

SEXUALITY, SUBJECTIVITY AND ... ECONOMICS?

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Where lesbian and gay studies was pioneered in Anglo-American departments of history and sociology, its queer successor's poststructuralist turn was driven by critical theorists in literature, visual culture, media studies and rhetoric. This produced crucial new attention to the 'cultural' constitution of the sexual subject, but in other respects it constrained the theory's analytical reach and capacities. Such failings did not go wholly unremarked in the development of the field, and as early as 1993 Cindy Patton complained of the political limits of queer "reading" techniques' - 'the logics of homosexual construction / disappearance uncovered as formal operations of literary (or popular) texts'. But the misgivings she expressed in *Fear of a Queer Planet* were largely ignored by those relying on such methods (11 literary scholars among 15 contributors to a collection subtitled 'Queer Politics and Social Theory'). As the collection's other dissident, Steven Seidman, observed, 'Institutional and historical analysis and an integrative political vision seem to have dropped out'.¹ Less than a decade later Dennis Altman would count the cost of these omissions for any attempt to understand sexuality under globalisation. All too often, he complained, the consequence of queer culturalism was the neglect of 'conventional sources of political and economic power'² in favour of the particular symbolic phenomena that it had evolved to investigate.

In 1997, the economic relations of sexuality were addressed in a volume of essays analysing phenomena ranging from the gentrification of gay neighbourhoods to campaigns for domestic partner benefits. But, significantly, queer theory is hardly mentioned in *Homo Economics*, with the exception of Richard Cornwall's attempt to articulate interrelations between a property-owning individualism and both the proscription and the defence of homosexuality, via theories of consumer preferences and readings of Wilde and Genet. In the two writers' celebrations of a perverse individuality, Cornwall perceived a Bersanian 'betrayal' of the social relations of the market system. If his speculations suggested that a 'Queer Political Economy'³ might be possible, an exchange published that same year debated its desirability.

'Heterosexist Capitalism?' The question on the cover of the *New Left Review* may have lured older readers down memory lane, but it also signalled a new development on the sexual political agenda not widely anticipated in 1998 - what Nancy Fraser announced inside as 'reclaiming the best elements of socialist politics ... and integrating them with the best elements of the politics of the "new social movements"'.⁴ Fraser's announcement came at the end of a debate which had also appeared during the previous year in the US journal *Social Text* in response to her reflections on the 'post-socialist

1. See Cindy Patton, 'Tremble, Hetero Swine!' and Steven Seidman, 'Identity and Politics in a "Postmodern" Gay Culture' in Michael Warner (ed), *Fear of a Queer Planet*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1993, p166 and p136 respectively.

2. Dennis Altman, *Global Sex*, Chicago, University of Chicago, 2001, p158.

3. Richard R. Cornwall, 'Queer Political Economy', in Amy Gluckman and Betsy Reed (eds), *Homo Economics: Capitalism, Community and Lesbian and Gay Life*, New York, Routledge, 1997, pp89-122.

4. Nancy Fraser, 'Heterosexism, Misrecognition and Capitalism: A Response to Judith Butler', *New Left Review* 228 (March-April 1998), 149.

condition', *Justice Interruptus*. In that study she addresses the much-heralded turn in left politics from an emphasis on the redistribution of resources to a stress on identity focussing on cultural recognition. Arguing for a strategy aimed at 'transforming the deep structures of both political economy and culture', she distinguishes claims for cultural or symbolic justice, which she terms 'recognition', and claims for socio-economic justice, or 'redistribution'. To illustrate this difference, she provocatively positions various social groups along a continuum, separating those who seek economic justice, at one end, from those who seek cultural recognition, at the other. In the middle she places groups who might claim both - notably those who experience ethnic or gender subordination. At the extreme end of economic oppression she locates the working class, and at the far end of stigma, those whose sexualities are 'despised'. This opposition of lesbians and gay men to victims of economic exploitation is qualified by Fraser's own admission that most oppressed groups suffer both maldistribution and misrecognition, indeed that 'economic justice and cultural justice are usually interimbricated'.⁵ But her schematic assignment of heterosexism to cultural politics and class exploitation to political economy drew a critical response.

