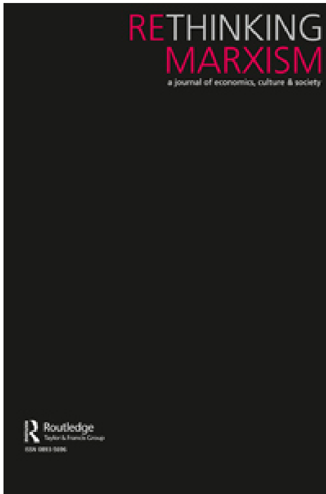
This article was downloaded by: [University of Western Sydney Ward]
On: 31 August 2015, At: 21:04
Publisher: Routledge
Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954
Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London, SW1P 1WG



Rethinking Marxism: A Journal of Economics, Culture & Society
Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rrmx20

Parody, the Party, Politics, and Postcapitalism: Some Thoughts on a Shared Future

Stephen Healy
Published online: 16 Jul 2015.

CrossMark
Click for updates

To cite this article: Stephen Healy (2015) Parody, the Party, Politics, and Postcapitalism: Some Thoughts on a Shared Future, Rethinking Marxism: A Journal of Economics, Culture & Society, 27:3, 385-395, DOI: 10.1080/08935696.2015.1042693

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08935696.2015.1042693

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the “Content”) contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions

Downloaded by [University of Western Sydney Ward] at 21:04 31 August 2015

Rethinking Marxism, 2015
Vol. 27, No. 3, 385–395, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08935696.2015.1042693

Parody, the Party, Politics, and Postcapitalism: Some Thoughts on a Shared Future

Stephen Healy

Downloaded by [University of Western Sydney Ward] at 21:04 31 August 2015

This essay responds to the generous commentaries on the talks Jodi Dean and I delivered during the 2013 Rethinking Marxism International Conference. It offers further reflections on communism as a political project, on its relation to postcapitalist practices, and on Dean's desire to "return to the party," making two distinct interventions. First, while I remain agonistic about the relevance of the party, I express concerns about Dean's sharp delineation between what is political and what is merely lifestyle choice, postcapitalism being encompassed in the latter. I draw parallels between Dean's use of parody and Judith Butler's intervention in the Sokal affair and "left conservatism." Second, I further explore what counts as political, drawing upon Jonathan Dean's characterization of widespread depoliticization narratives as "tales of the apolitical"—fantasies in the Lacanian sense. I argue that when the Left is in this fantasy's "grip," it misses a politics of communism in the present.

Key Words: Apolitical, Communism, Fantasy, Parody, Postcapitalism

I would like to begin by thanking all of the respondents to the conversation between myself and Jodi Dean in connection with the plenary session entitled "Crafting a Conversation on Communism," held on the final night of the 2013 Rethinking Marxism International Conference. I would also like to thank the conference organizers and the organizers of this symposium. And finally, I would like to thank Jodi Dean for her very provocative talk and her written paper. There is no way to do justice to all of the comments that we received, but in lieu of a comprehensive response, I would like to make two arguments that I cannot quite suture together. Both are interventions in the "debate" we seem to be having about communism, about the status of the party, and about what constitutes a communist politics.

The first argument I would like to make takes as its point of departure the congruencies in our definitions of communism combined with our very different understandings of what constitutes a communist politics—as opposed to what amount to, as Jodi Dean (2015) puts it, mere lifestyle choices. Thinking about the difference between politics and lifestyle brought back memories of Judith Butler's talk at the 1996 RM conference in which Butler engaged with the aftereffects of the Sokal affair and also the charge that queer politics is "merely cultural" and at best a distraction from what should be of concern to the Left. Like Sokal, Dean uses parody, singling out

© 2015 Association for Economic and Social Analysis

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

a constellation of activities around food, domesticity (social reproduction), and self-provisioning (what in the United States is called the alternative food movement) and describing them as individualistic, localist lifestyle choices. I will argue that, while parody is funny, as communists we have to take issues surrounding agriculture, self-provisioning, and domesticity more seriously than we did in the twentieth century.

