

Gender Work
Feminism after Neoliberalism

Robin Truth Goodman

palgrave
macmillan

Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter 1 The Gender of Working Time: Revisiting Feminist/Marxist Debates	19
Chapter 2 Julia Kristeva's Murders: Neoliberalism and the Labor of the Semiotic	65
Chapter 3 Feminist Theory's Itinerant Legacy: From Language Feminism to Labor Feminism	83
Chapter 4 Girls in School: The "Girls' School" Genre at the New Frontier	111
Chapter 5 Gender Work: Feminism after Neoliberalism	139
<i>Notes</i>	175
<i>Works Cited</i>	205
<i>Index</i>	219

CHAPTER 5

Gender Work: Feminism after Neoliberalism

In prior chapters, I have pointed to elements of the current organization of capital that depend on expanding paradigms of “women’s work.” By “women’s work,” I mean a type of labor that in the industrial age was considered domestic, affective, immaterial, or reproductive, and having to do with functions of “care” and socialization. Designated as a “separate sphere” outside of production, such sets of productive tasks were, traditionally in the twentieth century, represented as outside of public concern, not organized by the wage, not protected by the rights and privacy discourse of the liberal state (e.g., labor, security, safety, health, environmental, educative, etc.), formulated as “autonomous,” and not connected to a package of guaranteed protections and benefits. Instead, they added “free time” to the productive process—time for which capital did not need to make an exchange, that in capital’s terms was separate: pure excess or “surplus” that capital got for free. Currently, capital is demanding that all work fit such paradigms.¹

As such forms of work have become increasingly prevalent as a structural tendency (even if not quite a statistical “norm”), transformations have taken place, as well, in cultural spheres. As capital has approached the limits of the universal expansion that Marx imagined for it, “women’s work” has become one of the most viable sites where primitive accumulation can still operate by creating new zones for robust capitalizability and exploitation. As Angela McRobbie has remarked, “[I]t does not make sense to interrogate the post-Fordist field of immaterial labour without foregrounding gender” (2010: 69). To place “women’s work” at the center of neoliberal globalization means to start to imagine femininity in particular as the framework for understanding

processes of universalization under new forms of capital accumulation. In other words, the feminization of capital *is* its universalization.

Recently, philosophers Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have described the current nexus of primitive accumulation through corporate growth and consolidation as expanding in ways that capitalize on the types of work women have done in private, and they also understand that women's work offers a particularly rich symbolic setting for thinking through biopolitical life-in-common. A "major trend," they write, in the composition of labor is the "so-called feminization of work," including "the rapid increase in the proportion of women in the wage market," but indicating "how 'women's work,' such as affective, emotional, and relationship tasks, is becoming increasingly central in all sectors of labor, albeit in different forms in different parts of the world" (2009: 133). This trend, they note, marks a "qualitative shift in the working day" (2009: 133), in jobs that are more temporally flexible, irregular, and informal while spatially more varied, mobile, and migratory, but also symptomizes a change in the content and type of work, toward greater focus on the production of bodies, subjects, communications, ideas, interactions, relationships, services, and types of socialization: "As the temporal division between work time and the time of life is becoming confused, the productive power of labor is being transformed into a power to generate social life. We can accept the term 'feminization' to indicate these changes as long as it is said with a bitter irony, since it has not resulted in gender equality or destroyed the gender division of labor" (2009: 133–134). This model suggests that all work tends toward a political frame appropriated from the private side of industrialization's separate spheres, maintaining its focus on the contents of a formerly reproductive and domestic production, becoming calculable so as to enter into relation with the wage. Such a relation to the wage impoverishes the work, in order to suck it of surplus. The perspective puts work formations like sweatshop labor and migrant domestic help at the conceptual center as these exemplify a form of work organization toward which all work is headed. All work, regardless of its demographics (that is the race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, ability, etc. of its dominant practitioners) is equally abstracted in ways that direct it toward adapting to the formerly most privatized forms.²

What makes Hardt and Negri's work provocative for feminism is this: they understand class formations in the late twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries as tied to a process of economic feminization, and thus put to the forefront the indispensable claim that thinking femininity entails thinking class. With women making 78 cents on the dollar globally (and even lower for minority women and women on the margins), gender alone is an entrenched source of surplus. Furthermore, as well as understanding

femininity as a mechanism whereby the new division of labor under neoliberalism can be organized to extract surplus, Hardt and Negri also put economic feminization at the forefront of envisioning and theorizing the force of resistance against capital presently. I therefore disagree with Lee Quinby's assessment that Hardt and Negri's philosophical enterprise exhibits "gender-blindness" (240), or that its subjects of resistance are "masquerading as a gender-free embodiment of universal values" (242), in its centralizing of violence, its romanticization of opposition, and its insistence that revolutionary change must be total. On the contrary. Hardt and Negri's work first emphasizes that neoliberalism is a violent system precisely because it has built class discourse from gender in different ways than industrialism's separate spheres did, in part by flattening the differences between production and reproduction, and turning what was once the free work of labor socialization in the private sphere into a serviceable principle of exploitation: the production of surplus time. Hardt and Negri then project a liberated future by projecting a total liberation of "women's work" (though Quinby is right to remark that repressive power is more marked and intense against women and their work, she is not right that things as they are determine things as they have to be: the "pressing and quite particular needs of women" (241) underlie Hardt and Negri's construction of a future that is better). By reinserting labor into poststructuralism's theories of difference, Hardt and Negri reveal some of the contradictions and vital, productive questions that arise in suturing class onto gender in a neoliberal age, questions that differ substantially from those surfacing in response to the interweaving of class and gender evident under the assumptions of Fordist culture analyzed in chapter 1.

Hardt and Negri's idea that left philosophies need to concentrate on the production of subjects as much as, if not more than, the production and commodification of objects, evolved out of a feminist interest in the 1960s, in such writers as Julia Kristeva, on socialization and language as increasingly integral to the construction of identities, social, symbolic, and economic relations. They also relied on contributions, from such feminist thinkers as Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Silvia Federici, and Selma James (for example), on social reproduction. They promote a radical transformation of the times, processes, and organization of work as contingent on a radical transformation in the work relations of the traditional family and the traditionally gendered body: "These barbaric deployments work on human relations in general, but we can recognize them today first and foremost in corporeal relations and configurations of gender and sexuality. Conventional norms of corporeal and sexual relations between and within genders are increasingly open to challenge and transformation... The will to be against really needs a body that is completely incapable of submitting to command. It needs a

body that is incapable of adapting to family life, to factory discipline, to the regulations of the traditional sex life, and so forth” (2000: 215–216). Hardt and Negri attribute to second-wave feminist theory their interest in collective bodies, bodies in revolt, and “the theme of life itself on . . . center stage” (2009: 26): “[o]nly the standpoint of bodies and their power,” they conclude from the lessons they glean from feminism, “can challenge the discipline and control wielded by the republic of property” (2006: 27).

In fact, Hardt and Negri’s analysis of capital draws on a construction of time and value as separable from the political domination of the means of production and circulation, but still internal to them, in a way that is indebted to feminist critiques of the private sphere. Negri’s earlier philosophical contributions, for example, have theorized a split or an event where an emergent form of “use value”—formerly attributed to work in precapitalist, domestic, and traditional settings that capital later subsumed—and “surplus value”—or work-time appropriated by capital “for free”—explode production from within. This happens when “living labor,” or the processes of the production of life, revolts against “dead labor,” or the accumulated productive forces that give it power. “[U]se value is nothing other than the radicality of the labor opposition, than the subjective and abstract potentiality of all wealth, the source of all human possibility . . . [T]he workers’ opposition, the proletarian struggle, tries continually to broaden *the sphere of non-work*, that is, the sphere of their own needs” (1991: 70–71)—that is, of worker reproduction and “women’s work.” As this “sphere” of “radicality”—of “nonwork”—takes on features autonomous to production and to the wage, it becomes the hinge or transition between intensified exploitation and an opening toward difference.