Judith Butler opens her argument with Fraser by challenging two positions - the complaint that the new social movements (feminism, anti-racism, environmental struggles and - most nefarious of all - queer politics) ignore 'the interrelatedness of social and economic conditions' and the accusation that 'the cultural focus of left politics has abandoned the material project of Marxism'.⁶ As she and Fraser agree, the belief that social theory has taken such a 'cultural turn' was by then widespread. Witness Richard Rorty's 1998 declaration that 'the cultural left thinks more about stigma than money, more about deep and hidden psychosexual motivations than about shallow and evident greed'.⁷ Or the elegiac 1999 collection of sociological essays entitled *Culture and Economy after the Cultural Turn*, with its jacket copy proclaiming 'the decline of interest in economic aspects of society'. Inside, Harriett Bradley and Steve Fenton chart the transformation of gender studies from a concern with 'material factors' to those of - in Michele Barrett's phrase - 'sexuality, subjectivity and textuality'.⁸

In their attempt to historicize this shift, Bradley and Fenton cite five key developments:

1. The collapse of Marxism after the fall of Soviet communism.
2. The rise of postmodernist approaches to cultural theory and cultural studies.
3. An increased scholarly interest in psychoanalytic theory.
4. Critiques of racism within feminism and their challenge to the notion of a unified category 'women'.
5. The influence of post-structuralist and deconstructionist theories of discourse as constituting rather than merely reflecting gendered subjectivities.

5. Nancy Fraser, *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the 'Postsocialist' Condition*, New York, Routledge, 1997. See chapter 1, 'From Redistribution to Recognition?'

6. Judith Butler, 'Merely Cultural?', *New Left Review* 227 (January-February 1998), 34.

7. Richard Rorty, *Achieving Our Country*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 1998, p77.

8. Harriett Bradley and Steve Fenton, 'Reconciling Culture and Economy', in Larry Ray and Andrew Sayer (eds), *Culture and Economy after the Economic Turn*, London, Sage, 1999, p120. See also Michèle Barrett, 'Words and Things: Materialism and Method in Contemporary Feminist Analysis', in Michèle Barrett and Ann Phillips (eds), *Destabilizing Theory*, London, Polity, 1992, p213.

The resulting impetus, to a cultural definition of gender and to cultural analysis in feminist studies, is not one which Bradley and Fenton celebrate. Like many of the collection's contributions, theirs is an attempt to combine the ostensibly opposing frameworks of culture and economy, rather than to abandon the investigation of economic interests and influences. Thus, the pair insist upon the integration of textual, archival, institutional and ethnographic studies with broader statistical indices of economics and demography when analysing 'any social phenomenon'. And in passing they make what now seems a prescient argument for contextualising cultural analyses of the re-assertion of Islam, notably that by young British women of South Asian descent, 'in terms of the global economic and political hierarchies which portrayed Middle Eastern societies as subordinate and inferior to the west; and to the conditions of economic deprivation and inequality in many Muslim societies, such as Egypt, Turkey and Algeria, which increased the support among the rural and industrial proletariats for Islamic parties'.⁹

9. Harriet Bradley and Steve Fenton, op. cit., p129.

In seeking to elude the abstractions of both economism and culturalism, Bradley and Fenton refuse to divide their purviews between global and local, structural and experiential. At the same time, they insist upon the mutually interrogating engagements of differing methodologies rather than a hierarchy or conflation of analyses. But where they argue the need for a proliferation of contending perspectives on gender and ethnicity, Judith Butler answers Fraser by refusing her differentiation 'between material and cultural life'. Replying to Fraser's claim that lesbian and gay politics stand outside those of political economy - since homosexuality is neither a class-specific condition nor the basis for a division of labour - Butler invokes a socialist tradition that stretches back to *The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State*. There Engels declares the reproduction of human beings and their means of existence the ultimate factor in history - 'according to the materialist conception'. As Butler stresses, Engels' argument became central to socialist feminist accounts of the family as part of the mode of production in the 1970s and 1980s. And despite Engels' own naturalisation of heterosexuality in that study, his emphasis on the production of human beings offered an entrée for psychoanalytic speculations on the constitution of sexual subjectivities in the service of capital.