In the second part of my response, I again take up the question of what constitutes a communist politics in responding to Jodi Dean's assertion that only the collectivity of a communist party can counter a current widespread depoliticization in which postcapitalism is a symptom. With help from Jonathan Dean (2014), I question the premise that we are living in an era of depoliticization as well as examine the theoretical and practical consequences of the depoliticization narrative central to Jodi Dean's argument.

Downloaded by [University of Western Sydney Ward] at 21:04 31 August 2015

1

Oona Morrow and Claire Brault point to congruencies between Jodi Dean's (2015, 338) definition of communism as the "expansion of voluntary cooperation" and my characterization of communism as concern with the "everyday habits and practices in which we answer the question of how to live in common" (Healy 2015, 353). Both of these definitions focus on practices and sociality—cooperation as opposed to selfishness, solidarity as opposed to competition—but as Morrow and Brault point out, this point of commonality connects to very different political sensibilities and in particular to a different sense of what counts as political and what does not. Yahya Madra and Ceren Özselçuk (2015, 360) note this congruity as well but see the misalignment stemming from Dean's misreading of postcapitalism, in which she "has aligned postcapitalist politics with depoliticized localism, individuation, and voluntarism and has opposed it to the communist horizon of party politics. Since Dean, when she looks at the world, sees an all-encompassing capitalism that fragments, isolates, and individualizes each and every one of us," any postcapitalist politics in the here and now "appear as 'depoliticized … lifestyle choices.'" For Dean, worker cooperatives, community-based resource management, housing cooperatives, and mutual aid practices (large and small) all seemingly fall into the non- or perhaps antipolitical realm of lifestyle choices. Likewise, self-provisioning, homesteading, and collective provisioning—all of which might be associated with the social reproduction that Morrow and Brault explore in their essay—are especially singled out for ridicule in Dean's talk as decidedly "lifestyle," not politics. For me this dismissal raises questions: What counts as political as opposed to merely a "lifestyle choice"? Where does politics take place? Reflecting on these questions led me to recall that this same topic was explored in the 1996 RM conference featuring Judith Butler.

A Historic Digression: The 1996 Rethinking Marxism International Conference

This question of what is political, and moreover of what should be of political concern to Marxists, has been asked before in the context of an RM conference. In 1996, Judith

Butler spoke on a panel alongside Wendy Brown and Wahneema Lubiano. In her talk, Butler directly addressed the aftereffects of the Sokal affair, in which Alan Sokal, a physicist and self-described "old leftist," had sought to embarrass the cultural studies crowd and ridicule deconstruction by publishing a fraudulent article in *Social Text*. In his mind, Sokal was on a mission to set the academic Left back on its proper path, to return it to the study of things that mattered, like income inequality, in the hope of renewing the unity and relevance of the Left. Sokal's hoax, in Butler's (1997, 265) view, reflected two growing currents in the academic Left: first was a concern about the reduction of Marxism to cultural studies and second was a dismissal of identity politics in general and queer politics in particular as "merely cultural, and then to construe this cultural politics as factionalizing, identitarian, and particularistic."

In my recollection, Butler referenced the Sokal affair directly in her 1996 talk. In her paper "Merely Cultural," she does not refer to Sokal by name but refers only to parody and to the function of parody in which the "one who performs the parody aspires, quite literally, to occupy the place of the one parodied" (Butler 1997, 266). In her view, the parody and the version of the Left that it served to advance (what she calls left conservatism) together were a regressive development that "discounts the contributions to Marxist theory since Althusser's displacement of the base-superstructure model" and of all who came after, mentioning Stuart Hall, Ernesto Laclau, and Chantal Mouffe by name. In her view, the paradoxical effect of Sokal's parody was to "redivide the Left in precisely the way that orthodoxy purports to lament" (265).