Ironically, perhaps, given that women’s labor seems so central to this picture Hardt and Negri give of “use value” in neoliberal labor regimes and so integral to the antagonism against capital that arises in capitalism’s historical course, it is worth remarking that there has been a relative scarcity of feminist interest in Hardt and Negri’s critique of globalization.³ Notably, Angela McRobbie reads in Hardt and Negri “a failure to foreground gender, or indeed to knit gender and ethnicity into prevailing concerns with class and class struggle” (2010: 60). McRobbie understands Hardt and Negri as permitting “no space at all for reflecting on the centrality of gender and sexuality in the post-Fordist era” (2010: 62) as a result of their assuming that “gender is no longer a ‘problem’” (62). Whereas they abstract relations of everyday life outside the workplace as the new site for relations of production, they favor describing class itself as envisioned through urban disenchantment or shallow creativity, marginalizing the question of gender within the formation of political subjectivities. Though the multitude seems

like a broader, less nationally based rendition of what an older left called “class,” it shares, for McRobbie, the white masculinist privilege of this older form of class, drawing its roots through industrial militancy and other conflicts within the purview of the factory. Women become subordinated to or invisible within this larger abstraction. Though I agree with this critique, it assumes women as always and only the particular whereas Hardt and Negri, in their methods of abstraction, experiment with the idea that all workers are women now. That is, neoliberalism abstracts labor to the point where it becomes only woman (again, this would be a direction where the social is headed rather than a present reality, a tendency rather than a norm). This does not necessarily disregard gender or fail to foreground it as much as it reconfigures gender along new axes of difference: the body that becomes new in neoliberalism is sexed as woman. There are definite problems in this perspective, some of which I hope to draw out, but I also think there might be value found in giving Hardt and Negri their day in court and trying to imagine how this plays out.

An industry of criticism has developed responding to other aspects of Hardt and Negri’s oeuvre. Many have discerned that Hardt and Negri’s prognostications about the contemporary developments of capital did not exactly come to pass, or that Hardt and Negri have neglected vital components of the contemporary economic situation, and many others have detected that Hardt and Negri’s readings of their philosophical progenitors have often taken quite a bit of license. Their omissions, expound their critics, distort their views of the North-South divide, the population of the workforce, and the histories of oppositional political activity. Giovanni Arrighi accurately reproaches Hardt and Negri for foretelling the smoothing out of global power differentials into one immanent plane of production, and consequently, against the empirical record, the narrowing of the Third World/First World income divide: “Indeed, all available evidence shows an extraordinary persistence of the North-South income gap as measured by GNP per capita” (32). Ellen Meiksins Wood chides Hardt and Negri for proposing that the cure for the ills of capitalism should be to intensify its reign: “[T]he general lesson we are supposed to draw from it is that capitalist globalization is an irresistible force and that opposition to what is practically a law of nature is futile and counterproductive” (61–62). For Wood, Hardt and Negri, through their embrace of globalization, pronounce the end of the nation-state and the concentration of power (against the historical evidence), and insist on the contingent infiltration of capital into every aspect of life. Rather than freeing up an oppositional culture as they forecast, these elements of Hardt and Negri’s prophecies guarantee, for Wood, the end of resistance: “[F]or all its insistence on the possibilities of insurrection . . . , it

is much less persuasive as a call to opposition than as an argument for the futility of oppositional politics” (63).

The criticisms of Hardt and Negri do not stop at challenging their descriptions of capitalism, highlighting the ethical implications, or disputing the limitations to their thinking on resistance. Also, Hardt and Negri are frequently and often vehemently disparaged for misapplying theoretical ideas in ways that distort the historical context, often with dangerous consequences. Timothy Brennan has reproached Hardt and Negri for combining Marxist orthodoxy with a contradictory embrace of Deleuzian and other poststructuralist theory that allows for a picking-and-choosing between convenient (even if contradictory) fragments of historical events and a reading history “as a shop window filled with texts of glossy revolutionary allure” (114). The risks in this theoretical stance play out mostly in the context of the Italian workerist movement of the 1970’s, with its Catholic overtones in themes of redemptive return and spiritual unification attributable, claims Brennan, to Negri’s training in Italian Catholic Universities of the 1950’s. The affiliation with workerism (*operaismo*) meant that the “will to be against”—to refuse work—that Hardt and Negri develop at the moment of revolutionary rupture “was poised not only against the state but also the traditional trade unions” (103), and the concept of “immaterial labor” that they see as opening the formation of a “general intellect” “signal[s] nothing more than a reference to the symbolic analysts of the information economy” (103) that calls upon millennial convictions of US economic primacy. Alex Callinicos, meanwhile, has called Negri’s projections about workers’ movements and wage independence “among the most foolish and irresponsible statements to be produced by a social theorist with the kind of reputation now enjoyed by Negri” (188). Callinicos disagrees vehemently with Negri’s reducing economic relations to politicized domination as well as with his celebration of a “general intellect” or a “collective worker,” interpreting such misunderstandings of Marx as, in part, contributing to the tragic defeat of the unions and the splintering of the left in Italy. The list of shattering criticism goes on.

Despite such debates over the accuracy of Hardt and Negri’s work in empirically describing this new phase of capitalism, or the controversies over how well Hardt and Negri have understood the potentials for unification and resistance among a rising working class, or the disagreements about their readings of the philosophical or historical record, I believe that feminism has an interest in working through Hardt and Negri’s texts. In fact, some part of the critics’ objections may take on different appearances, stresses, and faultlines (though do not disappear) if the gender of Hardt and Negri’s critique of capitalism is taken into account. Hardt and Negri want

to tease out of political and philosophical traditions a way of conceiving of a resistance born out of the present but not beholden, for its definition and its character, to its abstraction through the wage and its reliance on the existing means of production: in other words, as autonomous from capital's current configuration. In this, they read "women's work" as an empiricism that breaks the hold of the empirically present.

Like Hardt and Negri, feminism has long been interested in understanding the production of subjectivities at the limits of current cultures of production, as valued and constituted differently. Hardt and Negri's focus on "women's work" as offering the descriptive vocabulary for neoliberal economic relations leads to the construction of a feminized subject that is, at the same time, universalizing. In other words, whereas Simone de Beauvoir defined femininity as particularity,⁴ Hardt and Negri are calling attention to the universal feminine, brought to bear in response to the neoliberal privatization of labor, raising the question, then, of whether the universal is the same universal once feminized. They interpret this new sense of femininity as becoming visible in many of neoliberalism's emphases, stresses, and developing global cartographies: biopolitics and life, use value, immaterial labor, the split between surplus labor and necessary labor, an ontology that is at the same time transitional and generative, living labor, socialization and cooperation.⁵ In all these areas, Hardt and Negri understand neoliberalism's privatizing functions as marking out a collective horizon, both as social capital and then as the collective worker. Through this analytic, they envision women's immaterial labor or labor of reproduction as universal or disembodied consciousness that, in as much as it has become central to production, leads to a break with capital.

The question for feminism remains: in what sense do Hardt and Negri augur the realization of feminist aspirations in the freeing up of women and their bodies from their symbolic relegation to private life and reproductive work outside of production? Or rather, in what sense does the universalization of the feminine symbolic promote the intensification of worker exploitation grounded in the further alienation, marginalization, and domestication of women? How does Hardt and Negri's rendition of capital's subsumption of reproduction into production differ, in degree and in kind, from the appropriation of women's labor into industrialization that Marx portrayed? In what sense does the general tendency toward making all work into "women's work" provide an opportunity for more dense exploitation than ever before imaginable, and in what sense does it outline the conditions for a transition to something other than the current unacceptable social relations? As neoliberalism seems to answer to some of feminism's most radical claims toward the abolition of the private sphere

and the merging of reproduction into production, do Hardt and Negri expose feminism's failings and force its repositionings, or do they indicate that feminism all along was predicting the turn to "women's work" as fundamentally reconfiguring the capitalist playing field in ways integral to neoliberal processes and, then, to their annihilation? As Alberto Toscano comments, "It is not impertinent to ask, for example, if the destruction of the public-private barrier, lauded by Negri, is not actually in the first instance a repressive and exploitative tool, rather than an augur of red dawns to come" (114). At the same time, Hardt and Negri demand that we ask, if the red dawns do come, what they might look like?