Repeating these arguments, Butler acknowledges her debts to left cultural theorists such as Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall, as well as to the philosopher whose work had hitherto offered the most consistent Marxist reference in her repertoire, Louis Althusser. It is his essay claiming the material existence of 'Ideological State Apparatuses' that enables her to argue that 'matter exists in different modalities' in *Bodies That Matter*, and the same essay's concept of interpellation through which she develops the relation between ideology and subject formation in *The Psychic Life of Power and Excitable Speech*. There too Althusser argues for the efficacy of institutions such as the family in reproducing the skills and disciplines of labour power;

while elsewhere refusing determinist representations of the social formation as a mere superstructure of an economic base. But if his work underwrote the socialist feminist position Butler espouses some twenty years after it was initially formulated (and long after its abandonment by so many of those who originally employed it), it is Gayle Rubin's pioneering 1975 essay on 'The Traffic in Women' that most influences her response to Fraser.

Again, Butler's enthusiasm for what some others have disdained as a rather dated attempt to propose 'gender, obligatory heterosexuality and the constraint of female sexuality'¹⁰ as requirements of contemporary capitalism might seem surprising - not least to its author, who famously revised her position in the 1980s, and who attempted to persuade Butler to do likewise in a fascinating discussion published in the 1990s. But, like that of Rubin and her socialist feminist contemporaries of the 1970s, and Althusser before them, Butler's challenge to a distinction between sexual and economic oppression relies upon a political economy of kinship. Indeed, she takes up the position of her predecessors to invoke a very particular theory of kinship, the structural anthropology of Claude Levi-Strauss. Following Rubin's initial essay, she cites the anthropologist's observations that in pre-state cultures the exchange of women enforced by the incest taboo ensures political, economic and symbolic alliances between social groups, for whom intermarriage fosters peace, trade relations and communication - the creation of 'society'. Here too Butler points out that the symbolic function of women in such exchanges provides an avenue to Lacanian accounts of the role of signification in the constitution of gendered subjectivity. But against the 'universalizing pathos' of both Lacan and Levi-Strauss's hypostasis of female subordination, she argues for an historicised account of kinship, 'socially contingent and socially transformable',¹¹ which would recognise the counter-normative sexual arrangements in contemporary alternatives to the patriarchal family.

Butler doesn't win this debate. Certainly Fraser's argument is troubled by its tendency to reify identity categories even as it questions identity politics, separating 'women, racialized peoples, and/or gays and lesbians' from each other and their mutual conditions of historical constitution while failing to consider the inter-relationships of their 'status injuries' - the abjectifying feminisation of both homosexuality and certain ethnicities in men, the still prevalent attempts to stigmatise the women's movement with accusations of lesbianism. Nevertheless, she persuasively argues that such heterosexism - socially imbricated though it is - need not be, and increasingly is not, a requirement of capital accumulation. As she succinctly demonstrates, Butler's assignment of sexual regulation to the economic structure alternately proceeds by definition - simply equating the economic with the cultural since the latter includes the reproduction of goods and people - or by functionalist claims that capitalism 'needs' heterosexuality. The effect is to divest capitalism (a term Butler indicatively eschews in favour of 'political economy' or 'the economic') as well as kinship of the historicity she finds

10. Gayle Rubin, 'The Traffic in Women: Notes on the Political Economy of Sex', in Rayna R. Reiter (ed), *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 1975, p179.

11. Judith Butler, *op. cit.*, p44.

missing in the works of Lacan and Levi-Strauss. In response to Butler's illustrations of 'the normative heterosexuality of the economy' - the exclusion of homosexuals from partnership rights in property, taxation and inheritance; as well as the economic disadvantages suffered by lesbians and people with AIDS - Fraser counters with contemporary corporations' 'gay-friendly' policies, notably the extension of partnership benefits to lesbian and gay employees in the face of religious opposition. More provocatively, she challenges the grounds of her opponent's theory, agreeing that the economic and the cultural are equally 'material', while insisting that they are no longer integrated as they once were in the kinship systems of the pre-capitalist societies studied by Levi-Strauss.