Rather than pursue a politics of resentment, Butler challenged the Left at that time to question whether anything, including queer politics and its concerns with homophobia, was "merely cultural." She asked whether "social movements are reducible to their identity formations," as even sympathetic scholars like Nancy Fraser seemed to argue that the politics around homophobia was concerned with (cultural) recognition as opposed to (economic) redistribution. Butler then returned to the writings of Marx and Engels to demonstrate how queer politics and sexual identity might be connected with the family and with what Engels called immediate life as a mode of production. She argued that the "regulation of sexuality was systematically tied to *the mode of production* proper to the functioning of political economy" and, contra Fraser, that this cannot be understood "without an expansion of the 'economic'sphere itself to include both the reproduction of goods as well as the social reproduction of persons" (Butler 1997, 272).

For Butler, nothing, not even queer politics, is merely cultural. Her words are worth quoting at length:

> Is it possible to distinguish, even analytically, between a lack of cultural recognition and material oppression, when the very definition of legal "personhood" is rigorously circumscribed by cultural norms that are indissociable from their material effects? Take, for instance, those instances in which lesbians and gays are rigorously excluded from state-sanctioned notions of the family (which is, according to both tax and property law, an economic unit); are stopped at the border; are deemed inadmissible to citizenship; are selectively denied the status of freedom of speech and freedom of assembly; are denied rights, as members of the military, to speak

Downloaded by [University of Western Sydney Ward] at 21:04 31 August 2015

> their desires; or are deauthorized by the law to make emergency medical decisions about dying lovers, or to receive the property of dead lovers, or to receive from the hospital the bodies of dead lovers—don't these examples mark the "holy family" once again constraining routes by which property interests are regulated and distributed? (Butler 1997, 273)

Butler adds that the political economy of HIV/AIDS in the gay community at the time had unique political economic implications for those going into debt to access antiretroviral drugs and for those who were denied the drugs.

I think though, looking back with two decades of hindsight, that there is another message to be found in Butler's argument: when we look at the list of exclusions—at once an insult to dignity and an economic hardship—so much of that has changed (in at least some places). Indeed, I look at this list and shiver in recognition that what seemed intractable—homophobia in U.S. society—was in fact, as William Connolly (2013) might put it, a fragile thing. From the time when ACT UP fought against a world that would sentence people living with AIDS to both silence and death, there has been a wholesale cultural and political shift in relation to the meaning of sexual identity in the United States and elsewhere. This might mean that there is something to be learned about the cultural and political practices that brought such a shift about. Perhaps, following Butler (2004), we could look at the process by which people who lived with HIV and died from AIDS went from having abject to mournable bodies—where loss could not only be acknowledged but also become a basis for collective action. In reflecting on the history of that struggle, and particularly the history of ACT UP, one sees a more-than-cultural politics grounded in the power of stories, of representations like the memorial quilt, of mobilizations of anger, and also of love.

In the same historical moment, J. K. Gibson-Graham (1996) drew inspiration from Butler's work on queer theory in order to imagine a new politics of desire in the realm of economy, breaking from a heteronormative/capitalocentric understanding of economy and seeing other possibilities. The central move was not only to identify "queer" noncapitalist economic spaces—alternative households, cooperatives, alternative exchange systems, and so forth—but also to imagine how these spaces could function as a locus for a postcapitalist politics. In my reading of Gibson-Graham, this is an attempt to extend difference into the domain of economics, and with it comes a possibility in which struggles for cooperatives, struggles against capitalism, struggles for the creation and care of commons, and struggles against enclosure can be articulated with the politics of new social movements, with the requisite understanding that these connections will have to be produced rather than presumed and that they will, like everything else, be fragile. I think one of the fragile connections that communists should consider cultivating is with the queer economic spaces associated with the alternative food movement.

