*, provides an initial orientation from which to develop this second reading.

Beyond whatever trajectory Marx's thought may have suggested, there are more pressing reasons for the construction of a Māori Mārx. There is a certain violence of abstraction in the perspective that demands the spread of a homogenous Marxist logic around the globe, one that reflects the same violence inherent in the expansion of capitalism. At best, such a perspective sees other modes of life and modes of thought only as gaps to be sketched in to an existing schema. Instead, my conviction is that Marx's thought must undergo profound transformation through its encounters with what is beyond it. New concrete universals must be built up from the ground of our relational difference if we are to open out from the narrows of 'scientific socialism' and into the wider main of human emancipatory endeavour. We must open out, however, without falling into the wash of a deracinated, placeless thinking, abstracted from our practical cohabitation, from which we would then have to conjure a world beyond this one from thin air. We

must, then, think from the deep connections of the place in which we find ourselves and with the long thinking of this place to which Māori give voice. Tikanga Māori and mātauranga Māori are names for this thinking. As emanations of the long inhabitation of this place, they assert their own validity. Their engagement requires no justification. This is not to say that tikanga and mātauranga are vestiges of some static tradition; they are modes of thought that flow in to our present in a way that is vital, dynamic, and contemporary. They are not bracketed at the point of European arrival, as is the case with Pākehā memory that begins with the Nation.<sup>5</sup>

The question that remains, then, is why Marx? The real, historical arrival of capitalism and its ongoing clash and entanglement with te ao Māori refuses any purity of analytic position. By listening to Marx, we can learn to listen for the ructions and stresses of capitalism's operations so as better to inform the practical activity of demystifying our own relationships and perspectives. As capitalism insinuates itself into real contexts, embedding itself in the life-blood of other worlds, so the struggle in, against, and beyond it must think and act from these conjunctions.

Sir Tipene O'Regan, who has been called the architect of modern corporate Māoridom due to his role as the chair of Ngāi Tahu throughout the Treaty-settlement negotiations, said that 'mana and money sound very similar'.<sup>6</sup> My view is that O'Regan is fundamentally mistaken, and this mistake is reflected in the form of the corporate iwi. O'Regan's comparison is straightforward enough: in the old days, if you had a lot of mana you had a lot of power and prestige and an increased sphere of influence. These days, money stands in for mana and, indeed, for neoliberal Māori, mana motuhake appears as having money in the free market. My contention is that the concept that plays as central a role in te ao Māori as money does in the Pākehā world is not mana, but whakapapa. Marx describes money as a *nexus rerum*, the nodal point of connection between

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5 Stephen Turner, 'Settler Dreaming,' *Memory Connection* 1, no. 1 (2011): 114–26.

6 Colin James, 'Transition from Tradition to Modernity,' *Māori Law Review*, 12 June 2013, <https://maorilawreview.co.nz/2013/06/transition-from-tradition-to-modernity-colin-james/>

all things.<sup>7</sup> Whakapapa expresses a horizontal interrelation of all things, as well as their intergenerational layering. Money, likewise, signifies an entire system of relationships, the relationship of every commodity to every other commodity via the price at which they may be rendered equivalent for exchange. Money is the means by which commodities socialise. However, money blocks the experience of our congenital interrelation with our world, our whakapapa. Marx says as much in regard to the institution of monetised exchange in ancient Greece: '[monetary greed] is itself the community, and can tolerate none other standing above it'.<sup>8</sup> Beyond the corrosive effects of the infinite accumulation money suggests is possible, it is apparent that the narrowness of the commodity-perspective—the world as value and, above all, exchange value; relationality being between commodities—blocks a more generous experience of, and communion with, the world.

The attempt to envision a Māori Mārx is for me the process of attempting to gather together the strands across the worlds of my learning: the university and the wānanga, London and Pōrangahau. These worlds have been the historical subjects of contact, encounter, entanglement, and incomplete subsumption. In what follows, by no means definitive or complete, I describe some provisional materials for the construction of a Māori Mārx. Each name of this latter conjunction in no way signifies some unvariegated and consistent whole of thought to then be adhered to one another at points where their logics interlock: Māori 'plus' Marx. Instead, the attempt is to imagine a geometer, a meeting place capable of the connective and comparative geometry with which we might begin to discern the outline of a world free of the constraints of this one.

As far as I am aware, literature that explicitly attempts to think through Marx from a Māori perspective is scant. Evan Te Ahu Poata-Smith's brilliant PhD thesis provides a Marxist, historical-materialist account of

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7 Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 228.

8 Marx, *Grundrisse*, 223.

Māori protest between 1968 and 1995.<sup>9</sup> As Poata-Smith outlines, the emergence of militant worker organisations from the late-1960s such as *Tē Hōkoi*, an underground newspaper, and the associated Maori Organisation on Human Rights, allied as they were to the Pākehā Left and the trade unions, might constitute a practical example of Māori politics informed by Marxism. My project here is somewhat different. My aim is to try to transform Marx's thinking so that it might become more adequate to our context by thinking it through from the perspective of a constellation of Māori concepts.

## Marx and Māori

The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilisation. The cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarians' intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilisation into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image.<sup>10</sup>

Even undercut, as this passage is, by a more antagonistic counterpoint, there can be little doubt that the *Communist Manifesto* tacitly expresses a unilinear conception of historical development. Granted its polemical charge, in this text non-Western societies, in their irresistible capitulation to capitalism, are seen to fester in the prehistory of their eventual transition to 'civilisation'. The *Manifesto* largely accepted the stadial or four-stage theory

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9 Evan Te Ahu Poata-Smith, *The Political Economy of Māori Protest Politics, 1968–1995: A Marxist Analysis of the Roots of Māori Oppression and the Politics of Resistance* (PhD diss., University of Otago, 2002).

10 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto: A Modern Edition* (London: Verso, 2012), 47.



of human development put forward by, among others, Adam Smith and the Physiocrats in the 1750s.<sup>11</sup> The stadial theory viewed history as structured according to a single ascendant ark: according to the mode by which a society produced its subsistence, societies progressed from hunter-gatherer, to shepherding, to agriculture, finally reaching their apex in commercial society. The *Manifesto* memorably added to this trajectory a fifth stage that Smith somehow forgot to mention: communism. As communism would emerge from the overcoming of the capitalist mode of production, colonisation, the *Manifesto* implies, serves the purpose of accelerating the progress of non-Western societies towards their inevitable future.

Marx's reading on non-Western and non-capitalist peoples deepened in the following decades. Kevin Anderson summarises Marx's vast yet neglected writings on these issues in his book *Marx at the Margins*.<sup>12</sup> The writings that provide the source material for Anderson's work are doubly marginal. On the one hand, they cover countries and peoples that, at the time of Marx's writing, remained on the margins of capitalism, whether at its frontiers (Ireland, the United States), partially incorporated through colonialism (India, Indonesia, Algeria), or still beyond its reach (Russia, China, Poland). On the other hand, the writings themselves are from Marx's journalism, letters, notes, and notebooks in which he excerpted and commented on texts as he read them. This apparent marginality when compared to his serious economic writings has been exaggerated by subsequent editorial decisions, with Engels's focus on readying the second and third volumes of *Capital* for publication and the motivations of heavy-handed Soviet editors under Stalin.<sup>13</sup> Through this expansive research on non-Western and non-capitalist societies—wherein he paid particular attention to the intersections of race, gender, and nation with capitalism—Marx continually complexified his conception of historical development,

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11 Ronald Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 68.

12 Kevin Anderson, *Marx at the Margins: On Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Non-Western Societies* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010).

13 For a useful account of the travails of these texts in their ongoing journey toward publication see Anderson, *Marx at the Margins*, 247–252.

developing a far less deterministic, more layered and multivalent schema, one that left open the question of possible trajectories of transformation. Marx would continue to rethink and rework the way he conceived of the relationships between the earth and its peoples, and between those peoples, for the remainder of his life. Indeed, in the last few years of his life, Marx was so profoundly opened up by his readings on Indigenous societies that his thinking would become fundamentally transformed.

The *Grundrisse*, a series of notebooks Marx kept between 1857 and 1858, marked an important shift in his conceptualisation of historical development. One of the key ways in which Marx complexified the stadial narrative was through the introduction of multiple geographical points of origin into his analysis, each subject to its own history of development. By the inclusion of 'the Asiatic mode of production', which could only be understood as following its own twists and turns, rather than following in Europe's footprints, Marx rethought the conception of a single path.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, at this stage, the *Grundrisse* still implies that no one comes to communism except through capitalism.

Though they each have different characteristics, for Marx, the earliest forms of social organisation are all communal. In an extended discussion of 'precapitalist' societies, Marx describes three different communal forms under the headings of Asiatic, Graeco-Roman, and Germanic. It seems, at least superficially, that Marx would agree with Karl Popper, Peter Munz, and Rawiri Te Maire Tau that Māori were a tribal people at a comparable stage in development as the tribal Greeks or Germans.<sup>15</sup> What is of interest, in the view of these latter authors, are factors that produce growth by dissolving the impediments to progress such as traditional beliefs and customs, thus enabling rationalisation. In this view, Ngāi Tahu are little different from

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14 Karl Marx, '1859 Preface,' in *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977).

15 Karl Popper, *Open Society and its Enemies* (Routledge Classics: Routledge, 2011), 302; Peter Munz, 'How the West was Won: Miracle or Natural Event?' *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 21, no. 2 (1991), 253–76; Rawiri Te Maire Tau, 'The Death of Knowledge: Ghosts on the Plains,' *New Zealand Journal of History* 35, no. 2 (2001), 131–52.

the entrepreneurial Gauls, who turned their colonisation by the Romans into a business opportunity. Citing Munz, who himself is citing Popper, Tau makes the point that Māori are like the Indigenous inhabitants of Gaul and Germania who ‘were smart enough to seize the opportunities offered by Roman traders and Roman armies to enrich themselves and improve their standard of living’.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, it was the ‘relentless pursuit’ of these opportunities that ‘eroded indigenous loyalties, customs and traditions’.<sup>17</sup> The specificities of each culture are mostly irrelevant to these authors, being only so many examples of static, irrational dogmas that require ‘culture clash’ (read colonisation) to set them onto the path of rationalisation.

Marx, on the other hand, is interested in the way in which a ‘living and active humanity’ in unity ‘with the natural, inorganic conditions of their metabolic exchange with nature’ becomes split in two: ‘a separation which is completely posited only in the relation of wage labour and capital’.<sup>18</sup> Marx here comments on the historical process by which capitalism introduces a decisive cleft into a prior unity. It is through the violent processes of the clearance of direct producers from the land—enclosure, colonisation, extirpation, ‘so-called primitive-accumulation’—that the umbilical relationship between people and the land that nourishes them is broken.<sup>19</sup> In this vein, Raymond Williams was to note that the sharpening resolution between the terms ‘nature’ and ‘culture’ was a function of increasingly pervasive ‘real interaction’.<sup>20</sup> It is this break that sets the human against nature, the subject against the object, and enshrines the individual as a discrete unit. Free in a double sense (freed from the means of production and so free to sell their labour-power), formerly direct producers must buy their means of subsistence on the market. Their relationship to the earth is no longer mediated through the collective but instead through money; they

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16 Tau, ‘The Death of Knowledge,’ 143.

17 Tau, ‘The Death of Knowledge,’ 143.

18 Marx, *Grundrisse*, 489.

19 Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, volume I, trans. Ben Fowkes (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976), 871.

20 Raymond Williams, *Problems in Materialism and Culture: Selected Essays* (London: Verso, 1997), 83.

appear to each other as related through their private labours. Torn from the unity of their metabolic exchange with the earth, people stand in ‘dot-like isolation’.<sup>21</sup>

Marx’s discussion of the unity of human activity with nature and its subsequent separation takes place within a historical-materialist account of the origins and development of property in pre-capitalist societies. Marx suggests that, because living in unity with the earth is the normal condition of humanity, while the separation of that unity is a historical process, the former does not require explanation. However, he is forced to provide some account of the previously lived unity between humanity and nature in order to better understand the process of its subsequent division.

Marx defines ‘property’ in its prelapsarian state as belonging to a community, and belonging to a community as belonging to the land. Through this double belonging, individuals relate to the earth as their ‘inorganic body’. As Marx states: ‘Property therefore means belonging to a clan (community) (having subjective-objective existence in it); and, by means of the relation of this community to the land and soil, [relating] to earth as the individual’s inorganic body’.<sup>22</sup> Thus, prior to division, human beings’ relation to their natural conditions of production was as ‘natural presuppositions’ of the self, as the inorganic body of their subjectivity in which their subjectivity is realised: their ‘extended body’ (the earth).<sup>23</sup> This relationship is necessarily mediated by the community: ‘an isolated individual could no more have property in land and soil than he could speak’.<sup>24</sup> Existence in a situation such as this is characterised by a unity of subject and object, subjectively as ourselves and objectively as the land, which Marx terms ‘subjective-objective’ existence.<sup>25</sup>

Even couched, as it is, in the language internal to subsequent separation—‘property’, ‘subjective-objective’, ‘inorganic’—Marx’s under-

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21 Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, 485, 496.

22 Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, 492.

23 Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, 485, 492.

24 Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, 485.

25 Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, 492.

standing is astonishingly resonant with the basic contours of Māori conceptions of being tangata whenua. Whenua, meaning land and placenta, reflects the fact that we are born from the womb of Papatūānuku. Tangata whenua is a relationship of belonging to the earth as the earth. The closest comparable concept to ‘property’ in the sense that Marx is discussing it is that of mana whenua. Mana whenua, mana meaning sacred authority and power for action, has two aspects: mana in the land and mana over the land. Mana in the land is issued by way of the whakapapa from Ranginui and Papatūānuku to their children; that is, all of creation, including tangata whenua. Mana over the land comes, still through the connections of whakapapa, from the prowess of more recent ancestors. The former can be referred to as mana tupuna (ancestors), the latter as mana tangata (people).<sup>26</sup> These two aspects of mana are analogous with Marx’s conception of property in non-capitalist societies: the relationship to the earth as an extended body approximates mana tupuna; and the community that mediates the relationship of the individual to the earth approximates mana tangata. With regard to the latter, for Māori, an individual living in isolation was inconceivable.<sup>27</sup> So too for Marx, whose analysis rejected the central mystifications of bourgeois social relations that saw the individual as existing prior to the social, the fondness of political economists for ‘Robinson Crusoe stories’, as he termed it.<sup>28</sup> An important contrast, or maybe a clarification, is that Papatūānuku is far from inorganic, being a living biological system with her own agency and personality. Although not explicitly stated, Marx acknowledges as much in his description of humans as the subjectivity of the objective earth. Marx’s contention here resonates with Māori Marsden’s assertion of ‘humankind as the envelope of the noosphere—conscious awareness of Papatūānuku’.<sup>29</sup>

Acknowledging Marx’s insight into some of the general premises of

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26 Edward Taihakurei Durie, *Custom Law*, Treaty Research Series (Wellington: Treaty of Waitangi Research Unit, 1994), 14–18.

27 Durie, *Custom Law*, 10–14.

28 Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, 169–170; *Grundrisse*, 83.

29 Māori Marsden and Charles Te Ahukaramū Royal, *The Woven Universe: Selected Writings of Rev. Māori Marsden* (Otaki: Estate of Rev. Māori Marsden, 2003), 46.

an existence not divided by oppositions of use and exchange value, wage labour and capital, does not mean accepting the universal validity of his account. Marx's *Capital* is primarily, of course, a critique of European social relations achieved through a critique of the classical political economists who gave voice to those relations. However, a key contradiction that arises within capitalist social relations is the apparent naturalness, and therefore universality, of capitalist forms, a dynamic that conceals the historical particularity and contingency of those forms. A related problem vexes Marx throughout the *Grundrisse*. Here, Marx struggles over the correct starting point for a properly historical-materialist critique of political economy, perhaps failing to find a satisfactory answer.<sup>30</sup> Whereas Hegel began his *Science of Logic* from 'being-in-general' (pure being without any particular determinant or embodiment), for Marx this was an idealist starting point that emptied itself of all content.<sup>31</sup> Once emptied of all content, the category attains universality at the highest level of abstraction. The result is that the philosophers merely find their own categories everywhere they look.

Inverting Hegel's idealism, Marx initially suggests beginning with 'material production'.<sup>32</sup> Marx concludes, however, that the notion of 'production in general' abstracts from historical development and, although it brings out elements common to all production, it elides specificities and differences in its apparent unity. Ultimately, Marx finds, production in general is a category with which 'no real historical stage of production can be grasped'.<sup>33</sup> Marx poses two possible responses to this impasse: the first is to begin with 'living wholes', such as a given nation-state, and then, through analysis, to discover some 'determinant, abstract, general relations such as division of labour, money, value, etc'.<sup>34</sup> The second option works in the opposite direction, beginning with abstract, general relations and working on them to flesh out 'living wholes'. While Marx is certain that the

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30 Marx, *Grundrisse*, 81–109; see also Martin Nicolaus's forward to this edition, 35–38.

31 Marx, *Grundrisse*, 101.

32 Marx, *Grundrisse*, 83.

33 Marx, *Grundrisse*, 88.

34 Marx, *Grundrisse*, 100.

second option is the correct one, he is immediately troubled by the fact that simple, abstract, general relations have their own history. Each would first need to be accounted for, leading to a necessary regression to a historical point zero from which it would then be possible to begin. Marx counters that the correct place to begin is with a category that holds a particularly central position within the specific social formation or epoch to be studied. At the close of the introduction to the *Grundrisse*, Marx remains uncertain, fudging the answer by stating that the initial category must be central to a particular social formation but also ‘more or less’ common to all social formations.

## Commodity and Commune

Marx’s answer, as will become the famous departure point of *Capital*, is the simple commodity, divided and doubled as use/exchange value, the opposition from which Marx will dialectically unfurl the entire work. The commodity is Marx’s primary anthropological category of capitalist society. The contradiction at the seam of the commodity (use/exchange) is expressive of the contradictions of capitalism generally, a fragment of a hologram that reveals the entire image. Forgetting for a moment any judgements that order societies according to certain metrics, Marx enables a comparison between a society of reproduction in unity with the earth and a society organised around commodity production and exchange. Or, to modify his phrasing slightly, Marx enables an analysis of what becomes of Ranginui and Papatūānuku once subsumed within capitalist social relations.

He provides a beguiling response to this question towards the close of the third volume of *Capital*:

Capital-profit (or better still capital-interest), land-ground rent, labor-wages, this economic trinity as the connection between the components of value and wealth in general and its sources, completes the mystification of the capitalist mode of production, the reification of social relations, and the immediate coalescence of the material relations of production with

their historical and social specificity: the bewitched, distorted and upside-down world haunted by Monsieur le Capital and Madame la Terre, who are at the same time social characters and mere things.<sup>35</sup>

Capital, arriving in Aotearoa with the nation-state and European law in tow, insinuates itself between Rangi and Papa and forces a nuptial with the earth. As its terrain for expansion, the ground of its reproduction, and the source of its raw materials, capital is lost without this unholy union. Following this ritual, the earth rises up in ghostly form. As a commodity, the earth is socialised as an apparition in the form of exchange value. Beneath the conjured apparition of the earth as exchange value, rendered inert through the severance of direct producers from the land, the earth becomes the object of 'the right of the proprietors to exploit the earth's surface, the bowels of the earth, the air and thereby the maintenance and development of life'.<sup>36</sup>

Such is the inverted world of the commodity, its fetish-like character, in which relations between people take on the fantastic form of social relations between things. However, from the perspective of the unity prior to the instantiation of capitalism, the distinction that makes possible the inversion of people and things is absent. Within that unity, there is a general sociality amongst all things in the world. The world has its very existence through that sociality, as is described by the concept of whakapapa. However, from the appearance of Papatūānuku as lifeless, inorganic matter, her ghost is called to dance while her body, including humans, is subjected to exploitation, spoilage, and degradation. In Marx's words: 'all progress in capitalistic agriculture is a progress in the art, not only of robbing the labourer, but of robbing the soil; all progress in increasing the fertility of the soil for a given time, is a progress towards ruining the lasting sources of that fertility'.<sup>37</sup> From a Māori perspective, however, the inversion that has human relations appear as social relations between things was, even prior

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35 Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, volume III, trans. David Fernbach (London: Penguin Books, 1981), 969.

36 Marx, *Capital*, vol. III, 909.

37 Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, 638.



to inversion, still only a partial view. Humans *and* things had always had social relations between and amongst themselves. Papatūānuku is a general field of sociality.

Marx began his account of capital with the commodity, containing as it does the kernel of capitalism's contradictions. Yet the commodity is a category specific to capitalism as it had developed in the West. In the last decade of his life, Marx became both increasingly hostile to colonialism and deeply engaged with, in Teodor Shanin's phrase, 'the very heterogeneity of structure and motion around the globe'.<sup>38</sup> The commodity could not provide the point of departure for the type of comparative analysis adequate to this heterogeneity. A thinker of process and motion, whose thought remained in process and motion for the entirety of his life, late Marx devoted himself to the understanding of non-Western and non-capitalist societies as part of his attempt to reformulate his approach. Testament to the fact that much of the Marxism that followed Marx carried nothing of the motion or vitality of his thought, some of the foremost interpreters of Marx in the period after his death considered the new direction Marx's thought took in the last few years of his life as a result of senility.<sup>39</sup> Why else would Marx abandon the serious scientific work of *Capital* in favour of reading about people who had to catch up to capitalism before they could dream of communism?

A major indication of the transformation Marx's thought underwent throughout this period is the letter he wrote in response to a question from Vera Zasulich, a young Russian revolutionary.<sup>40</sup> Two years before Marx died, Zasulich wrote to him in February 1881 seeking clarification on a question that she considered to be 'of life and death' import for the socialist struggle in Russia.<sup>41</sup> Zasulich asked whether the rural commune in Russia was, freed from domination by the state, capable of developing in a socialist

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38 Teodor Shanin, *Late Marx and the Russian Road: Marx and 'the Peripheries of Capitalism'* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 22.

39 Shanin, *Late Marx*, 19, 32.

40 Zasulich was in exile at the time of writing. No armchair revolutionary, she had shot the governor of St Petersburg as retribution for him flogging a prisoner: Shanin, *Late Marx*, 178.

41 Shanin, *Late Marx*, 98.

direction, or if it was destined to perish. If the former was the case then the ‘revolutionary socialist must devote all [their] strength to the liberation and development of the commune’.<sup>42</sup> But if the rural commune was an archaic dead-end, then all that was left to Russian revolutionaries:

was more or less ill founded calculations as to how many decades it will take for the Russian peasant’s land to pass into the hands of the bourgeoisie, and how many centuries it will take for capitalism in Russia to reach something like the level of development already attained in Western Europe.<sup>43</sup>

Marx spent three weeks working intensely on a response, producing four lengthy drafts before finally sending a shorter version. Marx was hardly unprepared for the question. According to Jenny Marx, in 1870 Marx had begun to teach himself Russian so that he could read Russian sources directly. In the years that followed, he had amassed a vast library of Russian books, taking voluminous notes on his reading. In his answer to Zasulich, Marx was clear: his research had convinced him that ‘the [rural] commune is the fulcrum for social regeneration in Russia’.<sup>44</sup> Ironically, this was taken to be an entirely heretical stance from the perspective of Russian Marxists and the letter would not be published until it was discovered in 1924.<sup>45</sup>

In one of the drafts of the letter, Marx provided more detail: ‘Precisely because it is contemporaneous with capitalist production, the rural commune may appropriate for itself all the positive achievements and this without undergoing its frightful vicissitudes’.<sup>46</sup> Marx and Engels would confirm much the same sentiment in an 1882 preface to the second Russian edition of *The Communist Manifesto*, the last of Marx’s writings published during his lifetime. As is made clear in this preface, Marx had thoroughly transformed in his thinking any notions of unilinear evolutionary stages,

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42 Shanin, *Late Marx*, 98.

43 Vera Zasulich, ‘A Letter to Marx (February/March 1881),’ in Shanin, *Late Marx*, 98–99.

44 Karl Marx, ‘The Reply to Zasulich (8 March 1881),’ in Shanin, *Late Marx*, 124.

45 David Ryazanov, ‘The Discovery of the Drafts,’ in Shanin, *Late Marx*, 127–133.

46 Shanin, *Late Marx*, 105.

opening onto a far more heterogeneous field of possibilities in the relationships between different social forms.

At the time of his response, Marx's readings on non-Western and non-capitalist societies had greatly expanded. Marx's notebooks from between 1879 and 1882 run to some 300,000 words of excerpts and notations. Focusing mainly on works by anthropologists, Marx's research spans Indian history and village culture; Dutch colonialism and the village economy in Indonesia; gender and kinship patterns among Native Americans and in ancient Greece, Rome, and Ireland; and communal and private property in Algeria and Latin America.<sup>47</sup>

The literature on the notebooks from this period is slim, not least because of their polyglot texture, the multiple languages used even within single sentences, and their incompleteness. Lawrence Krader, who made about half of the materials available for the first time in 1972, surmised at the end of his lengthy introduction that the notebooks' 'incomplete form has nevertheless indicated the transition of Marx from the restriction of the abstract generic human to the empirical study of human societies'.<sup>48</sup> It is perhaps for this reason that E P Thompson had regarded Marx as, in these last years of his life, spiralling back to the concerns of his Paris youth,<sup>49</sup> where, in his 1844 *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, he had been absorbed by Hegel's discovery of 'the formation of the earth, its coming to be, as a process of self-generation'.<sup>50</sup>

Raya Dunayevskaya regarded the notebooks as 'epoch making', expressive of the radical open-endedness of Marx's thought, and providing a novel position from which to reinterpret his life's works. The Marx of

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47 Anderson, *Marx at the Margins*, 196; Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe IV/27* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, forthcoming).

48 Karl Marx, *The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx: Studies of Morgan, Phear, Maine, Lubbock*, trans. and ed. with an intro. Lawrence Krader (Assen: Von Gorcum, 1974); Krader, 'Introduction,' in Marx, *The Ethnological Notebooks*, 85.

49 E.P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory, or An Orrery of Errors* (London: Merlin Press, 1995), 220.

50 Karl Marx and Lucio Colletti, *Karl Marx: Early Writings*, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregar Benton (London: Penguin Classics, 1992), 356.

the notebooks was ‘returning to probe the origin of humanity, not for purposes of discovering new origins, but for perceiving new revolutionary forces, their reason, or as Marx called it, in emphasizing a sentence of Morgan, “powers of the mind”’.<sup>51</sup> While Dunayevskaya is no doubt correct that Marx gathered materials and perspectives to bear on the present, she introduces a more reductive teleology than is found in his own writing. She conflates Marx’s research into ancient society and contemporary non-Western societies as both being exemplary of previous stages in the historical development of the West.

As Krader suggests, the notebooks actually show the thoroughgoing anti-teleological charge of Marx’s thinking, as well as his refusal to apply an unmodified Darwinian evolutionary schema to human culture. In Krader’s words, Marx’s criticism was of ‘evolution made over into evolutionism, a doctrine comforting and comfortable to the sustainers of the given civilisation as the telos of evolutionary progress’.<sup>52</sup> Marx noted how these doctrines reconstructed the past so that the mores of a particular society became the end-result of an evolutionary process and so could serve as the justification for the domination and exploitation of other peoples. The heterogeneous themes of the notebooks are no accident. Marx’s intense focus was on Indigenous societies, with particular emphasis on the relations between men and women in egalitarian societies, the changes over time within societies, colonialism, and technological advances in agriculture. As we know from Marx’s response to Zasulich, these insights had a vital bearing on the struggle of Marx’s present.

The most voluminous notes are found in Marx’s reading of the anthropologist Henry Morgan’s work on Native Americans. Marx painstakingly excerpted such details as the animals from which each clan descended, the precise description of certain rituals, and the Indigenous words for things. Likewise, Marx was enthralled by the democratic practices of the Iroquois and the power and participation of women within

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51 Raya Dunayevskaya, *Women’s Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future* (Wayne State University Press, 1996), 221.

52 Krader, ‘Introduction,’ 84.

those practices. A particularly fine formulation of the way in which Marx's thought was transformed by his textual encounter with Indigenous peoples is given by Franklin Rosemont; Marx came to understand:

the true complexity of 'primitive' societies as well as their grandeur, their essential superiority, in real human terms, to the degraded civilization founded on the fetishism of commodities. In a note written just after his conspectus of Morgan we find Marx arguing that 'primitive communities had incomparably greater vitality than the Semitic, Greek, Roman and a fortiori the modern capitalist societies.' Thus Marx had come to realize that, measured according to the 'wealth of subjective human sensuality,' as he had expressed it in the 1844 manuscripts, Iroquois society stood much higher than any of the societies 'poisoned by the pestilential breath of civilization.' Even more important, Morgan's lively account of the Iroquois gave him a vivid awareness of the actuality of indigenous peoples, and perhaps even a glimpse of the then-undreamed of possibility that such peoples could make their own contributions to the global struggle for human emancipation.<sup>53</sup>

In the next section, I return to this fundamental opening at the close of Marx's thought, thinking Marx from the perspective of this transformation. This is accomplished in combination with a provisional attempt to read Marx from the perspective of a Māori conceptual orientation. This seems to me the process Marx started, in whatever limited, one-sided way he could, through his own readings on Indigenous societies.