In describing the attenuation of the link between accumulation and the regulation of kinship, Fraser is only echoing the lesbian and gay historians who had argued the case against capitalism's 'hard-wired heterosexism' long before she took it up: John d'Emilio, who claimed that capitalism commodified the economic functions that previously promoted familiar dependency even as it 'enshrined the family as the source of love, affection and emotional security'¹² - with the result that both homosexuality, and the scapegoating of homosexuals for threatening family values, became increasingly widespread; Jeffrey Weeks, who traced the extensive development of metropolitan male prostitution to late nineteenth-century capitalism's incorporation of sexuality into the cash nexus; Lillian Faderman, who argued that middle-class women's entry into the professions gave them the financial means to make life partnerships with one another; and Gayle Rubin, who memorably revised her kin-based analysis of erotic organisation to incorporate Foucault's theory of a system of sexual stratification superimposed from the eighteenth century on the earlier regulation of marriage.¹³

Defending that revision in her discussion with Butler, Rubin distinguishes contemporary gay kinship, as a voluntary system of association and intimacy, from the regulation of marriage:

Levi-Strauss is talking about societies in which those relations of marriage and descent are the social structure. They either organize almost all of the social life, or they are the most important and visible institutional apparatus. In modern systems, kinship is already a structure that is much reduced in institutional importance. It is not radical to say, in anthropology, that kinship doesn't do in modern urban societies what it used to do in pre-modern cultures. Furthermore, gay kinship closely resembles what anthropologists would call 'fictive' or 'informal kinship'. Such systems of informal or fictive kinship are even less institutionalized and structurally stable than those relationships which are reinforced by state authority.¹⁴

Butler replies with examples of the continued idealisation of the traditional family in the policing of child abuse, public sex and prostitution, as well as

12. John d'Emilio, 'Capitalism and Gay Identity', in Ann Smitow, Christine Stansell and Sharon Thompson (eds), *Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, London, Virago, 1984, p148.

13. Jeffrey Weeks, *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain, from the Nineteenth Century to the Present*, New York, Quartet Books, 1979; Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1991; Gayle Rubin, 'Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality', in Carole S. Vance (ed), *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality*, Boston, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984, pp267-319.

14. Gayle Rubin with Judith Butler, 'Sexual Traffic', *differences*, 6, 2-3 (Summer-Fall 1994), 87. Reprinted in Mandy Merck, Naomi Segal and Elizabeth Wright (eds), *Coming Out of Feminism?*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1998, p60.

restrictions on lesbian and gay parenting and partnership rights.¹⁵ And although she concurs with Rubin that ‘kinship can’t possibly be the predominant way in which we try to take account of the complexity of contemporary social or sexual life’, it remains the focus of her subsequent study, *Antigone’s Claim*. There, despite her estimable challenge to structural anthropology’s foundational heteronormativity, her reading of Sophocles’ tragedy and its commentaries reinstates kinship as the site integrating the subject’s sexual and social existence. To do so she extends its domain to ‘any number of social arrangements that organise the reproduction of material life, that can include the ritualisation of birth and death, that provide bonds of intimate alliance both enduring and breakable, and that regulate sexuality through sanction and taboo’.¹⁶ But what of the social arrangements that organise the reproduction of material life outside the family, enforced or elective? Whether we pursue that reproduction in terms of its instrumental forces in the workplace, its ideological relations in the schools, churches, political parties, trade unions and media, or the repressive apparatus of army, police, courts and prisons - to invoke Althusser’s categories - none of these institutions are in themselves those of kinship, however much they govern our intimate lives.

Although *Antigone’s Claim* again proposes a ‘socially alterable’ understanding of kinship - including in its contemporary manifestations not only homosexual parenting but black urban families headed by groups of mothers, aunts and grandmothers, other parenting arrangements shared by more than two adults and voluntary single parenting - it is in Butler’s recent dialogues with Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek that her historicisation of the structuralist ‘law’ opens (however briefly) to a parallel treatment of ‘the economic’. Under the heading *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*, she returns to the work of Žižek and Laclau first employed in ‘Bodies That Matter’ to develop her theory of the phantasmatic investment in identity. But the Gramscian derivation of these dialogues, as well as their direct debt to Laclau and Mouffe’s *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, enforces at least nominal attention to the mode of production as an element of the hegemonic formation under discussion. Again, particularly in her discussion of Lacanian psychoanalysis, kinship is a central issue, but here it is mobilised against the transcultural imperative of (hetero)sexual difference reiterated by Žižek. Challenging this model (and its incongruity with his historical Marxism) Butler posits an avowedly dynamic notion of subjectivity. Insofar as it retains psychoanalysis, it does so largely to account for the unconscious registration of - or resistance to - social norms and identifications, albeit in ways that may involve instability, failure or contradiction. And if, in her argument, the Lacanian ‘symbolic’ and even the supposedly non-symbolisable ‘real’ are socially transformable, so the ‘economic’ of the Fraser debate is historicised into ‘capitalism’, and granted some possible relation to the psychic processes of subjectification. ‘It is unclear’, Butler writes, ‘that the subject is not, for instance, from the start structured by certain general