"Real Subsumption" and "Women's Work"

One of Negri's significant contributions to Marxist thought has been the central part played by "real subsumption" in his analysis of capitalism's current phase. In contrast to "formal subsumption," which imagines capital accumulation as a progressive abstraction of diverse working forms as it grasps at the multiple branches of production, "real subsumption" is "socially constituted surplus value, the exploitation of society under the control of capital" (1991: 92), where profit "is determined by its essential capacity to be measured against the social working day" (1991: 92). "Real subsumption" is the form capital takes when production absorbs reproduction. It is therefore the setting for "the so-called feminization of work," that is, where "women's work" integrates into capital as an internal antagonism, marking a split. (In sections that follow, I show, as well, how this equivalency between capital and "women's work" influences how Hardt and Negri formulate their analysis of "biopolitics" and "immaterial labor" within their vision of life, power, and resistance, and ask what this means for feminism.)

"Real subsumption" is not an historical moment or an endpoint toward which capitalism has evolved; instead, "real subsumption" is a descriptor of capitalism as it is now which has always been part of its social inside even if now it is more fully realized. Yet, neither is "real subsumption" a telos; rather, it is a definition—the force that capital has, by definition, to turn everything into itself. "Real subsumption" is a transitional figure that depends on capital's push to reduce necessary labor time (the time that remains outside of productive time, or reproductive time) to zero and the expansion of surplus value, or profitability, over everything: "Real subsumption means the complete realization of the law of value... [I]n real subsumption... all labour is reduced to mere quantity, to time. Before us we have only quantities of time. Use-value, which in *Capital* was still given as separation from, and irreducible to, value *tout court*, is here absorbed by capital" (2003: 27).

Once exchange value has taken over the entire social field, or all social life has become the “social factory,” the forces of primitive accumulation find no external spaces for expansion, and all labor is socialized by capital as the whole of social life: “it no longer produces through factories alone, but makes the whole of society work for its own enrichment; it no longer exploits only workers, but all citizens; it does not pay, but makes others pay it to command and order society. Capitalism has invested the whole of life” (2003: 136). “Real subsumption” is based on the idea of the factory once it is no longer spatially enclosed. The “social factory,” Hardt and Negri later say, where the forces of discipline break out beyond the factory walls and move into the totality of the social,⁶ demands a different formation of labor that slips away from the gendering implicit in factory work: “The dictatorship of the factory over society, its position at the crossroads of all processes of the formation of value, and therefore the objective centrality of directly productive (male, manual, and waged) labor are all disappearing” (1994: 280). Such a formulation raises this question: what elements in Negri’s philosophical-political system require that “real subsumption” passes into history in the guise of the “so-called feminization of work”—that is, why is the “so-called feminization of work” the carrier of the historical construction of “real subsumption”?

“Real subsumption” signifies the development, within certain aspects and movements of the system, of a present crisis through which the future is setting its course, most notably: (1) politics has redrawn the field of economic transactions of time (labor power) into a system of unified or collective command (money) beyond time-measure.⁷ Money turns time into collective capital, or *command*; (2) *use-value* (or labor before the exchange of labor power measured by time, that is, labor that factory time does not yet but eventually will count and appropriate) is no longer independent from capital, and in its immeasurability, also takes collective form⁸; (3) constant capital, technology, fixed capital, or the State has a decreasing need for variable capital or *living labor*, freeing up living labor (which has become collective and multiple). This is related to the break-down in the division between manual and mental labor, the first class division remarked by Marx, as the body and the imagination merge into the productive process, meaning that ideas become productive, corporeal and concrete at the same time. As knowledge and the expansion of knowledge returns to the worker, the imagination cannot be captured in the time-analysis of older forms of labor power;⁹ (4) *circulation* (reproduction) is no longer distinguishable from production.¹⁰ Whereas Marx theorized circulation as the cessation or temporal pause between cycles of production, in “real subsumption,” the time lag of circulation is reduced to zero¹¹; (5) therefore, production and reproduction

(or the social) become interchangeable (use-value and circulation have taken on the role of the social from within production). Productivity is, for Negri, ontological like God (or, like Spinoza's God) but also at the same time material (both rational and empirical), as the human mind that expands eternally through the ability of the human body (labor) to create reality, in part by reproducing itself, by self-generating as its own cause (origin); and 6) this creates antagonism, war, or crisis, where two different, nonmediating, irreducible, asymmetrical and opposing conceptions of time, or class formations, separate (rather than unify or synthesize): "To me it seems that, in the history of thought, the hypothesis of a collective constitution of time as an operation antagonistic to the spatial and mediatory conception of time, becomes an increasingly observable element—one that is always characteristic of revolutionary thought" (2003: 56). In other words, the difference between integrated productive time (measured time) and reproductive time ("women's work," "use value," social time, or collective time) becomes an antagonism that figures as class conflict within production.

Negri's reconfiguration of time in "real subsumption" does not only break down the division between work and the social (between production and consumption) but also develops social time, with its connection to reproduction and socialization, as the time of production (one might think of the dominance, in political discussions on economic issues, of thematic of health care, education, insurance, and reproductive rights). Overall, by reducing the time of circulation to zero, production extends over the entire social field, so that the distinction between spaces of consumption-circulation and spaces of production disappears, and exploitation enters into all relations and levels of socialization. "In real subsumption," Negri explains, "capital presents itself as capitalist society, and hence as tautology of life and value, of time and labour. The relations of magnitude between the constitutive parts of the working day are imperceptible" (2003: 67). Production and life coincide (2003: 42).¹² Examples abound, from new professional standards making it easier to work from home and thus blurring the line between the time of work and the time of leisure, to the commodification of formerly social functions, from child care and elderly care to house cleaning and food preparation. As well, as Hardt and Negri never tire of pointing out, life itself has become a primary target for the creation of new markets, from life cycle promotions and nutrition to vitamins, sexual enhancers, muscle enhancers, fertility technologies, psychotropics (both legal and illegal), energy drinks, genomes, cell tissue, chromosomes, amino acids, and pharmaceuticals (both legal and illegal), health care and other health management, insurance and other risk-management, and body forms, including cosmetic surgery, exercise regimes, and prosthetics. In addition, work itself has in some

instances entered a commodified life-cycle, through the selling of business trip planning, career advising, and five-star elite services for temporary care and entertainment in urban financial centers as well as the privatization of many professional training certification functions, teaching and nursing most notably. What is more, the instruments of production have changed from the large-scale machinery of industrialization through which Marx marked history to cognitive innovations that can be traded and exchanged: know-how, communications, language processes, symbols, and imaginings, often given shape in cooperative networks of information. This movement of capital into life itself is highly politicized.

The replication of production as reproduction in Negri's sense of "real subsumption" means not only that capital begins to take on a metaphoric shape that resembles what women do but also that capital does what women do—the generation, socialization, and production of subjects—in their place. This approximation between reproduction and production—that is, between capital and "women's work"—means that as capital moves increasingly toward privatizing the social (e.g., measuring it, counting it, turning it into value and exchange), the social is increasingly excessive to it, a tendency increasingly resistant to the measure of the private.¹³ Life refuses systems and systematicity. Though politics is reorganized for the purpose of controlling life, life itself escapes total subsumption, never quite stabilized within capital's categorical measurements. Just as a constitution can never capture in code and abstraction the energies that founded it and that continually surge up to overtake its limits, life itself poses the force of its multiplicity against the unifying constraints of profit's calculations. Capital's self-reinvention in "real subsumption," that brings it closer to the structural and symbolic form of "women's work" means that capital dons women's narratives as life-forms; this becoming-reproduction of production accounts for capital's separations from itself, its antagonisms, shifts, and schisms.