From the Merely Cultural to the "Lifestyle" Politics of Postcapitalism

Returning to the present, I am struck by the similarities between the parody of the "merely cultural" and Dean's dismissal of postcapitalist activities as a mere "lifestyle

Downloaded by [University of Western Sydney Ward] at 21:04 31 August 2015

Downloaded by [University of Western Sydney Ward] at 21:04 31 August 2015

choice." Widening out from Morrow and Brault's examples of collective and self-provisioning, there is a burgeoning set of food production and distribution practices, associated with the alternative food movement (AFM), that seem to be singled out for criticism in Dean's representations in the same way that queer politics had been singled out two decades before. For Morrow and Brault, the telling moment in Dean's presentation was the slide that featured a group of her students wearing T-shirts emblazoned with the phrase "Goldman Sachs doesn't care about your chickens." As Butler conceded two decades ago, it may indeed be possible to find examples of new social-movement politics that are merely cultural or that are even worthy of parody. Likewise, it is easy to find very depoliticized, problematically privileged, and self-indulgent swaths of the AFM. That said, when one only looks to parody, one may miss an opportunity to politicize—in a communist way—food, collective self-provisioning, agriculture, and much else. Thus, while it is funny to lampoon bearded hipsters engaged in chicken husbandry and boutique switchel brewing, there are some pressing issues here for communists—issues that are not to be missed.

To provide a historical context that is perhaps uncomfortable for us on the Left, collective self-provisioning through market gardens and informal market distribution played an important role in feeding people during the Soviet era, in part because of how state collectivization was carried out (Shanin 1990). This continues to be true in many post-Soviet countries. Here the diverse economic practices of small-scale farming and market gardening are at once disavowed but also crucially important.[1] Goldman Sachs may indeed not care about chickens (though I do wonder about their position in ag commodity markets), but the questions around how to arrange agricultural production and the role of collective self-provisioning in society has been very significant in the historical experience of communist countries, something we forget at our peril.

At the present moment, there is perhaps even more reason to be concerned with collective self-provisioning, the organization of agriculture, and social reproduction. The FAO (2014) estimates that 500 million of the world's 570 million farms are "family farms" less than two hectares in size. Further, at a UN conference in 2014, the FAO adopted the position that these small farms could play a critical role in mitigating the harms done by large-scale agriculture, given that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change identifies the latter as a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions (FAO 2015; see also Lin et al. 2011). As Jodi Dean (2015) points out in her essay, the people she calls "peasants" have played a significant role in past revolutionary struggles. On an international scale, small-scale farming as part of a system of collective self-provisioning or of food polyculture, to use Agyeman's (2013) term, may allow human communities to partially mitigate the consequences of anthropogenic global warming and other forms of environmental degradation. Indeed, communists may make an important contribution here. As Ramey (2014) points out, many U.S. family farms are sites of exploitation in both the field and the household. The CEC and Katherine Gibson (2009) make a similar point in the context

1. One could make a similar point about how indigenous communities (and their diverse economies) persisted through both the Soviet and post-Soviet eras and spread over vast spaces, including areas where petropolitics is a dominant concern (Pavlovskaya 2013).

of activist research in the Philippines, where innovations in food security and livelihood have directly confronted feudal class processes and systems of indebtedness. This means that forging a viable and just food system globally would require a politics of class transformation—a politics of communism—to be successful.

To say one last thing, none of this is to deny the point that when one looks at the United States and elsewhere, many of the AFM's spaces are very privileged, focusing on multiplying food options for white middle-class consumers at the expense of everyone else. I get the impulse to parody, but the cost when that's all we do is to miss the incredible experimentation taking place in cities like Detroit, where many people from communities of color are engaged in extensive urban farming practices with complex goals and aspirations, including food security, practices of community and sharing, and the use of food space as a means for political organizing (Pietrykowski 2012). Again, as with queer politics, what's happening in Detroit and elsewhere may constitute spaces that communists can work with and learn from.