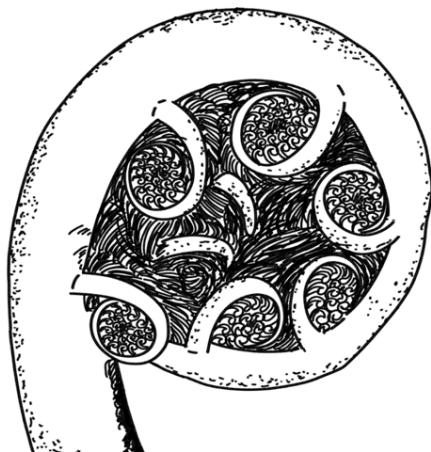
## Māori Mārx

The first point to note in a comparison between Marx's style of thinking and a Māori style of thought, other than the asymmetry of a comparison between a person and a people, is a shared pattern described by the spiral.

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53 Franklin Rosemont, 'Karl Marx and the Iroquois,' in *Arsenal: Surrealist Subversion*, ed. Franklin Rosemont (Chicago: Black Swan Press, 1989), 201–213.

To take a visual example, the curled tendrils of the koru fern—the word meaning a fold, loop, or coil—so important to Māori thought, also works as a diagram of Marx’s dialectical mode of presentation.<sup>54</sup>



**Figure 1.** Koru fern – image by Huriana Kopeke-Te Aho, 2019

Both Hegelian and Marxian conceptions of the dialectic, and the concept of whakapapa, all express a thinking of and in movement. That is, a relational thinking of process, cycle, and development wherein the relation is prior to the terms constituted by that relation. Although Hegel chose the figure of the circle, always multiple and in movement, as his diagram of the dialectic, it is hard not to detect the curls of the koru in his descriptions:

But universal movement as concrete is a series of manifestations (*Gestaltungen*) of the Spirit. This series should not be pictured as a straight line but as a circle, a return into itself. This circle has as its circumference a large number of circles; *one* development is always a movement passing

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<sup>54</sup> The relationship between Hegel’s dialectic and the Māori notion of wānanga (study) has been noted by Ruakere Hond, ‘The Concept of Wānanga at Parihaka,’ in *Parihaka: The Art of Passive Resistance*, eds. Te Miringa Hohaia, Gregory O’Brian, and Lara Strongman (New Zealand: Victoria University Press, 2001), 82.

through many developments; the totality of this series is a succession of developments curving back on itself; and each particular development is a stage of the whole. Although there is progress in development, it does not go forward into (abstract) infinity but rather turns back into itself.<sup>55</sup>

Working from the other direction, it is equally hard not to be struck by the dialectical nature of Māori Marsden's account of the whakapapa of creation:

The genealogy of creation occurs in stages in which one order, after it has reached its culmination, takes a giant leap forward to be succeeded by a radical departure resulting in the introduction of a new stage. That process is illustrated by the stages, void—root foundations—energy-consciousness—spirit—form—a new space/time continuum—Ranginui and Papatūānuku.<sup>56</sup>

The dialectical character of the Māori account of creation does not end with Ranginui and Papatūānuku. In fact, it is odd that in Tau's account of Māori thought as lacking critical distance, leading to its confinement in mirror thinking, he does not mention the Māori Enlightenment.<sup>57</sup> As one common account has it, the first children of Rangi and Papa became frustrated at living in the darkness of their parents' tight embrace. After much dialogue and debate, they resolved to split their parents apart, allowing light to enter the world. Tane, the atua of the forest and knowledge, one of whose forms is the mighty Kauri tree, inverted himself, placing his feet against the sky and his shoulders against the earth, thus separating his parents. This is the way that Te Ao Mārama (the world of light, the realm of being) was born from Te Pō (the night, the realm of becoming). The

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55 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel's Idea of Philosophy with a New Translation of Hegel's Introduction to the History of Philosophy*, ed. Quentin Lauer (New York: Fordham University Press, 1971), 80. Marx's figure of the dialectic is the ellipse: see Thomas Weston, 'Marx on the Dialectics of Elliptical Motion,' *Historical Materialism* 20, no. 4 (2012): 3–38.

56 Marsden, *Woven Universe*, 45.

57 An enlightenment fundamentally different from its European counterpart. Tau, 'The Death of Knowledge.'

etymology of the term ‘dialectic’ is from the Greek ‘*dia*’, meaning split in two, and ‘*logos*’, meaning reason; hence: debate, decision, reasoning by splitting in two. Tane’s division of his parents after ferocious debate is the dialectical act *par excellence*.

From the perspective of the shared dialectical texture or spiral rhythms of both modes of thinking—Māori and Marx—I propose to pick up the thread of the multiplication and delinearisation of trajectories of development within societies and between them. In a compelling series of articles entitled ‘Once Were Communists’, the Pākehā Marxist and trade unionist Terry Coggan recounts an anecdote from his youth:

At a public meeting in the 1970s, I heard Maori rights activist Syd Jackson say that Europeans came to Aotearoa (New Zealand) with a culture that was ‘materially superior’ but ‘spiritually inferior’ to that of the indigenous Maori people they encountered. As a newly minted Marxist, I knew that by material and spiritual culture he meant the economic base, the legal and political superstructure, and the forms of social consciousness particular to each society, even if I wasn’t sure how value judgments like ‘inferior’ or ‘superior’ belonged with such a scientific analysis.<sup>58</sup>

There is undoubtedly something valuable in the distinction drawn by Jackson in describing the difference between Māori and Pākehā at the moment of encounter, although some might find ‘spirit’ too Hegelian a category for a materialist dialectics. For Marx, the totality of the relations of production constitutes the economic base; or, as he puts it, they constitute ‘the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness’.<sup>59</sup> The conception Marx outlines in the passage just cited has regularly been taken up by Marxists as a strict economic determinism, one that Engels would later rail against for rendering Marx’s

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58 Terry Coggan, ‘Once Were Communists – Part One: The First Communism,’ *A Communist at Large*, 6 December 2014, <https://convincingreasons.wordpress.com/2014/12/06/once-were-communists-part-one-the-first-communism/>

59 Marx, ‘1859 Preface,’ *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*.



proposition ‘meaningless, abstract, absurd’.<sup>60</sup> Coggan, at the time of the anecdote a ‘newly minted Marxist’, is too quick to map Jackson’s terms onto a cruder reading of base and superstructure. Nonetheless, the anecdote opens up the question of the multiple registers of progress and the values whereby development along these axes might be evaluated.

Historical materialism, where it remains beholden to a rigid schema according to which the economic base determines all superstructural elements, eclipses its own imagination. If the forces of production are the only agency through which social forms evolve, then emancipation starts to look like a technological problem. And perhaps it is, but not the technology of a lifeless materialism that thinks of matter as inert and technology as solely a matter of objects. Technological objects, whether handheld gadgets or global infrastructure, are, of course, thoroughly social. But acknowledging this does not necessarily free us from the idea that technology is simply a matter of objects, a narrow perspective that monopolises our imaginations. If the model of base and superstructure is wound down into a more complex, differential unity comprising multiple agencies, then the other aspect of technology is able to step into the light: namely, the techniques of sociality as they are imagined and elaborated in thought and in practice. Techniques of sociality are all those technologies that mediate and enable difference without needing to tame it, their level of advancement being decided by the degree to which they secure and increase *both* independence and interdependence.

Early Pākehā colonists noted the radically democratic and egalitarian aspects of Māori society in comparison to that of Europeans.<sup>61</sup> Many agreed with the sentiments of Francis Dart Fenton when he observed, in 1857, that:

No system of government that the world ever saw can be more democratic than that of the Maoris. The chief alone has no power. The whole tribe

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60 Friedrich Engels, ‘Engels to J. Bloch In Berlin, London, September 21, 1890,’ *New International* 1, no.3 (1934): 81–85.

61 On this point, see Vincent O’Malley, *The Meeting Place: Māori and Pākehā Encounters, 1642–1840* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2014), 197.

deliberate on every subject, not only politically on such as are of public interest, but even judicially they hold their 'komitis' on every private quarrel. In ordinary times the vox populi determines every matter, both internal and external. The system is a pure pantocracy, and no individual enjoys influence or exercises power, unless it originates with the mass and is expressly or tacitly conferred by them.<sup>62</sup>

Likewise, the process of pōwhiri of manuhiri onto a marae continues to provide a rich expression of the advanced social technology of tikanga in handling difference in ways that do not come at the expense of autonomy. In contrast, the record of the earliest European arrivals, when read from a perspective even slightly sympathetic to Māori, provides repetitive evidence of callous insensitivity to (even the possibility of the existence of) local protocols and of violence as an immediate response to any perceived slight, minor provocation, or even their own incomprehension. Pākehā, when they arrived, must have appeared to Māori as having very primitive social skills.

Marx's categories such as the commodity are those of an 'endoanthropology', too internal to his own society to be able to provide the basis of comparison between societies without presupposing the universal existence of the commodity. While the commodity is of particular importance within capitalism, it is not more or less common to all social formations. Where the commodity might seem to be a more or less universal category is in its useful, or thingly aspect.

Although the commodity cannot provide a universal basis of comparison, this does not mean that it is precluded from providing a point of comparison. A question that emerges from such a comparison is what the commodity fetish that arrives with Pākehā would look like from a Māori perspective. An important difference follows from an absence of the opposition between use and exchange in te ao Māori prior to European arrival. Because of the absence of this distinction, the apparent inversion that sees relations between people 'appear as relations between material objects, instead of revealing them plainly', remains a limited or bracketed

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62 F.D. Fenton, 'Report as to Native Affairs in the Waikato District March 1857,' *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives*, E-1c (1860), 11.

perspective.<sup>63</sup> For Māori, there was instead always a field of interrelation and co-constitution, whakapapa, a sociality between and amongst ourselves and the world. To invert the inversion enacted by the commodity would be to remain blinded as to the fullness of the dynamic inter-relationality of everything with everything else.

Reading Marx from an Indigenous perspective, Glen Coulthard transforms Marx's concept of 'modes of production' into the more expansive 'modes of life'.<sup>64</sup> Rather than Marx's more anthropocentric notion of relations of production conditioned by forces of production, a mode of life refers to 'a field of relationships of things to each other'.<sup>65</sup> What I call a 'geometry of life' tries to think the epistemological implications of the concept of mode of life.<sup>66</sup> A geometry of life—the patternings traced in a world by the flux of its constituent sociality—gains a third dimension through the development of a 'geomentality'.<sup>67</sup> A geomentality is a relationship with the earth that issues from the particular rhythms and patterns of a world expressed as a particular enunciative fold within it (for example, a human). As a rhythmic aspect, a geometry of life has a temporal dimension that is given through the metabolic interchange with the earth, the tempo of which is particular to a mode of life. The comparative, historical, vital, and sacred materialism approached by the conception of a geometry of life is an initial and provisional methodological formulation of a Māori Mārx.

A geometry of life seeks to remain open such that *a priori* reconfigurations of other worlds are lessened. Absolute symmetry or complete non-distortion of perspective remains, however, an unachievable purity that would be likely to be entirely sterile, even if it were possible. The point is not to come to an objective view from nowhere but instead to reach a meeting place where different perspectives can be held in their

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63 Marx, *Capital*, vol. I, 169.

64 Coulthard, 'Place against Empire,' 1–34.

65 Coulthard, 'Place against Empire,' 16.

66 Simon Barber, *Geometries of Life* (PhD diss., Goldsmiths, University of London, 2018).

67 The term is taken from Hong-Key Yoon, 'On Geomentality,' *GeoJournal* 25, no. 4 (1991): 387–92.

difference, with the hope of coming to novel, collective, and experimental constructions. A geometry of life is, then, a provisional orientation from which to begin the transformation of Marx's thinking from an Indigenous perspective.

## Proletarian Papatūānuku

Coulthard has convincingly argued that, although *Capital* acknowledges a double moment of dispossession *and* proletarianisation, Marx's interest is for the most part taken up with the latter. Coulthard suggests moving away from Marx's more capital-centric analysis to one in which land is more central and in which dispossession becomes a more sustained focus. This speaks more directly to Indigenous experience.<sup>68</sup> In light of this, my claim that Papatūānuku is best understood as proletarian might seem incongruent.

What I hope to make apparent via this phrasing is that the process of dispossession of people from the land is also one in which the land is forced to 'work' in the factory. The farm/field is a factory in which the industrial rhythms of capitalist agriculture sever and supplant those of the metabolism of people living in intimate, umbilical connection with the earth. Whereas Papatūānuku is formerly the means of reproduction of life on the planet, once dominated by capital this function is devalued, and her ability to do so lessens as she is impoverished by increasingly frenetic exploitation. Capitalist agriculture produces a rift by demanding more from the earth than it is able to give. The profit motive that demands that production increase in each business cycle is in direct relation to the increasing poverty of the earth. Capital tries to staunch this deficit by increasing its violent means of technological intervention. The literal Latin meaning of proletariat, 'those with many offspring', was used in its ancient Roman sense to designate the lowest class of people, whose members, poor and exempt from taxes, were useful to the republic only for the production of

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68 Coulthard, 'Place against Empire.'

children.<sup>69</sup> It is in this impoverished reproductive sense that Papatūānuku, as dominated by capital, is proletarian.

Because of the particular relationship of humans, understood as tangata whenua (people of the land, born of Papatūānuku), to her, the dispossession of people from the land is from Papatūānuku's perspective a theft of her land people. As Māori Marsden explains:

The function of humankind as the envelope of the noosphere—conscious awareness of Papatūānuku—is to advance her towards the omega point of fulfilment. This will mean a radical departure from the modern concept of man as the centre of the universe towards an awareness that man's destiny is intimately bound up with the destiny of the earth. . . . Thus will he embrace a holistic view which encompasses all life. He will thus learn to flow with and ride upon the vibrant energies of the Cosmic stream. . . . So will he overcome his sense of isolation, that estrangement which breeds despair—the encounter with nothingness. Only then will he recognise inwardly that he has come home.<sup>70</sup>

And so the dispossession that produces the worker as a subject set against inert nature is also the inversion of Papatūānuku's own consciousness against herself.

A recent and celebrated case, the result of many years of struggle by the various iwi and hapū involved, marks the attempt to return consciousness and voice to Papatūānuku. Te Awa Tupua (the Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act 2017 bestows legal personhood on the Whanganui River.<sup>71</sup> By way of the act, two people are appointed by the Crown and iwi associated with the river to be te Pou Tupua (guardians of the river) and to speak on the river's behalf.<sup>72</sup> This is no doubt a considerable achievement

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69 Cedric Robinson, *An Anthropology of Marxism* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2001), 17.

70 Marsden, *Woven Universe*, 46.

71 New Zealand Parliament, *Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act 2017*, Public Act no. 7 (20 March 2017).

72 Former MP Dame Tariana Turia and educator Turama Hawira have been appointed the first Te Pou Tupua.

that provides significant protections for the river, also opening the law up to far more dynamic and creative processes than have been previously available to it.<sup>73</sup>

The decision has become one of international renown, and will no doubt find resonance with many working in the wake of new materialisms, plural ontologies, or post-humanism. That a river might be given voice is a practical fulfilment of the hope expressed by Bruno Latour for a ‘parliament of things’.<sup>74</sup> However, both legal personhood and parliament are, of course, bourgeois forms entirely consistent with the continued domination of the earth by capital. In the terms of first law, the Whanganui River’s subject–objecthood, understood as a relational agency, is expressed in the multiple *taniwhā* that inhabit it. A *taniwhā* is a relational being that inhabits a body of water and acts as *kaitiaki* of the health and vitality of that water, including that of all those things nourished by it. A *taniwhā* is an expression of the field of reciprocity and cohabitation whereby the health of the river is also the health of the communities it sustains. The latter are in a position of responsibility and obligation to the river as reciprocity for their own existence.

As against the indivisible individual of the river as legal person,<sup>75</sup> I am instead describing the unbounded relational totality of the river expressed by *taniwhā*, *tupuna*, *atua*, *tangata whenua*—an expression of the collective powers of the earth. It is through this agency, and by way of our participation in this ensemble, that we might begin to fulfil our responsibilities to Papatūānuku and to each other by negating the ruinous exploitation of her (including us) by capital. That is, the liberation of the earth by the coming to self-consciousness of proletarian Papatūānuku.

This will not be possible if our imaginations remain constrained by the forms of capital, whether legal, economic, ideological, or otherwise. The capitalist mode of life forecloses, however inconclusively, that of Māori,

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73 Marama Muru-Lanning, *Tupuna Awa: People and Politics of the Waikato River* (Auckland: University of Auckland Press, 2016).

74 Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

75 ‘Te Awa Tupua is an indivisible and living whole’: New Zealand Parliament, *Te Awa Tupua Act 2017*, 2:12.

as te ao Pākehā, the commodity-world, asserts itself as the only possible reality. A negation of this negation remains open to us: Papatūānuku might this time heave capital off of herself. This is due to the vast manaakitanga shown Pākehā by Māori. That many Pākehā fail to see the door Māori hold open, or to see the possibilities for our co-constitution and cohabitation beyond relationships of domination, is due to the violence carried by Pākehā in the readiness to refuse, extinguish, or flatten other modes of life, precluding us from sharing the energies and imagination of this vision. Thus, the unending struggle by Māori, which finds one present expression in the patient work of the Matike Mai collective for a constitution based on first law, appears to Pākehā as an attempt to undermine sovereignty.<sup>76</sup> The continuation of violence is upheld against the offer of open aroha.

Papatūānuku calls out to us now, her karanga tinged with urgent lament. Responding to this call, Marx, with his spiralling investigations into the advanced social technologies of Indigenous peoples and the immense productive forces of capital, arrives at this hui alive and among us. A new world struggles to be born. Either we breathe life into that world and learn to breathe its life or we suffocate in this one. Tihei mauri ora!

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76 *He Whakaaro Here Whakaumu mō Aotearoa: The Report of Matike Mai Aotearoa – The Independent Working Group on Constitutional Transformation* (2016), available at, <https://nwo.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/MatikeMaiAotearoa25Jan16.pdf>

In this article, I argue that both tino rangatiratanga and socialism lie at the heart of emancipatory politics in Aotearoa New Zealand. For Māori, the economy has always been a dynamic site of interaction with the state and corporate bodies, and today the Māori economy is celebrated by some as a space where tino rangatiratanga can be realised. For the most part, though, the capitalist economy has been a site of exploitation for Māori. Given the inextricable relations between capitalism and colonialism, I present the case for Māori socialism as an emancipatory response to both. To do so, I employ Erik Olin Wright's socialist compass, a conceptual tool that points to a variety of economic pathways towards socialism. But there is a major problem with Wright's compass: it only has three points (state power, economic power, and social power). I extend Wright's vision for socialism by completing the compass, adding to it a much needed fourth point: tino rangatiratanga. The resulting 'Aotearoa socialist compass' can be used to orient us towards Māori socialism—a socialist economy in which tino rangatiratanga is realised.



## A Socialist Compass for Aotearoa: Envisioning Māori Socialism

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DANIELLE WEBB

The assertion of tino rangatiratanga, whether in resistance to, or in collaboration with, the state, has achieved much in political, cultural, and economic spheres.<sup>1</sup> It was through diplomacy, determination, and persistence that rangatira first secured seats in Parliament and Māori representation in both central and local government. Culturally, the ‘Māori renaissance’ of the 1970s and 1980s led to renewed efforts in the revival of te reo Māori, the establishment of Kohanga Reo, and the celebration of Māori identity through the arts and media. In the economic sphere, which is the focus of this article, Treaty settlements and Māori innovation have led to the growth of the Māori economy, now worth around \$50 billion.<sup>2</sup>

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1 I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their helpful suggestions. I would also like to thank Dylan Taylor and Jack Foster for encouraging me to develop this article and for patiently guiding me through the process.

2 Here, the ‘Māori economy’ refers to a range of corporations, businesses, and employers that self-identify as Māori and are included in official New Zealand economic statistics. See New Zealand Foreign Affairs and Trade, ‘The Māori Economy,’ [https://www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/FTAs-in-negotiations/UK-FTA/The-Maori-Economy\\_2.pdf](https://www.mfat.govt.nz/assets/FTAs-in-negotiations/UK-FTA/The-Maori-Economy_2.pdf). It must be recognised that the definition of the Māori economy espoused in this report, and reflected in this article, is only one way of understanding the Māori economy. The same term might also be used to refer to traditional and diverse economic practices such as koha and manākitanga and reciprocal gift-giving, which were dominant prior to colonisation and continue to exist today.

Despite this progress, however, the devastating legacy of colonisation remains manifest in the lives of far too many Māori whānau today. According to the economist Brian Easton, by the 1970s Māori had become ‘an indicator of what was happening to people who were lowest in the income distribution’.<sup>3</sup> Inequality has only increased since the 1970s and Māori continue to rank among the lowest in income distribution and poverty measures today.

One way Māori inequality has been measured has been by looking at the number of Māori, compared to non-Māori, who are represented in the precariat. The precariat, as conceptualised by Guy Standing, refers to a ‘class in the making’, emerging in the wake of neoliberal economic reform and characterised by job insecurity.<sup>4</sup> In many countries, including Aotearoa New Zealand, the neoliberal ideal of increased labour market flexibility has only transferred insecurity and risk from employers to employees. In the recently published book *Precarity: Uncertain, Insecure and Unequal Lives in Aotearoa New Zealand*, the precariat refers specifically to those who are in temporary work, are unemployed, or are receiving a benefit.<sup>5</sup> Using statistics from the 2014 New Zealand General Social Survey as well as their own research, the authors tell the stories of hundreds of young people, refugees and non-European immigrants, elderly, and many others who make up Aotearoa New Zealand’s precariat. Although they come from diverse backgrounds, the lives of all of these people are characterised by ‘situations and experiences of uncertainty, dependency, powerlessness, perilousness and insufficiency’.<sup>6</sup>

While *Precarity* highlights the diversity of inequality, special attention is paid to the overrepresentation of Māori in the precariat: almost one in

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3 Brian Easton, ‘Māori have been trapped in a poverty cycle,’ *E-Tangata*, 13 May 2018, <https://e-tangata.co.nz/korero/brian-easton-maori-have-been-trapped-in-a-poverty-cycle/>

4 Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), xii.

5 Shiloh Groot et al. eds. *Precarity: Uncertain, Insecure and Unequal Lives in Aotearoa New Zealand* (Auckland: Massey University Press, 2017).

6 Groot et al. *Precarity*, 13.

four Māori are represented in the precariat compared to almost one in six non-Māori.<sup>7</sup> When comparing Māori and Pākehā deprivation they find that 13 percent of Māori are in temporary work compared to 8.2 percent of Pākehā; similarly, 12.4 percent of Māori are unemployed compared to 4.4 percent of Pākehā.<sup>8</sup> In comparing Māori to Pākehā (as opposed to all non-Māori, as in the first instance), the authors highlight the importance of viewing Māori inequality within the context of colonisation, pointing out that precarity is compounded by experiences of discrimination and cultural isolation. They urge the reader to remember the ‘deeds from this country’s past’, linking current Māori inequality with the historic appropriation of Māori land and natural resources.<sup>9</sup> The key message is that Māori represent more than just a subset of the wider Aotearoa New Zealand precariat; underlying Māori inequality are issues of colonisation which, if not addressed, will continue to impinge on Māori wellbeing.

Given the complexity of the inequality faced by Māori today, it is clear that emancipatory politics in Aotearoa New Zealand must address both colonisation and capitalist exploitation. The concept of Māori socialism, worked through in this article, addresses the need for both tino rangatiratanga and socialism. In section one, I demonstrate the need for Māori socialism by contextualising Māori inequality within the history of colonisation and capitalist exploitation. I then move on to give a brief overview of the different ways Māori authorities and the state have responded to this. In section two, I unpack Erik Olin Wright’s pragmatic approach to socialism as an achievable alternative to capitalism and introduce his concept of the socialist compass. In section three, I complete Wright’s compass by adding a fourth point: tino rangatiratanga. I develop the idea of Māori socialism by extending Wright’s vision to include the emancipatory goals of Māori in line with the vision for tino rangatiratanga outlined in the Matike Mai

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7 Groot et al. *Precarity*, 116.

8 Groot et al. *Precarity*, 117.

9 Groot et al. *Precarity*, 111.

report.<sup>10</sup> In the final section, with the new compass in hand, I explore the potential of the Māori economy and briefly outline some of the possible pathways towards Māori socialism.

## The historical roots of Māori inequality

Prior to European settlement most hapū were resource rich and had well-established trading systems.<sup>11</sup> While not entirely without hierarchy, the social structure of hapū was relatively flat and a strong culture of reciprocity and manaakitanga meant that wealth was evenly distributed. When Europeans did arrive many hapū were quick to adapt to the capitalist market economy. The 1840s and 1850s saw a thriving Māori economy characterised by hapū-driven enterprise and economic expansion.<sup>12</sup> Many hapū, for example, became successful players in the coastal shipping, flourmilling, and farming industries. However, ‘the golden age of Māori enterprise’ was short lived; with the rapid increase of the Pākehā population came a demand for productive land and the subsequent dispossession of Māori from their main source of economic and cultural prosperity.<sup>13</sup> The confiscation of Māori land during and after the Land Wars ‘led directly to the creation of “an almost landless proletariat”’.<sup>14</sup> The proletarianisation of Māori left many dependent on the emerging Pākehā economy for wage

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10 *He Whakaaro Here Whakaumu mō Aotearoa: The Report of Matike Mai Aotearoa – The Independent Working Group on Constitutional Transformation* (2016), available at, <https://nwo.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/MatikeMaiAotearoa25Jan16.pdf>

11 For an overview of pre-European Māori societies, including their economic activity, see Atholl Anderson, ‘Emerging Societies: AD 1500–1800,’ in *Tangata Whenua: A History*, eds. Atholl Anderson, Judith Binney, and Aroha Harris (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2014), 86–114.

12 Hazel Petrie, *Chiefs of Industry: Māori Tribal Enterprises in Early Colonial New Zealand* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2006); Ranginui Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou: Struggle Without End* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 2004).

13 Petrie, *Chiefs of Industry*, 5.

14 Judith Binney, Vincent O’Malley, and Alan Ward, ‘Wars and Survival: 1860–1872,’ in *Tangata Whenua*, 251.

labour in areas such as farming, gum digging, bush felling, and road making. Land alienation has arguably been the biggest contributor to Māori poverty; alienation continues today in various ways such as the Crown's claim on the foreshore and seabed and the proposed housing development at Ihumātao.

After the Second World War the 'long boom' drew the majority of the Māori population to the cities in search of employment and better standards of living.<sup>15</sup> The Department of Maori Affairs actively encouraged this, relocating 399 families and assisting a further 485 to move 'of their own accord' in the early 1960s.<sup>16</sup> Leaving the relative security of the kainga behind, urbanisation meant that whānau became even more dependent on wage labour. While the welfare state provided almost full employment, Māori were largely excluded from professional and managerial positions. Instead, as Evan Poata-Smith points out, Māori were offered precarious blue-collar jobs and treated as expendable in times of economic recession.<sup>17</sup>

The economic crisis of the 1970s had a disproportionately negative impact on Māori employment. As Aroha Harris and Melissa Williams explain, 'Because Māori workers were concentrated in particular workplaces, often intergenerationally, economic downturns affected whole communities, not just individual families'.<sup>18</sup> The impact of the economic crisis was exacerbated by the punitive labour and welfare reforms introduced by the fourth Labour government in 1984 and continued by successive

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15 In *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou*, 96–97, Walker notes that urbanisation was swift. Before the war, 90 percent of the Māori population lived rurally, but by the 1960s 70 percent had moved to the urban centres.

16 Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou*, 198.

17 Evan Poata-Smith, 'The Political Economy of Inequality Between Maori and Pakeha,' in *The Political Economy of New Zealand*, eds. Chris Rudd and Brian Roper (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1997), 160–179. Poata-Smith emphasises the structural mechanisms of capitalism underlying Māori inequality. He identifies two major phases of proletarianisation: land alienation in the 1800s and urbanisation in the mid-1900s.

18 Aroha Harris and Melissa Williams, 'Rights and Revitalisation: 1970–1990,' in *Tangata Whenua*, 365.

governments since.<sup>19</sup> While unemployment increased urban Māori poverty in the 1970s, it was the neoliberal policies in the 1990s that entrenched it.

Two of the defining features of neoliberalism have been labour market deregulation and welfare cuts. As Jane Kelsey notes, while the fourth Labour government was quick to deregulate the market through trade liberalisation, its commitment to the trade union movement made it difficult to deregulate the labour market.<sup>20</sup> It wasn't until the National party came into power in 1990 that substantial changes to the labour market were made. The Employment Contracts Act 1991 (ECA) had a massive impact on employment security. The main goals of the ECA were to weaken the collective bargaining capacity of unions and to drive wages down. This meant that workers had little choice but to accept lower wages or face unemployment. To make matters worse, those who did lose their jobs could no longer rely on the welfare state to provide short-term relief—under National benefits were substantially reduced, and universal benefit subsidies were abolished or became means tested. Between 1989 and 1992 the number of people living below the poverty line increased by 35%. Māori were among those most severely impacted by these economic policies.