I read Negri as describing, in "real subsumption," a concept of capital saturated by a form of "women's work" based on industrialism's structural and symbolic placement of domestic labor in the "autonomous" private sphere, separated from production. As I detail in chapter 1, Marx explained capital as always in the process of integrating into production a domestic sphere that could never, in the final analysis, be integrated completely. This taking-up of capital as "women's work" generates the "so-called feminization of work" that Hardt and Negri interpret as underlying neoliberalism, and its excess—its resistance to capitalization—as what catapults the transition. "Real subsumption," in short, is the final universalization of capitalism that occurs with production overtaken by reproductive processes, when production assumes the shape, movement, cooperation, and creativity that

permeate the totality of social life, becoming the equivalent of life (and therefore the equivalent of “women’s work”): “all commodities have become services, all services have become relations, all relations have become brains, and all brains form part of the common” (2003: 177). That is, as the means of production assume the form of the social, social relations are themselves commodities. Yet, this transformation of capital’s organization along the lines of “women’s work” challenges, from the inside, capital’s simultaneous demand for measuring, quantifying, and exchanging everything, creating destructive antagonisms.

“Real subsumption” actually *needs* “women’s work”—the work of socialization and the socialization of production—to make sense as Negri renders it. This is because Negri’s treatment of the issue depends on a fundamental separation between aspects of capital, a separation that tends to rely on the increasing feminization of its modes and operations. Linked to antagonism, this separation is adapted from Jean Baudrillard’s descriptions of contemporary society as simulation—that is, that reproduction, copy and consumption have merged into production and overtaken it, that the objects of production have become immaterial images or symbols of a social reality that is divided off¹⁴: “The spark of production, the violence of its stake no longer exists. Everybody still produces, and more and more, but work has subtly become something else: . . . A demand exactly proportional to the loss of stake in the work process” (47). Negri sees this separation of production from work and workers in terms of generation: that is, the rupture between capital and labor forms into a new instance of working subjectivity that cannot be synthesized, appearing as an innovation. Generation is, above all, “women’s work”: “Thus creating is not something at the limits of being; rather it is something which gives birth. Can one say that generating is not the same as creating?” (2011: 93). The separation (transition) hinges on “women’s work”: it understands capital as involved in direct production of human beings, but human beings as lives that are transforming into new types of potentials and values that escape total appropriation in capital’s socialization processes and measurement systems.

As reproduction *merged into* production, separation complicates Negri’s analysis of the State under neoliberalism. He does not advocate, assume, or predict the end of the nation-state in the “free market’s” presumption of the sovereign governing role, as Timothy Brennan and Ellen Meiksins Wood (among others) interpret it, as a “freeing up” of desire and autonomous subjectivity (though this reading of the “multitude” is certainly possible). The State is also, for Negri, composed of a set of simulations¹⁵: juridical and procedural functions, functions of business enterprise and social accumulation, that reference other simulations of civil society through legal abstractions in

order to create a sense of balance, while no longer recognizing in themselves the contradictions, instabilities, and play “from below,” nor the explosion of worker creativity as the social real. “[I]n no case,” writes Negri, “does the constituent subject submit itself to the static and constricting permanence of constitutional life” (1999: 324–325). As the State devolves toward an antidemocratic symbolic of self-representation (or, command), the economy delinks from effective demand, as we can witness in policies that cut away at workers’ spending power—cuts to salaries, benefits, and supports as well as global austerity measures. The juridical stimulation that composes the State ensures stability “by avoiding or excluding any external inputs” (Hardt and Negri, 1994: 233), managing exploitation, circulation, and the extraction of surplus value through command rather than through incorporating, integrating, absorbing, and synthesizing. As the landscape of the “social factory,” the State extends over the whole field of accumulation by posing itself as an unmediated unity.¹⁶ The State is a totality and the social is the same totality, in the same time and space, instigating a divide. Separation means that the gap between capital (or the State, which amounts to the same) and labor is no longer a space of communication, negotiation, compromise, or synthesis (like a labor union or a welfare system) but instead irresolvable, that nothing remains in common, and that the only recourse for independent labor is to pose itself as a total alternative to the total constituted machinery (the “dead labor” or simulation) of the State.

“Real subsumption” is not dialectical, says Negri’s account of separation: capital no longer functions by incorporating external forms of labor (as in the type of primitive accumulation described by Marx) but rather “labor processes themselves are born within capital” (Hardt and Negri, 1994: 224). With the end of the dialectic, workers are also less necessary to capital—necessary labor time (the time of the worker’s reproduction) is reduced toward zero, “labor becomes invisible in the system” (Hardt and Negri, 1994: 259)—because of the expansion of technology, financialization, and the “deficit of politics” (Hardt and Negri, 1994: 237). At the same time, capital represents itself as less connected to them:

In the *specifically* capitalist mode of production, in the real subsumption, labor—or even production in general—no longer appears as the pillar that defines and sustains capitalist social organization. Production is given an objective quality, as if the capitalist system were a machine that marched forward of its own accord, a capitalist automaton. To a certain extent, this image is the fulfillment of a long-standing dream of capital—to present itself as separate from labor, to present a capitalist society that does not look to labor as its dynamic foundation, and thereby to break

the social dialectic characterized by the continual conflict between capital and labor. (1994: 226)

For Negri, the State, its apparatuses, and its ideologies are not so much diminished to give place to the market. Rather, they are formalized and abstracted as capital itself so that together they become an envelope, excluding from the State's constitution the active creative subjectivities from which it builds its regimes of profitability. This is less about the disappearance or "withering away" of the State than about the devolution of its representational powers, as it maintains rule through violence and command. The split between the State and civil society, or the end "of negotiation between capital and labor" (Hardt and Negri, 1994: 240), or the displacement of the social contract, takes form, for Negri, in reference to a reconstitution of industrialism's historic split between men's and women's labor spheres within the future plane of production. "Men's work" takes the guise of the symbolic constitution of the State, whereas "women's work" assumes the separation:

[T]he production and reproduction of the world have always been separate. Man produced and woman reproduced. The sector of the economy that concerned production was the prerogative of men; the one that concerned reproduction was the prerogative of women. It is only in postmodernity, when work becomes intellectual and affective, that production and reproduction cease to be divided and come to constitute a circular whole. Living labour belongs to everyone. It is in order to signal this metamorphosis that becomes manifest in the becoming-common of labour, that one laconically says: living labour has become-woman. (2003: 224–22)

As labor is relegated to the State's outside and takes on features of cooperative organization and the social, that is, as production integrates reproduction and the collective creativity of its work, the "becoming woman" of living labor underlies its refusal, its separation, and its autonomy.

Use-Value, Constituent Power, Ideology, and the Time of Innovation

Hardt and Negri's accounts of neoliberalism as "real subsumption" show that gender does not disappear under neoliberalism. On the contrary, neoliberalism needs gender to substantiate its values in production and, in fact, to organize production as a whole. Additionally, gender as production performs a type of ontological function: "women's work" is what gives production a

multiplying force, a constituent power that capital needs for self-valorization but cannot fully reduce to its own temporal measure (cannot reduce to its representations of equivalency: to money, calculation, and the like). This reading seems to depend on an essentialism, as “women’s work” is tied to a corporealization, and women’s bodies seem to symbolize as biologically productive, as generative. Yet, underlying this seeming essentialism is an antifoundational ontology of production. Though production is usually seen as objectified, as an empirical situation materialized and congealed through repetitions and technologies (as dead labor), Negri contests that it must be understood as subjective, and, as a subjective structure, production is neither definable nor containable within a particular historical frame or a historicized body: it is neither singular nor can it be generalized. As Negri cites Marx in the *Grundrisse*: “production also is not only a particular production. Rather, it is always a certain social body, a social subject, which is active in a greater or sparser totality of branches of production” (1991: 44; *Grundrisse*, 86). Production is a social idea. “*The category of production*,” concludes Negri, “in the essential terms which distinguish it, and with the totality which characterizes it—a veritable social articulation of reality—*can only be constituted as a category of difference*, as a totality of subjects, of differences, of antagonism” (1991: 44; Negri’s emphasis). Inflected through history and connected in particular to a history of changing social relations and changing material realities, production—even generation (reproduction)—is mobile and multiple, partial, and total, and the identities called in to inhabit the symbolic of the generative form are themselves transitional. As production becomes real in relation to the production of subjects and bodies, it acts and mobilizes through the material production of gender. In this, Negri’s ontologies of production resemble Judith Butler’s theory of gendered performativity that I analyzed in chapter 3, in that production is always the production of gender *and* the production of the social through gender. In Negri’s neoliberal/postmodern world of “real subsumption,” all work is on its way to becoming “women’s work.”