15. Judith Butler, ‘Against Proper Objects’, *differences*, 6, 2-3 (Summer-Fall 1994), 13-15.

16. Judith Butler, *Antigone’s Claim: Kinship between Life and Death*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2000, p139.

17. Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*, London, Verso, 2000.

18. *Ibid.*, pp277-278.

19. Judith Butler, 'Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual?', *differences*, 13, 1 (2002), 21-22.

20. Brett Levinson, 'Sex without Sex, Queering the Market, the Collapse of the Political, the Death of Difference, and AIDS', *differences*, 29, 3 (Fall 1999), 94-95.

features of capitalism, or that capitalism does not produce certain quandaries for the unconscious and, indeed, the psychic subject more generally'.¹⁷

But this highly qualified hypothesis - hedged in by its characteristically Butlerian double negatives - is never developed. Although she insists that struggles over sexual difference, like those over class and nation, have a contingent historical character, she suggests no points of contact or communality, let alone the functionalist integration previously criticised by Fraser. Nor, in what proves to be a highly abstract discussion of politics and subject formation, does she pursue her speculations on capitalism's relation to psychic life. But then, responding to Žižek's complaint that neither she nor Laclau challenge 'the fundamentals of the capitalist market economy and the liberal-democratic political regime', she retorts that no contribution to their dialogues offers 'a critique of the market economy' nor really asks what 'the economic' might mean. Her final questions, of our a priori understandings of economic equality and its relation to political enfranchisement, are characteristically suggestive and characteristically unanswered. She takes them no further than to propose a genealogical rethinking of the separation of the cultural from the economic in the academic disciplines of anthropology and political theory.¹⁸ Which is, of course, where her polemic against Fraser began.

In a subsequent defence of lesbian and gay kinship relations, Butler questions gay marriage, and even domestic partnership contracts, as appropriate bases for the allocation of health care, asking why there shouldn't 'be ways of organising health care entitlements such that everyone, regardless of marital status, has access to them?' But despite her challenge to the extension of marital normativity and its nexus of property relations, despite her acknowledgement of international adoption and donor insemination in a global economy, the focus of her discussion remains kinship, and the state as the agent of its legitimation. Indeed, she retains the structuralist conflation of psychical and political 'law' to declare the state 'the means by which a fantasy becomes literalised: desire and sexuality are ratified, justified, known, publicly instated, imagined as permanent, durable'.¹⁹

But, as Brett Levinson has asked of Butler, what happens 'when we move from a world in which the highest political institution is the state, to one in which the state must compete for its sovereignty with global movements (including AIDS), above all the market ... ?'²⁰ Whether, as Steven Shapiro will argue in the next issue of *new formations*, this attention to global markets proceeds from queer theory's failure to establish itself in its own academic market, or from perceived limits in its political purview, a new economic dimension is increasingly evident in its studies. Addressing the academy's role in the globalisation of such identities, a Call for Papers from the Queer Caucus for the May 2001 Society for Cinema Studies conference notes that 'In contemporary academic discourse, "queer" has come to signify a particularly postmodern mode of socio-cultural subversion ... At the same time, however, the political, economic and ideological contexts and

determinants of “queer” moving-image culture have not generally been acknowledged, much less challenged ... How does the marketability of “global queer” and its purported creative difference satisfy the assimilationist and ideological dreams of liberal humanism and (post) western imperialism?²¹