While the introduction of neoliberalism was a devastating blow for working-class Māori, the 1980s saw the beginning of substantial economic gains at an iwi level. In 1985 the jurisdiction of the Waitangi Tribunal, which had been established in 1975, was extended to hear historic claims dating back to the 1840s. Since 1990, 75 iwi have finalised Treaty settlements and now have an asset base worth \$9 billion.<sup>21</sup> Much as during 'the golden age of Māori enterprise' in the 1840s and 1850s, many of these iwi have invested wisely, making the most of a neoliberal economy and international trade.

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19 Evan Poata-Smith, 'Inequality and Māori,' in *Inequality: A New Zealand Crisis*, ed. Max Rashbrooke (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2013), 148–158.

20 Jane Kelsey, *The New Zealand Experiment: A World Model for Structural Adjustment?* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1995).

21 TDB Advisory, 'Iwi Investment Report 2018,' <https://investmentnews.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/iwi18.pdf>. This report details the investment portfolios of the eight most successful iwi.

While the economic success of post-settlement iwi has been hard earned, it is not necessarily shared by all who suffer the consequences of colonisation. Poata-Smith draws attention to the growth of inequality within Māori communities, noting that dominant ideas about Māori development empower some groups of Māori, but disenfranchise and marginalise others.<sup>22</sup> Just this year workers at Moana New Zealand, the country's biggest iwi-owned fishing company, went on strike over low wages. These workers expressed their frustration at a company that makes millions of dollars a year but does not value its workers enough to pay the living wage. Despite economic success at an iwi level, then, many Māori continue to be overrepresented in measures of income and job insecurity.

### Tino rangatiratanga and the state

State policies concerning Māori have at different times coincided or conflicted with Māori aspirations for tino rangatiratanga. Tino rangatiratanga, as promised in the Treaty, refers to the right of hapū to practice self-determination.<sup>23</sup> Iwi and hapū actively, and often forcefully, resisted Pākehā appropriation of land and political power. The Land Wars, in which various iwi and hapū united against British troops, began after the forced survey of land in Taranaki.<sup>24</sup> Other forms of pan-tribal organised resistance included the Kingitanga and Kotahitanga movements, established in the 1850s. These movements represented a united effort of iwi and hapū in the assertion of tino rangatiratanga as a response to Crown breaches of the Treaty.<sup>25</sup> While there are also examples of iwi and hapū who fought alongside the British, they did so with the understanding that Māori political and economic aspirations would be met by the newly established

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22 Poata-Smith, 'Inequality and Māori.'

23 Margaret Mutu, 'Constitutional Intentions: The Treaty of Waitangi Texts,' in *Weeping Waters: The Treaty of Waitangi and Constitutional Change*, eds. Malcolm Mulholland and Veronica Tawhai (Wellington: Huia Publishers, 2010), 16–33.

24 Binney et al., 'Wars and Survival: 1860–1872,' 228.

25 Richard Hill, *State Authority, Indigenous Autonomy: Crown-Māori Relations in New Zealand/Aotearoa 1900–1950* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2004).

Pākehā government.<sup>26</sup> However, as land alienation continued unabated into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, growing poverty and a decreasing population left Māori with little choice but to make compromises with the state in regards to tino rangatiratanga.

The first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a closer relationship between Māori leaders and the state. The Labour–Ratana alliance in the 1930s, for example, promoted cooperation and reciprocity in Crown–Māori relations. In 1935 Prime Minister Michael Joseph Savage promised to advance Māori welfare in return for Māori support for Labour.<sup>27</sup> Other attempts at state-sanctioned Māori advancement sought to deal with rural Māori poverty through land development. Led by Āpirana Ngata, the Young Māori Party encouraged rural iwi to ‘combine the technological, cultural and other benefits of European civilisation with preserving “the best” of Maori culture’.<sup>28</sup>

Indeed, the preservation of culture became a major focus for the advancement of tino rangatiratanga in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The Māori Women’s Welfare League and the New Zealand Māori Council, both of which were supported by the state, worked hard to maintain cultural solidarity as Māori urbanised. Both the league and the council were integral in the establishment of the cultural clubs and urban marae which served the cultural needs of Māori at a time when government policy pushed for full assimilation.<sup>29</sup> In 1961 the government had released the Hunn report, which detailed the plight of Māori in health, education, housing, and land development. As a solution to issues of Māori poverty, the report advised that Māori be fully ‘integrated’ under mainstream social welfare policy. In reality, the Hunn report represented the thinly veiled racism of the government’s assimilationist agenda. The idea that New Zealand had ‘the best race relations in the world’ had little to do with the state’s attempt at integration and was based largely on the efforts of Māori leaders who

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26 Hill, *State Authority, Indigenous Autonomy*.

27 Walker, *Ka Whawahi Tōnu Matou*.

28 Hill, *State Authority, Indigenous Autonomy*, 44.

29 Harris and Williams, ‘Māori Affairs: 1945–1970,’ in *Tangata Whenua*, 333–357; ‘Rights and Revitalisation: 1970–1990’; Harris, *Hiko: Forty Years of Māori Protest* (Wellington: Huia Publishers, 2004).



mediated between the state and working Māori.<sup>30</sup>

Crown–Māori relations took a dramatic turn in the 1960s and 1970s with the resurgence of Māori political consciousness and protest. While the struggle against the colonial practices of land alienation and cultural assimilation had never been abandoned, resistance to state oppression was reinvigorated by the global protest and civil rights movements of the late-1960s. The Māori Women's Welfare League and the Māori Council had resisted cultural assimilation by 'working in quiet ways to support' their people without causing too much of a stir.<sup>31</sup> A more assertive approach was adopted by young Māori activist groups like Ngā Tamatoa, who espoused contemporary methods of resistance such as marches, occupations, and pickets.<sup>32</sup> These groups were predominantly made up of young, university educated, and left-leaning Māori who recognised the racism underlying the states assimilationist agenda. According to Harris, it was the land occupations (Bastion Point, Raglan, and Pākaitore), the 1975 Land March, and annual Waitangi Day protests of the 1970s that eventually led the government to give greater consideration to its obligations under the Treaty.<sup>33</sup>

In response to Māori activism, the fourth Labour government sought to appease Māori aspirations for tino rangatiratanga. Poata-Smith explains that this was achieved in two main ways: first, by allowing the Waitangi Tribunal to process historic claims, allowing for economic compensation for breaches of the Treaty; and second, by embracing biculturalism, allowing for greater Māori representation in Parliament and the adoption of Māori models of organisation in the public sector.<sup>34</sup> As Poata-Smith points out, the opening of the Waitangi Tribunal to historic claims coincided

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30 Harris, *Hikoi*, 20.

31 Melissa Williams, *Panguru and the City: Kāinga Tahi, Kāinga Rua: An Urban Migration History* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2014), 118.

32 Harris, *Hikoi*.

33 Harris, *Hikoi*.

34 Evan Poata-Smith, 'He Pokeke Uenuku i Tū Ai: The Evolution of Contemporary Maori protest,' in *Nga Patai: Racism and Ethnic Relations in Aotearoa New Zealand*, eds. Paul Spoonley, David Pearson, and Cluny Macpherson (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1996), 97–116.

with the rise of ‘Maori cultural nationalism’.<sup>35</sup> The main focus of cultural nationalism was the revitalisation of Māori culture, and activists at this time can be credited with the inclusion of language and cultural programs in the education system and the establishment of Kura Kaupapa and Whare Wānanga.<sup>36</sup> While this achieved much for Māori in terms of cultural revival, it distracted activists who had previously challenged capitalism from the economic determinants of inequality. Similarly, the focus on biculturalism in Parliament has been criticised as a token gesture towards the inclusion of Māori culture that has done nothing to alleviate the poverty created by neoliberal policies.<sup>37</sup> In this way, biculturalism can be seen as another form of assimilation: Māori have been allowed to celebrate culture as long as we conform to the capitalist agenda of the state.

Since the signing of Te Tiriti, Māori have consistently asserted tino rangatiratanga and much has been achieved politically, culturally, and economically. However, a huge number of Māori continue to live lives marked by insecurity and hardship. As Poata-Smith points out, many iwi leaders have turned to neoliberal economic policy in the interests of advancing tino rangatiratanga:

While many still look to constitutional change to reform the worst excesses of the system, a number of powerful tribal executives and corporate warriors have argued . . . that the welfare system has held Māori back and that real self-determination and liberation for Māori can only be achieved under unrestrained, free-market capitalism.<sup>38</sup>

Like Poata-Smith, I disagree with this sentiment. Participation in the capitalist economy does not challenge the neoliberal policies that keep Māori poor; Māori liberation cannot be achieved under capitalism as we know it.

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35 Poata-Smith, ‘He Pokeke Uenuku i Tu Ai,’ 106.

36 Poata-Smith, ‘He Pokeke Uenuku i Tu Ai’; Harris, *Hikoi*.

37 Poata-Smith, ‘He Pokeke Uenuku i Tu Ai’; Harris and Williams, ‘Māori Affairs: 1945–1970’; ‘Rights and Revitalisation: 1970–1990’.

38 Poata-Smith, ‘He Pokeke Uenuku i Tu Ai,’ 98.

Faced with the issue of Māori poverty, it is necessary to consider emancipatory alternatives to capitalism that remain sensitive to issues of colonisation. Socialism, in its various configurations, has long been seen on the Left as a plausible alternative to capitalism. While Māori socialist activism has decreased significantly since the 1970s and 1980s, it has not disappeared; Māori aspirations for socialism are still alive and well today. While there is no cohesive Māori socialist movement, there are a variety of groups and organisations that prioritise people and the environment over profit and who advance the case for tino rangatiratanga. Perhaps the most noteworthy example today is Save Our Unique Landscape (SOUL), a collective who are campaigning for the land at Ihumātāo to be returned to mana whenua.<sup>39</sup>

Given the complexity of socio-economic inequality, our history of colonisation, and the diversity of Left politics, socialism must not be posited as a monolithic economic alternative to capitalism. What is needed on the Left is a variety of socially empowered pathways that provide people with more control over and within the economy so that we can eventually to transform it.

## The socialist compass

In *Envisioning Real Utopias*, Erik Olin Wright offers an inclusive and broad vision for socialism, based on social empowerment.<sup>40</sup> In working through proposals for a ‘radical democratic egalitarian alternative to capitalism’, he argues that there is no single path towards socialism; rather, multiple paths may be pursued as long as they are oriented towards social empowerment.<sup>41</sup> Given the ‘empirical variability’ of economic systems, there is no such

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39 While they are not a self-proclaimed socialist group, their values (kotahitanga, manaakitanga, aroha, kaitiakitanga, rangimarie, and whakaponono), goals, and actions are compatible with a socialist agenda. To support this kaupapa, and for more information, see their website: <https://www.protectihumatao.com/>

40 Erik Olin Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias* (London: Verso, 2010).

41 Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias*, 110.

thing as pure socialism or pure capitalism.<sup>42</sup> Instead, economic systems are hybrid in nature and differ depending on how power is organised.<sup>43</sup> Wright develops a socialist compass with three points: state power, economic power, and social power. These points are used to navigate the pathways towards socialism. Before developing the socialist compass, Wright defines the conceptual vocabulary on which it is based. His definitions of power, ownership, the state, the economy, and civil society are vital to an understanding of the compass. I summarise them below.

Power is broadly defined as ‘the capacity of actors to accomplish things in the world’.<sup>44</sup> The capacity to act depends both on the ownership of resources and the socio-structural conditions under which actions take place. Under capitalism, for example, the owner of a factory is empowered both by the economic structure which alienates workers from the means of production and by the state which enforces contracts and protects property rights. Wright argues that power does not always require domination. For example, a group of people, acting together cooperatively, has the capacity to accomplish tasks without coercion. Power therefore takes different forms depending on the social relations on which it is based. Wright identifies three types of power: state, economic, and social, which derive from the state, the economy, and civil society respectively.

Wright’s definition of ownership is a little more complex and involves three dimensions. First, the *agents* of ownership: people who hold ownership rights. These can be individuals, organisations, families, the state, or even abstract entities such as society.<sup>45</sup> Second, the *objects* of ownership: the things which can or cannot be owned. Third, the *rights* of ownership: the right to use things in different ways, the right to destroy things, and the right to sell, lend, or give things away.

While acknowledging the conceptual difficulties involved in defining ambiguous terms such as state, economy, and civil society, Wright keeps

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42 Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias*, 111.

43 Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias*, 123.

44 Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias*, 111.

45 Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias*, 113.

his definitions relatively simple. The state is ‘the cluster of institutions, more or less coherently organized, which imposes binding rules and regulations over a territory’.<sup>46</sup> The economy is ‘the sphere of social activity in which people interact to produce and distribute goods and services’.<sup>47</sup> In capitalism this involves capitalist firms and market exchange. Finally, civil society is ‘the sphere of social interaction in which people voluntarily form associations of different sorts for various purposes’.<sup>48</sup> Some associations are formal organisations such as churches, clubs, or labour unions, while others are looser associations of informal networks and communities. Based on these definitions, Wright constructs the conceptual points of his socialist compass: state power, economic power, and social power.

Wright refers to state power as the state’s capacity to impose rules over a territory. He notes that while this includes its ability to exert force over its subjects, this is not always the dominant feature. For example, state power also relies on such things as ‘the ideological commitments of citizens to obey rules and commands’ and its effectiveness in solving social problems.<sup>49</sup> Economic power refers to the capacity of social actors to make use of and control the means of production and distribution. Social power is the capacity of associations in civil society to organise and act collectively on a voluntary basis.

With these conceptual tools in hand, Wright provides a ‘typology of economic structures’, defining socialism in contrast to capitalism and statism.<sup>50</sup> Unlike some socialist theorists, Wright does not view socialism as a ‘binary contrast to capitalism’ in which the state is privileged as a source of anti-capitalist power.<sup>51</sup> Rather, socialism is separate from both capitalism and statism. Under capitalism, the means of production are privately owned by individuals or corporations and capitalist firms exercise

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46 Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias*, 118.

47 Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias*, 119.

48 Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias*, 119.

49 Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias*, 119.

50 Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias*, 120.

51 Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias*, 111.

economic power in the market economy. Statism is an economic system in which the means of production are owned and controlled by the state and in which economic activity is conducted through the exercise of state power. Socialism, then, is an economic system in which the means of production are collectively owned by various associations in civil society and is underpinned by social power.

While Wright sets clear parameters around capitalism, statism, and socialism, he stresses that these are ideal types that do not exist in reality—they ‘live only in the fantasies (or nightmares) of theorists’.<sup>52</sup> He emphasises instead the hybrid nature of economic systems. For example, while economic power dominates in most capitalist societies, the state usually plays a significant role in regulating the economy. Similarly, even authoritarian statist economies rely on informal social networks that lie outside of state power. Thus, capitalism, statism, and socialism are variables:

The more the decisions made by actors exercising economic power determine the allocation and use of resources, the more capitalist is an economic structure. The more power exercised through the state determines the allocation and use of resources, the more the society is statist. The more power rooted in civil society determines such allocations and uses, the more the society is socialist.<sup>53</sup>

In emphasising the hybridity of the economy, the task becomes not so much to overthrow capitalism but to ground economic activity in social power and therefore orient ourselves towards socialism.

With state, economic, and social power as compass points, Wright is able to work through seven different scenarios of economic organisation—different pathways to socialism. Each pathway links social power with economic activity. This is either direct, through social ownership of the means of production and social control over production, consumption, and the allocation of resources, or indirect, through various configurations of socially empowered state regulation or socially empowered forms of

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52 Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias*, 123.

53 Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias*, 124.

state-free capitalism. There is no space to pursue all seven pathways here; instead, I briefly outline the four that I extend on in the next section.

*Statist socialism* refers to an economy where economic activity is controlled directly by a socially empowered state. The vision here is of a democratic state in which state power is subordinate to social power. Economic power is marginalised, meaning that ‘it is not by virtue of the direct economic ownership and control over assets that people have power to organize production; it is by virtue of their collective political organization in civil society and their exercise of state power’.<sup>54</sup> Wright gives the example of associational councils or parties that draw on social power to influence state institutions.<sup>55</sup>

*Social democratic statist economic regulation* also involves a socially empowered state acting on the economy. The difference here is that instead of acting directly on the economy, the state serves as a regulator of economic power (the power held by owners of capital). The state would intervene in the labour market by upholding such things as workers’ rights, pollution control, and product safety standards. Unlike statist socialism, all three forms of power inform the economy. This vision includes the possibility of private ownership; however, both state and economic power are subordinate to social power.<sup>56</sup>

*Social capitalism* is where state power is marginalised and social power acts directly on economic power to shape the economy. Wright gives the example of labour unions who draw on their capacity to organise workers to influence economic power through collective bargaining. He acknowledges

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54 Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias*, 131.

55 Wright notes that statist socialism lies at the heart of traditional Marxist revolutionary socialism but has remained largely theoretical. In practice, statist socialism has tended to end up with a concentration of power in a single party. He calls this ‘authoritarian statism’ and differentiates it from statist socialism as described above. Wright argues that it is likely that the state will continue to play a major role in the provision of public goods such as healthcare and education; therefore, statist socialism (as described above) remains an important emancipatory pathway. The goal for socialists is to work to bring state institutions under the control of democratically empowered civil society.

56 Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias*, 134–136.

that social power is still fairly limited in this situation and suggests the more radical alternative of worker representation on firms' boards of directors. This would include the replacement of shareholder boards with 'stakeholder boards' giving workers a voice in decision making.<sup>57</sup>

*The social economy* sees both state power and economic power marginalised. The social economy involves the direct ownership of the means of production by voluntary associations. Workers would have authority over the allocation of resources and control over production and distribution. In this scenario, work operates outside of the capitalist market. The purpose of work would be to meet the needs of the workers (and their dependents) rather than being oriented towards profit-maximisation. Wright gives the example of Wikipedia, which produces knowledge and distributes it for free. Wikipedia's infrastructure is funded by donations from its supporters, meaning it can operate independently from state or economic power.<sup>58</sup>

While Wright acknowledges that none of these pathways provide sufficient challenges to capitalism by themselves, he argues that 'substantial movement along all of them taken together would constitute a fundamental transformation of capitalism's class relations and the structures of power and privilege rooted in them'.<sup>59</sup> Thus, he offers a hopeful vision for socialism which does not require an all-or-nothing socialist revolution. However, Wright's concept of socialism has been developed outside of the Aotearoa New Zealand context, meaning it is not sensitive to the issues of colonisation in this country. As such, the socialist compass must be extended and adapted so that it takes into account the structures of power unique to Aotearoa New Zealand.

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57 Wright defines stakeholders as 'all people whose lives are affected by the use of [the] means of production': *Envisioning Real Utopias*, 177.

58 Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias*, 140–143.

59 Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias*, 114.



## The Aotearoa Socialist Compass

Like Wright, I propose a socialist alternative to capitalism. It is not enough for Māori to have tino rangatiratanga in an economy that continues to exploit the most vulnerable. In imagining an emancipatory future for Māori, whose lives continue to be impacted by colonisation and poverty, I propose a socialist alternative to capitalism. Iwi, hapū, and urban Māori authorities might have a unique way of achieving this and notions of tino rangatiratanga are not the same as Wright's idea of social power. In developing the Aotearoa New Zealand socialist compass, therefore, a working definition of tino rangatiratanga, as a form of power, is required.

### Tino rangatiratanga as power

One of the many manifestations of tino rangatiratanga has been the ongoing struggle for constitutional transformation based on Te Tiriti o Waitangi. When Māori signed Te Tiriti, they did so with the understanding that tino rangatiratanga 'over their lands, their villages and all their treasured possessions' would be recognised by the Crown.<sup>60</sup> The Crown failed to uphold this agreement. Since 1840 Māori have persisted with the struggle to have the Crown recognise Te Tiriti and more recently to have it enshrined in constitutional law.<sup>61</sup> This vision took a hopeful leap forward in 2010 with the establishment of Matike Mai Aotearoa, the independent working group on constitutional transformation. In 2016 Matike Mai released a report documenting the conversations from 252 hui on constitutional transformation in Aotearoa New Zealand.<sup>62</sup>

After establishing that constitutional transformation was the desire of the people, the report outlined what this might actually look like. Based on model two at the end of the report, governance in Aotearoa New Zealand could be undertaken within three independent 'spheres of influence': the kāwanatanga sphere, under the authority of the Crown; the tino

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60 Mutu, 'Constitutional Intentions: The Treaty of Waitangi Texts,' 23.

61 Mutu, 'Constitutional Intentions: The Treaty of Waitangi Texts,' 23.

62 *He Whakaaro Here Whakaumu Mō Aotearoa*.

rangatiratanga sphere, under the authority of an assembly of iwi, hapū, and urban Māori authorities (henceforth referred to as IHU authorities); and the relational sphere, where the two would interact and negotiate.<sup>63</sup> Based on the constitutional vision of Matike Mai, and specifically on model two in the report, I define tino rangatiratanga as a form of power derived from IHU authorities. Specifically, tino rangatiratanga is the capacity of IHU authorities to exercise authority over their territories and ‘all their treasured possessions’, as promised by Te Tiriti.

To make sense of tino rangatiratanga as power alongside the three forms elaborated by Wright, the social structures of IHU authorities must be differentiated from both civil society and the state. According to Wright, civil society refers to ‘the sphere of social interaction in which people voluntarily form associations of different sorts for various purposes’.<sup>64</sup> While people can choose whether or not they affiliate with their iwi or hapū, it is usually not seen as a voluntary association. Rather, iwi and hapū are social structures based on whakapapa and one belongs by birthright. While a person cannot simply choose to belong to any iwi or hapū, many people belong to more than one and there may be some level of choosing which to primarily associate with.

IHU authorities are also not equivalent to Wright’s definition of the state (‘the cluster of institutions, more or less coherently organized, which imposes binding rules and regulations over a territory’).<sup>65</sup> Despite never ceding sovereignty, IHU authorities are currently under the jurisdiction of the state.<sup>66</sup> Prior to European arrival, there was no single governing body that incorporated all iwi and hapū. While there was relationship between various iwi and hapū, each exercised full authority over the stretches of

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63 *He Whakaaro Here Whakaumu Mō Aotearoa*, 9.

64 Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias*, 119.

65 Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias*, 118.

66 There are, of course, countless examples of Māori communities rejecting state control and asserting tino rangatiratanga. Two current examples are the protectors of Ihumātao, who are occupying the land despite being served eviction notices, and Ngāti Kahu, who have banned the Endeavour replica from their shores on the grounds that they are the sole authority in their rohe.

land, waterways, and coastal areas that they worked.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, the Matike Mai report does not envision a single governing body with jurisdiction over all iwi and hāpu. Instead, model two proposes ‘an assembly made up of Iwi, Hapū and other representation including Urban Māori Authorities’ to form the tino rangatiratanga sphere.<sup>68</sup> They do not go into detail about who exactly would make up this assembly or if/how they would be elected. However, as democracy is emphasised as an important value throughout the report, it would seem safe to assume that some kind of democratic arrangement is envisaged.

### The revival of the Māori economy

While tino rangatiratanga relates to self-determination, people interpret this in different ways. In documenting the rise of cultural nationalism, Poata-Smith points out that ‘agreement on the vision of tino rangatiratanga is far from unanimous. It can simultaneously be identified with Maori capitalism, Maori electoral power, cultural nationalism or revolutionary activity’.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, one of the ways Māori measure tino rangatiratanga today is through the success of the Māori economy. According to a report released by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, the Māori economy is now valued at \$50 billion.<sup>70</sup> It is made up of corporate iwi entities such as Ngāi Tahu’s investment branch, Ngāi Tahu Capital, as well as small Māori businesses. In an interview with *The Spinoff*, Hēmi Rolleston, the sector manager for Callaghan Innovation’s Māori unit, spoke of the reason for the upsurge in Māori businesses: ‘Māori have a lineage of exploring, navigating, and entrepreneurship. Having tino rangatiratanga over your life and income is appealing too. Māori in business is a natural

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67 Anderson, ‘Emerging Societies: AD 1500–1800.’

68 *He Whakaaro Here Whakaumu Mō Aotearoa*, 104–105.

69 Poata-Smith, ‘He Pokeke Uenuku i Tu Ai,’ 98.

70 Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, ‘Māori Economy Investment Guide’.

fit!’<sup>71</sup> The capacity for Māori to achieve tino rangatiratanga through economic advancement (that is, by becoming less dependent on the state for income) is certainly something to be celebrated. However, as argued above, the same neoliberal policies which help the Māori economy to grow are trapping a large proportion of Māori in poverty.

Anake Goodall, former chief executive of Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, seeks a more empowering alternative to capitalism. He argues that post settlement, iwi have strayed from the guidance of traditional values: ‘While [iwi boards] do have distinctive indigenous icons, it often seems their traditional values—their true North Star—are unnecessarily left at the boardroom door as the price of entry’.<sup>72</sup> He also notes that the success of the Māori economy exists in tension with intergenerational Māori poverty. Despite this, Goodall has hope that the Māori economy will be able to move beyond capitalism; he advocates ‘investments by Māori entities in alternative models, rooted in community, that might genuinely be described as being “of the people, by the people, for the people”’.<sup>73</sup> He asks why today’s Māori enterprises have not engaged in economic activities such as bartering, crowdsourced funding, or credit unions. Perhaps the answer to his question can be found in Wright’s observation that there is an ‘absence of a comprehensive institutional design for a radical democratic egalitarian alternative to capitalism’.<sup>74</sup> Perhaps the vision for tino rangatiratanga in the Māori economy needs to be paired with a socialist vision to achieve liberation for all Māori, not just the elite.

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71 Rebecca Stevenson, ‘Adding up the little things: How Callaghan’s Māori team is unearthing the next big Māori business,’ *The Spinoff*, 1 December 2017, <https://thespinoff.co.nz/business/01-12-2017/adding-up-the-little-things-how-callaghans-maori-team-is-unearthing-the-next-big-maori-business/>

72 Anake Goodall, ‘Back to the Māori Future?’ in *Inequality*, 159.

73 Goodall, ‘Back to the Māori Future?’ 162.

74 Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias*, 110.

## **Māori socialism: Emancipatory pathways**

In a similar fashion to Wright, I use the Aotearoa New Zealand socialist compass to point to pathways leading towards a socially and tino rangatiratanga empowered economy. The following pathways, adapted from the four outlined above, represent a theoretical vision for Māori socialism. It must be emphasised that this is not an exhaustive list of viable alternatives and that these pathways can exist alongside one another. The intention here is to demonstrate how the compass may be used to envision potential alternatives to the dominance of the capitalist economy.

### ***Iwi socialism (statist socialism)***

This would require a socially empowered state (kāwanatanga sphere) and socially empowered IHU authorities (tino rangatiratanga sphere), both of which would have control over different parts of the economy. In this vision, economic power is marginalised, meaning capitalists would not have direct power over the economy. Instead, socially empowered (i.e. democratic) IHU authorities would have control over their means of production and the allocation of resources. The extent to which economic activity would be regulated by the assembly of IHU authorities and how much would be regulated by individual iwi and hapū themselves would be determined democratically. In this scenario, the kāwanatanga sphere would also operate democratically, with interaction between the two occurring in the relational sphere. For example, arrangements around trade regulations (both domestic and international) and currency would need to be agreed on. A discussion of the technical and political specifics of what this could look like is not possible here; the core point is that the Crown would have no jurisdiction over IHU authorities.

### ***Iwi economic regulation (social democratic statist economic regulation)***

This pathway also requires a socially empowered state and socially empowered IHU authorities. In this case, however, economic power

is included and acts on the economy. This scenario allows for private ownership. While traditionally the concept of private ownership was foreign to Māori, it is not the case now and this needs to be considered when contemplating emancipatory futures. However, in line with Wright's vision for socialism, economic power would be subordinate to state power and/or tino rangatiratanga (depending on where individuals and firms are situated in respect to the kāwanatanga and tino rangatiratanga spheres). Thus, IHU authorities would be able to regulate (to some degree) the economic activity of individual economic players within their jurisdiction. Again, the Crown would have no jurisdiction over the tino rangatiratanga sphere and there would be interaction between the two. For example, laws regulating economic power so as to ensure the protection of workers and the environment might be agreed upon in the relational sphere. The core difference between this pathway and Wright's equivalent is that instead of just the state regulating economic power there would also be an independent assembly of IHU authorities, which, in turn, would recognise the autonomy of individual IHU authorities.

### ***Tino rangatiratanga capitalism (social capitalism)***

This pathway marginalises the role of the state. That is not to say there is no state; rather, it recognises that if firms and corporations have sufficient worker representation there will be no need for state regulation. This goes for both the kāwanatanga and the tino rangatiratanga spheres. In this scenario, Māori capitalist firms would be free to compete in the market. However, economic power would be informed by socially empowered individuals and groups. As with Wright's description, this would include stakeholder boards in which all members of the IHU association have the right to have their voice heard. This vision is already realised in some areas of iwi corporatism. Anake Goodall, for example, notes that Māori land trusts and ownership structures combine 'in single entities the interests of shareholders and stakeholders, citizens and investors and social agents, and—most fundamentally—close family members'.<sup>75</sup> The key here

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75 Goodall, 'Back to the Māori Future?' 159–160.

would be to ensure stakeholder interests were prioritised and represented democratically. While Māori would certainly be free to directly influence economic power, there may be times when it is more appropriate for individuals to work through the structures of iwi and hapū. This scenario highlights the complexity of tino rangatiratanga and how it differs from state power and social power. Tino rangatiratanga can assume the role of both the state and civil associations but is not equal to either.