This formulation of all production as reproduction explains capital’s intensification at the same time as the unsustainability of capitalist methods of exploitation: its implosion. Critics have been divided about Hardt and Negri’s stance that this hardening of capital’s systems conditions the forms of its dissolution. Eugene Holland, for example, wants to divide Hardt and Negri’s philosophical modeling of capital onto two planes: the virtual or potential concepts and the historical actualization. The virtual concepts “provide a certain way of addressing the problem, with the aim of eventually solving it” (126) particularly by “the role of (nonlabor) markets” (125) (e.g., unemployment) as a challenge to the sovereignty of imperialist orders.

Less appealing and less likely for Holland is its realization, for which there is no evidence.¹⁷ On the other hand, Timothy Brennan and Ellen Meiksins Wood adamantly scold Hardt and Negri for envisioning the potential for radical challenge as nothing less than a deeper immersion in the most heinous aspects of appropriation, accumulation, and control. The ambiguities and shiftiness of Hardt and Negri's depictions of capital's work could be seen as reflecting neoliberalism's own ambiguities about the role of gender in production, particularly in the way neoliberalism simulates gender as *the* ideal that structures its system of exploitation from within.

"The so-called feminization of work" appears as "real subsumption" in the following ways: the overtaking of productive process by reproductive organization, the suppression of independent "use value," the need for capital to diminish "necessary labor time" (reproductive time) to zero, the conversion of the bulk of production toward social relations and life-forms, the appropriation of social time as the time of production, and the transformation of commodity-objects into circulating symbolic forms exchanged as value (commodity production as ideological (immaterial) production, or as the production of affective social relations). To take "use value" as an example: "use value" was the standpoint of separation from the dominant tendencies of productive capital as Marx describes primitive accumulation and then industrialization. It usually pointed to a traditional or pre-technological form of life prior to capitalism, often centered on domestic life, with a division of labor organized in accordance with familial hierarchies. Knowledge, including technological knowledge, was traditional and belonged to the worker. This separation or temporal autonomy can even be seen, Negri notes, in Kant's Critiques, where the "private" interior of the subject, governed by time, has no correspondence with the exterior defined through space, extension, and measurement. In industrial capitalism, too, the "time of life" can be seen as outside the spatialization of commodity circulation, as "autonomous," domestic, private, or familial life where subjects are made. However, in "real subsumption," "use value" cannot be exteriorized because production is identical with social time, and social time is the means of extraction of social value.¹⁸ Instead of being measured in terms of the time-units extractable through the productive process—for example, measured as a quantity of objects manipulated through an assembly line—, "use value" appears as a quality: an idea, form of life, language, affectivity, relationship that production needs to valorize itself. "Use value," Negri says, "is creative" (1991: 73); it constitutes the solid subjectivity of the worker, its [the worker's] autonomous ability to extend its needs and desires—its reproduction—against capital's profitability. In other words, "use value" is the collective social time within the process of production: the time of

socialization, of the production of subjects. Capital absorbs “use value” as necessary for production even as “use value” tends toward autonomy.

Within Negri’s analysis of “use value,” “women’s work”—like Kant’s subjectivity—is what refuses synthesis or mediation. Negri speaks of “real subsumption” as a mode of time, a “tendency” (rather than as an empirical instance), where the “after” is already taking place as separate, without recourse to the “before,” as its own constitution. Replacing the classical Marxist moment of the transition, where time is negated and overcome in its forward projection, the “tendency” is a nexus of specific features and social relations embedded in the present modes of production but antagonistic to them, and that open toward a general realignment, developing as a separation¹⁹: the “what is *to come*” as it gestates, a restlessness of the future that materializes in the present and resists it.

The analoguing of historical transition as a pregnancy is not just expressive or metaphoric but rather a serious dispute with Heideggerian phenomenology: Negri reads “Being towards death” as a closing down of new rationality, a negativity,²⁰ whereas for Negri, capital poses limits that generate autonomous subjectivities, actions to-be-born, a creativities. This orientation develops out of his reading of Spinoza, where God is ontological and total but still productive, still versatile, active, and multiple because of its connection to life—God is everything but still expanding because “the intensity of the first ontological passage has reached its maximum pregnancy” (1991A: 50). Negri explains this as “the opposite of the dialectical method” (1991A: 50) because a new ontology—or attribute (human consciousness, or method)—exists as infinite *and* as part of God but also as its own cause and its own foundation: “The attribute is the same thing as the substance, and yet its difference is stated in relation to the intellect” (1991A: 57). Two temporalities exist at once, and the fact that one has to be part of the other does not mean that they must not be separate.

Though Negri says that Spinoza abandons the “attribute” in his future work, its “pregnancy” reappears at moments when human politics, history, and reason are operating as an ontology on a separate plane from divine ontology: as an interruption or a rupture. Sometimes he’ll use a different term, as when here he uses “mode” to imply the same sort of temporal hinge as “attribute”: of an afterwards whose ontology is already present: “Reconstructing a general horizon that maintains and develops the ontological pregnancy of the mode, the power of the world, implies a series of completely new phenomenological and critical instruments” (1991A: 84). Talking about the imagination and its role in interpreting Scripture, Negri sees the “attribute” or the “mode” as pregnant with a future collective imagination, “The restoration of natural light [by which Scripture illuminates its own historical

origins, or constitutive force] is a historical and human operation, and it is at the same time an excavation of reality that reveals the ontologically pregnant collective force of this human conquest, a conquest that renews being” (1991A: 101). Negri evokes “pregnancy” when historicity or phenomenological man is producing its own separate reality, an experience both inside the present and outside of calculable time (as a new collective time): “[I]t [politics] is an ontologically pregnant horizon of the continuous incursions of power (*potentia*) toward constitution, of the intersections and tensions and antagonisms that a physics of historicity describes” (1991A: 119).

By referencing potentiality like a pregnancy, Negri challenges temporality. This new temporality, or “living labor,” brings into being a type of production based in imagination, subjectivities, and bodies rather than in repetitious processes and circulations commanded from above (from the system, or from God) whose objects are measured outcomes. It also denotes a type of historicity formed around open existence, life and its innovations that test and antagonize what is already constituted. Like the tendency, reproduction as production assumes the temporality of pregnancy: life jumps out of the deadened past, as separate (instead of living labor separating away from dead labor as profit). This reenvisioning of historical processes through the temporality of women’s bodies is Negri’s alternative to thinking through the dialectic and its mediations; it brings into play a positivity, an affirmation of a new life that does not require death or the negative in the movement of its emergence.²¹ As the hinge of the transition, pregnancy or reproduction models the temporality that marks the crisis: the future sociality inside the present, the appropriation of the present by the future that is already inside of it. This temporality explains labor, where labor is the force of life within what-is that carries the dynamic strength of the constituting power to-come: “*Living labor is internal... to the rational constitution of dead labor*” (2003: 82; Negri’s emphasis). The time of living labor, of “use value,” is inside dead labor (constant capital, the eternal past, the State) but opposes it and bursts through the edge as innovation, as generation. Through labor, with its demand for the extension of reproductive time, the time of production accumulates, collects, mutates, diffuses, innovates, opens, generates—but against unification. The social time of living labor is not just a “continuous—reproduction of itself” (2003: 153) but rather “presents itself as a new being” (2003: 154) so that the future is already an active experience within the present and separate from it.