In an ambitious attempt to answer this question, Rosemary Hennessy has written a political economy of ‘queer’ identity which posits it as both an expression and an instrument of globalisation. *Profit and Pleasure: Sexual Identities in Late Capitalism* argues that while that mode of production continues to make use of heteronormativity to enforce a gendered division of labour, neither those norms, nor gender subordination per se, are required for accumulation. What capitalism ‘does require’, Hennessy claims, ‘is an unequal division of labor’.²² Here she outlines the familiar story of post-Fordism’s search for cheap and politically defenceless labour markets, dispersing production across the globe, transforming the patterns of employment, family life, sexual practice, national identity, social migration and production itself - now accelerated, decentralised, deregulated and made ‘flexible’. Within the same logic, commodification has been both extended and intensified, colonising the individual’s physical and psychological existence as new markets for self-improvement, its ideal form ‘attuned to freeing up the previously static and relatively fixed spatial and temporal dimensions of daily life’²³ (the Walkman and the microwave in the 1980s; the ‘mobile’, as it is so rightly called, in the 1990s).

Hennessy calls the structure of consciousness characteristic of these changes ‘postmodernism’, but, unlike Fredric Jameson, she does not ignore or deny its specifically sexual aspects. For Jameson, the psycho-logic of late capitalism involves a schizophrenic breakdown of temporality and a free-floating euphoria, a hallucinatory delight in simulation whose only sexual attribute is a certain ‘camp’ or ‘hysterical’ exhilaration. For Hennessy, writing some fifteen years later, the mode of production finds its subjective equivalent in the disciplined flexibility of the middle-class professional service worker: ‘habitual mobility, adaptability in every undertaking, the ability to navigate among possible alternatives and spaces, and a cultivation of ambivalence as a structure of feeling’.²⁴ And who better to represent this cultivated ambivalence than that anti-identitarian identity ‘queer’ - free-floating, self-fashioning, apparently autonomous?

Hennessy’s suspicions recall a related critique from another quarter, Biddy Martin’s concerns about the construction of queerness as a sexually mobile vanguard superseding the outmoded physicality of old-fashioned gender politics. The effect, she warns, is to detach queer politics from corporeality and reassign that domain to the supposedly fixed identities and interests represented by women and people of colour. In consequence, Martin concludes, queerness is awarded a mobility that is decidedly upward, that of the white male.²⁵ (Subsequently Regenia Gagnier has argued that post-industrial societies tend to detach sexuality from both biological

21. David Gerstner and Terri Ginsberg, Co-chairs of the SCS Queer Caucus.

22. Rosemary Hennessy, *Profit and Pleasure: Sexual Identities in Late Capitalism*, New York, Routledge, 2000, p105.

23. *Ibid.*, p107.

24. *Ibid.*, p108.

25. Biddy Martin, ‘Sexualities without Genders and Other Queer Utopias’, *Femininity Played Straight*, New York, Routledge, 1996, pp71-94.

26. Regenia Gagnier, *The Insatiability of Human Wants: Economics and Aesthetics in Market Society*, Chicago, University of Chicago, 2000, pp236-237.

reproduction and social role and assign it to pleasure - in consumerist discourses - or pain - in Dworkinite polemic.²⁶) Although Hennessy doesn't discuss these arguments, one of the merits of her own is the attention she draws to the economic character of queerness and how its unstated dependence on wealth and education secures its transitivity 'beyond' racial and gender identities.

But as Hennessy acknowledges, this queer ideal is not evenly dispersed across the globe, nor unchallenged by state and cultural heteronormativity. Indeed, in her conception, neoliberalism's employment of this subjectivity, like the commodification of desire that it represents and intensifies, is often at odds with specific enterprises' continued reliance on compulsory heterosexuality to organise exploitation. Nevertheless, the increasing accommodation of the 'global gay', as middle-class professional and consumer, challenges functionalist assumptions of an intrinsically heterosexist capitalism. What then of the relation between sexual politics and those of redistribution?

To pursue this question, it's worth considering Hennessy's own analyses of the positions discussed earlier. Returning to Gayle Rubin's early attempt to develop Engels' *Origin of the Family* into an enlarged theory of sexuality and social production, she argues that her anthropological focus on the premodern kin group as the site of subjectification precludes more than passing attention to subsequent influences, such as the organisation of work and childcare outside its domain - let alone the gendered and racialised divisions of labour, changing patterns of commodification, state formations, etc. of contemporary existence. (Moreover, Rubin's attempt to attribute gender subordination to social exchange is critiqued for neglecting the importance of production to economic analysis.) Nor does Rubin's revised position receive her approval, since its Foucauldian history of the proliferation and regulation of modern sexualities is judged to detach their development from both kinship and the economy in the autonomy it grants to normative practices.