### ***The social economy***

This final scenario does not differ from Wright's description for a social economy. Here it is recognised that not all Māori can, or indeed want to, affiliate with an IHU authority. This scenario recognises the diversity in Māori society and the extension of tino rangatiratanga to individuals; it makes space for Māori who wish to form associations outside of IHU authorities. As with Wright's social economy, this pathway operates outside the capitalist market and does not require the state; instead, people are able to engage directly in economic activity. A local example is the Wellington Timebank where people swap knowledge and skills for credit which can then be traded for other services in the community.<sup>76</sup> The concept of mahi aroha, the manifestation of love through work, is another example.<sup>77</sup> Mahi aroha is akin to volunteering one's services. Underlying the concept, however, is the idea of reciprocity. People who engage in mahi aroha do so with the knowledge that they are contributing to a community that nurtures them in various ways. It is understood that one's services might not be reciprocated immediately, indeed, it may not even happen in one's lifetime (for example, caring for the environment for the benefit of your grandchildren). It must be noted that the social economy is not currently strong enough to ensure that whoever provides their services for free will receive sufficient reciprocation. Most people are at least somewhat

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76 For more information, see <http://www.wellingtontimebank.org.nz/>

77 See Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector, *Mahi Aroha: Māori Perspectives on Volunteering and Cultural Obligations* (Wellington: Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector, 2007).

dependent on the capitalist market and the social economy runs the risk of exploiting unpaid work in the same way that capitalism does.

Pursuing institutional change along these (and other) emancipatory pathways would serve to undermine the dominant economic and state structures that currently keep Māori poor. IHU authorities, operating free from state power, would have the freedom to side-step the neoliberal policies that have been so detrimental to many Māori whānau. As Wright points out, substantial movement along all of these pathways would begin to transform economic institutions, making a radical, democratic, egalitarian, tino rangatiratanga alternative to capitalism possible.

## Conclusion

The overrepresentation of Māori in the precariat is an enduring feature of Aotearoa New Zealand society. Throughout history, Māori struggles for tino rangatiratanga have been diverse and at times contradictory, ranging from the Land Wars to Māori capitalism. In the early years of colonisation, tino rangatiratanga was manifest in direct and forceful opposition to the Pākehā state. By the early 1900s, however, many Māori leaders began to seek ways of working alongside the state to achieve economic and cultural aspirations. Since the 1980s one of the major ways tino rangatiratanga has been realised has been through the transfer of substantial economic power through Treaty settlements. Bringing claims before the Waitangi Tribunal has demanded much of rangatira both past and present, and the hard-earned fruits of this mahi should be celebrated. However, investment in a neoliberal capitalist economy has proven to be a shallow and limited emancipatory project where the Māori precariat are concerned.

Margaret Mutu, Moana Jackson, and all those involved in the Matike Mai project offer a more hopeful vision for Māori. They envision a future where tino rangatiratanga is taken seriously and the Crown can no longer assert state power over iwi, hapū, and urban Māori authorities. This vision is hopeful, achievable, and should lie at the heart of emancipatory Māori politics. I have argued that Māori socialism must be part of this vision



too. Unless tino rangatiratanga takes a socialist bent there is little hope that those represented in the precariat will ever be free from the poverty resulting from capitalist colonisation. This is a vision that all on the Left, Māori and non-Māori alike, can get behind. In developing the Aotearoa socialist compass, I have provided a conceptual framework with which we can orientate ourselves towards a socialist future where tino rangatiratanga is a reality.

More research is required to develop the concept of Māori socialism further. Each of the pathways above (as well as new ones) could be developed by looking into existing models, businesses, and economic practices (including those outside normative definitions of the economy). Another avenue worth exploring would be using empirical research to model what the Māori economy would look like under the Matike Mai kaupapa. Would it suffer, as other economies have, when a formally colonised state gains its independence? Would the Crown have an obligation under the Treaty to ensure the stability of the Māori economy? Would this separation spell economic disaster for both economies?

That there is a need for radical economic and constitutional transformation in this country is beyond doubt. The obstacles to achieving such transformation can at times seem insurmountable. But this does not mean that we need limit our imaginations and political goals to what is achievable under the status quo. We do not have to have a fixed map of where we are going to know where we want to be, and we do not have to know all the possible roadblocks in advance. The Aotearoa socialist compass can be used to guide us in the right direction and to reorient ourselves when the unexpected happens.

Dresses and skirts are emblematic of a feminine style and also of women's subordination to men. But the fashion these days for what is erroneously called gender-neutral or unisex clothing is neither a sign of progress nor of victory of feminists against patriarchy. For while in protest of their physical and symbolic impositions women were abandoning feminine affect and apparel, without the political motive and under no pressure to do likewise, men enacted no equivalent abandonment of masculinity. With femininity subtracted out, the style men are habituated to wearing became gender neutral by default and nothing was or is sacrificed by men to achieve it. The process of becoming a man is an aversion therapy in anything held as feminine. This article centres on what I call a 'feminine praxis', a practice of thought and action with the aim of ending masculine domination. The idea, and what it entails, is unpacked through a range of theoretical sources and interventions germane to the topic, including Marxist, feminist, and queer theory.

## Feminine Praxis

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CIARA CREMIN

Dresses and skirts are emblematic of a feminine style and also of women's subordination to men.<sup>1</sup> But the fashion these days for what is erroneously called gender-neutral or unisex clothing is neither a sign of progress nor of victory of feminists against patriarchy. For while in protest of their physical and symbolic impositions women were abandoning feminine affect and apparel, without the political motive and under no pressure to do likewise, men enacted no equivalent abandonment of masculinity. With femininity subtracted out, the style men are habituated to wearing became gender neutral by default, and nothing was or is sacrificed by men to achieve it. The process of becoming a man is an aversion therapy in anything held as feminine. Advancing on my first book under the name of Ciara, *Man-Made Woman: The Dialectics of Cross-Dressing*, this article centres on what I call a 'feminine praxis', a practice of thought and action with the aim of ending masculine domination.<sup>2</sup> The idea, and what it entails, is unpacked through a range of theoretical sources and interventions germane to the topic, including Marxist,

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1 Thank you to the editors and reviewers of this piece for their comments and suggestions.

2 Ciara Cremin, *Man-Made Woman: The Dialectics of Cross-Dressing* (London: Pluto Press, 2017).

psychoanalytic, feminist, and queer theory.<sup>3</sup>

Traits associated with masculinity are inextricable to patriarchy and capitalism. Strength means domination; if not achieved through the dividends accruing to class and race, domination is secured through aggression. A stylisation as opposed to a state of being, forever compensating for feelings of inadequacy, masculinity is born of crisis but only named as such when the veneer of invulnerability is tarnished. A feminine woman, on the other hand, wears her vulnerability. Goddess, slut, scab to the sisterhood, and never queer enough, her femininity is synonymous with decadence, frivolity, weakness, and fragility. Her adornments, Freud thought, compensated for the absence of a penis, whereas for the self-righteous male who disdains femininity for its seeming excesses, betraying his misogyny in doing so, they are markers of an enslavement to, and complicity with, the nefarious practices of the beauty and fashion industries. What is recognised as characteristic of a gender, and opposed by those who reject crude and essentialist binaries, are not, however, so easy to liquidise, especially when the image of man is one we are so acquainted with and is so reassuring to us. Complicated by class, racial, and ethnic differences, doubtless there are as many masculinities as there are men. A barrier nonetheless exists in an overwhelming majority of men that prevents them from making even the slightest sartorial incursion onto women's turf. Gender fluidity stops with men. In view of the role assigned to women in the sphere of social reproduction, it is imperative to capital that it does.

Clothing is the most visible and easy to verify example of how closely the masculine gender is guarded. It is not, however, that men are never seen in women's clothes. On the contrary, they daily wear clothes such as shirts and pants, staples in a woman's wardrobe. Incorporating a multiplicity of styles, the clothes that women wear are, if anything, gender neutral. Consider the phrase, 'Brian is dressed as a woman'. The image likely formed in your mind is that of a male in a dress, heels, pantyhose, and makeup, items men do not wear. The image conjured by the phrase exposes the

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3 This article is a primer for my forthcoming book with Bloomsbury in which, building on the article, there is a more detailed analysis of the issues it raises.

superficiality in the claim that gender expressions are indeed diverse, at least when it comes to men. Parallels could even be drawn to Adorno and Horkheimer's claim that the harder it is to discern differences between individuals the more that minimal differences are fetishised.<sup>4</sup> Hence, we speak of gender in the plural.

The problem is this: spanning different subjective orientations, political affinities, sexualities, and so forth, the failure of a broad diversity of men to cross this trivial sartorial threshold issues from an unconscious dependency in both men and women on masculine domination. Men say to me: 'but I have no desire to wear women's clothes'. Women say to me: 'I'm not attracted to feminine men'. There is no reason to be suspicious of such claims; it either does it for you or not. But if there is nothing genetic about the disposition or otherwise towards feminine affect and apparel, it is evident that the patriarchal setup is remarkably efficient in socialising us into wanting the gender markers that sustain it. Whether male or female, one way or another, libido is wedded to the masculine. Originating in our socialisation, dysphoria is a generic condition; hence, a general dysphoria.

In the seemingly inexhaustible commentaries of left-leaning newspaper columnists, a 'toxic' masculinity is held responsible for many of society's ills. Thus, we might suppose, if men were of a more liberal disposition, patriarchy would be ended. Describing masculinity as toxic is like describing water as wet. Echoing, though also disavowing, Freud, Bourdieu described how men and women are libidinally and unconsciously oriented to masculine forms of domination which are habitually and unthinkingly reproduced in everyday interactions, comportments, gestures, tone of voice, and so forth.<sup>5</sup> The androcentric unconscious is not, however, specifically male. In the home, workplace, and leisure time, in our words and everyday gestures, through space and time, such is the power of the patriarchal setup that it is impossible to register the multitude of ways that

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4 Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (London: Verso, 1997).

5 Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination* (California: Stanford University Press, 2001).

we are all complicit in masculine domination. The parallels in Westernised societies to the Kabyle, a focus of an earlier study by Bourdieu, in which the labour of social reproduction is ostensibly the work of women and accords no symbolic value, are, by comparison, easy to identify, though still difficult to overcome. Although relative to women men are politically and economically the chief beneficiaries of patriarchy, in respect to the diminished capacities afforded for self-expression and the consequences for self-development, men are arguably more disadvantaged in their ego. It is a disadvantage that women frequently compensate for.

The need to compete for jobs and gain the upper hand requires a disposition that, while not organically male, has strong masculine connotations. Because of their socialisation, the male is better primed for competitive enterprise. However, women must also, by necessity, align their subjectivity to the imperatives of capital. But as with my apprenticeship in the art of becoming a woman, compelled along a different pathway, the sexed female is typically a late starter and thus, compared to men, her fledgling efforts to compete will likely seem awkward and unnatural. To the men in the position to validate them, an ambitious and successful woman is often about as welcome as a female football pundit. Women must in degrees ape the man. Men, on the other hand, must disassociate themselves from the image of women entirely.<sup>6</sup> Being turned into a woman, wrote Bourdieu, is the worst kind of humiliation to be inflicted on a man. Or, as Stoller said, “The first order of business in being a man is, “don’t be a woman””.<sup>7</sup> The male fears ‘weakness, dependence, intimacy and closeness’, Segal writes.<sup>8</sup> A man who openly displays such traits is never the rock in a woman’s life, nor does he represent the patriarchal authority that, in the eyes of others, can validate her as an object of desire.

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6 Andrea Dworkin, *Intercourse* (New York: Basic Books, 2006).

7 Robert Stoller, *Presentations of Gender* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 183.

8 Lynne Segal, *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men* (Hampshire: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2007), 259.

## Eros and femininity

The idea that there is a feminine essence is a male fantasy, argued Lacan. But for feminists such as Irigaray, the female body has the unique capacity for a multiplicity of heterogeneous pleasures. It is a capacity that, according to Mieli, males also possess but that a masculine ego represses.<sup>9</sup> Taking his cue from Marcuse, femininity, in this register, equates with Eros, the creative life-force of a sensuous being. But whatever sensual pleasures are obtained through feminine attire, the clothes themselves do not magically liberate anything nor, in an unqualified way, affect a new sensibility. Had Marcuse wrote on male drag, a rebellious subject in Mieli's thinking, he would no doubt have regarded it as 'the ceremonial part of practical behaviourism . . . quickly digested by the status quo as part of its healthy diet'.<sup>10</sup>

Segal criticises Irigaray, and the strand of French feminism to which the latter is associated, for evoking a corporal idea of woman, as this idea reproduces the patriarchal myth that women are essentially nurturing, non-violent, and egalitarian. My point is not that these qualities are somehow there to be uncovered in men, nor that in covering himself up in items that strongly connote women that his psyche will magnetically attract these qualities, making him a better person. Anecdotally, many of the self-defining cross-dressing men who have gotten in touch with me serve in the US military and other highly masculinised professions; their masculine profession both masks and also, dangerously, traps a desire to take flight. Femininity is an escape valve for the cross-dresser who reserves his proclivity for the home, thereby protecting his masculinity at work. But it is also potentially an exit strategy, a more totalising and altogether radical alternative to masculinist forms of being and becoming, and the violence, whether self-inflicted or inflicted upon others, that is engendered through them. By incorporating the idea of woman in all situations, the masculine ego is no longer dependent on representing a man, and the pressure to

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9 Mario Mieli, *Towards a Gay Communism: Elements of a Homosexual Critique* (London: Pluto Press, 2018).

10 Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (London: Routledge, 2002), 16.

‘man up’ subsides. Moreover, in acquiring the aura of femininity that for a long time has mystified the female body—the ‘enigma of women’ trope—femininity becomes a free-floating signifier, neither male nor female. Though such moves are sometimes necessary when opposing forced dress codes, this cannot be achieved by women who refuse feminine adornment. As with unisex clothing, a masculine hegemony is not countered by such gestures; if anything, it is reinforced. It is the socially defined male who needs to step up and be a woman. For it is in this way that an answer to the ‘crisis’ of masculinity that men find themselves in can be found: stop being a man.

Masculine domination will not be ended under capitalism; only in a communist society will there be a chance of it withering away. We should not count on it. A prefigurative move is required. Pink shirt, red lipstick, and flowery dress. Feminine items and affects are the machinery of a praxis that manoeuvres up against this barrier and, testing for its weaknesses, explores ways to breach it. Both jarring and revelatory of an androcentric unconscious, a feminine praxis proposes a tactical reification and everyday embodiment by men of feminine signifiers. The substance of this move is determined by what is at stake—whether, for example, the effect is alienating to others and forces a subjective recalibration. A feminine praxis burns. It is a practice of thinking through the predicament we are all subject to, and for exploring the potentialities of affecting, through interventions, experiments and encounters in the world, a new kind of sensibility. This is not something for men to enact on behalf of women; rather, in view of the limitations of a masculinised ego, men must recognise that the dismantling of patriarchy is in their own self-interest. Theorised with the help of psychoanalysis, this brings us to the general dysphoria that afflicts all gendered subjects.

## General dysphoria

Though sometimes in need of feminists to remind them, Marxists are better at discerning the institutional dimensions of patriarchy than they are the



unconscious ones. It was this failure to approach the problem of domination in unconscious desire that led Deleuze and Guattari to write *Anti-Oedipus*. There, they distinguish between the molar and molecular. It is easy, they say, to be anti-fascist on the outside, the molar level of representation—in other words, how you see yourself and want others to see you—without recognising the fascist within you which you yourself nourish and sustain, the molecular level of affects that can be sensed but not seen.<sup>11</sup> For example, due perhaps to unexamined feelings of inadequacy, a committed activist in a movement or party against capitalism, may, without being conscious of it, intimidate others, bully them, and be emotionally cold to those whose gender, sexuality, race, or class background differs from their own. Driving people away, the movement becomes increasingly uniform, masculinist in tone, and authoritarian in nature as only those in their image remain. This is the kind of scenario that Deleuze and Guattari warn against, and why, whether we are talking about a socialist party, a feminist group, or LGBTQ+ activists, it is not only the card-carrying fascist that poses a threat. Deleuze and Guattari alight on the problem that a subject born into the capitalist patriarchy develops an ego not only characterised by this arrangement but is also dependent on it for their sense of self. Desire is put to work and becomes active in the reproduction of what it is enslaved by. So the question, which is notoriously difficult to answer, is how to liberate the capacities that the ego represses? The problem is most evident in the way sexed males are socialised to be men: to repress their emotions, disguise their insecurities, and appear invulnerable to others. The ego plugs up capacities which, if liberated, would enrich us all. It is the same problem Marx centres on when describing how alienated labour deprives us of our species-specific (creative) capacities.

Due to the condition into which we are socialised, all of us are in degrees diminished in our capacities—hence, a general dysphoria. Neither knowing nor experiencing any other condition, it is impossible to grasp what it would mean, at both a subjective and interpersonal level, to have

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11 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Continuum, 2003).

been born into a more egalitarian and free society. It is the same with gender. What would those who are gendered to be masculine be capable of, and what would society be like, if instead they were gendered in feminine ways? In a society that forces us to compete aggression is a survival strategy, so negating the masculine must be a collective endeavour. We learn from the history of class struggles how to struggle better. We cannot await a world-shattering event before a phoenix purified of its bourgeois individualism rises out of the ashes. Consequently, a feminine praxis, if approached as a kind of therapy, must be both personal and collective. It must be something that is in the world—not simply on Freud’s proverbial couch—and at variance to the prevailing gender regime.

The absence of feminine adornment on the sexed male is illustrative of masculine domination and his ego investments in it. A feminine praxis is about removing an invisible barrier that exists in the psyches of men and women that prevents the sexed male from crossing over into the feminine. The path to liberation passes through the feminine. But what is understood as feminine, and what a feminine praxis entails, is culturally and subjectively contingent. If there is a universal dimension to such a praxis it lies in the aim to purge the soul of the masculine ego and make masculinity semiotically meaningless—the effect of which would extend far beyond language.

Connell describes masculinities as configurations of practices.<sup>12</sup> Masculinity is not a thing but an empty signifier, the meaning of which can be loosely derived from the values, behaviours, activities, and aesthetic choices associated with the word. There are masculinities in the plural because there are considerable variations between men. What she calls a hegemonic masculinity is not necessarily the norm but rather an ideal-type that certain men, we might say ‘toxic’ men, identify with, aim to embody, and project onto others. Such men are status-oriented, entitled, emotionally closed, and hostile to those considered weaker, different, gay, or effeminate. It is not only women who are vulnerable. Boys and men who struggle to embody the ideal are pressured into acting like bullies too, as a means

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12 Raewyn Connell, *Masculinities*, second edition (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 37.

of protection. Given that, for Gramsci, hegemony refers to an ideology operationalised through consensus, we can question the appropriateness of the term here. Nevertheless, if there is a hegemonic masculinity in play, 'the best a man can get', then it is the liberal variant: the man who appears at ease in himself and tolerant of other genders and sexualities—think Obama rather than Trump.

Like femininity, the meaning of masculinity is unstable and open to different interpretations, but not so unstable and open that the term is meaningless. If there is one characteristic that the different masculinities share in common it is the aforementioned aversion towards, or at the least disassociation from, what in our society is considered feminine. Many men do, of course, wear scarfs, carry their belongings in a 'man bag', or even wear makeup to hide blemishes, practices considered by some to be feminine. But there is a line, neither possible to define nor represent, the crossing of which is clocked. We possess a reptilian-like ability to recognise in a fraction of a second, without recourse to reflection, those who are labelled non-normative, genderqueer, and trans. This ability is all the more remarkable when considering how minor these differences are—say, for example, the characteristics differentiating a man bag from a handbag. Even if the only feminine item borne by the male is a handbag, it is nonetheless recognised and an explanation typically sought—'that's it, they're holding it for their partner!' Otherwise numb to the social environment through which we traverse, our senses are jolted to life when the sexed male dresses in feminine ways but not when the sexed female dresses in masculine ways. A binary notion of gender has colonised the unconscious. It leans, however, to the masculine in which the magnitude of libidinal expenditure is greatest, which makes the unconscious androcentric. It is a man-made invention that, as with all machines, have material consequences, and which, somehow, we need to jam.

Halberstam argues that if masculinity were the default gender category, more young girls would be 'running around and playing sports . . . building

things . . . and so on'.<sup>13</sup> Further, masculinity, she claims, is 'reserved for people with male bodies and has been actively denied to people with female bodies'. But this misses the point. While incontestable that from a young age those sexed as female are steered away from these masculine activities, there is a greater taboo on male feminisation. There is no hegemonic femininity, as Connell rightly claims, because domination centres on the masculine, and while masculinities are delineated through the absence of feminine signifiers, there is no strict delineation in respect to women.

Those who are defined female but identify and present in masculine ways face enormous challenges, many of which are comparable to those of trans women—access to medical treatment, rejection by friends and family, employment opportunities, and so forth—but these are challenges I cannot directly speak to. What I can speak to is the effect of being socialised into manhood and how crippling it is for the ego. While cisgendered women are certainly capable of violence and can be as aggressive as any male, I struggle to think of examples of women who, independently of men, have massacred schoolchildren, churchgoers, civil servants, and social democrats. Such facts are not proof of a fundamental toxicity in males. Rather, it exemplifies the extent to which all possible means are mobilised to ensure that boys will, as they say, be boys. Trans men, female masculinities, and dykes have not typically undergone the same process of what hooks aptly describes as 'psychic self-mutilation', nor made to feel so entitled and, with violent consequences, vulnerable to humiliation.<sup>14</sup> It is hard to imagine a trans man, or trans woman for that matter, going on a rampage. Or declaring, like Elliot Rodger, before killing six people and injuring 14 others: 'I'll take great pleasure in slaughtering all of you. You will finally see that I am, in truth, the superior one, the true alpha male'.<sup>15</sup> Masculinisation from

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13 Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 269.

14 bell hooks, *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love* (New York: Atria Books, 2004), 58.

15 'Video manifesto reveals CA shooting spree was revenge for social rejection,' *Al Jazeera*, 24 May 2014, <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/5/24/ucsb-mass-shooting.html>

an early age is a social problem. Female masculinities are a problem for bigots and sociopaths whose sense of superiority can be traced to white-supremacist ideology.

In a study spanning colonial history, Bederman identifies the white supremacist core of American masculinity in the mythical hero Tarzan, 'King of the Apes':

Combining the ultimate in AngloSaxon manliness with the most primal masculinity, Tarzan is violent yet chivalrous; moral yet passionate. Above all, he has a superb body. If manhood is a historical process that constructs the male body as a metonym for power and identity, Tarzan's cultural work was to proclaim that 'the white man's' potential for power and mastery was as limitless as the masculine perfection of Tarzan's body.<sup>16</sup>

A materialist approach explains the persistence of these gendered arrangements through the logic of capital, which colonisation and imperialism are fundamental components of. The position women typically take up in the sphere of social reproduction is also of fundamental importance to its circulation and expansion.<sup>17</sup> This is not the focus here. With emphasis on the androcentric unconscious and libidinal investments in the reproduction of masculinity, psychoanalytic theory is essential in explaining the predicament, but is not so useful when it comes to finding a way out of it.

## From Freud to Lacan

The basic premise of Freud is that human sexuality is undivided. We are inherently bisexual or, as he calls it, 'polymorphously perverse'. To explain the preponderance of heterosexuality, Freud looked to the family. His theory of Oedipalisation explains how, with no natural inclination, gender

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16 Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 234.

17 Lise Vogel, *Marxism and the Oppression of Women* (Brill: Leiden, 2013).

divisions emerge and the male assumes a dominant role.

In the classic Oedipal triangle, the mother is an object of desire that the child, born dependent, relies on for their sustenance. This is complicated by the entry onto this scene of the father—a literal individual or, typically in psychoanalysis, a signifier of power that functions as a moral authority with the capacity to punish—who is a more powerful rival for the mother's attention. The boy's sense of entitlement comes from recognising himself in his father's image, a rival but also a role model, a masculine ideal to strive for and embody. By becoming like the father, the son appropriates his role and occupies the same privileged position within the patriarchy; he becomes an agent in adulthood of his own son's Oedipalisation. In contrast, the mother, who occupies a subordinate position in the family, is 'castrated'. She lacks power and authority. Thus, afraid that, if like her, he too would be castrated, the male distances himself from anything associated with women. Whether it is through anatomy or style that she recognises herself in the mother, the girl accepts her subordinate position in the patriarchy and looks for a father substitute to protect her and provide her with a substitute penis in the form of a baby. One does not have to accept the presuppositions of Freud to recognise that his theory helps explain the bifurcation of sex into two genders, the absence of feminine signifiers on males, and, without recourse to genetics, how these patterns are reproduced over time.

However, libido, in Freud's theory, is seen to be biological in origin. It is a destructive force tamed through the Oedipal process, during which the subject internalises the rules governing society in the form of a social conscience or 'superego'. Libido is both repressed and sublimated, channelled into socially useful activities. Our 'passion' for work is symptomatic of this. Lacan, on the other hand, claims that desire in the form of libido has a social origin. We desire because we lack and what we desire is what we imagine to be missing: signifiers or objects that if possessed would end insecurity and bring a sense of closure to our lives. It is the accolade on the CV that would clinch our promotion were we to possess it, the allusive sporting achievement that would confirm our greatness. Whatever it is, no object exists that, once possessed, would foreclose the need for something else.

We are never employable enough and we are never man enough. Whatever we signify as subjects, there is always something missing, what Lacan calls a leftover or remainder from signification. This is the *objet (petit) a*, the object that causes desire. The phallus, in Lacanian terms, is the symbolic object or prop that represents power and fulfilment for the subject but which, like the masculine ideal, is never fully embodied. This does not stop boys and men from imagining that they do embody the ideal.

Masculinity, as I said at the start, is born of crisis. It is born of crisis in this precise Lacanian sense of being unfulfilled and insecure, and also in its persistent need for validation from others—masculinity is thus always contingent. All the efforts expended to shore up masculine egos, and the fleeting moments of enjoyment these egos derive from achieving measures of ‘success’ in a capitalist society, are symptomatic of this crisis.

Signifiers are never equivalent to what is being signified by them, which is why, when discussing gender, caution is always required as to what precisely we mean. We tend to use the terms ‘male’ and ‘female’ when referring to ‘biological’ sex. But even these terms are not self-explanatory. Aside from the fact that some people are ‘intersex’, ‘male’ and ‘female’ mean something only because we attribute meaning to them. When, for example, we ask if the newly born baby is a ‘boy’ or a ‘girl’, we are not simply enquiring as to whether they have a penis or vagina. We are already anticipating the kind of person they will be, the clothes they will wear, the activities they will be encouraged or discouraged to partake in, and the roles they will eventually assume at home and in the workplace. ‘Sex’ does not in itself determine anything; the way we interpret sex does. There is no one-to-one or biunivocal relationship between ‘signifier’ (the image: a muscled torso) and ‘signified’ (the concept: masculinity) in Lacan’s theory. Thus, a ‘patriarchal’ authority is not necessarily male and, as a symbolic position, could equally be adopted by a female. Hooks notes, for example, that when the father is absent, mothers often overcompensate in the way they socialise boys, becoming more prescriptive and disciplinarian.<sup>18</sup> This is why when a female becomes a leader we should not automatically assume

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18 hooks, *The Will to Change*.

that she will be any less ruthless and self-serving than a male in the same role—the fact she has achieved such a position in the first place suggests that she might be.

If gender is a linguistic signifier, does that mean I, as a trans woman, am not a ‘real’ woman? Irrespective of how you were sexed, that gender is a signifier means it is just as valid for a trans woman to declare themselves a woman as it is for a cisgendered woman to do so. Identity gives meaning to life. How we are gendered is often a matter of life and death, and whether you think the origin of gender is social or biological the consequences are the same.

When, in his theory of sexualisation, Lacan refers to masculine and feminine sexuality, he is not describing a relationship between genders.<sup>19</sup> There is ‘no sexual relationship’ he provocatively declares, only a relationship to *objet (petit) a*—masculine and feminine sexuality being two ways, in other words, that desire relates to the leftover after signification. Masculine desire is oriented to *having* the phallus, a signifier that would bring closure to the lack, or the symbolic ‘castration’, at the core of being. What this phallic substitute represents to one subject may differ from that of another—career status for one person, a fast car for another. But whatever it means to us, the status of ownership is contingent on the recognition of others. It is therefore important to identify, examine, and understand why certain signifiers have more status in a particular symbolic order than others—this order being, for our purposes, capitalist patriarchy.

The masculine subject is unable to come to terms with their symbolic castration and thus, in a certain sense of the word, they are slaves to their desire to have the phallus, making them especially vulnerable to the judgement of others. With echoes of Freud, feminine desire differs, according to Lacan, in that in accepting their castration they are not wholly oriented to the phallus. As it is not object-oriented, feminine desire is more open and, we might say, gender diverse. But it is also, according to Lacan, partially oriented to *being* the phallus for the masculine subject. In

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19 Jacques Lacan, *Encore: On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge* (New York: WW Norton & Company, 1998).



other words, feminine desire is directed towards assuming the position of a symbolic prop that compensates for the masculine subject's castration or inadequacies—it aims to fill the lack in the masculine subject, to complete them, to be their other or missing 'half'. As with Freud, the description maps the relative positions that sexed males and females are socialised to adopt in patriarchal society. But are these theories relevant to all societies or only to patriarchal societies? Deleuze and Guattari do not dismiss the relevance of psychoanalytic theory as a mode of explanation, but they reject its fundamental premise and identify Oedipalisation as a peculiarly capitalistic and patriarchal assemblage.