The combination of the centrality of labor and the rise of reproduction into production, saturating it, make productive femininity or “women’s work” into the core of productive capital. The collective time of social coordination (of generation, of socialization, of reproduction) is necessary for

production at the same time as it is antagonistic to the measured-time of exploitation. The structuring of production and historical time through the time of pregnancy—or reproduction—is more than metaphoric: the idea of constant generation is, for Negri, fundamental to his central concern with “constituent power.” Negri developed the concept of “constituent power” in order to move beyond debates among leftist intellectuals of the 1960’s over the relational definitions of base and superstructure. In parallel, he wanted to overcome the problem of structure in Foucaultian thinking, where institutions, force, and power in the system precede the emergence of subjects and act on them.²² This compromises thinking on resistance. Negri attributes the ethics of “constituent power” to the questioning of teleology that “militant feminism” developed in 1968 (2003: 229). “Constituent power” is an open eruption from below, a potential in human labor, a productivity: “Constituent power is defined emerging from the vortex of the void, from the abyss of the absence of determinations, as a totally open need . . . Constituent power is this force that, on the absence of finalities, is projected out as an all-powerful and always more expansive tendency” (1999: 14). “Constituent power” is the ontological force of production that assumes the constancy of revolution, the demand of constant renewal. Though “constituent power” cannot be reduced to a particular content, to a past or future constitution, it exists always as “the social order of labor” (1999: 247), or rather, in the generation and socialization of beings that, as collectivity, cannot be synthesized. Negri’s understanding of constituent power makes production appear as reproduction through equating the production of time and system to pregnant women’s bodies. He de-natures women’s bodies by invoking them as machines of productivity. As, through reproduction, capital takes on the collective form of the social, the social can project itself into a separate existence, an autonomous, socializing, and affirmative life-form that actively creates reality as a new foundation. As “women’s work,” constitutive power is oriented toward difference in the future.

In other words: in the classical Marxist view, labor evolves through a series of historical stages, each succeeding the other through negation: living labor is forced into the factory after capital imposes a violent separation between labor and its old means of production, and capital socializes labor through factory-time. In “real subsumption,” the present is pregnant with the future: the factory extends over the entirety of social life, generating social cooperation (“the common”) and a social subjectivity saturated by the time of need (reproduction) that escapes from the measured time-space of exploitation (the extraction of surplus). Capital then expropriates “the common,” subjects it to a regime of privatization, but social cooperation and the desire to constitute revive elsewhere, through different narratives,

in autonomous places, “creatively modeling, *ex novo*, the materials that it touches” (1999: 326). In capitalism, the juridical system (the constitution), too, needs “constituent power” to maintain itself, but “constituent power” is always escaping, taking leave, metamorphosing, and producing new, living being on another horizon that cannot be written into a constitution or a set of representational laws, of simulations. On one level, “constituent power” closes down into juridical power as law is codified into the constitution and the representational State, or becomes congealed in dead labor, turned into measure; on another, it—as pure desire, or ontology, as singularity—cannot assume symbolic form, is socialized, collectivized, and therefore resists synthesis and subordination to the present system.

Integrated within both ideological apparatuses of the law and the State as well as in the material relations of laboring processes, “constituent power” responds to the inconsistencies in the classical Marxist account of base and superstructure by turning production into reproduction, that is, by transforming all production—ideological and material, reproductive and productive—simultaneously into the socialization of subjects. Negri’s description of “real subsumption” infuses the field of capitalist production with a social life that appears as the extension of reproduction, or “women’s work,” over everything. Ideology is no longer separated from production in a position of reproductive “relative autonomy” as Althusser would formulate it, creating the conditions of temporal displacement that open toward the transition to the next social stage. Neither is ideology charted, as Gayle Rubin and other feminists have charted it (and I analyze in chapter 1), as the circulation and exchange of women as symbols outside of the history of production. Rather, capital’s products are themselves circulating ideas, communications, and social relations (“general intellect”) made and exchanged as value. Women that in structural anthropology and psychoanalysis were circulating symbols of exchange are now internal to production (what Hardt and Negri call “immaterial production”²³), as affect, ideas, sensibilities, and relationships now figure as capital’s very substance: “The collective time . . . of symbolic transvaluation that functions as superstructure—is here brought completely back to, and rediscovered within reality, and is all the more unyielding the more it fluctuates across and within the determinations of production” (2003: 63). The extension of “women’s work” over the entire productive field is what allows Hardt and Negri to get beyond the problem posed by ideology as a reflection of reality, as relatively autonomous, as an ideal outside of material interactions, or as a tension with the base, making ideology coextensive with reality and politics coextensive with the social.

This “postmodern” absorption²⁴ of superstructure and circulation into production means that production now takes shape as social cooperation, as

an integration of social and communicational life in a totality—like a family but “beyond individuality, beyond the family, toward ever more complex and ever more versatile communities” (2003: 98). Production *is* the reproduction of social life. The class struggle, in Marx’s *Capital*, over the parts of the working-day is transformed, in Negri, into an internal, integral antagonism between the temporalities of life and socialization (reproduction), on the one hand, and, on the other, the valorization of capital (production), or capital’s drive to measure “use value” as time (or labor power) and turn it into “surplus value.” In other words, for Negri the principle antagonism of production, the class antagonism, takes place in the mutation of “women’s labor” as primary production and source of profit. Through the mystified form of the wage, capital divides the time of the working-day between “necessary time,” or the time it takes for the worker to produce enough to reproduce himself (and the next generation), and “surplus time,” or time that the worker works for the capitalist for free, subsumed by capital in the exchange of labor power. As “free time,” “socially average necessary time” (or reproductive time for labor, “use value”) struggles to expand against “surplus,” or time that capital uses without exchanging anything for it.²⁵ For Negri, even as capital tries to minimize the time of reproduction to the barest minimum or to nonexistence, it still needs “necessary time,” or creativity, in order to increase surplus.²⁶ The subsumption of this exterior space of reproduction (domestic space; traditionally, the time of “mothering”) within the temporal analytic of capital creates the possibility of revolt for Negri: revolt happens when “women’s work” as “use value” becomes capital (so that capital can become social) and yet is separate from capital, subsumed but irreducible and therefore antagonistic. “Surplus value” itself is an internally antagonistic operation.

In classical Marxism, there is a “before” in which “use value” is independent, both temporally and spatially exterior, and then an after, where “use value” becomes a limit to the system, a point of resistance. In “real subsumption,” on the other hand, there is no time, space, or type of organization exogenous to the system. Capital has turned time and space into collective constituent time, the time of reproduction or “women’s time,” that it aims to codify and exploit. Here, “use value” is the horizon of a constitutive internal antagonism—a plural and collective antagonism inherent in capital—, impossible to reduce to an equivalence with exchange value or measured time. No longer exogenous, “use value” is “an element of crisis within the process” (1991: 55). “Use value” is the worker’s ability to expand socially average necessary labor time, or reproduction, indefinitely; it puts a limit on capital’s ability to accumulate and to realize its surplus: “This is the hypothesis that the quantity of value of the necessary part of the working

day is *not only* more and more rigid but also tends toward higher values and therefore tends to diminish—subjectively, actively—the surplus value that can be extorted. . . . Necessary labor can valorize itself autonomously, the world of needs can and must expand” (1991: 101; Negri’s emphasis). Unlike in classical dialectics, where the antagonism can be resolved in a synthesis, mediation, compromise, negotiation, or combination, and the greater use of machines leads at first to greater amounts of accumulated labor power, Negri projects “use value” as separable from capital, as an opposing, independent, collective subject—as he says, quoting Marx: “the *separation* between these inorganic conditions of human existence and their active existence” (1991: 109; Marx’s emphasis). “Real subsumption” depends both on the expansion of reproduction (as creativity and social relations) and on the reduction of its necessary labor time (“use value”) to zero, the turning of all time into productive time. As capital pushes ever harder toward liberating itself from living labor and reducing its time of reproduction, Negri predicts greater antagonism and endless crisis.