Similarly, Hennessy questions the limits of Judith Butler's analysis of sex as the materialisation of norms. While acknowledging that law, culture, ideology and symbolisation materially produce social life, she distinguishes what she calls cultural materialism from the historical materialism that emphasises the production of social life by people making 'what is needed to survive'. Furthermore, she complains that Butler's attempt to incorporate all these practices into a single materiality under the heading of kinship fails to connect sexual subordination to relations of labour or exploitation.

Not even Nancy Fraser's project for 'transforming the deep structures of both political economy and culture' escapes this censure, since its schematic division of economic, racial, gender and sexual subordination, however overlapping, is argued to forestall consideration of their historical interrelation within production and consumption. In making class a mere analogue of other categories of social oppression, Hennessy maintains,

Fraser's theoretical edifice risks collapsing back into the identity politics she sets out to transform. And her redistributive politics are far too reformist for the radical anti-capitalism Profit and Pleasure espouses.

Such a project leaves Hennessy with precious few allies outside classical Marxism, and having pronounced her qualified endorsement of Althusser's theory of over-determination, which supports her own attempt to demonstrate how a variety of social factors derive from and contribute to economic contradiction, she punctuates her study with brief sorties at other feminist and lesbian positions. Thus, Teresa de Lauretis's psychoanalytic approach to lesbian subjectivity is criticised - predictably - for privatising accounts of psychological development within the nuclear family and dehistoricising its relation to changing modes of production and political domination. Less predictably, she also condemns de Lauretis's *The Practice of Love* for its biographical (and autobiographical) characterisation of sexual orientation as a narrative of lifelong consciousness. The effect, she declares - in a surprisingly Foucauldian aside - is to produce object choice not as practice but as identity, one more of the exclusionary identities argued to cripple collective resistance.

As for the anti-psychoanalytic arguments of critics like Elizabeth Grosz, formulated via Deleuze and Guattari in response to de Lauretis, these too are given short shrift, condemned - as Hennessy condemns 'sex radicalism' in general - for abstracting desire from material or affective need and reifying it as an autonomous and insatiable drive or energy. In a parallel argument, poststructuralist accounts of identity's inherent instability are reinterpreted as actual, economically-grounded, struggles over meaning: 'the constitutive inability of any identity to secure its referent or to capture what it names - whether that identity be woman, homosexual, heterosexual, or queer - is not the result of an instability inherent in signification, but of the social contradictions on which capitalism is premised and which are condensed in the struggles over naming'.²⁷ Where Hennessy does find corroboration, it is in commentaries which historicise their psychic modelling within such patterns. Thus she cites Lauren Berlant and Wendy Brown's explanations for the depoliticising of capitalism in American life via the rhetoric of intimacy and identity which structure so much of sexual politics - rhetoric which, as Brown points out, is nonetheless fuelled by an unconscious resentment and idealisation of class power.

It's unlikely that the latter two would sign up to the more flagrantly contentious elements of Hennessy's argument - its head banging reduction of all contests over meaning to those of resources; the refusal to recognise a register of unsatisfiable demand beyond that of gratifiable need; or the conviction that an interest in 'style, textuality or performative play' necessarily precludes attention to divisions of wealth and labour, a conviction that gainsays the entire history of Marxist cultural criticism, as well as the textual, indeed performative, character of economic practices such as contract, wager and the money form itself. Then there are the occasional

27. Rosemary Hennessy, op. cit., p68.

caricatures of opponents' positions: to say that queer theory can be unwittingly complicit with globalisation is hardly grounds for declaring its proponents architects of 'neoliberal public intellectual discourse'. As for Hennessy's ludicrous attempt to link the rise of 'bad girl' lesbian sex radicalism to the reduction of welfare rights, this ignores the frequency with which exponents of the former position are opponents of the latter, as well as the historical alliance between socialism and sexual libertarianism in Anglo-American feminism. For these reasons, despite its global perspective, *Profit and Pleasure* has thus far exerted little influence on the analysis of sexuality and globalisation emerging in lesbian and gay scholarship.