## Anti-Oedipus

If Lacan is indispensable in mapping the condition, Deleuze and Guattari are indispensable in proposing a way out of it. To do so, however, requires them, and perhaps Marxists in general, to formulate a conception of desire that differs from that of Freud and Lacan, as for the former it is inherently destructive, and for the latter it is born of lack. For Deleuze and Guattari, the unconscious is not, as Lacan says, structured like a language. It is a factory. Akin to the notion of drive as force, they hold that desire is productive and is neither in need of repression nor phallic substitutes. Accounting for the productive dimension of desire is important when conceptualising a feminine praxis. In what follows, I expand briefly on their use of gendered signifiers to describe the relation of desire to domination.

'Man', in Deleuze and Guattari's theory, represents the dominant or 'majoritarian' identity in patriarchal society.<sup>20</sup> If psychoanalysis explains this through the Oedipal complex or the lack in being, Deleuze and Guattari look for ways to overcome it. They criticise Freud for failing to see the revolutionary potential of desire, and for making psychoanalysis a tool for ensuring conformity in those who display characteristics that are not in

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20 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (London: Continuum, 2003).

accord with the mores of the time. With Lacan we are stuck at the level of representation: his semiotic approach to desire places us in the deadlock of an endless signifying chain, wherein desire is perpetually in thrall to the phallus (signifier) that compensates for lack. The ego that Oedipalisation engenders represses the multiplicity of affects or creative capacities inherent to us all. Oedipalisation explains why desire wants domination. As with Lacan, notions such as man and woman do not refer to anything intrinsic, and so when Deleuze and Guattari use the term ‘becoming-woman’ they are not referring to men who dress as women but to an affective process of making the patriarchal ego supple to the point of its dissolution (becoming-imperceptible). As with Lacan, their use of gendered terminology reflects the relationship that exists between sexed males and females under patriarchy. For them, however, the masculine refers to domination and the feminine to liberation. Hence, because the task is the dissolution of the ego and thereby liberation from the effects of Oedipalisation, there is a becoming-woman but not a becoming-man, a micro-femininity but not a micro-masculinity. As it would intimate a process of becoming dominant, there cannot be a liberatory masculine praxis.

Dressing as a woman is an imitation of an idea or identity, a molarity as opposed to an unrepresentable molecular affect. For this reason, the transvestite, according to MacCormack, is not an affective woman.<sup>21</sup> Affects are engendered through surprising, chance encounters—situations in which proximity to others enables one to create affects and to be affected. But it is precisely by cutting a line, as it were, from the sanctuary of the home to the streets, going to work and having drinks at the pub afterwards—in other words, doing regular life—that the socially defined male with feminine adornment not only represents, in varying degrees, the feminine cliché but, through a multitude of surprising encounters, experiences femininity as one of affect. In other words, if feminine signifiers are incorporated by the sexed male into their appearance then people will behave differently towards

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21 Patricia MacCormack, ‘Unnatural Alliances,’ in *Deleuze and Queer Theory*, ed. Chrysanthi Nigianni and Meri Storr (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 2009), 139.

them. While you can theorise how people might react if you were to change your gender appearance, it is only in the doing that you affect others and others affect you. It is only in the doing of a feminine gender that the sexed male experiences something of what his masculine ego had deprived him of. This is, of course, contingent on the time and place in which it is done. Dressing as a woman on stage or at home is qualitatively different to doing so in isolation in the middle of town around strangers. If the thought of doing this is unthinkable to you, it is worth asking yourself why and whether what is at a stake is not so much your safety as your symbolic authority. We are afraid to let go of what binds us to a gendered order that privileges the masculine. On the streets, the sexed male with feminine adornment becomes a nomad whose appearance, at variance to the norm, ‘deterritorialises’ the sex–gender molar lineage that the cisgendered man and woman have spent their lives tracing since the onset of Oedipalisation. It is a mode of being and becoming that poses a threat to those, including some feminists, who hold to an imaginary and symbolic order in which a certain idea of man is symbolically reinforced and affectively reproduced.<sup>22</sup>

The objects and ideas that shore up the ego and which we pursue may vary, but under capitalism particular ones are valorised. The investment of men in them constitutes a kind of libidinal enslavement. Ego validation becomes dependent on the capitalist. It is not only a job that is at stake but also the very idea of what it means to be a man. Under conditions as precarious as these, there is an ever-present risk of humiliation, a loss of face. Avenues of escape are closed. In the hope of saving face, often the only recourse is to double down by continuing in the pursuit of the valorised signifiers that lock the male into a downward spiral of growing frustration and resentment to others deemed an impediment to success. It recalls Adorno’s observation that the authoritarian leader is both the product and embodiment of a failed masculinity.<sup>23</sup> Trump is a well-worn example, a flawed individual, who openly and in ridiculous ways displays, even revels

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22 I write about my own affective encounters in *Man-Made Woman*.

23 Theodor Adorno et al., *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950).

in, his ignorance and misogyny. It is precisely because of these flaws that he makes a perfect screen onto which the typically white, narcissistic follower, who feels the largesse he is entitled to is denied or under threat from an external impediment—immigrants, women, black Americans—can project his libido. Gender is inherently precarious and mutable, Segal writes.<sup>24</sup> But it is the male in his phallic dependencies who is unable to come to terms with this and is the most susceptible to violence, aggression, fascistic ideologies, and extreme forms of misogyny—as seen with the self-defining and self-deprecating ‘beta males’ of 4chan who resent that women are bypassing them in favour of alpha males.<sup>25</sup> By mocking Trump, the liberal left are effectively calling his followers’ masculinity into question. The worst thing you can do to a man is humiliate him. Better to propose ways to overcome the ego.

Those who sympathise with trans people in their struggle to recover the gender authentic to their sense of self, and that society has robbed them of, would do better to recognise in their Oedipalisation the general dysphoria and the tragic consequences of it on their own lives. Those who sense this dysphoria may, as I have done, decide to present in the image of a feminine woman and come to identify themselves as women. Others will queer their gender, mix signifiers and move fluidly between one gender presentation and another. But what about those we call cis who have no desire to breach the norms that define their identity and are, in fact, at ease with the gender they were prescribed? Whether you identify as trans, queer, or cis, the general dysphoria that Oedipalisation realises is, as the term suggests, an affliction that the cis-gendered may only at best relate to in the abstract, but which there is nevertheless a common interest in overcoming. This interest needs politicising and must therefore ultimately include those identified as cis. For those who derive no satisfaction from dressing in feminine ways, a feminine praxis would be against the grain of what libidinally they desire but may well align to their political convictions or sense of the benefits to

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24 Segal, *Slow Motion*.

25 See Angela Nagle, *Kill All Normies: Online Culture Wars from 4chan and Tumblr to Trump and the Alt-Right* (Hants: Zero Books, 2017).

their personhood in doing so.

We need to discover ways to unplug desire from the destructive assemblages it fuels and plug it into a different kind of assemblage. This is what a feminine praxis invites, even if this means appropriating the very symbols that are stock-in-trade of the beauty and fashion industries, and which for many women are undoubtedly an imposition, burden, and denigration. However, as with consumerism more generally, and recalling Ernst Bloch, the appeal of things we associate with femininity is in part an index of an unconscious yearning for a sensuality freed from the drudgery of alienated labours and our libidinal enslavements in them. The beauty and fashion industry trade on Eros. They neither invented it nor entirely monopolise it.

## The problem of femininity

If characteristics that are arbitrarily associated with the term femininity are germane to the kind of society that we want to live in as socialists, a feminine praxis is about acting as if that future is already realised. Trans women have no choice but to live against the grain of the norms by which they are judged and also discriminated. Gender is a curse. However, while the sexed female has to contend with the economic and political disadvantages of their feminisation, the problem is not with the feminised ego as such. Rather, it is with the masculinised ego against which the feminine is judged to be weak and dependent. As with current mobilisations to slow down, arrest, and perhaps even reverse the effects of climate change, a feminine praxis is future oriented. In other words, if an androcentric unconscious cannot altogether be exorcised from our psyches, the onus is on those who are living to ensure that the curse is not passed on to the next generation through a socialising process that psychoanalysis aptly describes, and which Deleuze and Guattari are apt to oppose.

Whether or not your gender identity is consistent to the one you are given at birth, it is easy to understand why, from the perspective of a cis-gendered woman (a socially defined female who in Deleuzian terms traces

a molar line by representing the idea of woman consistent with established norms), femininity would be considered an aesthetic of powerlessness. The clothing is impractical, makeup expensive, and putting it on a routine craft. In voice, as in comportment, sentiment, and sensibility, to be feminine, Brownmiller writes, is to display weakness and fragility.<sup>26</sup> According to Young, the feminised woman experiences her body as a restrictive object.<sup>27</sup> In their 'often, enthusiastic' participation 'in cultural practices that objectify and sexualise' them, the female who feminises her body, Bordo claims, must bear some responsibility for their subordination.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, men and women, she says, are both implicated by conditions they have no authority to determine, but through 'external regulation, subjection, transformation', and 'improvement', it is the female body that is 'docile'. Comparing my elaborate and time-consuming morning routine of applying makeup, and all the vexing questions about which outfit to wear and what shoes and jewellery to match it with, to that of the man who was out of bed and out the door in 10 minutes, I would surely agree. But such views must be tempered according to the greater extent to which men police their own boundaries and the lengths they go to in disassociating their bodies from femininity. While women are also obviously subject to gendered forms of disciplining, they differ in the key respect that while a man must disassociate himself from the image of woman, a woman must, if she is to compete, partly incorporate masculine traits. In view of the material circumstance and symbolic ordering of gender, a rejection by women of femininity would appear salutary to a feminist praxis. Plugged into the capitalist machine, the masculine nonetheless becomes, or rather remains, the default; such a praxis does nothing to end or, arguably, even lessen patriarchal domination.

Bartky's description of a stereotypical femininity underscores the

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26 Susan Brownmiller, *Femininity* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994).

27 Iris Marion Young, 'Throwing like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment Motility and Spatiality,' *Human Studies* 3, no. 2 (1980): 137–156.

28 Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (California: University of California Press, 1995).

problem with such critiques, at least insofar that, contextually, she regards the following traits to be negative.<sup>29</sup> The feminine woman, she says, is ‘warm, nurturant, expressive, unaggressive, gentle and genteel’, and, if not for her occasional lapses of vulgarity, likely mistaken for upper class. A feminine woman defines herself in contrast to the image of a stereotypical masculinity and thus, lacking ambition for herself, is ambitious for her husband and children. Acknowledging that there have been changes in the workplace, Bartky claims that a feminine woman still tends to disassociate from activities and professions in which the masculine male predominates. Sometimes the feminine woman is courageous, Bartky writes; unlike men, however, she is not ashamed of appearing cowardly or fey.

Bartky describes the skill of feminine women in dealing with complex human emotions as ‘peculiar’. We might add that this ability makes the feminine woman an excellent candidate for a job in the caring professions. After all, in a labour market frequently described as ‘feminised’, femininity is not without exchange value and males who, short of representing, affect femininity are in some respects at an advantage. However, unlike ‘masculine’ forms of labour that are physical, ‘skilled’, and practical, and which involve the creation of tangible things, ‘feminine’ labour is affective and intangible. Like the work that women are tasked to do in the home, feminine waged labour is invisible. It literally cannot be counted.

Perhaps it is because I was socialised to compete for Daddy’s crown, and therefore have not had to contend with the material limitations of such a disposition, that the qualities Bartky speaks of strike me as positive ones that a good parent would want to encourage in their children. After all, who does not want their children to be expressive, ‘nurturant’, and caring? Are feminine women lacking in confidence, as Bartky claims? Or, as Schweickkart suggests, is a woman who defers to others simply being respectful and demonstrating a capacity to listen?<sup>30</sup> Is the lack of shame

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29 Sandra Lee Bartky, *Sympathy and Solidarity’ and Other Essays* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002), 15.

30 Patrocínio Schweickkart, ‘In Defence of Femininity: Commentary on Sandra Bartky’s “Femininity and Domination,”’ *Hypatia* 8, no. 1 (1993): 178–191.

in displaying cowardliness really such a bad thing? Whether at the pub, school, or on the battlefield, imagine the conflicts that surely could have been avoided if men felt no compulsion to man up and show courage. When femininity is equated with being girly, individualistic, and possessive, and this attitude to life equated with feminism—a neoliberal variant to be sure—then Bartky makes a salient point: that to be feminist one has to overcome femininity. But just as it is wrong to conflate feminism with liberalism, so too to conflate femininity with patriarchal submission. To do so lends weight to the old Freudian view that women are indeed weak, and men strong. What Lacan's description of masculine desire suggests, on the other hand, is that because of his need for a symbolic crutch, it is the male who is weak. Whether femininity is a commodity that post-feminism embraces, or a set of signifying practices that second-wave feminism refuses, the capitalist is untroubled.

## Resignifying femininity

If, semiotically, femininity cannot exist without masculinity, according to some it can nonetheless be resignified as an expression of strength and even incorporated as a mode of resistance. As Barton writes in respect to a queer femininity, 'to be "femme" is to forge a self-made femininity that subverts the gender binary and heteropatriarchy by refusing to be defined in opposition to manhood and masculinity'.<sup>31</sup> But within the queer hegemony, feminine styles and expressions are considered passive and to therefore reinforce gender norms.<sup>32</sup> Thus, in the LGBTQ+ pecking order, trans men become the privileged subjects entitled to wear the badge. 'Androgynous' styles fair no better. Defined by the 'absence of gender markers', it is the

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31 RM Barton, 'On Femininity and Being a Fierce, Autonomous, Radical, Queer Femme,' *Wussy*, 19 February 2018, <https://www.wussymag.com/all/2018/2/17/on-femininity-and-being-a-fierce-autonomous-radical-queer-femme>

32 Laura Brightwell, 'The Exclusionary Effects of Queer Anti-Normativity on Feminine-Identified Queers,' *Feral Feminisms: An Open Access Feminist Online Journal* no. 7 (Spring, 2018): 15–24.



feminine gender that is marked as other. If a feminine woman cannot be queer, what we are left with is a queer femininity appropriated, caricatured, and monopolised by homonormative men (men who are gay, typically white, affluent, and liberal in their values, the kind likely to campaign on gay marriage and defend the right of police officers to attend gay pride parades dressed in uniform).<sup>33</sup> Butler is, of course, a widely acknowledged, though much criticised, proponent of the idea that by revealing gender to be iterative—a habit as opposed to an essence—the drag artist causes gender trouble. Her original qualification, under-theorised elsewhere in her theory of performativity, is worth repeating:

On the street or in the bus, the act becomes dangerous, if it does, precisely because there are no theatrical conventions to delimit the purely imaginary character of the act, indeed, on the street or in the bus, there is no presumption that the act is distinct from a reality; the disquieting effect of the act is that there are no conventions that facilitate making this separation.<sup>34</sup>

Ridiculed, ‘sensationalised, sexualised and trivialised’, and accused of reinforcing the gender binary, trans women, Serano suggests, are victims not only of transphobia but also transmisogyny.<sup>35</sup> Given how few males do adopt overtly feminine styles and how significant the social and psychological obstacles to doing so are, if anyone can claim to be queering gender norms it is trans women as broadly defined.

With the Westernised idea of gender ingrained into everyone brought up in a Westernised culture, it is difficult, impossible even, to visualise what no gender, or having no gender markers, looks like. There is no image, in

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33 Yael Mishali, ‘Feminine Trouble: The Removal of Femininity from Feminist, Lesbian, Queer Aesthetics, Imagery and Conceptualization,’ *Women’s Studies International Forum* no. 44 (2014): 55–68.

34 Judith Butler, ‘Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,’ *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 527.

35 Julia Serano, *Excluded: Making Feminist and Queer Movements More Inclusive* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2013), 66.

other words, that we can turn to and embody that is not in some fashion gendered and which others, unnaturally adept at ‘recognising’ gender markers in a fraction of a second, will not seemingly automatically register. Progressively minded individuals have stopped me in the street and said: ‘I love it!’ What they love is that I represent a contradiction of masculine physique, a trace of one at least, and feminine dress (my presentation is unambiguously and altogether feminine). If not, there would be no reason either to stop or congratulate me. Those that identify as non-binary, and who present in so-called androgynous styles, either eschew feminine signifiers altogether or, like the iconic Prince and Bowie, represent a mixture of masculine and feminine signifiers, but not a compound or synthesis of signifiers that represent a third gender. The difference between molar representation and molecular affects that are not represented is worth recalling. If gender is fluid and the variations inexhaustible, it is not at the level of representation. A concept of gender in which the variations are as plentiful as the human personality is, after all, conceptually, politically, and analytically meaningless. It would make more sense to qualify the idea through Deleuze and Guattari, not as representation but as multiplicities—egos to the *n*th degree—that cannot be bracketed off from one another as identities, however many we claim there are.

In conceptualising a binary notion of gender as the problem to deconstruct and overcome, theory and practice binds to a red herring. However egregious the idea in practice, the ‘binary’ as such is not the issue, at least not one for which a solution can be found in its refusal. Gender theory frequently reminds us of Lacquer’s observation that in certain cultures there is no sex distinction. Accordingly, the one-sex model proves that the two-sex model that Westernised societies are predicated on is culturally specific. The two-sex model nevertheless has a one-gender problem. The solution to the former lies in the answer to the latter. Immanent to the situation, material, symbolic, identitarian, and affective, it is masculinity that wants queering, masculinity trouble that wants causing, and masculinity that wants fucking.

## Conclusion

A unified idea of femininity is refracted through the prism of a dominant class of men that remains largely uncontested. A feminine praxis opposes the monoglossia of this singular accent and proposes that the idea of femininity is multiplied through the heteroglossia of competing accents or voices. Though they are never entirely dead, Voloshinov spoke of how signs lose force when no longer part of a social struggle. ‘Feminist’, a label that the former Conservative prime minister of the UK, Teresa May, once brandished on her t-shirt, could be considered one such example. For femininity to enter the arena ‘for the clash of live social accents’, the negative supposition of this monoglossia, which is essentially a patriarchal one, must be rejected.<sup>36</sup> In doing this, the sign of femininity enters the social struggle and becomes an ideological force with which to contest masculine domination. Thus, we might say that the proper place of femininity is not at the Dior counter, in the women’s section of H & M, at the care home, or on RuPaul’s latest show. The proper place of femininity is in the class struggle.

A tactical reification of femininity, signifying practices in the feminine register, must first and foremost be taken up, without irony or ‘just for fun’, by those who are sexed as male, irrespective of whether or not they desire to wear feminine things or consider themselves gay, which has nothing much to do with femininity anyhow. It is an experiment in which, like all experiments, the outcome cannot be determined in advance. But for some, even a minor deviation from a masculine norm would be catastrophic, their circumstances prohibiting such a move. For whoever takes this path there are always risks, many that are not so trivial. But people, strong people, brave people, are already blazing the trail, and they are doing so in increasing numbers. Proud and assertive, in their visibility trans women announce themselves to the world and in doing so, whether intended or not, contribute to changing it—to forcing, in a Lacanian sense, a different

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36 Valentin Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986), 23.

symbolic order. Not just on TV or at gay pride parades, but in your midst. The germ of a communistic future is socially embodied—idealised—in your trans ‘daddy’, your teacher, your co-worker, your union rep; a gift to the unborn through the various ways they articulate and embody a feminine praxis.

In a master/slave dialectic, the masculine master requires the feminine slave to recognise and thereby confirm him as master. In other words, it is the slave that makes the master, not the other way around. From this Hegelian angle, there would seem to be a point in refusing the feminine aesthetic. But whatever the merits of dialectical thinking, it is a fairly crude tool for discerning differences in magnitude—unrepresentable molecular affects—through which at particular thresholds changes occur that produce the sorts of rupture that dialectically minded theorists like to wax on. Changes that are affective, indiscernible, and productive prefigure the more dramatic and discernible breaks in the symbolic order, the major negation that retroactively confirms the political salience of the minor one.



This intervention argues that our understanding of negative emotions is underdeveloped due to the urge to expel negativity from the personal and political spheres. By invoking the antagonism of Chantal Mouffe's philosophy, the article provides a conceptual grounding of pity, hate, and resentment by explaining these emotions based on whether the person feeling them sees the other as inferior, equal, or superior. For the Left, the intervention argues, a better understanding of these emotions will help people think through their own antagonisms, to counter accusations that all Left opposition is mere resentment, and to promote solidarity. Finally, the article seeks to hold open a space for a hatred that is neither pathologised nor eradicated.

## Pity, Hate, Resentment, and the Left

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MURDOCH STEPHENS

The triumverate of pity, hate, and resentment are poorly understood and yet regularly invoked as both personal and political logics.<sup>1</sup> An accusation of pity, hate, or resentment functions as an *ad hominem*—‘oh, he’s just a hater’—or as a crude simplification—‘the Left is driven by a politics of resentment’. The aim of this intervention is to reflect on these kinds of accusations after the fact, once the heat of it has passed. I want to reflect on these accusations by delving into each of the three antagonisms, suggesting how they relate both to one another and to a general negativity. The intervention becomes redemptive, not of the Left, but of the validity of the emotional experience of the three concepts. In particular, I want to offer a schema for people to recognise pity and resentment so that they can level those feelings into an egalitarian, though still negative, hate.<sup>2</sup>

Pity, hate, resentment: everyday words with meanings rarely debated. The lack of understanding of these words extends from the personal sphere (‘I pity you’; ‘you hate me’) through to the political sphere (‘we hate them’; ‘they resent

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1 I would like to acknowledge Jack Foster and Dylan Taylor who I owe affection to (see Table 1) for their careful reading of an earlier version of this intervention as well as their stewardship of *Counterfutures*.

2 It would be remiss to end this first paragraph without at least alluding to Nietzsche, who I (briefly) turn to in the coming pages.

us’). Each refers to a negative emotional state directed at another person or group. But where the words differ is in how the individual values, or does not value, the person subjected to their antipathy. Resentment is when we dislike someone who we see as superior to ourselves. Pity is when we dislike someone who we see as inferior to ourselves. But when we see ourselves as equal to the person we dislike then that negative sentiment takes the form of hate.

		Type of feeling		
		Positive	Moderate	Negative
Relation of other to the self	Better than I	Admiration	Respect	Resentment
	Equal to I	Affection	Esteem	Hate
	Worse than I	Acceptance	Tolerance	Pity

Table 1. Emotional relations to valuing another.<sup>3</sup>

Looking into the personal feelings of pity, hate, and resentment are undoubtedly of use as we try to understand some of our negative reactions to others—whether they be comrades or cousins. But for this *Counterfutures* intervention, as with my article ‘Pākehā as Punisher’ in issue four, my aim is to take a relation that we understand from the intimate sphere and

3 I hesitated to form the three-part distinction between pity, hate, and resentment into a matrix that also gave names to emotions that represented moderate and positive attitudes. That hesitation came through in my naming of the emotions that would fall in each box. I’m no structuralist. I don’t think that the words I’ve put into boxes should have lines between them. The matrix is intended only as an exploratory foray into a terrain that I hope others will also wish to survey so that the subject matter might receive further analysis, description, and use. In approximating this topology, we are able to contrast a positive schema against the negative. We can also discern a middle-ground, where the passions dip into the kind of neutrality that some might think make for civil politics.



transpose it to the political sphere.<sup>4</sup> In this case, this movement involves using examples of the three negative feelings in the personal sphere to help political agents understand their relationship to political adversaries.

## Political antagonisms and emotions

The work of Chantal Mouffe offers one way to understand the recent history of political antagonism.<sup>5</sup> Mouffe's principle task is to foreground antagonism and dissent against Habermas and Rawls's focus on striving for agreement and consensus. Mouffe's work takes form through 'agonism'—a type of antagonism that recognises the rights of all parties to exist and to participate in debate as legitimate actors. An example of agonism can be found in the competition of sport: we might hate the opposition with a curious fury, but we accept—and even promote—their right to play the game. In contrast, a blunt antagonism would occur if a sporting event spilled off the field of play into a violence unsanctioned by rules.

Mouffe critiques Habermas's consensus politics for delimiting participation in political decisions to rational actors. Rationalism was required for these consensus systems because it supposedly paved the way for a politics that could go beyond the single-minded self-interest described by Schmidt. In contrast, any actor who was irrational could be excluded from decision-making because they would not be able to follow the process of recognising the other and working towards a common understanding in the public sphere. Mouffe is right to be suspicious of the way that the demand for rationalism would manifest as a tool of exclusion. For example, one aim in defining some political groups as terrorist organisations is to undermine their legitimacy to participate in political negotiations. Consider the fraught balance of the Taliban, for example, on the edge of negotiations

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4 Murdoch Stephens, 'Pākehā as Punisher—Dominated Conversations on Dominant Cultures,' *Counterfutures* no. 4 (2017): 185–191.

5 See Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London: Verso, 2000) and *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically* (London: Verso, 2013).

with the Afghan government and the United States-led forces.<sup>6</sup>

But Mouffe is not just the antithesis of Habermas and Rawls: her work marks a circling back to, and a synthesis beyond, the all-against-all antagonisms of earlier thinkers like Schmitt. Antagonism becomes agonism when the various interests that split groups are no longer seen as insurmountable or desirable. In short, Mouffe's agonism is pluralist where Schmitt's antagonism is not.

Across these discussions of how to embark on political communication and who is included, little attention is paid to the emotional tone of political expression. While the excluded irrational behaviour must give some indication that it cannot be trusted, there is no discussion of the emotions of agreement and agonism. Why might animating emotions be elided when theorists consider antagonisms in the political sphere? Perhaps studying the emotions of antagonism unnecessarily complicates things when there are other arguments that one is seeking to make. For us to understand enduring disagreement, I think we need to turn to some examples where emotional responses—such as pity—congeal or fester.

## Pity

*My strongest memory of pity is from my first year at the University of Otago. It was lunchtime and I was walking from the university to my dorm. My memories are a little hazy, but I sense that it was a still, overcast day. It was not so cloudy that the hills hemmed in the cloud, but just enough to feel like the murky grey of the sky was a mirror of the ocean. These days are a common occurrence in Otago, but rarer in the plains of Canterbury and almost impossible in Auckland and Wellington. I walked along Queen Street. It was a minor road, terraced into the hill and almost the complete opposite in all imaginable manner from the long*

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6 I would argue that Mouffe is only able to be *more* open to actors who are considered outside the bound of rationalisms. The impetus of all of the models of consent and antagonism are on moving towards dialogue and agreement and at some point all of these scholars come up against the hypothetical example of a negotiant who is at the limit of our ability to make sense of them.

*one that runs through Central Auckland.*

*From a distance I saw a woman, doubled over in the driver's seat of her car. Whenever she righted herself, her eyes darted about the street before ducking her head down as if attempting to hide from some unknown spy. As I drew up alongside the car I matched her furtive gestures with a crime: she was demolishing a bucket of KFC. Having come from a small farming town, KFC was always something I associated with the city. But even so, I'd never seen a real bucket before—all those battered limbs of chicken piled up and coated with those herbs and spices. I knew nothing of the woman but sensed a shameful transgression. I walked on without pausing. And I pitied her.*

If we want to have a richer conception of the legitimacy of antagonism it is useful to turn to the murkier question of how we value others. If we consider pity and resentment we find a relation between the self and other that is not that of equals. If we are not equals, then the relationship of the worthy adversary that is so central to Mouffe's agonism becomes difficult, perhaps impossible.

Consider the personal case made above: I pitied the woman eating KFC alone in her car. Why? I've thought about this many times. I wasn't a vegetarian at the time, so it wasn't that. Could it be the racial or class signifiers of fried chicken? Perhaps that had something to do with it. Would I be as equally pitying if the woman had been tucking into a panini? But on reflection, the crux of the experience was the furtive glance. That glance revealed a face distorted with shame, pleasure, and fear. I feel that my pity was justified, even though I sympathise with her situation. But I could have read it all wrong. Maybe she was listening to the radio and her expression was not the result of everything that I have projected onto her but rather a winsomely left response to her lunchtime pleasure being sullied by Leighton Smith.<sup>7</sup>

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7 Leighton Smith is an Australian-born talk-back radio host who was grating liberals and leftists alike from a time before Sean Plunket's or Mike Hosking's voices had broken. The author maintains a particular animosity to Smith due to one of the presenter's sneering diatribes about the author's ultimately successful 'Doing Our Bit' campaign to double New Zealand's refugee quota.

A politics motivated by pity is undesirable for the Left for two reasons. First, if pity is extended from the personal to the political then it is also expanded across a massive scale. While the pity shown in the example above can be thought through—e.g. maybe she wasn't really ashamed of the fried chicken—extending this example to pity an entire category of people means that it becomes a categorical truth. In this case, that truth places the Left in a position of superiority to the average person that we seek to work alongside. As one reviewer of this intervention noted, in pitying we see the target of our actions as worse than us, which is problematic as it creates an idealised other (the poor and downcast, who we pity and wish to raise above their low station). This idealised other dehumanises those we imagine ourselves aligning with. By contrast, the reviewer noted, the philanthropy of the Right is well-suited to this position, as it allows them to bolster their own sense of superiority and the 'natural order' of which they are at the pinnacle.