“Women’s labor” of reproduction, socialization, and production of subjects is therefore, for Negri, the crux of the transition. As necessary time (or “use value,” or labor’s reproductive time), it comes to represent that what capital needs for its own reproduction is also, simultaneously, its limit, or its internal block to its own self-valorization. “Women’s labor” is necessary for capital’s reproduction of itself because it socializes subjectivity, producing the collective subjectivities that anticipate capital’s future: capital finds value in the present production of its future collective sociality—ideas, relationships, affects. Yet, “women’s labor” as reproduction or necessary labor, once it is internal to capital, stands as a limit to capital’s self-realization for the very reason that it, in its social organization, resists capital’s drive to expand by expanding its time-measure, or quantity: there is a part of it that is excessive to capital, uncontainable, or untranslatable by it.²⁷ “Communism,” says Negri, “is the negation of all measure, the affirmation of the most exasperated plurality—creativity” (1991: 33). The idea that “women’s work” is a target for capital’s drive to count everything in its place for the sake of police logic, or privatization—this idea is one that Negri shares with Jacques Rancière, as is the simultaneous sense that “women’s work” is constituted as uncountable because of its relationship to morality, socialization, education, equality, and community.²⁸ However, Rancière goes on to attribute this incommensurability to the continuation of debate necessary for the possibility of politics,²⁹ and thinks of it as formative and unremitting. Negri, rather, thinks of the uncountability of women’s labor of socialization, ultimately, as destructive and at the same time constitutive of an anticapitalist, productive force. In response to Negri, Rancière rejects his idea of communism, based

on what he reads as a production of subjects from inside the “failure of the capitalist utopia” (2010: 174), and upholds instead a democracy created by “the free association of men and women implementing the egalitarian principle” (2010: 176), though he sees this “principle” as perennially and continually embattled by the unassailable, relentless logic of the police, or privatization, and the count. For Rancière, there is no way for the police to stop policing or privatizing (including, privatizing “women’s work” in one form or another). This insistence that everything is accounted for and everything in its place is crucial, for the “dis-agreement” that is politics, against the cry of “the common,” or the part that cannot be counted.

In contrast, Negri sees “women’s work”—“use value,” the work of reproduction, “necessary labor,” or free labor—through the split that constitutes the irreducible subject: a metamorphosis, an insurrection, a refusal. “Women’s work” constitutes subjects in the break from production, as a separation. “Women’s work” is both constituted as the current face of capital and escapes from that constitution by always constituting anew. The revolutionary strength of “women’s work” is in its destructive opposition to the forces of privatization that try to reduce it to the count—that is, to a quantity of exchange, to measure. Negri’s placement of “women’s work” confronts feminism as a predicament: on the one hand, women and their work exist only as capital, in its logic of privatization through the measure, and capital only exists as “women’s work.” Yet, women and their work are central not only to capitalism and its socialization but also to a transition. “Real subsumption” seems to fulfill the dreams of feminism, eclipsing gender difference by putting everyone inside production as “women at work”: “[T]here is no difference between production and reproduction, between man and woman” (2003: 227), Negri recognizes. On the other hand, as “women’s work,” capital no longer needs women.³⁰ This recreates women as autonomous, that is, as radical, subversive potential.

“Biopolitics”

A terminology revealing “women’s work” as the ontological substrata of productivity, “biopolitics” is when the processes of governance are oriented toward the production and management of life rather than the infliction of death, meaning that politics merges with the social. The body is the source of both joy and potential. Life is always resistance. “Biopolitics” is the term Hardt and Negri use to describe this production of social relations and life itself that “*exceed* all quantitative measurement” (2009: 135). “Biopolitics” indicates that women and feminism must be integral to any analysis of labor, productivity, and class struggle because “women’s work” indicates that

corporeal experience must be restored to the socialization of subjects (which is increasingly the dominant mode of production).

A force “from below” particularly developed from second-wave feminism’s “move toward a standpoint of bodies” (2009: 26), “biopolitics” returns power to bodies, the creative power to produce through labor: “[T]he concept of biopolitics for me,” says Negri, “ultimately need to confront and address the question of labor” (Casarino and Negri, 2008: 148). “Biopolitics” therefore gets its substance from the productive forces in general that Hardt and Negri term “biopower”: “The paradox, though, is that even in the moment of capital’s triumph in the 1960’s, when bodies are directly invested in the mode of production and the commodification of life has rendered their relations entirely abstract, that is the point when, immediately within the processes of industrial and social production, bodies spring back onto center stage in the form of revolt” (2009: 27). As “when it is the body that produces” (2003: 164), “biopolitics” allows Hardt and Negri to talk about the general turn of production toward the production of bodies in action (rather than material commodities) as a resistance from within and from below.³¹

Often evoked through the female body or allusions to “women’s work,” the use of “biopolitics” links up the Marxist interest in reproduction, particularly the reproduction of labor power, with a focus on sexuality and its production of life: “In the biopolitical sphere of life,” Hardt and Negri begin, “life is made to work for production and production is made to work for life. It is a great hive in which the queen bee continuously oversees production and reproduction” (2000: 32). “Women’s work” frames the “biopolitical” because women’s bodies are the entryway for the diversity of life and the “general hybridization of being” (2003: 206), the contamination of races and languages that compose the new being of living labor. Situating the body as the point of contact with the “to come,” “biopolitics” also opens up the field of production to a diversity of forms, energies, and reactions—what Hardt and Negri call “the multitude,” or “the ensemble of sensorial, perceptive, and mental mutations that the bodies themselves produce” (2003: 235). Though seemingly attributable to organic cause, these birthing bodies are not naturalized, corresponding instead, in their ontology, to the productive machine.

For Hardt and Negri, “biopolitics” thus shows ontology in movement, that is, as always—like living labor—recognizably effective even while assuming different materialities historically. “Biopolitics” makes visible that history is acted on “from below,” and that oppressive force is a reaction to the historical momentum that constitutes living labor and its socialization. Hardt and Negri understand the problem of corporeality in contemporary formation is that bodies disappear, eclipsed into a “transcendent realm” (2009: 33).

In religious fundamentalisms, for example, bodies vanish as simply pathways to the soul, as a woman under a veil or the material of dietary restrictions, whereas in nationalisms and economisms, the body appears as a central target of discipline and command, as a container of value. Yet these fundamentalisms, as well, ultimately must consider the body as militant in its revolt, that is, as needing controls.³² In contrast, “biopolitics” provides an analysis of bodies as woven into a critique of transcendence as property: “When he [Foucault] insists that there is no central, transcendent locus of power but only a myriad of micropowers that are exercised in capillary forms across the surfaces of bodies in their practices and disciplinary regimes, . . . Foucault’s analyses of bodies and power . . . really make good on some of the intuitions that the young Marx could not completely grasp about the need to bring the critique of property, along with all transcendental structures of capitalist society, back to the phenomenology of bodies” (2009: 31).

Though “biopolitics” is a set of symptoms of contemporary power mostly analyzed in reference to Foucault, Negri has also indicated its indebtedness to feminism: “Sexuality, rather, is the fundamental element of human reproduction. I intend reproduction here in its strict Marxian sense: labor power reproduces itself above all through sexuality. . . . I don’t think I’m adding anything new to what contemporary feminism has been saying for a while, namely, that the choice of different styles of life and different styles of sexual play is overdetermined by the structuring of reproduction, which is as important as production itself” (Casarino, 2004: 166). The allusion to women’s bodies and “women’s work” within Hardt and Negri’s thoughts on “biopolitics” poses problems to the philosophical project that would be of interest to feminism. For one, the ontological aspect of “biopolitics” flattens out productivity, identities, and situations: the body as the focal point of production tends to void out time as measure (e.g., as the division between necessary labor time (reproduction) and surplus (production), or between “use value” and exchange), drawing all temporality indistinguishably into the production process as a whole: as productivity powers everything, there is no difference from it. Thus, the “biopolitical” has similar concrete strategies to the “biopower” that opposes it and tries to dominate it. As Alberto Toscano has noted, this philosophical perspective marginalizes a central element of Foucault’s thinking on “biopolitics,” that is, that it is an “anti-universal’ concept” (111). Whereas Foucault’s disciplined bodies are meant to cast doubt on stabilizing, transcendent concepts of political theory like state, sovereignty, and labor, localizing the institutional networks of their subjectification and showing capitalism to be penetrating deeper into the micro-levels of existence, Hardt and Negri’s collapse of “biopolitics” into an ontology shifts “biopolitics” “from a localized analytical register to that of a

global totality” (125): living labor in general. Particularity is lost. The effect, says Toscano, is a blurring of fields, forces, and categories where it becomes impossible to distinguish oppressive power from the “biopolitical” living labor that antagonizes it from within: the biopolitical force “from below”—no longer local, historically disassociated (as “traditional”), or spatially exterior (as “domestic”)—inhabits the same collective temporal register as capital and its biopower. Additionally, the ambiguities in the periodization of “biopolitics”—that it appears as the current phase of history under “real subsumption” at the same time as merging all phases of production congruently into the now—makes it difficult to know what separation from the oppressive power of capital would entail.