Downloaded by [University of Western Sydney Ward] at 21:04 31 August 2015

2

In my reading of Dean's talk, the rationale for a return to "the party" is to be found in her diagnosis of a profound depoliticization that has emerged over the past two generations in the United States and elsewhere. She connects this depoliticization to a historical moment, the late sixties, when people on the left began to reject the party as an organizational form. Dean sees this antipathy for "the party" as something born of a moment when "the struggle" was understood to be one of destroying the "mediating social institutions of society—family, union, party, university"—that support capitalism. She notes in passing that in both France and the United States, Communist parties themselves seemed to be status-quo institutions (and certainly this is true when one thinks about the French Communist party in relation to French colonialism). Jodi Dean's (2015, 333) analysis suggests that perhaps this struggle against mass institutions and mass culture was too successful:

> Now, in the second decade of the new millennium, the mediating institutions of civil society have changed significantly. More people live alone than in any time in U.S. history. Fewer U.S. children live in two-parent families. Because of decades of antisexist and antihomophobic struggle, even the mainstream accepts a wider array of living arrangements than were permitted thirty years ago. Union membership in the United States is at its lowest level in a century. Wages have correspondingly stagnated and declined, decreasing the likelihood that blue-collar, service-sector, and minimum-wage jobs can lead to a middle-class standard of living.

In this reading, the decline of mass institutions along with the rise of neoliberal governmentality has led to the declining efficacy of the Left. But in Dean's analysis, what is truly destructive is that the individualism of bourgeois society has been amplified by the circuits of communicative capitalism. Contemporary forms of social alienation, the rise of communicative capitalism's version of individuality, and a continued antipathy toward the party as a political form all add up in Dean's analysis

to a kind of depoliticization. In this regard Dean's analysis seems to conform to other analyses of the postpolitical: a kind of disengagement from politics that creates a vacuum occupied by administrators and other neoliberal reformers who envisage the political arena as a site of expert administration. Certainly, when Dean writes—with poignancy in some places—about the loneliness that comes with American individualism and the felt impossibility of collectivity, I think of my own experiences and what my working-class U.S. students have told me over the years. There is a reality to this shared sense of powerlessness, to the feelings engendered by loneliness, competitiveness, and scarcity. I'll come back to what I think we might do about this, but for Dean, at least in my reading, it is really this scattered, individualized, hypercompetitive, communicative capitalist complex that *requires* the return of the party. In her view, it is the party alone that can restore a disciplined sense of the collective, and with it the renewed theoretical and political relevance of the Left. But the depoliticized present is the first link in a chain of evidence that leads to the necessity of the Communist party. For this reason I think it's at least worth questioning whether or not we live in depoliticized, antipolitical or postpolitical times, as Dean and many others assert, and what it might mean to challenge that belief.

Jonathan Dean notes that there has been a long tradition of writing about decline in civic life, from Hannah Arendt to Putnam's writings. In the academic Left, depoliticization refers to the decline of mass movements and the disappearance of the possibility of radical transformation. It is the tendency of the latter to tell "tales of the apolitical," which is his primary concern. Dean (2014, 457) notes what these "tales of the apolitical" share in common is that they are not empirically substantiated, and frequently their self-evidence is asserted casually in the context of speech, becoming "folk tales, in that they are shared, inherited, reworked, passed around and given different inflections by different story tellers" constituting a "common sense of the community of scholars to whom they are addressed." In questioning whether or not we truly live in apolitical times, Dean becomes alert to the affective dimensions of the apolitical. Drawing on Gibson-Graham's theorization of the affect of capitalocentrism, he asserts that these tales have power because "they *presume* a certain modality of disappointment towards the present in *advance*, foreclosing the possibility of fostering more hopeful orientations to the present, or more nuanced empirical diagnoses. Crucially, then, capitalocentrism and narrations of apoliticality consist not just of a series of (contestable) empirical propositions, but form a shared world view, a shared way of seeing contemporary (a)politics, 'widely present if not fully manifest in any person or pronouncement' (Gibson-Graham)" (Dean 2014, 457–8). Dean notes that many narratives of apoliticality begin with 1968 and, without stating it, are structured around a decline of revolutionary anticapitalist politics while remaining silent about or marginalizing political movements around postcolonialism, feminism, sexual identity, and environmentalism (459). According to Dean, there have been efforts to verify widespread depoliticization empirically, with mixed results, but when viewed from the perspective of a narrative apoliticality, their factual status is of little consequence.