The second shortcoming of pity as a political strategy applies to the adversary rather than a broad public. Pity works to deflate any threat our adversaries might pose. For example, the alt-right incel figure is dismissed as a serious political force because of their pitiable attempt to find a positive identity on the basis of their rejection by women. These dismissals are most troublesome when they stand-in for taking action against such a figure.

Viewing the other as inferior undermines the broad democratic base of the Left. A challenge for middle-class leftists in forging an alliance with the working class are socio-cultural differences that are, frankly, barely important. But it is these socio-cultural factors—things like white bread or preferred brand of beer—that make up a lot of attempts by people to show their worth. While conspicuous displays of worth can involve creativity or imagination, more often than not they are simply raw displays of wealth. Pitying someone who either can not, or refuses to, participate in these fashions is a distraction from the abilities of people to forge political alliances. Those political alliances often require traversing real differences in race, gender, and class for which consumption choices can stand in as a proxy. Pitying these choices—even when there are justifiable reasons to do

so in terms of quality—is just one more way that solidarity crumbles into inane division.

Before turning to a relational and emotional stance to the adversary that could be more useful, I need to consider an inverse to pity: resentment. Not all situations of pity would also involve resentment, but where pity sees the other as worse than us, resentment flips this position: the other is seen as better than us.

## Resentment

*I resent my ex. An ex. She has moved on: marriage, mortgage, children, career. I have not, or I have not moved on so much as I have siddled off on my own, sullen way. I recognise my negative feelings towards her and recognise that they come from the difficult place of thinking that she is better than me.*

What about resentment? Admissions of resentment are rare and curious. It is hard to boast that one is resentful because it is also a statement of inferiority. Most of the everyday admissions I have heard come with an implication that the inferiority is partial, and may soon be resolved: I resent my friend's good fortune; I resent waiting in a queue.

In my example, the reader should wonder about the truthfulness of my resentment. Do I truly see my ex as better than me if I can see the situation so clearly? Perhaps there is a catch-22 at play: anyone able to admit their resentment isn't really inferior as their admission requires the strength to abandon the tools we use to protect ourselves from feeling inferior. But we can also imagine my admission as a ruse: I say that I recognise my resentment so as to project my reasonableness and clear-thinking. I say that I am resentful to create the conditions for no longer being resentful. Speech has such a power!

Many books have been written on how to extricate oneself from the psychological overinvestment in another, or cathexis. While I won't go into the work required to redeem one's self and, in turn, our view of those who

we resent, I do want to gesture to Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*.<sup>8</sup> In that work, cocooned away from his own cursed romance by a series of pseudonyms and literary methods, he turns the tables on resentment to describe the best way for a resented lover to cool the jilted. The long and short of Kierkegaard's advice is to balance the relationship away from resentment through a display of affection for a new, pitiable partner. This display, he argues, will lead to a re-evaluation of the object of affection. The lesson, as in the approximations in the matrix in Figure 1, is that we can change our value of another by changing how we value them or how they value us (better, equal, or worse than us), or how we see the relationship to them (positive, neutral, or negative).

The popularity of resentment as an accusation against the Left comes from right-wing uses of Nietzschean theories on Christianity and slave morality.<sup>9</sup> From Nietzsche's view, the Christian faith grows from a resentment against the powerful. As the number of Christians grew they were able to extend their morality into a system of laws that subjugated the powerful and conquered their consciousness with an ethic that denies power and mutes human will.

The Nietzschean critique is transposed by the contemporary Right from the metaphysical space of a critique of good and evil (and valorisation of the will to power) to the economic space of a critique of inequality and exploitation. While the case *could* be made that today's economic critiques are merely an inherited subsystem of previous subsystems, the point feels opportunist. If economic critiques are always a function of resentment despite the material basis of the critiques, one wonders at what point the incisiveness of Nietzsche's metaphysical critique is overdone.

The concept of resentment is used by the Right in a curious bit of circular accounting that explains away almost all antagonistic political relations. The reasoning of the Right goes like this: the poor are lefties

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8 Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life* (London: Penguin Classics, 1992).

9 Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality: A Polemic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). My reading of resentment was informed by the work of Kathleen Higgins and Robert Solomon, most notably: *What Nietzsche Really Said* (New York: Schocken, 2001).

because they envy the wealthy. If they were no longer poor, they would no longer be left-wing. The Left, to the Right, is institutionalised resentment. The Right assumes that the poor (and Left, by proxy) see their economic conditions as the entire basis of their being. In this worldview, all critiques of capitalism (and the resulting inequities) are grounded not in any actual economics or politics but in the psychological shortcomings inherent to poverty.<sup>10</sup> Poverty, to the Right, determines the worldview of the poor and the Left and necessarily leads them to the logical recognition of their own inferiority. It should be easy to reject this view by claiming that there are more important things in the world than money, but this reductive logic seems as doggedly enduring as capitalism itself.

The value of a critique of both pity and resentment for the Left should now be obvious: it offers a riposte to the Right's attempt to ground leftist politics in infantile jealousies and buffers the Left against the inward turn to moral superiority. But if we reject the idea that the Left is animated by resentment, and if pity is not a viable strategy for distancing ourselves from those we oppose, does that mean we need to simply drop the negativity and find some common ground? Maybe the Left *could* lighten up on the capital-C Critique of capital-C Capitalism a bit, but I would argue that there must still be a place for antagonism. The antagonism that I would make space for is called hate, an emotionality that treats adversaries as equals even if we don't see eye-to-eye.<sup>11</sup>

## Hate

*I hate my landlord. Our rent has just been increased by 10 percent and yet they leave the downstairs flat empty while they decide whether to renovate it or not. If money were the problem then you'd think they would have timed*

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10 One can imagine that the same would have applied to feudalism: 'The serfs are merely jealous that they are not ordained with royal blood as decreed by God'.

11 I'm thinking, here, of invoking J.K. Gibson-Graham, *The End of Capitalism (as We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996) or perhaps just a bit more critique that is grounded in a reading of capital-C Colonisation.

*the renovations with kicking the previous tenants out. We ask them, via the property management company, to fix the front door and if we can have a cat. The first question is ignored, the second is rejected. I've never met them, but I hate both them and the property manager.*

The Soviet poet Vladimir Mayakovsky released a set of poems with the rare distinction of being legible in both the Cyrillic of Russian and the Latin script of English: *HATE!*<sup>12</sup> Those four letters, if read in English, speak of the intense emotion of an aggressive antipathy. Hate is so foundational that it barely needs explanation. In Mayakovsky's Russian, *HATE!* means 'here you are!' His assertion explodes: 'I've found you! I've found the real you! The lost but essential, you! You are hate. And you were obscured . . . but now you are found!' For Mayakovsky, an emblematic but troubled figure for Bolshevik poetry, this rich word play was his contribution to a social struggle that eventually had no use for his passions. Here you are!

The most useful emotional relation to a political adversary is hatred. In the manner recognised by Mouffe, we recognise them as equals with a right to exist in the political space, but nevertheless we deeply oppose them, their practices, and/or their beliefs. Hatred is valid and can be effective if its intensities are channeled into political action. By describing the need to channel the intensities of hatred into political action I am not suggesting that hatred becomes tampered down into a more reasonable, friction-less discourse. Nor am I suggesting that there is something singular about hatred that other emotional states do not possess—love could be equally balanced and useful and has been the subject of many personal and political enquiries. Hate, in contrast to love, is at something of a loose end. There is an instructive anecdote at the beginning of Semiotext(e)'s *Hatred of Capitalism* where Sylvere Lotringer (S) is chatting to Chris Kraus (C):

S: What happened is that we forgot that capitalism even exists. It has become invisible because there's nothing else to see. When I told Baudrillard about

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12 Vladimir Mayakovsky, *HATE!* (Kharkov: Folio, 2009).



this book, he said the title sounded too old-fashioned.

C: He didn't get the joke.<sup>13</sup>

Lotringer and Kraus's view of hatred is two-fold: first as a throw-back, then as a laugh. Hatred, at that odd point in time—a decade after the end of the Cold War but before the new American quagmires—was something either best left to the cavemen or that could be joked about knowingly. The first verso of the collection explains where the title actually came from: a response from film-maker Jack Smith to the journal name *Semiotext(e)*.

Listen: *Hatred of Capitalism* would be a much better title. It's stunning. The world is starving for thoughts. If you can think of something, the language will fall into place, but the thought is what's going to do it.<sup>14</sup>

For this intervention, Smith and Mayakovsky are patron saints. They express hate as an emotion of vigorous, creative opposition.<sup>15</sup> A similarly vibrant approach to the animating powers of hatred come through in Sloterdijk's *Rage and Time*.<sup>16</sup> *Rage and Time* repositions hatred through the concept of thymos. Thymos is the Ancient Greek term for a rage that one directs, rather than for a rage that takes over the body. As Couture summarises, thymos is the controlled, directed, and domesticated form of rage.<sup>17</sup> Thymos is a form of rage that is both powerful and strategic. Hate need not be an irrational force prohibited from political struggle, but as

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13 Chris Kraus and Sylvere Lotringer, 'Introduction: The History of *Semiotext(e)*,' in *Hatred of Capitalism*, eds. Sylvere Lotringer and Chris Kraus (Los Angeles: *Semiotext(e)*, 2002), 15–16.

14 Jack Smith, Epigram in *Hatred of Capitalism*, 4.

15 I would argue that hatred is a gendered performance, with descriptions like these more likely to be levelled at men who display hate rather than women. This is not to say that women don't hate, but that the way their hatred is received has less room for being seen as vigorous or creative.

16 Peter Sloterdijk, *Rage and Time: A Psycho-Political Investigation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

17 Jean-Pierre Couture, *Sloterdijk* (London: Polity Press, 2015).

thymos can be deployed through a rhetorical rage. Rhetoric, in Sloterdijk's overview of the field, 'is the doctrine of controlling affects in political ensembles, is applied thymotics'.<sup>18</sup>

Hate could be an antagonism that is not changed by being recognised—unlike resentment—as while the relation to the situation is negative, the relation to the other is one of equals. Schopenhauer uses the porcupine as a naturalised figure of antagonism that permeates a pessimistic society. As he tells it, the porcupine in winter is like the human in society. In winter the cold pushes the porcupine into close proximity with others in search of warmth. But as they get closer their quills intrude on one another and so the little mammals endure the sharpness of their collective company and are only rewarded with the most minimal of body heat.<sup>19</sup> The story has an appeal to the misanthrope, but achieved wider fame when it was recalled by Freud—hence, a healthy recrudescence for the concept in books like those of Luepnitz and Warwick.<sup>20</sup>

But before Freud, Nietzsche had made reference of the porcupine as a mark of his late turn away from Schopenhauer and nihilism. In reflecting on his place in German towns he wrote:

In such circumstances should I not be compelled to become a hedgehog? But to have prickles amounts to a squandering of strength; they even constitute a twofold luxury, when, if we only chose to do so, we could dispense with them and open our hands instead.<sup>21</sup>

As with Nietzsche's late turn to joy, our matrix is not just a tool to elaborate

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18 Sloterdijk, *Rage and Time*, 15. Ironically, across a series of public-facing commentary in newspapers, Sloterdijk seems almost pathologically unable to recognise the sorts of economic exploitation that animate Left thought and practice.

19 Arthur Schopenhauer, *Essays and Aphorisms* (New York: Penguin, 2004).

20 Deborah Luepnitz, *Schopenhauer's Porcupines: Intimacy and its Dilemmas: Five Stories of Psychotherapy* (New York: Basic Books, 2013); Hugh Warwick, *The Hedgehog's Dilemma: A Tale of Obsession, Nostalgia, and the World's Most Charming Mammal* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004).

21 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2004), 32.

on negative thoughts. There are other important emotions not discussed in this intervention: affection, admiration, acceptance, and even those from the ambivalent, or moderate sphere. Consider, for example, Papastergiadis, who aligns the ontologies implicit in Sloterdijk and Mouffe around antagonism and agonism, then challenges the reader to think of an alternative to this opposition as a grounding politics.<sup>22</sup> And while that evocation of a politics beyond conflict—think co-operation or mutual aid—is not the writ of this paper, it could be a kind of compulsory detoxification required of any intervention that fixates a little too much on the negative.

To find hope in hate as an equaliser between resentment and pity might not be the end goal of most psycho-political investigations. But is the opposite—opening our hands or turns to joy—as infallible as works on love and peace might propose? Just as I have argued that the negative stance of hate can obscure an egalitarianism, so too can the positive rhetoric of love be used to disguise all sorts of contempt and corruption. Love thy neighbour? Well . . . *maybe* . . . but what of the landlord? As wages stagnate and rents leap ahead of our ability to pay, our hatred of the landlord—expunged of resentment, and without a cloying self-pity—may be the best response.

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22 Nikos Papastergiadis, 'Does Philosophy Contribute to an Invasion Complex? Sloterdijk the Antagonist and the Agonism of Mouffe,' *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture* 9, no. 2 (2017): 13–24.

The New Zealand Prostitutes' Collective (NZPC) is an organisation founded on the rights, welfare, health, and safety of sex workers in Aotearoa New Zealand and globally. The collective is committed to ensuring the agency of sex workers in all aspects of life. After years of lobbying by the NZPC to overturn an archaic law founded on double standards, whereby sex workers and third parties were prosecuted for acts such as soliciting and brothel keeping, the Prostitution Reform Act 2003 saw the decriminalisation of commercial sex activities and allowed for third parties to operate brothels. Aotearoa New Zealand remains the only country to decriminalise most commercial sex work and endorse the rights of sex workers. Dame Catherine Healy has been with the NZPC since its inception in 1987. As the national coordinator she is a vocal lead activist and advocate for sex workers' rights. She also publishes extensively on sex workers' rights. In 2018, Catherine was presented with a Dame Companion to the New Zealand Order of Merit in acknowledgment for working for the rights of sex workers. Dr Denise Blake is an academic and the chair of the NZPC Board. Denise has been involved in the sex industry in a variety of roles for a number of years, and also advocates strongly for the rights of sex workers. In this interview, Catherine talks to Denise and Amanda Thomas about her work and the history of the NZPC.

## Telling Stories: Sex Workers' Rights in Aotearoa New Zealand

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CATHERINE HEALY with DENISE BLAKE & AMANDA THOMAS

**AMANDA THOMAS** – Thank you very much for making this time and for being willing to chat to us. Could you start by saying a little bit about your journey, how you were politicised, and how you came to occupy such a public role in working for sex workers' rights?

**CATHERINE HEALY** – When I was a young woman I was really inspired by lots of things that my older sister seemed to be involved in. It was the 70s when I went through high school, so we had people protesting about lots of things. The Springbok tour, in particular, was something that was very prevalent through the 70s and 80s and that had a great influence. Also, the feminist movement was very pronounced and that meant a lot. Germaine Greer, for example, came to New Zealand in 1970 when I was in the fourth form and that seemed to be fantastic really. Not that Germaine Greer is somebody I admire today because she is anti-trans and I think also anti-sex workers. I went on to university and teachers' college simultaneously. I was very shy—I would go to things, but I wouldn't speak; I didn't have that kind of voice. But I was very earnest and when I was 20 I joined a university friendship delegation and went to China on a study tour. I had a great interest in China at that time because when you're 20 you are looking to see what's different. I would go to

little study groups as well because I was quite earnest.

There were two separate campuses, so Wellington Teachers' College was autonomous, and it was a very liberal institution in its day. I went there as a 17-year-old and they were impressive really. Teachers' college is always regarded as a softer kind of option. But it gave me a bit of income, so I could go to university simultaneously; I chugged down there on my motorbike and split my time between the two campuses. But the Wellington Teachers' College I have a lot to thank for because it was very progressive at the time. A lot of us benefited from a very liberal institution; it opened our minds up and the 70s just seemed to be a magical time for that.

**AMANDA** – So how long were you a teacher for?

**CATHERINE** – Nine years I taught. My first year was out in Porirua East. I taught in all sorts of contrasting schools so that was interesting. It's a really, really hard occupation, but lots of good memories. The thing for me though was that I felt I would never leave school and I was really pushing to get out. And I always had different parts to my life; I like to travel a lot and got away on those long school holidays and I just thought, 'oh God, going back to teach for another year'. I got to that crossroads really where I was 30 and felt that I had to take a year's leave of absence. By then I had started night work in a massage parlour to pay off the visa bill from the travel, because travel was really expensive in those days; so that's how I became a sex worker.

**DENISE BLAKE** – How did you first learn about massage parlours? How did you first start working there?

**CATHERINE** – I think the first time I heard about massage parlours was probably around the mid-70s. In 1978 I was living in a flat. There were nine bedrooms in this flat but I'm sure there weren't nine people. It was massive, one of those big, tiered mansions around the Terrace. There was sort of a bar that was operating in the basement. There were two masseuses living

there and occasionally I would see them, but mostly I would be tootling off to school and teaching and stuff. So that's when I first learned that there were massage parlours. I definitely did not make the connection that they were sex workers. They may not have been because I think people were paid some money for massaging in those days. I also flatted with someone, also round that era, '78, '79, and she was working out on the street and I didn't realise this at first. She had met somebody and she got into injecting heroin and then she started sex work and bringing people home, and so I learnt about her experience as well.

In 1986 when I had been teaching for about eight-and-a-half years, I thought, 'gosh I need a night time job to top up teaching', and it could have been bar work, it could have been anything, but these adverts kept on popping up. The adverts would say things like, 'no training required'; I don't know if they said, 'dollars, dollars, dollars', they possibly did. I saw one for a receptionist in a massage parlour. I was living at the time with my mother, trying to recoup after travelling, and I remember saying to her, 'mum, I think I will go work at a massage parlour'. And she said, 'if you do, I will have to sell up and go and live in Spain'. I don't think mum and I really knew what massage parlours were except that they were naughty, and naughty enough to be a little bit too risqué for my mother.

**AMANDA** – So that's quite a contrast to the mental image I have of your earnest self as a student.

**CATHERINE** – Well, that's right. I discovered hedonism and travel for pleasure and credit cards. So that's how I started. I was hired as a receptionist and I didn't quite appreciate where I was working. I thought it really was about massage and I didn't really know what massage was anyway, apart from having gorgeous head massages in Bali. Massages weren't common, I didn't really know what they were about. But I thought perhaps that the woman had to go topless.

But anyway, my job was just to answer the phone and say 'hello, Number 12', fold the towels, do the laundry, run around, and write in

the big book the appointments. The manager of the business said, 'look if you need anything, I will be over the road at the St George', which was the pub where she preferred to see creditors, people she owed money to. So they would turn up periodically looking for her and I would be the gormless receptionist on Friday and Saturday nights. I would say, 'no sorry I can't help you, I don't know where she is'. I would book these people in and they would be wanting a 35- or a 45-minute massage, or sometimes a connoisseur, and so I would book them in and introduce them to the women. And the women were really fantastic. I was a dowdy old school teacher with flat shoes and they wore these wonderful gowns that were amazing. They would float around in these silky things and they really were impressively groomed.

**DENISE** – Sophisticated, smoked inside.

**CATHERINE** – Yeah, scary!

**DENISE** – So how long were you a receptionist for?

**CATHERINE** – Two months. I jumped. I jumped the desk. Well, it was the second night I discovered all was not what it seemed.

**AMANDA** – It was a bit more than this [head rubbing].

**CATHERINE** – I got a big telling-off from one of the women because I had booked in a 'straight' and I didn't know that a straight meant somebody who didn't have money to pay for extras, and that extras were indeed about sex, and if they didn't make money from extras they didn't make any money at all.

The women had a lot to say as well—they were eclectic really, all kinds of women. On a shift there were women studying while others were sitting around when work wasn't busy enough; and they had lots of pressures on them, you know, women with children. It was incredibly diverse. It was busy too. There was a little illicit bar that operated on the ground floor



and that would get chocca, and the women would question, you know, ‘why does she let them in?’ But it wasn’t me; this was when the manager would return. She would have these little parties and all these men would be crowded into the bar and the women would be quite frustrated because they would want the clients to come through for bookings with them instead of drinking.

So we would talk a lot. We would talk about how unfair things were and that became sort of the impetus. There was another crowd who came as a group. They were incredibly cohesive, and they came over from another massage parlour—their one was being renovated. They were known as ‘the women from the Lily’, and so they came over to Number 12, which formerly had been The House of Ladies. And they came en masse. They were living together and to me they seemed to be very cohesive socially and had a lot to say about conditions at work. So it was sort of a backwards and forwards discussion about what we needed to do, and we were all scared about HIV and how that would impact on us.

**AMANDA** – And then it started to kind of formalise into something more cohesive?

**CATHERINE** – Well the formality was a really interesting thing. We didn’t actually want to, we didn’t want to bore ourselves rigid and have meetings. We wanted to kind of keep a free thing going, so it formed quite organically. So we were talking and saying we needed to have an organisation, we needed to do something.

In Australia, we were conscious they had sex worker organisations there. We had heard about the Americans, and we had heard about the English, and then we came to hear about the French who of course had kicked off the whole second wave of sex worker rights in 1975. The French sex workers had locked themselves in a church and protested about police violence. So then the English Collective of Prostitutes did the same. There was also a connection to the names. There was the Australian Prostitutes’ Collective and there was and the Prostitutes’ Collective of Victoria. We

were conscious that there were sex worker rights organisations for women. And so we felt it was time for us to organise something. But it was kind of like we would meet in the pub, we would go to a room and we would sit there and come up with these ideas for things that we needed to do. We felt that people didn't have a fair take on us.

**DENISE** – So you wanted to be really safe and really inclusive?

**CATHERINE** – We didn't have those words. Yeah, why can't we be accepted really?

**DENISE** – I was thinking about those women that would be excluded from that because obviously the industry is big and there are different types of women in the industry. What was it about your group that enabled you to be conscious of what was going on? Because my understanding is there's a whole lot of sex workers that don't have any knowledge about what is happening internationally.

**CATHERINE** – Yes, I think there's a lot in that. I remember when we reached out to street-based sex workers. We were working in a fairly well-heeled situation; there were people who had a whole range of different experiences and education, but the one thing we could all do in these massage settings was hide tattoos. You know, that sounds funny, but it was one of the many things that was used to keep women apart in those scenes.

**AMANDA** – Like in a classed dynamic that coloured the scene a wee bit? Like the tattoos?

**CATHERINE** – Well a little bit, yeah. You know, people have records. That was the other thing that kept you out of those places: if you had a drug conviction and that was found out.

**DENISE** – There was a class distinction aye, amongst the parlours, like

who got into where. Not necessarily from the women though, it's just the way it happened.

**CATHERINE** – Often it would be how somebody appeared to be as opposed to how they actually were. Bill Crow had a reputation for having really snooty sex workers, the *crème de la crème* sort of situation, and the clients would be explained as if they were the who's who. They quite possibly were the who's who, but the bulldozer driver would come up once a week as well. Some of the women who were working up there were people who had convictions and they couldn't be hired in the downtown massage parlours which were heavily policed.

In 1978 there was an attempt to try and contain and control sex workers and so it was all put into the Massage Parlour Act. There were heavy regulations about monitoring masseuses and anyone who was convicted of anything related to prostitution was evicted. We had a woman who the police said was going to be convicted of possessing marijuana. Someone sent her a roach in the mail. Even prior to her conviction she was going to be tossed out. Well our response to that was to hide her so she could continue to work there. Two of the other workers took her name so when clients would ring up to see who was on shift, they'd say, 'oh you know, Jane, Jane, and Jane'.

**DENISE** – Yeah, because as much as there were, kind of, class divisions, there was real comradery aye. There was real protection. Everyone protected each other no matter where you came from. Is that your experience?

**CATHERINE** – Yeah, I think so. I think when we looked there were different personalities related to each of the places. Thinking about people who did have drug convictions, often it was safer for people to work in places where there was a more liberal approach to that, so it wasn't necessarily about class. It certainly could be about perceptions related to beauty. The class thing is kind of an obvious one, but I don't think its necessarily *the* thing actually. I think it was a bit more complicated.

**AMANDA** – So with NZPC, lots of solidarity across that space coagulated into something. Tell me from there what happened. I was saying to Denise before that I was really interested that in the late-80s NZPC was getting government funding. She was explaining a bit of the background around that, but maybe you can pick up there?

**CATHERINE** – From the group that started talking about what we needed to do we branched out quite quickly to reach out to other people. I went out to the street-based sex workers quite early on. At the same time, New Zealand is a small country and somebody in the Department of Health heard about us through personal contacts and rang me and said she was with the AIDs task force. She had heard that I was a sex worker and that we were going to be doing something and would we like to meet to talk about this. Also, there was somebody who was trans, a woman who worked in the Department of Labour and she was aware that probably there was money that was going to be given to sex workers or should be given to sex workers. So she also made contact with us. She had been battling away for trans rights back then and she was also a public servant, so she and I and one other sex worker went to this meeting with the Department of Health. We talked about the reality of sex work and at that point they said, ‘well, would you be interested in doing something, applying for funding?’

And so we went away and talked about that as a group. I think there were about nine of us sitting in a big circle saying, ‘do we want to have government funding, what should we do if we got it?’ They offered \$35,000 and, you know, we were earning big money back then so the money wasn’t the thing for us, it was the independence. So we just thought, okay well if we have that money we could probably set up community places where sex workers could come. We could do a magazine and we started to think about that and thought that would be a good use of the money; and we asked for \$50,000. Somebody said, ‘ask for more’, and the government came back and said, ‘yes, we’ll give you a contract’. We heard about that, I think, in early ‘88.

In October ‘88 we got our first community centre and got a telephone line. We decorated the community base with pink cushions. It was a little

cottage. We had to go out looking and that was an exercise in itself to talk and say, 'look we are who we are and we're going to be doing this'. HIV played a huge part in being able to explain what we were about and, you know, people kind of responded to that.

**DENISE** – What was the connection with the needle exchange?<sup>1</sup>

**CATHERINE** – The needle exchange in Wellington came along afterwards and so we said, 'well, why don't you come in and share with us'. It just seemed to make sense to have the needle exchange come in and they seemed to be having difficulties trying to get a place.

**DENISE** – So they were formed and approached separately by the Department of Health?

**CATHERINE** – Yes, but by the same AIDs task force. They were approached, I think, before us, because it was easier to make contact with drug groups than to access sex workers.

**DENISE** – So of the core nine women you were saying that got together, were any of them crossing over those worlds? To make those connections?

**CATHERINE** – Yes, definitely. And that was really, really important and useful. I was really a fan of that, bringing those factions together, those different scenes together. The other thing that struck me was that the street-based sex workers were incredibly organised as well, because a lot of them were performing in clubs and were trans workers. When I went out to speak

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1 The National Needle Exchange Programme (NEP) began in 1987, also in response to AIDs, as a peer-based service for drug users, after activists from the intravenous-drug-using community advocated for safe injection services. New Zealand became the first country with a national network of exchanges. As well as providing health and education, NEP provides free clean needles and syringes in exchange for used ones. Today, there are 20 NEP outlets, and 180 pharmacies and alternative outlets supplying safe injection equipment.

to them I felt so inadequate—they looked down at me from a great height and I had never met anyone who was trans before so that was incredible. They came into the community centre as a group. I was really thrilled, but some people weren't. There was sort of this separatist issue, from both sides actually, so there was a lot of discussion about trans rights. We listened to what they wanted, and they wanted their own separate space, so we went on to hire another place on Vivian Street for the trans population. But then the police came to us and said we had to close the lease, or they would charge me with brothel keeping because the trans workers were supposedly taking their clients back there.

**DENISE** – What about the homosexual law reform? Did that feed into the movement as well?

**CATHERINE** – It did, definitely. We were inspired and encouraged and supported by the New Zealand AIDs Foundation. I mean, we became aware we were coming into something bigger than us, a bigger kind of jigsaw. We had our own particular issues with the perceptions that people had of us as sex workers, the attitudes that the police had towards us and the actions they took against us. We were arrested periodically. You know, that whole sort of stigma around being a sex worker when you didn't feel you were a law breaker. It attacked your integrity and I think that it was what we all felt, that we weren't dangerous people. All these things were bubbling away and we had our own particular thing, but becoming a part of that big AIDs community was really important.

**AMANDA** – So then what happened after the Vivian Street place was shut down?

**CATHERINE** – Well, we regrouped. It was a shame it didn't work at that time but all our communities were quite stressed—we had to learn how to do a lot of things that we didn't necessarily have the skills for. We were volunteers for a long time and we didn't have an employment structure, so

we were all volunteers; but quite early on it was the three groups, because we also took on the National People Living with AIDs Union, so there were three groups using the space. We hired someone to open up for all of us and who was our first sort of secretary for all the three groups. And then suddenly you realise that you're a boss and that wasn't what you had signed up for, so you had to learn to grow an organisation.

We kept the informal thing going as long as we could and then the Department of Health said, 'you have to have a structure we can engage with', so we had to go to the lawyer and we had to get a structure in place, and we spoke to the lawyer at the time and said, 'don't bother with too much paper work, we want the very smallest structure that can hold us together'. So we set up as a charitable trust at that stage.

**DENISE** – What was the kaupapa back in those days? What was the drive for NZPC and how did it become about law reform?