Here two recent titles divide the field between a 'queer' approach and one that is expressly critical of it. In *Global Sex*, Dennis Altman espouses a self-consciously retro Marxist-Freudianism to survey the international transformation of sexual practices and identities ranging from non-marital cohabitation to sex tourism to militarised machismo. But his attempt to describe the vast nexus of connections linking them with globalised capitalism takes neither analysis much further than to stress the intersection of economic and psychological forces in such changes. Despite an approving citation of Aijaz Ahmad's complaint that postcolonial theory evades questions of determination by reducing Marxism to only one element of textual analysis, Altman's own adherence to Fraser's distribution/recognition dualism precludes much pursuit of determinate mediations. Moreover, his psychoanalysis is largely deployed in an admittedly commonsensical discussion of displaced desires and gendered phobias. But if this 'Marxist-Freudianism' is really a global social constructionism, Altman's knowledgeable synthesis of economic forces, political institutions and social movements, both internationally and in over a hundred named countries, is a valuable counterpart to *Queer Globalizations*.

Like *Global Sex*, *Queer Globalizations* is a First-World production, whose multiethnic contributors teach in the US, and its thirteen articles are necessarily narrower in their focus and far more preoccupied by their site of enunciation. This critical attention to western hegemony in arenas ranging from coming-out narratives to human rights rhetoric usefully challenges the aggrandising analogies attributed to globalising discourses, including Altman's own; but it also has the paradoxical effect of referring everything back to the hegemon. Even more problematically, the editors' declared emphasis on 'subjective mediation and agency' is initially opposed to a highly mechanical socio-economism, a sort of straw 'facticity'.²⁸ Happily this warning is often ignored, as in Janet Jakubson's illuminating analysis of the links between the supposedly 'value free' US economy and the 'family values' of the US state - to the advantage of US corporations who simultaneously export their employees' jobs to cheaper labour markets abroad and equalise partnership benefits for the lucky remainder at home, while campaigning against the tax-funded provision of any such entitlements to others.²⁹ As Jakubson provocatively argues, gay American appeals to a secular market,

28. Arnaldo Cruz-Malave and Martin F. Manalansan IV, 'Introduction: Dissident Sexualities / Alternative Globalisms', in A. Cruz-Malave and M. F. Manalansan IV (eds), *Queer Globalizations*, New York, New York University Press, 2002, pp7-8.

29. Janet R. Jakubson, 'Can Homosexuals End Western Civilization As We Know It? Family Values in a Global Economy', *ibid.*, pp49-70.

mistake the continuing Protestant character of its capitalism, however global its dominance.

Elsewhere in this collection, queer kinship and queer neoliberalism are also reconsidered - in an essay which remarks on the recent address of US household advertising to male couples and one which asks how far queer criticism is itself implicated in 'neoliberal visions of freedom, desire, value and profit?'³⁰ But unlike Hennessy, Bill Maurer's alternative to postmodern globalisation is not Marxism but the elegantly regulated capitalism of the gay modernist John Maynard Keynes. And unlike Butler, Miranda Joseph concludes that homosexual kinship is increasingly compatible with capitalist consumption in the US, but not with those goods' production in the patriarchally disciplined maquilas of Mexico.³¹ In Maurer's view, Keynes' proscriptions for international instruments to equalise balances of payments, stabilise commodity prices and finance postwar relief were informed by a Bloomsbury cosmopolitanism which might have restrained both global dominance and its conservative local oppositions. Joseph concludes that Latin American sweatshops have to be a queer issue, not least because the commodities of our commercially recognised relationships are constructed in them by workers denied such recognition. Her impassioned final appeal - to refuse gay marriage to the market and join anti-capitalist campaigns - might not be Maurer's style. But their increasingly shared opposition to the economic order from which queer theory has arguably both emerged and departed signals a significant turn in sexual scholarship.

30. Bill Maurer, 'Redecorating the International Economy: Keynes, Grant, and the Queering of Bretton Woods', *ibid.*, p102.

31. Miranda Joseph, 'Family Affairs', *ibid.*, pp71-99.