It is the irrelevance of empirical verification that suggests to him that these tales function as a fantasy in the Lacanian sense of the term—a narrative that gives logic and

Downloaded by [University of Western Sydney Ward] at 21:04 31 August 2015

coherence to the subject of fantasy. Here the social diagnosis of apoliticality—alienation, the circuits of cognitive capitalism, and its cunning powers of co-optation—provide a compensatory coherence for left subjects, explaining their lack of power. As with other fantasies, there is an irony at work here:

> Even though narrations of apoliticality are, in principle, underpinned by a desire for a return of politics, if one fantasmatically invests in narrations of apoliticality then the emergence of politicisation will very likely be experienced as troublesome, even traumatic, as they potentially disturb the deeply sedimented frames of reference that have come to constitute the symbolic universe of the academic left subject. This in turn suggests that we should not be surprised that narrations of apoliticality are so persistent and enduring, even in the face of new forms of politicisation and theoretical problematisation. (Dean 2014, 462)

The problem with this fantasy frame of depoliticization is not that it's "wrong"—of course it has some truth—but is rather the extent to which such a fantasy logic *grips the subject*, as Jonathan Dean puts it (following Glynos 2011). What's required here is not so much a repudiation of the fantasy framing but instead a "relaxing" of the grip that it has on the subject. This relaxing might manifest itself initially as a theoretical openness to the possibility that politicization—such as anticapitalism and postcapitalism—is already taking shape in the absence of the party as it has been understood in the context of our dialog. Relaxing this grip allows us to see a politics of communism in the present and in the immediate future, with and without a party, and in relation to anticapitalism, postcapitalism, and the struggle against other kinds of oppression.

By way of conclusion, and with apologies for an inelegant transition, I would like to now address the responses from Helepololei, Miller, and Buck, with help from a few other respondents, as I think they speak to this issue.

Helepololei and the Present Politics of Communism

Helepololei provides us with one example of a present communist politics in his account of the ongoing, sustained activities of the 15M protests in Spain, one of the many protest movements spawned by the 2008 global financial crisis. Helepololei describes how the sustained occupations in Spain—unlike those in New York, according to Helepololei—have persisted in apartment buildings, libraries, and former banks, where people engage in all sorts of collective activities.[2] Speaking directly to Jodi Dean, Helepololei states that these are not "lifestyle choices" or a "fetishization of the local." Instead, he attributes the persistence of the Indignados over the past half decade to the acknowledgment "that truly collective action

2. I think it's worth mentioning that, while Occupy was forcibly dispersed by the police, some of the anti- and postcapitalist activities begun there continue to this day. For instance, Occupy networks were mobilized to deal with the aftereffects of Superstorm Sandy, and Solidarity NYC continues ongoing efforts to develop an economy based on intercooperation.

Downloaded by [University of Western Sydney Ward] at 21:04 31 August 2015

requires a great deal of time, shared knowledge, and deliberation and that the conditions of daily life can't wait for grand intervention but must be theorized as they are lived by the people who live them" (Helepololei 2015, 370).

And of course, as Helepololei points out, it is this persistence that is in part responsible for the political success of Podemos. What this might mean to me is that attempts by the Indignados to make what I would call communism a sensible, practical reality for people do not necessarily require the intervention of a party. Rather, a savvy political party could in fact be helped along by efforts at enacting communism in the here and now. I think, following Glynos (2011), that this is what emerges when the fantasy of the apolitical loosens its grip. It is then that we begin to see Mount Tai, as Mao might have put it—that is to say, the obvious.