**CATHERINE** – It became about law reform, I think, with our first submission in July 1989.

**DENISE** – Oh, so straight away it was about law reform?

**CATHERINE** – Yeah, it was. I always think we've had three organisations, three parts to it, and for some people it was about sexual health, sexual reproductive health, and HIV and AIDs awareness and prevention. And for others it was about fighting for some understanding, you know, 'see us for who we are beyond those negative images'. And for others it was a place to come and actually work, and that was really important for some people who would say, 'all I have known is sex work and I actually appreciate being able to come to a place and to do a shift, open the doors, distribute the condoms, needles, and syringes'.

**AMANDA** – So thinking about the mahi to decriminalise sex work; thinking as well about the strategies and the sort of tactics that you all used in the lead-up.

**CATHERINE** – We just did what was obvious. My least favourite word is strategy. Do what you see and then look for what you can't see. We didn't sit there and plan ever. Do you remember [directed to Denise]?

**DENISE** – No, I don't remember that.

**CATHERINE** – It wasn't a matter of sitting down and saying, 'and now we must go and see if the National Council of Women will support us or the Māori Women's Welfare League'. You know, it was the things that presented, that came before us, and the times.

**DENISE** – Yeah, it's almost like, you know, the business model gets imposed on the grassroots model, and it is really grassroots aye. It's every day. Like got to get the money for the rent; got to distribute condoms; got to get people doing what they are doing; and then this person might know that person and then you might have those conversations. It's much more like that rather than sitting down and going, 'in two years' time this is where the business income is going to be'.

**CATHERINE** – I think the miracle is we stayed together. You know, the divides that could have occurred; and I think we have, for the most part, stayed pretty well together as an organisation. In the early years there was just so much in front of us that we had to meet. And it seemed to come at us too. I think one of the things that kicked off really quickly was the media interest and that was really helpful. And somebody gave me a sage bit of advice: never ignore them. Speak to them always and it doesn't matter how, just keep speaking to them. That was incredibly useful. It's been a useful way to get messages out and build interest and achieve public opinion.

**DENISE** – When it came to law reform, why did the organisation choose decriminalisation instead of legalisation?

**CATHERINE** – We chose decriminalisation because that's a model where



the laws are completely repealed. So the laws that stood in our way stopped us from being able to work safely were taken off the statute books and other laws kicked in, like labour laws. All those laws that protect people from violence became available to sex workers. Because sex workers were scared to report violence to the police it was a problem. So once sex work was decriminalised it meant that sex workers could come forward and report problems if that's what they needed to do. Legalisation is not a model that we favour because it's usually about saying, 'okay you're legal but you're not'. You tend to end up with this population who have to jump through all sorts of hoops only to fail—'you can't be a sex worker, I'm sorry. You have a drug conviction'. What happens is you have people who are sex workers anyway, but they don't have all the protections that the legal sex workers have.

**DENISE** – So who drove the actual writing of the reform?

**CATHERINE** – We got a student on placement and we talked out our ideas and he came up with a paper. So that's, sort of, where we started to get ideas down. But, for a long time we thought the law would change and that would just happen if we kept speaking about it. We did know about going to parliament and presenting; we did that. But we didn't really connect all of those dots, we didn't realise we could actually get a thing called a private member's bill into place. We just thought that would happen, politicians would do their thing.

That disconnection probably cost us time, so it took a wee while, and it was Tim Barnett who came through. And so we talked about our ideas, and then a law professor, who is now a judge, came through and helped with the actual law, and we would sit around in committee meetings with all those other groups, like the Māori Women's Welfare League, the National Council of Women, the Business and Professional Women's Federation, and the New Zealand AIDs Foundation. We would all sit there and look at everything and we'd get to call most of the things that went into the bill at that point. After it went into the parliamentary process it became, in parts,

a bit of a run-away train that we have to live with, but in other parts its captured pretty much what we wanted.

**DENISE** – How much toing and froing was there in that process?

**CATHERINE** – It got really intense. There were three readings. The select committee had all those people submit; so a lot of people wrote submissions, a lot of people presented, and then it went back to the House for another reading and that's where the debates occurred and different politicians would say that they would support something. For example, the minister of immigration at the time said that she would support it providing there was this clause that said that you cannot come to New Zealand with the intention of being a sex worker because she was lobbied, and people said, 'oh my goodness, there will be people trying to traffic sex workers here', and they came up with that suggestion. We were upset about that because we didn't feel it was necessary, and of course we have this trouble now where people can come to New Zealand and they can work in most other occupations. But if they are working as a sex worker instead of at McDonalds, and they are studying in this country, they can be biffed out, so that causes harm. And people know this about these sex workers and they target them, so we have had a few episodes where people have been attacked or robbed and their status as migrant sex workers has been taken advantage of.

**AMANDA** – Were there many concessions that needed to be made?

**CATHERINE** – There were moments we thought we had pulled the wool over Phil Goff who was minister of justice at the time. We wanted the definition of brothel to be different from what it is at the moment—if you're a single sex worker and you're working from home, at the moment that counts as a brothel, and we don't think it should. We were sitting there hoping that the definition would be more generous and that he wouldn't pick up on what we were up too. But he did. So there are a few things that

we would certainly like to change. It's unlikely that we will get a chance to do that without a huge debate and we aren't fans of really having big strong debates and risking losing what we have already. There's stuff that we live with. I don't think it's fair that sex workers can be prosecuted for having unprotected sex. I think that's not the way. Prosecuting people isn't the way. The better way of encouraging people to take part in public health initiatives is to encourage, not to prosecute. But we have that sitting in the act—if you don't use a condom, or take all reasonable steps to use a condom, you can be prosecuted. And that's quite a crime. That's quite a thing to have to carry with you, having to declare that as you fill out a visa.

**DENISE** – The other thing I was thinking about was who was helping us? There wouldn't have been a lot of money, so did you just rely on the generosity of people, or did you get specific grants?

**CATHERINE** – No. I mean what did it really look like? It was phone calls at night, it was getting off to meetings. We didn't have any money to rub together. The only thing we had was common sense really. We knew it had to happen. We would be at a meeting, it would be a public health meeting around HIV and AIDs, and there would be an opportunity to say, 'look, sex workers are still having their condoms used as evidence. Where does that sit in the AIDs strategy or public health strategy?' It's very hard to say that there was any distinct action that was purely about law change. A lot of the time it was about building support.

**DENISE** – I was just thinking, in terms of the stories around who did the research, all that day-to-day mahi that goes into that—we didn't get funded for that.

**CATHERINE** – No. We contracted an early evaluation because it was put on us by the Department of Health. They said, 'you need to be evaluated because we get asked about your organisation a lot'. So we had to find that money within our budget and from that we formed a relationship with the

University of Otago, Christchurch School of Medicine. They did a lot of the research, not specific to law reform but specific to the circumstances that we were trying to operate in around HIV and sexual and reproductive health. It was specific to that. And, of course, immediately you run across hot wires: our literature that is designed to educate sex workers is being used to achieve a prostitution-related conviction. It's been funded by the Department of Health and it's been used as evidence by the police. Come on! There's a tension here that's got to be worked out.

We did throw our toys out of the cot actually. We offered to give our funding back in 1993 and also after a series of police raids. We had a part-time employee and I spoke to her at the time and said, 'do you know it's going to affect you? You're going to lose your job and you know we are deadly serious'. We needed the police, the Department of Health, Women's Affairs, and Justice, to think about this tension. We said, 'listen, we are going to give our funding back unless you set up a deeper departmental committee to review the laws governing prostitution and the context of what we are trying to do around HIV and AIDs'. And they did that. So that was sort of a modest request. Something that they could achieve and that they did.

**AMANDA** – It's really interesting hearing about some of the processes around legislative reform. You were talking about health and narrating a lot of this as a health issue, whereas lots of recent literature talks about it as a workers' rights issue—sex work is work, and sex workers are workers. I don't want to be too post-structural about it, and I'm thinking about you saying there was no strategy, but is it that you could gain the most political ground if you narrated it as a health issue?

**CATHERINE** – True, and we felt, 'this is our work, this is our job etcetera', but that didn't seem to win us allies actually. People found that hard to follow. And so we didn't use that as much. I mean, amongst ourselves we felt it. We would talk union. We'd say, 'it's our job damn it', but it wasn't something that would be as palatable out there.

**AMANDA** – And in terms of the landscape of solidarity, most of your solidarity came from health groups rather than unions?

**CATHERINE** – True, until later on when there was a bit of intersection, but certainly health was the big avenue.

**DENISE** – And that's because it came off the back of the whole AIDs issue, and then hepatitis C, and all of those.

**CATHERINE** – Yeah, it did. And some of the human rights stuff. In 1993, when the human rights legislation was amended to cover sexual orientation, thinking back on that, we should have been in there getting anti-discrimination protection. But you see its horse and cart because we didn't have decriminalisation. It's ludicrous that sex workers aren't protected, and you know we're victims of hate crimes. And I remember talking to a politician and he was quite taken by that and hadn't thought about it and said, 'but you can stop being a prostitute'. That was interesting because all the other groups that are covered by anti-discrimination legislation can't stop really. I think definitely we need protection under the Human Rights Act. We'll be watching that hate crime legislation, because people have been murdered in this country because they have been sex workers, no other reason.

**AMANDA** – I'm from Christchurch and I remember that spate of murders of sex workers and how they were reported.

**CATHERINE** – We had a student who did a study on the media and looked at sex work images and reporting. And he did it after 2003 so it would have been around the time the women were murdered. They have been disgusting in their depiction of sex workers.

**DENISE** – Because it's interesting with all the discussion around Ōtautahi, Christchurch, and the hate crime and the hate ethos down there. Sex

workers are still ignored in these current debates aye.

**CATHERINE** – It's just not in people's consciousness. You hear it said, 'well you know I don't want, didn't want to prostitute myself'. And it's just in the most tame settings, on radio interviews. People just say it, liberal people. They don't even imagine there's a person sitting there thinking, 'oh I'm a sex worker'.

**AMANDA** – Yeah growing up in Christchurch, Manchester Street was seen as funny; as kids we would drive down there to look at sex workers. And I think in a lot of mainstream New Zealand culture sex work is seen to be 'funny' and a lot of sex workers aren't seen as people.

**DENISE** – Still today. Still today, even with our law reforms. It's still a stigma that is so embedded in a lot of us.

**CATHERINE** – How many sex workers are 'out', not even just in this country but globally? That tells you about something. Gay men had to come out, the queer community had to come out and it was terrible. But sex workers aren't out.

**DENISE** – So how does it feel for you, because there are lots of people that still struggle to have a voice and be 'out', as you call it? What is it about you that you're able to be out?

**CATHERINE** – I've got this organisation and credibility with this organisation. But if I was just me as a sex worker speaking out, that would be really, really hard. You're alone, you don't have the buffer of an organisation.

**AMANDA** – Yeah, I have a friend who's a sex worker and it took a long time for her to tell me that was her work and her parents still don't know. She said they would disown her if they knew. There's still a long way to go to create a society where sex workers can be out and be safe.

**DENISE** – It's also about the children; there's a lot of sex workers that won't come out because of the risk to their children who have to live with the ongoing stigma and that's pretty tough.

**CATHERINE** – That's right. Adult children have come forward and spoken about that, the times they've been teased in the playground and so on. But I'm smiling because I had a lovely encounter with someone at one of those official things where the governor general was. A woman came up to me and said, 'my mother was a proud member of your organisation' and it was so lovely to hear that. She was talking about how after her mother had died they found condoms and they knew. She was just absolutely pleased to make that connection.

**AMANDA** – I'm thinking back to your mum saying she would have to up sticks and move to Spain if you worked in a massage parlour. What have been some of the costs to you as a person in this mahi?

**CATHERINE** – You know, my mother, of course, died feeling very proud of me; that was 22 years ago. My family is proud of me. The cost? I'm not sure of the cost. I'm not sure there has been a cost; I think it's been a gain. I think it's certainly been an amazing time.

**DENISE** – I know that you becoming a dame last year was really, really important. Not just to you but to all of us involved in this organisation and in this space. So are you aware of that? Are you aware of what that meant? Just like the law reform.

**CATHERINE** – Oh, you know, people come in and touch me and it just makes me want to cry. It's lovely, it's that history you know. I know that around the world it's had its ripple effect amongst the sex workers' rights organisations. And, of course, there are young ones too who have said, 'but you threw the migrant sex workers under the bus', with the expectation

that when you go in to change a law you have total control. Perhaps we made the wrong decision not to pull the bill at the time because of that issue. So we are accountable, I have to be accountable for what's happened in the past. And people say, 'you accepted a damehood? That's so colonial'. That's quite a hard thing. There's no comeback really.

I know that my peer group of sex workers' rights activists here in this organisation are proud of it. I think they are pleased about the damehood. I know that internationally, same thing, the people who have been around. It means a lot. I think it means recognition and respect. It's sort of an embrace, it's bringing together.

**DENISE** – Yup. It's about that 'as good as'. It's like, 'we are okay because someone amongst us is okay and society has said they are okay, so therefore it makes it okay for us'. People are so proud. Like, I am not that lowly stigmatised person that society thinks I am because I am a sex worker. And it's put it back on the map as an issue that we need to keep thinking about, and it's fantastic. I know there's all those other arguments, but when you're inside the circle, for many of us it's been really moving, just like the law reform. As much as there are holes, it's like, 'wow, society's actually given us a tick or something, or changed how they feel about it', so that's what's really important.

**CATHERINE** – I think you're right. I mean the damehood wasn't for working in the context of HIV and AIDs, it was actually given for working for sex workers' rights.

**AMANDA** – From the 'outsider' perspective to that as well, your mahi and the mahi of this collective carved out a space within the legislative sphere that the Left generally can be proud of, that builds a better, more inclusive community. It's like a gift to New Zealand; that sounds so cheesy, but it's something for us all that we can all feel proud of.

**CATHERINE** – Do you think? It is a Left splitting thing though isn't it,



because there's been criticism that comes from the Left.

**AMANDA** – Yeah and there are differences within the Left. There's the stuff about migrant sex workers, and then there are 'radical feminists' who criticise sex work who would say they are 'of the Left' but many would say they're not. Decriminalisation is about equality and justice, and they are denying the existence of, and rights to, a good life for sex workers and trans people. I don't think that's very Left.

**DENISE** – What difference has NZPC's work made internationally? You've been doing a lot of international collaboration, talk circuits—do you want to talk a little bit about that?

**CATHERINE** – Yes, NZPC is part of NSWP, the Network of Sex Work Projects, and we value that network a lot. There's been work that's been carried out throughout that network that has resulted in us going to CEDAW, the Committee to Eliminate Discrimination Against Women, and taking the case of migrant sex workers there and having that included in the report that came back to the government, recommending that the government should have a look at the treatment of migrant sex workers. And we have been working as a part of that network around the status of women.

There's also a really strong push to export the Swedish model of law which really cripples the circumstances of the sex workers, makes their circumstances really reduced; it creates harm, causes problems. So sex workers across the globe are trying to push back. New Zealand, and New South Wales in Australia, have models based on the principles of decriminalisation. We're called on a lot to contribute and I think it's our responsibility to do that. It sounds a bit grandiose, but we are living these experiences and I know when we were looking to find our way in terms of law reform it was really hard to find anywhere that was useful except our mates across the ditch. We are fighting for people's lives in that regard.

We are at a pivotal time and Aotearoa New Zealand needs to play a special role here. We have a good working model here. There are, of course,

serious issues in relation to migrant sex workers that we are addressing. In the main, we are respectful of the rights of the sex workers. As a country we need to lift it up and say that we have a model for other countries to use and to remember that this country has come up with really interesting responses historically to the plight of women and now has stood up for the rights of sex workers.

**DENISE** – I feel quite emotional. I remember in 2003 I was sitting on my couch when the law reform went through and I was alone—there was no one with me when it was passed. I just started crying but there was no one to ring. But the next day I bought some flowers and I came in and saw you. We all came out of the woodwork to go, ‘wow, this is amazing, really amazing’.

We need to keep telling these stories rather than saying, ‘oh they didn’t get this right or they didn’t get that right’. And it’s the same with the dame-ing, it was just as significant for all of us. I just wanted to say thank you, I guess. Because it’s a really hard life being marginalised, being an activist. People don’t think about what it has cost you. It’s that constant battle, you’re battling every day against this world that is saying, ‘you’re not good enough. Shut up and go into the corner. Don’t exist. We are going to use you’. It was so significant for so many of us that that law was changed because we lived in so much fear for so long. That story needs to keep getting told because we’ve forgotten, people have forgotten what it was like for many of us to live under so much fear. You know nothing is ever perfect aye, but we have to remember how much it all meant.



Max Rashbrooke,  
*Government for the Public Good:  
 The Surprising Science of Large-Scale Collective Action*,  
 Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2018, 352 pp

## Can Deliberative Democracy Put an End to Neoliberalism in Settler-Colonial States?

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DAVID PARKER

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the New Right's agenda was summed up by the notorious Reaganite quip that 'Government is not the solution to our problem, government *is* the problem'.<sup>1</sup> Government was likened to a monopoly firm 'with all the negative tendencies of a monopoly such as exploitative price-making, parasitic rent-seeking and general budgetary greed and institutional complacency'.<sup>2</sup> As the medicine served up in response to this diagnosis, the New Right's 'supply-side' economics and neoliberal ideology has completely transformed the state in many liberal-capitalist economies around the world.

We have now had 40 years of 'privatization, outsourcing, internal managerialism and agentification, the rejection of interventionist industrial policies, and the concomitant

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1 Ronald Reagan, 'Inaugural presidential address,' 20 January 1981, <https://www.reaganfoundation.org/ronald-reagan/reagan-quotes-speeches/inaugural-address-2/>

2 Abby Innes, 'The New Crisis of Ungovernability,' LSE panel discussion, *Whither Europe? Historical Perspectives on 2017*, 27 April 2017, 2. Transcript provided by author. Podcast version of the talk available at, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/Events/2017/04/20170427t1830vOT/Whither-Europe>

development of quasi-markets in welfare provision, all within a context of liberalizing tax regimes'.<sup>3</sup> In that time, in the face of severe and deepening inequality which it has both failed to act upon and ruthlessly contributed to, 'the mainstream liberal centrist elite can be seen to have instrumentalized the powers of the state for party political or even private gain while simultaneously withdrawing the state's protections from the public'.<sup>4</sup> Thus, we have arrived at the disturbing and vicious endpoint of this logic that William Davies has accurately named 'punitive neoliberalism'.<sup>5</sup>

What might be the resolution of this increasingly brutal crisis? In his latest book, Max Rashbrooke sets out to explore in detail the policies and practices of a possible alternative—a government for the public good in the 21<sup>st</sup> century—and the public life of the civil society that it would foster.<sup>6</sup> Rashbrooke sets his analysis largely in what he calls the 'Anglosphere', namely Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In his deeply researched investigation, he draws on a vast array of literature from this 'Anglosphere', from theoretical tracts and academic studies to news items and popular commentary.

Strangely, perhaps, for such an accomplished journalist as Rashbrooke, there are no original interviews in the book. But even more unexpected is the almost-complete absence of Māori experience, of Māori analysis, of Māori voices, and of Māori solutions to the many problems generated by 35 years of punishing neoliberal hegemony in Aotearoa New Zealand. For a book published in 2018 that, according to the blurb on the back cover, 'offers New Zealanders a new way of thinking about government', this is a lacuna of stunning proportions.

I have said in a previous review for this journal that the easiest criticism to make of any book is to comment on what it does not do. Bearing that observation in mind, and given that Rashbrooke must surely have made a

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3 Abby Innes, 'Draining the Swamp: Understanding the Crisis in Mainstream Politics as a Crisis of the State,' *Slavic Review* 76, no. S1 (2017): S30.

4 Innes, 'The New Crisis of Ungovernability,' 5.

5 William Davies, 'The New Neoliberalism,' *New Left Review* no. 101 (2016): 129.

6 Max Rashbrooke, *Government for the Public Good: The Surprising Science of Large-Scale Collective Action* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2019).

deliberate decision on what to include and exclude, I must take a moment to consider the unexplained decision to exclude te ao Māori from the book. With the research behind this book ranging across the ‘Anglosphere’ as it does, the vast majority of the cited literature would give no attention to Māori concerns. So perhaps adding a Māori dimension to the book might have appeared tokenistic and shallow; and so it would, if it were merely bolted on for appearances. The alternative, a thoroughgoing engagement with te ao Māori, would have to be an analysis grounded in mātauranga Māori as much as in Western liberal political thought. As I have made clear, this book does not do that. I am forced to conclude that this book is not really about or for Aotearoa New Zealand at all.

Nonetheless, if this is a book aimed at addressing the crisis of the state across the ‘Anglosphere’—the UK and five of its colonised lands—the particular experiences of, and analyses provided by, Indigenous peoples must surely be acknowledged as significant. In other words, ignoring colonisation when discussing government in these countries means ignoring an issue that has fundamental constitutional, cultural, economic, and social implications. It means ignoring intergenerational historical trauma, and its ongoing impacts on the day-to-day lives of the Indigenous peoples who happen to live in this ‘Anglosphere’ as a result of invasion and colonisation.<sup>7</sup>

So, with my concerns about what Rashbrooke does not do in *Government for the Public Good* set out, let me turn to what he does do. The first part of the book investigates the successes and failures of both government and market. The neoliberal push towards ‘more-market’ solutions in areas of life formerly organised and/or serviced by government is analysed. The conclusion is that ‘extensive outsourcing has left governments unhealthily reliant on private mega-contractors, and the attempt to remodel departments and agencies has been broadly unsuccessful’.<sup>8</sup> But

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7 Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the US can be best described as settler-colonial states. I exclude the Republic of Ireland from this list on the basis of its particular history, though it certainly did experience the disaster of colonisation in full measure. As for the UK itself, it still fails to come anywhere near facing the reality of its imperialist crimes.

8 *Government for the Public Good*, 27.

rather than seeking a role for government only in areas where markets fail, Rashbrooke has a much more positive, actively interventionist objective for government. Furthermore, the ‘public good’ that such a government would strive to achieve is not defined by a simple aggregate of personal desires and individualistic wishes, but is:

What citizens, after discussion, decide that they themselves need (which may diverge from their initial desire) *and* what they would like to ensure others have. It encompasses the needs of future generations and the planet. And it incorporates certain qualities of a society: the depth of trust between people.<sup>9</sup>

The data that Rashbrooke draws together in support of this ‘active-government’ approach generally suggest that ‘governments are remarkably effective and efficient. Public discussion, altruistic motives, and free provision, it turns out, often trump private purchases, fee-charging and the incentive of profit’.<sup>10</sup> Given that the tropes of neoliberalism have become so widely accepted as common sense, especially within the mainstream corporate media and other circles of power and privilege, this detailed laying out of an alternative viewpoint is a valuable piece of work.

The key to Rashbrooke’s ideas for a government for the public good in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is contained in the phrase I quoted above: ‘what citizens, after discussion, decide’. In other words, Rashbrooke looks to deliberative democracy as the means by which active government can be implemented by giving people an active voice. He says that it offers ‘one possible path through the twin perils of managerialism and authoritarianism. It can answer the desire for citizen control that the former denies, but without the latter’s violence and threats to basic liberties’.<sup>11</sup>

Deliberative democracy is not government by plebiscite or referendum. It

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9 *Government for the Public Good*, 14.

10 *Government for the Public Good*, 27.

11 *Government for the Public Good*, 30. There is, of course, still the question of what (or who) defines a citizen. The UK has many degrees of ‘citizenship’, some of which, quite bizarrely, do not convey the right to live and work in the UK.

does not involve full participation in every decision. Deliberative democracy involves groups of people participating in ‘profound conversations’ where they ‘give reasons for their views, confront the evidence, and listen to the logic and life experience of others’.<sup>12</sup> The aim is ‘to leverage the wisdom of ordinary citizens to make well-crafted policies that the public supports’.<sup>13</sup>

These deliberative-democratic conversations can operate on a large scale, as in the planning for increased housing density which was debated via a deliberative programme in Seattle in the 1990s.<sup>14</sup> Each neighbourhood was given \$10,000 to develop stakeholder analyses, outreach programmes, and, ultimately, their own plans for increased housing density. An extensive network of community organisers was involved, and 20,000–30,000 residents participated in the project.

An example of a somewhat different process is the drawing up of a 10-year, \$5 billion financial plan for the City of Melbourne in 2014.<sup>15</sup> Deliberations began with a broad community engagement with 600 participants in meetings and online submissions. The results of this engagement were put to a ‘citizen’s jury’ of 43 randomly selected Melbourne residents, students, and business owners (with economists and planners on hand to offer advice) who met six times over five months. The panel made 11 recommendations.

There are many other examples of such processes and projects cited by Rashbrooke, giving the clear impression that deliberative democracy, participatory budgeting, and so forth are not crazy schemes dreamed up by utopians but common practice across many jurisdictions. The intention of these various processes is to move participation and deliberation far beyond box-ticking ‘consultations’.

Co-design is mentioned a few times by Rashbrooke but not discussed in depth or precisely distinguished from deliberative democracy. There

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12 *Government for the Public Good*, 30, 266.

13 Claudia Chwalisz cited in *Government for the Public Good*, 267.

14 *Government for the Public Good*, 151–152. See also, Carmen Sirianni, ‘Neighborhood Planning as Collaborative Democratic Design: The Case of Seattle,’ *Journal of the American Planning Association* 73, no. 4 (2007): 373–387.

15 *Government for the Public Good*, 92.



seem, however, to be many similarities between deliberative democracy and co-design (or co-production). My sense is that co-design processes tend to operate at the detailed level of practical service delivery—an example Rashbrooke gives is the user-centred co-design of a hospital pharmacy—while deliberative democracy operates at the more conceptual level of policy such as making recommendations for a municipal budget, as described above.<sup>16</sup>

The engagement in either case, so far as I can tell from the examples in the book, is always driven in top-down fashion by some organisation such as a local council, hospital, or health agency which makes the running and determines how the process will work. This top-down impetus, and the involvement of paid staff from the interested organisation, immediately raises questions about the power dynamics at play in such processes. One must ask: who sets the agenda? Who is involved and who is not involved in the deliberations? Who is comfortable in the institutional context of the project, and who is alienated from it? Who is able to speak in their first language and who is asked to speak in a language which they do not speak in the home? One might also consider the degree of influence of the staff involved; are they front-line staff with no institutional power or are senior managers involved in listening to the participants and implementing their solutions?

The amount of control the participants in such deliberations have—or are permitted, it might be more accurate to say—was made clear in case studies of co-design projects carried out by Michelle Farr in the UK. Participants in co-design projects ‘were successful in instituting changes at individual, local community, organisational service and organisational cultural levels’ but ‘had little power to be able to challenge or change policy, neoliberal economic structures or austerity drives’.<sup>17</sup> Going further in critiquing such projects, Ian McGimpsey argues that the ‘systemic conjunction of civil and state institutions to make greater use of voluntary

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16 *Government for the Public Good*, 279.

17 Michelle Farr, ‘Power Dynamics and Collaborative Mechanisms in Co-Production and Co-Design Processes,’ *Critical Social Policy* 38, no. 4 (2018): 623–644.

effort, community organisation and local social relations' in the co-design of service delivery and participatory budgeting is:

The appropriation of capital and labour in the civil sphere by a . . . market-state [which] is not only an extension of neoliberal privatizing tendencies but also a fix for a 'market-state' undermined by the instability of globalised financial markets, service cuts, reduced living standards and heightened inequality.<sup>18</sup>

Yet deliberative democracy has some very high-powered intellectual backing. One of its leading advocates has been the philosopher Jürgen Habermas. Rashbrooke acknowledges this when he writes that 'in good deliberation—high-quality democratic discussion in well-moderated forums—what holds sway is not someone's wealth but the strength of their case'; and he quotes Habermas to define the 'strength of the case' as 'the unforced force of the better argument'.<sup>19</sup> Deliberative democracy thus implicitly assumes a particular form of communicative rationality as the basis of a consensus about what is 'the better argument'. By doing so, it privileges those who have mastered the Western elitist form of communication and debate regarded as 'the rules of argumentation'. It certainly cannot be assumed that such abstract forms of argumentation are familiar to everyone; nor, as one encounter on a marae taught me, are they necessarily regarded as in any way acceptable as a culturally sound basis for 'high-quality discussion'.

Chantal Mouffe describes deliberative democracy's search for a 'final rational resolution' to political debate as 'misguided'. This is because a deliberative consensus-building process must, almost by definition, impose 'undue constraints' on the debate by attempting to insulate politics from the effects of the pluralism of values by privileging one particular worldview and excluding all others.<sup>20</sup> In other words, by Mouffe's analysis, the one

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18 Ian McGimpsey, 'Late Neoliberalism: Delineating a Policy Regime,' *Critical Social Policy* 37, no. 1 (2017): 64–84.

19 *Government for the Public Good*, 53.

20 Chantal Mouffe, 'Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism,' *Political Science Series* no. 72, Institute for Advanced Studies, Vienna (2000): 9.

thing that settler-colonial states can be sure about, that their societies contain a pluralism of values, is the one thing that deliberative democracy cannot cope with.