Downloaded by [University of Western Sydney Ward] at 21:04 31 August 2015

Miller: Postcapitalism or Anticapitalism beyond White Privilege? Yes, Please!

Ethan Miller, in his very capable analysis of the talks and papers connected with this symposium, rightly worries that the framing of this conversation implies a choice between an anticapitalist politics and a postcapitalist politics—each with their own seemingly distinct political and affective dimensions. Miller (2015, 364) envisions a politics that is both post- and anticapitalist at once, a politics built on "*cross-sector organizing* and *the critique of capital*." Miller notes, echoing Jodi Dean, that in both my talk and written paper I emphasize the role that academic research has played in producing a postcapitalist politics that can be seen as "'good ideas' disconnected from militant practice and organization [which] *do* risk becoming 'possibilities without possibility'" (365).

Like Miller I agree that a "thousand possibilities exist between the dangerously liberal image of proliferating points and the dangerously authoritarian image of the party," so, encouraged by Miller, I would gesture once more to the emergent solidarity economy movement taking shape in Latin America, Europe, Asia, Canada, and even the United States, as one point where people are working to build a cooperative economy while at the same time mobilizing for social justice and radical inclusion. I have been involved with a local solidarity economy group in Worcester, Massachusetts, the Worcester Solidarity and Green Economy Alliance (SAGE), which has now organized four community conferences, including two statewide forums focused on strategies to build more cooperative and sustainable economies but also to frame the development of the solidarity economy in relation to social justice for communities of color.

Loh and Shear (2015) and Shear (2014) have explored the struggle to make this happen—specifically, how one articulates the desire to cultivate noncapitalisms while resisting the dislocating effects of capitalism, mass incarceration, and police violence that are of concern particularly in communities of color in the United States (but also relevant to politics in other settler states like Australia or Canada; see also Nembhard 2008). I would agree with Buck (2015, 379–80) that promoting the solidarity economy or any effort at communism in the United States will involve confrontation with white privilege. As she puts it,

> unless the party, the networked community economies, or a linked solidarity economy are envisioned as dominated by people of color, unless the "minority world" is willing to *be* the minority, unless white communist theorists are willing and *happy* to let power slip away, unless party discipline and policy is largely propelled by people of color, unless we as white-privileged people are able to dismantle white privilege—or accept its dismantling—and are willing to join the majority world and the conditions it lives under, whatever those conditions may be at the time, then that better world will not happen.

Her call here seems akin to Butler's call from two decades ago to enlarge our sense of what the economy is or what it connects to, or that this process of letting power slip away would pertain equally to gendered or heteronormative privilege. Implicit in her remarks about the need to "join the majority world and the conditions it lives under" is a reckoning with both historic global inequities and present realities in the Anthropocene.

Perhaps this is what Chakrabarti and Dhar (2015) mean by "politicized social transformation"—new ways of connecting that must occur simultaneously with an effort to enact communism. But I think this is precisely what has been happening, in large and small ways, over the past decade and a half. Indeed, when I look back over recent history—with World Social Forum meetings and their regional counterparts, burgeoning solidarity economy movements and their millions of participants, resurgent climate activism, and Podemos and Syriza—I see anticapitalist movements and postcapitalist practices proliferating all over the place. J. K. Gibson-Graham, Jenny Cameron, and I document some of these postcapitalist practices, organizing them into practices of taking back the economy (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy 2013). These efforts in majority and minority countries constitute our empirical examples of a postcapitalist politics. The work that these examples can perform in the hands of scholars and activists is to loosen the grip of two familiar fantasy frames: the depoliticization narrative that tells us things are presently hopeless and a capitalocentric narrative that tells us change is impossible. Once we let go of those two things, we are left with the hard work that Buck and Miller are telling us to do.

Downloaded by [University of Western Sydney Ward] at 21:04 31 August 2015

References

Agyeman, J. 2013. *Introducing just sustainabilities: Policy, planning, and practice*. London: Zed.

Buck, P. 2015. Whiteness, communism, and possibility. *Rethinking Marxism* 27 (3): 378–80.