This brings me back to the particular context of Aotearoa New Zealand, a society which undoubtedly possesses a pluralism of values and where, in te ao Māori, there is an Indigenous worldview distinctly at odds with Western liberal individualism. Given these complicated circumstances, how might we best proceed? Fortunately, for us, we have had sitting on the table for some years now a document that proposes some ways forward: the Matike Mai report of 2016.<sup>21</sup> It is high time that tangata Tiriti engaged fully and at a national level with the innovative and insightful proposals provided by tangata whenua in the Matike Mai report. Rather than another helping of Western liberal thought, which is what deliberative democracy would provide, we need a much more radical constitutional transformation, and the Matike Mai report provides many highly constructive ideas to that end. A transformation of this nature would finally put the settler-colonial state behind us; and only then could we truly look to a government for the public good of all in a decolonised Aotearoa.

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21 *He Whakaaro Here Whakaumu mō Aotearoa: The Report of Matike Mai Aotearoa – The Independent Working Group on Constitutional Transformation* (2016), available at, <https://nwo.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/MatikeMaiAotearoa25Jan16.pdf>

Marco Revelli,  
*The New Populism: Democracy Stares into the Abyss*,  
 London: Verso, 2019, 220 pp

## Age of the Void

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CHAMSY EL-OJEILI

How are we to understand and explain Trump, Orban, Brexit, the League, the Alternative for Germany, and so on, the ‘earthquake’ that has shaken the political systems of Europe and the USA? In liberal commentary, ‘populism’ has been the predominant way of grasping and opposing the phenomenon. Marco Revelli’s *The New Populism* goes beyond this liberal commonsense in a careful, thorough portrait of this multifaceted object, drawing together a wide range of data and argumentation to provide, as William Davies notes in a back-cover endorsement, ‘The first definitive analysis of post-2008 populism’.

Certainly, this is the most expansive, sober treatment of the object to date, I think. It is full of detail on populism’s constituencies, as well as some daring and compelling interpretative suggestions. Nevertheless, an immediate objection concerns the guiding concept itself. As Marco d’Eramo has noted, the term, used with increasing frequency since the collapse of ‘really existing socialism’, is highly politicised. It is used as a contrast to a reasonable, consensual liberal centre, a brake on the imagination of alternatives. Resonant with class hatred, populism connotes fears of a ‘mob’ or ‘rabble’, viewed as virulent, aggressive, and irrational.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Marco d’Eramo, ‘Populism and the New Oligarchy,’ *New Left Review* no. 82 (2013): 5–28.

Revelli is well aware of these issues, the emptying of the term, its use to condemn everything challenging consensual neoliberalism, and of the way ‘populism’ is used—like ‘totalitarianism’—to equate far right and far left.

Still, he goes with it. ‘Populism’ is never clearly defined. Revelli briefly looks at the history of the term and the difficulties of definition, and arrives, ambiguously, at a more recent, three-featured ideal type: (1) the people as an organic entity, set against an extraneous, hostile element—an above-and-below logic; (2) the notion of betrayal, with political conflict interpreted primarily in moral terms; and (3) an imaginary of upheaval, an upheaval necessary for the restoration of popular sovereignty. Throughout these early pages, a cautious and variegated approach is suggested: a distinction between ‘populism as context’ or ‘generic mood’ and ‘populism as project’; a note on populism’s ‘various souls’; the inherent interlinking of populism and democracy; and a distinction, despite congruencies, between our populism—populism 2.0—and its 19<sup>th</sup>-century antecedents.<sup>2</sup> In the end, Revelli settles on populism as an ‘impalpable entity’: ‘It is a formless form that social malaise and impulses to protect take on in societies that have been pulverised and reworked by globalization and total finance . . . in the era in which there is a lack of voice or organization’.<sup>3</sup> While a culturalist emphasis on atmosphere or ‘structures of feelings’ seems vital, the concept remains troubling, especially in the way it sections off a much wider far-right atmosphere that belongs together with the formal political forces of the right that Revelli focuses on.

When it comes to the latter, Revelli’s analysis is brilliant and convincing. It is also wide-ranging, with chapters devoted to Trump, to Brexit, to France, to Germany, to the ‘Third Europe’ (Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Austria), and to Italy (a ‘collective laboratory’ of populism).<sup>4</sup> Across these cases, Revelli insists on the power of maps in thinking through to whom populism is appealing and why. Exploring the

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2 Marco Revelli, *The New Populism: Democracy Stares into the Abyss* (London: Verso, 2019), 26.

3 *The New Populism*, 11.

4 *The New Populism*, 32.

‘Trumpocalypse’, Revelli underscores the pivotal interpretative pairing of centre and periphery, Clinton taking the centres of metropolitan America by a wide margin, Trump triumphing in rural areas and in small and provincial cities. This was not, as is often suggested, a revolt of the poor; Clinton led easily with those earning under \$30,000 per annum, and Trump had a clear advantage among those earning over \$50,000, this advantage especially pronounced among those earning between \$100,000 and \$200,000. What the vote represented was more like ‘the revenge of those who had been divested of something’: ‘their male privilege, part of their (however high) income, their societal status, recognition of their work, respect for their faith or their country, their place in the world, their power, their hegemony’.<sup>5</sup> Those posited as doing the divesting are various:

Finance, the banks, the ‘swamp’ of Washington, gays and lesbians and transgender people, Hollywood celebrities with no morals, the Hispanics who eat in their gardens, the Blacks who drop empty bottles in the streets, Muslims who have more faith than they do, the Arab oil magnates who buy up their cities and finance the throat-cutters.<sup>6</sup>

Place and class are intertwined here with race and gender, Trump winning 67 percent of the non-college-educated white vote against Clinton’s 28 percent, and only 37 percent of women against Clinton’s 54 percent.

Certain convergences and discrepancies are to be found across the other populist case studies. Brexitland converges with a map of UK Independence Party support—weak in wealthy London, strong in sparsely populated peripheries as well as in medium and large cities with the ‘deepest industrial roots’, those that have been hardest hit by neoliberal transformations and austerity; weak among the young and more educated, strongest in areas where wages were lowest and public services less available, and among skilled and semi-skilled manual workers.<sup>7</sup> In France, Paris and

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<sup>5</sup> *The New Populism*, 72–73.

<sup>6</sup> *The New Populism*, 73.

<sup>7</sup> *The New Populism*, 87.

other large cities showed little openness to Marine Le Pen, although the vote share of the National Front (renamed National Rally in June 2018) has advanced significantly across the electorate and has increased its appeal with blue-collar workers, the less-educated, and those on lower wages. The map of Alternative for Germany support, meanwhile, once more signals the angst of the peripheries, with greater support generated in the east, in lower-density areas, among older citizens, the less educated, those on lower incomes, and men, alongside some exceptions in westward areas with high levels of manufacturing. The harder-right and more successful populists of the ‘Third Europe’ are treated more briefly by Revelli, but their support conforms to the predominant patterns already noted.

Revelli turns at some length to Italy, his homeland. With Berlusconi’s 1994 electoral victory, Italy was an early laboratory of populism, until recently governed by the peculiar ‘bipolar’ populist coalition between the anti-establishment Five Star Movement and the far-right League. The Italian case draws our attention to a crucial feature of the post-Global Financial Crisis populist earthquake: the devastation of the mainstream parties of both the centre-right and centre-left. Beginning earlier in Italy with the political scandals that engulfed the mainstream parties in the early 1990s, the general crisis of the centrist parties is pivotal in the rhetoric of the populists who set themselves against this supposedly distant cartel of political elites. Connected to commentary on the rise of ‘anti-politics’ in the West in the 1990s, and to contemporary discussions of post-politics and post-democracy (falling voter turnout, declining party membership, and growing distrust of politicians, bureaucrats, and parties), this is precisely the moment specified by Gramsci as hegemonic crisis: where ‘social groups become detached from their traditional parties’; in which:

The traditional parties . . . are no longer recognized by their class (or fraction of a class) as its expression. When such crises occur, the immediate

situation becomes delicate and dangerous, because the field is open for violent solutions, for the activities of unknown forces, represented by charismatic ‘men of destiny’.<sup>8</sup>

The erosion of the old ‘political containers’ (political homelessness the result) is a significant factor in Revelli’s explanatory repertoire.<sup>9</sup> On one score, then, populism is a ‘senile disorder of democracy’, provoked by a ‘deficit of representation’.<sup>10</sup> This, though, is intimately tied to the effects of neoliberal globalisation: the *déclassement* of the middle class (the ‘ballast’ of the formerly stable and moderate Western political sphere); the pulverisation of secure work; class disaggregation; class war from above and the massive polarisation it has engendered (a €120 billion a year shift of wealth from wages to profits in the West between the early 1990s and the mid-2000s); and the entrenchment of oligarchy.<sup>11</sup> All of this has left a disoriented mass of people ‘consigned to resentment and rancour’. These people experience a ‘diffuse feeling of rage, unease and suspicion’ and are without an available language to map these feelings to social conditions; they are prepared to ‘entrust themselves to a winner’, that is, to those who ‘stand *up above*’.<sup>12</sup>

Despite his quite mordant tone throughout, for Revelli, populism, the ‘awkward guest’ at the liberal-democratic party, might at least get us talking again about redistribution, social services, and wages, of a reformism that ‘now seems so “revolutionary”’.<sup>13</sup>

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8 Antonio Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916–1935* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 217–218.

9 *The New Populism*, 10.

10 *The New Populism*, 3, 4.

11 *The New Populism*, 200.

12 *The New Populism*, 202, 203.

13 *The New Populism*, 30, 204.



Victoria Margree,  
*Neglected or Misunderstood:  
 The Radical Feminism of Shulamith Firestone*,  
 Winchester: Zero Books, 2018, 168 pp

## Imagining the Feminist Revolution

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CAROL HARRINGTON

Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution*, first published in 1970, is often remembered for promoting a dystopian vision of babies developing in artificial wombs.<sup>1</sup> Feminists critiqued Firestone for taking a reductionist approach to women's oppression because she saw it arising from biological reproduction. Victoria Margree's re-visiting of Firestone's work makes a persuasive case that she has often been misunderstood and has continuing relevance for feminism. *Neglected or Misunderstood* grew from Margree's 10 years of teaching Firestone, which may explain its engaging pedagogical voice. In the 12 bite-sized chapters of this short book, Margree systematically takes readers through different elements of Firestone's argument, making an intriguing case for her historical-materialist account of women's oppression as based in human reproduction.

Margree introduces *The Dialectic of Sex* as a feminist manifesto, which Firestone, aged 25, wrote over a few months in 1969. As she notes, 'like all manifestos it is characterized by "compression" and "hyperbole"', a helpful observation for the reader confronting Firestone's lurid characterisation

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1 Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971).

of pregnancy and childbirth and her visions of technologically facilitated reproduction as a desirable norm.<sup>2</sup> Chapters one and two argue for a return to Firestone and provide some historical context—for example, reminding us that when Firestone wrote, only married women could easily access contraception in the US, while abortion was illegal in most states. Chapters three to eight systematically consider the core arguments of *The Dialectic of Sex*, offering a ‘qualified defence of Firestone’s thesis’.<sup>3</sup> Chapters nine and ten offer a Firestonian account of contemporary reproductive politics—issues raised by IVF, egg-freezing, surrogacy, and the increasing criminalisation of women judged to have endangered their ‘unborn child’.

Chapter three opens with Firestone’s claim that ‘Anyone observing animals mating, reproducing, and caring for their young will have a hard time accepting the “cultural relativity” line’.<sup>4</sup> For Firestone, women’s oppression is transcultural and transhistorical, arising from women’s role in human reproduction, something that makes them dependent on men. Margree suggests that feminist aversion to such an argument stems from repeated confrontation with defences of male dominance couched in biological arguments. She argues that treating women’s oppression as ‘natural’ does not mean that it is right or good—disease and death are also natural after all. Firestone thinks that nature *explains* women’s oppression but does not *justify* it. Margree unpacks how Firestone engages with the work of Simone de Beauvoir to argue that human society does not passively submit to nature, but rather takes control of it. Logically, if human reproduction causes women’s oppression then we need to take control of the means of human reproduction.

Chapter four elaborates on Firestone’s concept of sex–class as the first-class division. This chapter also explains why Firestone called her book ‘the dialectic of sex’. She aspired to incorporate Marx’s analysis of capitalism into a feminist analysis of women’s oppression, thus correcting Marx’s

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2 Victoria Margree, *Neglected or Misunderstood: The Radical Feminism of Shulamith Firestone* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2018), 19.

3 *Neglected or Misunderstood*, 6.

4 *Neglected or Misunderstood*, 20.

shortcomings in this area. Firestone thought eliminating private property was a necessary but not sufficient condition for women's liberation. She argued that, historically, most women have been at the 'mercy of their biology' and expected to spend much of their lives pregnant or nursing infants while suffering all the ills associated with their reproductive system such as menstruation and menopause.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, women depended on men for their physical survival and men have used this advantage to consolidate their power. Male enjoyment of power over women led them to seek domination over other groups of men. Thus, Firestone suggested that the initial sex-class division of humanity is at the root of all other class, caste, and racial forms of domination. However, in late-20<sup>th</sup>-century technological conditions, women's oppression is no more inevitable than the flooding of a village due to poor flood defences: human beings now have the technological capacity to solve the problem but have so far failed to do so.

Margree ends chapter four by posing several questions to the reader in anticipation of possible objections to Firestone's argument. Do we accept that fertility necessarily meant women's dependence on men for food and shelter in the distant past? On what grounds could this assumption be contested? Even if we accept that most women did depend on men, why should we assume men responded by enjoying and seeking to extend their power? Might not they have responded with tenderness and compassion? Margree suggests that Firestone could be interpreted as making claims about the kind of culture that could develop in such conditions rather than predicting the psychological response of every man. She contends that Firestone offers a plausible theory which feminists should take seriously rather than dismiss out of hand.

Firestone famously described childbirth as 'like shitting a pumpkin', a phrase Margree uses for the title of chapter five, which provides a fascinating discussion of Beauvoir's influence on Firestone, namely her apparent disgust with human reproductive biology. She sets Firestone and Beauvoir in debate with maternalist forms of feminism that celebrate pregnancy, birth, and maternal qualities in the face of patriarchal denigration of women as

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5 *Neglected or Misunderstood*, 25.

biologically inferior. Margree concludes that while feminists may have legitimate criticisms of Firestone's characterisation of human biological reproduction as barbaric, Firestone's core argument does not depend on this characterisation; further, maternalist feminism tends to over-romanticise women's experience of human reproduction equally as much as Firestone catastrophises it.

The next chapter, 'Against the Nuclear Family', delves into Firestone's engagement with Freud. She called Freudianism 'misguided feminism' because she thought that Freud shared feminists' insights into the terrible psychological damage caused by a father-dominated family structure. Where Freudianism went wrong, she believed, was in seeking to therapeutically reconcile individuals to this patriarchal structure. Margree argues that Firestone misreads Freud and pays little attention to his concept of layered human consciousness. However, she argues that Firestone's critique of the nuclear family and the damage its power dynamics cause for men, women, and children does not need to rest on Freudian theory.

Margree takes Firestone to task for attempting to explain racism in terms of the psychological structure of the nuclear family. Margree considers this the weakest part of *The Dialectic of Sex*, arguing that Firestone's theory of sexism as the bedrock of all other forms of oppression is one of the more profound problems of her theorising. Margree also notes that, for the most part, Firestone discusses women as though all women share similar experiences, and only briefly discusses black women in her chapter on race.

In chapter seven, 'The 1984 Trope', Margree considers how Firestone confronts cultural imaginings of future technologies as dystopian and dehumanising. Margree argues that Firestone sees the fear of technology as rooted in a fear of dehumanisation in a world where 'technocratic values of efficiency, quantification and control' dominate.<sup>6</sup> Margree argues that previous theorists like Donna Haraway have misunderstood Firestone as a technological determinist and optimist. In fact, for Firestone, feminist agency is key to the potential of reproductive technologies. Firestone argues that technology has been misused because science is male dominated, and

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6 *Neglected or Misunderstood*, 69.

sexism has produced a schism between science and the humanities. In a male-dominated culture where human feeling is suppressed, science reflects the worst of the male vices, generating horrors like the atomic bomb. Scientists have failed to develop efficient fertility control and artificial means of reproduction because science is a male-dominated field. Thus, Firestone argues that to free themselves from biological reproduction women must become scientists.

Chapter eight elaborates upon Firestone's vision of a post-revolutionary society. Firestone predicted that technological developments would increase unemployment and produce new service-sector jobs, opening low-paid opportunities for women and somewhat eroding male power in the household. Such developments would hasten a feminist-socialist revolution. Immediate revolutionary tasks would involve the equal distribution of drudgery: everyone would have to do some basic necessary work regardless of age or prestige. In the longer term, technology would eliminate drudgery altogether. People would then be allocated resources according to need and would pursue work that intrinsically interested them. Reproduction would no longer be the culturally valued life goal—non-reproductive lifestyles and living arrangements would arise. Some groups of adults may choose to share a household and raise children born through artificial reproduction who would not be biologically related to them. However, child-rearing would not be based on a sense of ownership of the child. Childhood would not be artificially prolonged, and children would be free to leave households where they were unhappy. The abolition of the nuclear family would transform sexuality so that humans would return to Freud's description of infant polymorphous perversity. Sexual distinctions would no longer have significance, and everyone would be androgynous and pansexual.

Margree criticizes Firestone's lapse into the assumption that natural, undistorted human sexuality would be good, containing no impulses for possession, control, or delight in inflicting suffering. She also questions how androgynous norms would treat people who identify more with one gender than another or who wish to reproduce the old-fashioned way. She notes

that androgyny is not the same as non-binary gender systems, in which differences in gender expression proliferate, but rather suggests a sameness from which some will surely diverge. Nevertheless, Margree argues that attempting to imagine alternatives to current family structures is valuable and suggests that Firestone offered a “literary image” of future possibilities’ rather than a literal blueprint for the post-revolutionary future.<sup>7</sup>

The final two chapters discuss present-day reproductive politics through a Firestonian lens. Chapter nine considers IVF, egg-freezing, and surrogacy. Margree problematises the cultural imperative to have children that fuels commercial egg-freezing services. She questions the social organisation of production and precarious employment that mean women cannot chose to bear children when it is biologically optimal. Her discussion of surrogacy criticizes commercial reproductive businesses that prey on peoples’ desperation to reproduce, leaving many deeply indebted. She also notes how surrogacy businesses recruit surrogates from poor countries and sometimes confine them to supervised premises where they must follow tightly restricted health and diet regimes. Margree argues that commercial surrogacy commodifies both surrogate and child. Chapter 10, ‘Pregnancy on Trial’, discusses feticide laws, originally designed to criminalise attacks on pregnant women which result in the death of a foetus. More recently, in the US, such laws have been used to charge pregnant women with reckless conduct causing the death of their foetus. Women of colour are disproportionately targeted by such laws.

Margree makes an effective case for the relevance of Firestone’s work. She concisely identifies and addresses common criticisms of Firestone: biological and technological determinism, a naïve faith in the positive impact of technological advances, and a construction of the pregnant female body as wretched and repulsive. She acknowledges flaws, particularly in relation to racism, thoughtless homophobia, problematic assumptions about sexuality, and the assumption that ‘a woman is a person with a womb’.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, she demonstrates that Firestone’s confronting vision and radical impulses

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7 *Neglected or Misunderstood*, 109.

8 *Neglected or Misunderstood*, 5.

provide an important resource for a ‘genuinely oppositional feminism’ in the face of contemporary neoliberal appropriations of feminist discourse that are used to sell cosmetics or justify military interventions.<sup>9</sup>

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9 *Neglected or Misunderstood*, 7.

Jared Davidson,  
*Dead Letters: Censorship and Subversion in New Zealand 1914-1920*,  
Otago: Otago University Press, 2019, 296 pp

## Censorship and Surveillance in the First World War

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ROSS WEBB

In his poem, '1 September 1939', W.H. Auden describes a dark and confused world on the brink of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's second 'total war'. Yet, in the despair, Auden notes that 'dotted everywhere / Ironical points of light / Flash out wherever the Just / Exchange their messages'. In his excellent new book, *Dead Letters*, archivist and historian Jared Davidson unearths points of light in the darkness that was the First World War. Throughout the book, Davidson introduces us to a range of extraordinary characters whose stories and struggles challenge the nationalist narratives of the war. These historical characters, as introduced in the blurb of the book, include 'a feisty German-born socialist, a Norwegian watersider, an affectionate Irish nationalist, a love-struck miner, an aspiring Maxim Gorky, a cross-dressing doctor, a nameless rural labourer, an avid letter writer with a hatred of war, and two mystical dairy farmers with a poetic bent'. What connects this cast of characters is that their activities, their letters, and in some cases their activism against the war, was of interest to the New Zealand state. The letters they wrote, to loved ones, friends, and comrades, were never delivered, but were intercepted by the state. They are now held at Archives New Zealand, in the Special Registry File, where Davidson discovered them 100 years later. In telling



their stories, Davidson not only provides a compelling historical narrative, he also contributes to our understanding of the First World War home front, to the early history of surveillance, to the history of political and industrial activism and dissent (often in the most surprising places!), and more broadly to New Zealand social history and the history of the modern state.

The book is divided into three parts. Part one provides the context within which surveillance and censorship took place, and what Davidson calls 'the scheme of surveillance' itself. Postal censorship predated the First World War, Davidson notes, with the New Zealand colonial state opening letters during its first war with Māori. Letters were opened during the Northern War of 1846–1847, and the 1863 invasion of the Waikato was justified by Governor George Grey on details found in intercepted mail. Letters to and from Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Turuki were 'intercepted and carefully analysed for meaning'.<sup>1</sup> Surveillance continued over the decades, but it was only after the 1890s, during the creation of the modern New Zealand state, that censorship impacted the lives of Pākehā. By the First World War, postal censorship was, Davidson writes, 'the largest state intrusion into Pakeha private life in New Zealand history'.<sup>2</sup> Davidson also reminds the reader of the importance of letter writing during this time. In 1914, 110 million letters and 5 million postcards were sent, around 160 items per person in New Zealand. In 1917, 6 million letters were posted each week. The Government censor opened nearly 1.2 million letters during the war.

The first chapter also gives an overview of the social and political backdrop, and Davidson provides an impressive panorama of social history and dissent on the New Zealand home front. It is not the consensus image often presented of the war. *Dead Letters* reminds us, as Charlotte McDonald writes in the forward, that the First World War was 'fought in conditions of political turbulence'. We are introduced to lesser-known events alongside those that are well remembered. The narrative moves from West Coast miners who downed tools in 1917 to demand an end to military

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1 Jared Davidson, *Dead Letters: Censorship and Subversion in New Zealand 1914–1920* (Otago: Otago University Press, 2019), 29.

2 *Dead Letters*, 24.

conscription and a rise in wages, the strikes held by woollen mill workers in Petone, resistance to conscription by the Kingitanga, and the arrest of Rua Kenana. In this context, ‘police braced themselves for class war’.<sup>3</sup> In introducing this context, Davidson writes in a beautiful narrative style, capturing the diversity of the personalities of the time and the political turmoil that defined the period. He reminds us, for example, that when Captain Charles Gibbon arrived in Wellington to begin his role as Chief of General Staff (and as Chief Censor) it was only one year after the 1913 strike, of clashes between workers and police on the streets. ‘Had he arrived six months earlier’, Davidson writes, ‘he would have been welcomed with jeers or even a piece of Ghuznee Street ripped up and hurled at him in anger—if his ship had been able to berth at all’.<sup>4</sup>

In parts two and three, Davidson gets into the real guts of the book. Each chapter introduces us to a letter, or a series of letters, and one of the main characters. Each opens with a reproduction of the letter or letters, leaving the reader wanting to know more. These are sources that contain rich details of ordinary life, of resistance, and of lives torn apart by the war-time state. On their own, they are wonderful things to read; we get a sense of the vernacular, the humour, and the anger of ordinary people.

Here is my favourite. Frank Burns, evading conscription on the West Coast, writes to his ex-sweetheart living in Australia, including a clipping of Fern from the coast, still in the archive 100 years later:

No doubt you will get a surprise when you receive this letter from me, however I know you will forgive me, as position and circumstances which I am under, as you already know, have forbidden me writing previous to this, nevertheless Doll, here I am again having managed to get through a great amount of trouble, which has learnt me a lesson I never will forget. . . .

Well Doll, rumours are circulating here to the effect that you have undertook to yourself a husband, cannot believe it myself, but if such is

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3 *Dead Letters*, 45

4 *Dead Letters*, 21.

the case remember there is a lad here, waiting to serve you in anyway you like to mention also that all the good luck and happiness that is possible to get, be bestowed on you and the hubby.

Well kid, I had an idea you were going to wait for me, Christ knows where I got the notion from, and I haven't lost it yet. I will wait until your hubby is pushing the daises up, and then arrive and claim you. I will love you all the more when the silver threads are shinning in your dear old barnet-fair.

Anyhow Doll I suppose you would have nothing to do with me now, if you wasn't married, I can't see you having any time for a military evader or shirker old kid. My God it gave me a bump when I heard you were married, but I've got no objections, so go for your life and get all the enjoyment possible to get.<sup>5</sup>

While the letters are interesting in themselves, Davidson is able to bring them to life with his narrative, providing the wider context and the stories behind each letter. The letter quoted above, for example, was never received, and its interception led to Burn's arrest soon after.

A diverse cast of characters are covered. In chapter two we meet Marie Weitzel, 'the only German among the worms, the only one with heart', as she writes.<sup>6</sup> Davidson describes Weitzel's Buller Street home in Te Aro, Wellington as a place where 'she and her comrades talked, sang, and planned the revolution'.<sup>7</sup> In chapter three, we are introduced to Even Christensen, a Scandinavian waterside worker who describes in a letter that 'the foreman told us that all foreigners working on the wharves and on-board ships must register at the police station'.<sup>8</sup> Christensen's story provides insight into the larger issues of waterside work, foreign labour, the clampdowns on strikes during the war, and mobility and citizenship when 'the aspiration

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5 Frank Burns in *Dead Letters*, 117–119.

6 *Dead Letters*, 56.

7 *Dead Letters*, 69.

8 *Dead Letters*, 75.

to control finally coincided with the actual ability to control'.<sup>9</sup> Once such controls were established, like the surveillance state in general, 'they were not dismantled'.<sup>10</sup> Chapter seven tells the intriguing story of Hjelmer Von Danneville, who horrified the officials by challenging gender norms: 'Here was evidence of a masculine, cross-dressing women meddling with a man's wife and shamelessly subverting gender norms. Not only that, she was a suspected enemy alien'.<sup>11</sup>

The greatest strength of the book, and one fairly consistent across the chapters, is the human stories that Davidson reveals. Davidson connects the political protest and dissent of the time to personal lives and, in turn, reveals the ways in which the war and state impositions ruined lives. Christensen was subject to laws impacting foreigners and placed on a 1917 *Register of Aliens*. 'Behind the stats', Davidson writes, 'lay heartache, the potential loss of civil and legal rights, and—for Evans and his family—the loss of an income when finding work as a "foreigner" was harder than ever'.<sup>12</sup> Burns describes how the war changed his life:

Well old dear my Christmas festivities were the most troublesome and disappointing ever I experienced so far, not like the previous one kid, when we got together roaming those hills. The one when you was here was all fun and frolic, and this one all sorrow and sadness, so you can imagine what it was like, just the two extremes. What do you think of those policemen, it tells you what they will do, when they watch over a father on his deathbed and also his funeral to try and capture his son for evading and refusing to go and fight their cursed wars.<sup>13</sup>

Hjelmer Von Danneville not only had her mail censored. She was interned on Matiu/Sommes Island.

After the last five years of centenary celebrations, we might ask why we

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9 *Dead Letters*, 91.

10 *Dead Letters*, 91.

11 *Dead Letters*, 166.

12 *Dead Letters*, 85.

13 *Dead Letters*, 118.

need another book about the First World War. But this is exactly the kind of work we need, a work that examines not only New Zealand's role in what Davidson calls 'one of history's most senseless spasms of carnage', but that also provides an insight into the suppression of freedoms on the home front.<sup>14</sup> The book introduces us to a diverse group of characters, rather than the traditional narratives of dissent and anti-war protest. In doing so, Davidson also avoids repetition across the chapters. Each one delves into a different aspect of New Zealand social history during the war, and a different aspect of dissent. All that connects these characters, in large part, is that they were seen as a threat by the state and had their letters intercepted and placed in the Special Registry File. What is also clear is the depth of research that lies behind this narrative. The writing is not weighed down with quotations and citations, but it is clear that Davidson is drawing on a wide range of sources. For closer readers, the footnotes give a sense of this.

Davidson notes the irony of the story being rooted in the state's archive of censorship: 'To tell such a history is possible only because of censorship and detention of letters through the system of surveillance. We are, at once, critical of and indebted to the state machinery of censorship'.<sup>15</sup> Yet, as Davidson concludes, there is a 'satisfying form of poetic justice' in reproducing these letters and the stories behind them: they are now available to a wider audience. The letter writers are given the chance to tell their own story and be remembered. The question of whether one is remembered or not is, Davidson concludes, 'one of life's final inequities'.<sup>16</sup> And by giving these stories to the present, Davidson allows these voices and lives from the past to empower the future.

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14 *Dead Letters*, 23.

15 *Dead Letters*, 16.

16 *Dead Letters*, 243.

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