Butler, J. 1997. Merely cultural. *Social Text* 52/53 (Autumn–Winter): 265–77.

———. 2004. *Precarious life: The powers of mourning and violence*. New York: Verso.

CEC (Community Economies Collective) and K. Gibson. 2009. Building community-based social enterprises in the Philippines: Diverse development pathways. In *The social economy: International perspectives on economic solidarity*, ed. A. Amin, 116–38. London: Zed.

Chakrabarti, A., and A. Dhar. 2015. The question before the communist horizon. *Rethinking Marxism* 27 (3): 357–9.

Downloaded by [University of Western Sydney Ward] at 21:04 31 August 2015

Connolly, W. 2003. *The fragility of things: Self-organizing processes, neoliberal fantasies, and democratic activism*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.

Dean, J. 2013. *The communist horizon*. New York: Verso.

———. 2014. Tales of the apolitical. *Political Studies* 62 (2): 452–67.

———. 2015. The party and communist solidarity. *Rethinking Marxism* 27 (3): 332–42.

FAO (Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations). 2014. *The state of food and agriculture: Innovation in family farming*. Rome: FAO. http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4040e.pdf.

———. 2015. *Final report for the International Symposium on Agroecology for Food Security and Nutrition*. Rome: FAO. http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4327e.pdf.

Gibson-Graham, J. K. 1996. *The end of capitalism (as we knew it)*. London: Blackwell.

———. 2006. *A postcapitalist politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Gibson-Graham, J. K., J. Cameron, and S. Healy. 2013. *Take back the economy: An ethical guide for transforming our communities*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Glynos, J. 2011. Fantasy and identity in critical political theory. *Filozofski Vestnik* 32 (2): 65–88.

Healy, S. 2015. Communism as a mode of life. *Rethinking Marxism* 27 (3): 343–56.

Helepololei, J. 2015. A plurality of communisms. *Rethinking Marxism* 27 (3): 368–70.

Lin, B. B., M. J. Chappell, J. Vandermeer, G. Smith, E. Quintero, R. Bezner-Kerr, D. M. Griffith, et al. 2011. Effects of industrial agriculture on climate change and the mitigation potential of small-scale agro-ecological farms. *CAB Reviews* 6 (20): 1–17.

Loh, P., and B. Shear. 2015. Solidarity economy and community development: Emerging cases in three Massachusetts cities. *Community Development* 46 (3): 244–60.

Madra, Y. M., and C. Özselçuk. 2015. The party and postcapitalist politics: A missed encounter? *Rethinking Marxism* 27 (3): 360–3.

Miller, E. 2013. Community economy: Ontology, ethics, and politics for radically democratic economic organizing. *Rethinking Marxism* 25 (4): 518–33.

———. 2015. Anticapitalism or postcapitalism? Both! *Rethinking Marxism* 27 (3): 364–67.

Morrow, O., and C. Brault. 2015. More-than-capitalist landscapes of communist becoming. *Rethinking Marxism* 27 (3): 371–74.

Nembhard, J. 2008. Alternative economics: A missing component in the African American studies curriculum: Teaching public policy and democratic community economics to black undergraduate students. *Journal of Black Studies* 38 (5): 758–82.

Pavlovskaya, M. 2013. Between neoliberalism and difference: Multiple practices of property in post-Soviet Russia. *Europe-Asia Studies* 65 (7): 1295–323.

Pietrykowski, B. 2012. Beyond the wasteland: A report from Detroit. In *Consequences of an economic downturn*, ed. M. Starr. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ramey, E. 2014. *Class, gender, and the American family farm in the 20th century.* London: Routledge.

Shanin, T. 1990. *Defining peasants: Essays concerning rural societies, expolary economies, and learning from them in the contemporary world*. London: Blackwell.

Shear, B. 2014. Making the green economy: Politics, desire, and economic possibility. *Journal of Political Ecology,* no. 21: 193–209.