What Toscano does not consider is that the move from the micro-levels of Foucaultian “biopolitics” to the universalizing grand-scheme of “real subsumption” or living labor that Hardt and Negri espouse passes through a re-rendering of the analytic of power. The fact that the universal of productive ontology has been feminized means that the universal is constantly coming upon its own internal limits: the limits of a returning particularity, of needs. Whereas Foucault’s notions of sexuality in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* only include women inasmuch as they are locked into the conjugal pair or hysterical, Hardt and Negri’s “biopolitics” treats femininity as the underlying, even the definitional force of all production. Yet, in its capacity of transforming production into reproduction, “women’s work” is also the maker of living labor with expanding needs and desires that put limits on the extraction of surplus.

The concerns this should raise for feminism include: (1) capitalist hegemony is primarily a sexual process in this view, meaning that its intensification entails its firmer expression through sexual practices, particularly violent ones; (2) the practices of sexuality developing through their integration with capitalism are not different in form from the ones that would separate themselves, though these later ones would be excessive to systemization, challenging the system to sexualize more, and beyond the law. Sexuality has become both a structure for wielding power, instituting command, and subordinating labor on the one hand and, on the other, an energy from below blended into the machine of production. As Cesare Casarino has remarked, this sexualization of power and production is not, for Negri, linked to pleasure;³³ (3) sexual difference or gender orientation are no longer a terminology around which critique or complaint can be developed; (4) since bodies are always bodies-in-revolt, differential capacities are expected equally to celebrate strength, without regard to ability or injury. Mutation is always seen as increased vitality; (5) though, through “biopolitics,” “women’s work” has been abstracted into productivity so that all production takes shape in

reference to the female labor of socialization in the domestic sphere of industrialization, productivity still translates into “the so-called feminization of work,” meaning that femininity has not been completely de-essentialized and decoupled from the meanings of private life even as it has morphed into the productive machine; (6) not only do Hardt and Negri reenvision capital as the so-called feminization of work but they also invest “women’s work” with the constituent refusal, antagonism, or separation from work. Such a framing of “women’s work” as a break or rupture from capital—as the transition—on the one hand endows “women’s work” with radical optimism and potential while, on the other hand, marking it as a setup for under- and unemployment, under-remuneration, and the like; and (7) the flattening out of production and reproduction—between gendered times—translates into a flattening out of the time-distance between what Hardt and Negri call “biopolitical” centers. With the economic stress moving from commodities to social relations, “confusing, as we have said, the division between production and reproduction” (2009: 135), “Third World labor” enters domestic spaces, service sectors, and low-skilled manufacturing in First World contexts: “This shift goes hand in hand with the ‘feminization’ of work, often combined with the racial stereotype of the ‘nimble fingers’ of women in the global South” (2009: 135). Though Hardt and Negri interpret this migration as potentially subversive, it has also intensified exploitation (see chapter 3), and it tends to wish away any acknowledgement that national borders matter in cultural terms, in the production of value, or in relations of inequality.

Another problem in Hardt and Negri’s adoption of feminism is that the ontological program substitutes production for agency. Agency is the heart-of-the-matter, particularly agency “from below,” and much of the texts’ energy and excitement resides in this optimism over the possibility of change, so welcome after poststructuralism’s depersonalized and objectified dominance of structure, narratives, language, and the image. As well, agency, even the agency of “women’s work,” is always a relation to class struggle. Hardt and Negri reconceive ontology through materialism in order to formulate ontology through movement, and historical movement in particular. Yet, events (e.g., constitutions, revolutions) arise only when reproduction, the force of constituent power, or the relentless push toward revolt, emerges from the belly of the ontology of production and disturbs it from within, like an alien embryo. Often (though not necessarily) proceeding from a crowd mentality or the logic of the “swarm,” the ontological grip of production is persistent, where living labor appropriates surplus *because* it falls under capital’s control. True: Hardt and Negri are interested in solving the problem of structure by constituting force “from below,” as decision, and

insist on the primacy of resistance over repression, and true: they acknowledge that part of poststructuralism's or Foucault's failure in theorizing "from below" was a failure in theorizing the connections between intentions (or potentials) and acts—or the place of the decision without sovereignty.³⁴ Yet, the subject, its creativity and imagination, is nascent most strenuously through its reproductions, assimilations, and affirmations of the system of the productive machine. Women's bodies have agency because they merge with the machine.

"Immaterial Labor"

Some of these problems for feminism and its connections to "biopolitics" become visible in Hardt and Negri's treatment of "immaterial labor," or the turn of production toward ideas, aesthetics, information, knowledge, emotions, symbols, and languages. "Immaterial labor" is affective, cognitive, and relational. It can be defined as when object commodities give way to the production of the "human brain" or what Marx called the "general intellect," that is, the entire field of social interactions and imagination, and of life in all its corporeality: "the producer," emphasizes Negri, "(the worker or proletarian, intellectual or material labour-power) reappropriated the tool of production, which increasingly is called the brain" (2003: 136). Whereas Marx posed the separation of manual and mental labor as the first class division, in the current social relations of neoliberalism, "use value"—or an organization of production where workers had decisive knowledge of production, and capital is outside to the activity—has reasserted itself, and work has thereby reacquired its autonomy. Often associated with computer technologies in particular, "immaterial labor" means that actions and engagements outside of the conventional workplace or the factory feed into production, making all spaces and times potentially a source of value. Though clearly a scenario for super-exploitation, where capital has its tentacles reaching out into the capillaries of human action as well as into every node of nature and there is never a time or space free from work, "immaterial labor" also is the form of production of "the common," abstractions and temporalities like language that belong to everybody, that cannot be privatized, enclosed, or named as property (despite attempts on that score) or commanded by capital.³⁵ "Immaterial labor" parallels, in a positive sense, what the capitalist system has designated as "externalities," or effects that enterprises and businesses have expelled from the sphere of their responsibility, pushing costs onto all others (like environmental degradation) but also denying their ownership. "Immaterial labor" is thus the condition that allows Hardt and Negri to claim that "biopolitical labor-power is becoming more and

more autonomous, with capital simply hovering over it parasitically with its disciplinary regimes, apparatuses of capture, mechanisms of expropriation, financial networks, and the like” (2009: 142). Because “immaterial labor” projects a limit beyond capital’s capture and control, Hardt and Negri see it as a tendency of crisis, a function of “the common,” an organic organization of labor that is antagonistic toward privatized production.

Scholars have adopted a spectrum of positions on the specific historical changes that “immaterial labor” inaugurates. Though some critics have idealistically concluded that the means of production can never be separated from the worker in creative labor, and so creative labor is ushering in greater freedom in the workplace, others have understood “immaterial labor” to be implicated in new neoliberal class relations and “the so-called feminization of work” in ways not necessarily directing toward revolutionary outcomes. Tiziana Terranova, for example, lauds creative labor as an exciting, “pioneering” (76) “high-tech gift economy” (77) because it channels “excess productive activities that are pleurably embraced” (78) though, she continues, at the same time they are “often shamelessly exploited” (78): people are willing to work for free, she argues, to make profits for others because they consider the provision of content to be enjoyable. In a similarly positive vein, Carlo Vercellone understands “immaterial labor” as representing a phase in capitalist production where the worker has reappropriated time and knowledge in ways that emancipate her from the wage relation. He then confidently asserts that the loss of such worker autonomy could only happen with a “lowering of the general level of education of the workforce” (33) resulting from the demise of a public education system, a historical change that he (idealistically) finds unimaginable. For Vercellone, following Marx, the development of a public education system was “a central site of the crisis of the Fordist wage relation” (27) because it allowed the worker to accumulate knowledge and a “diffuse intellectuality” that furthered market interests but still went “beyond the logic of the market” (27). However, this conclusion does not take into account that the public education system is under attack in the US and worldwide, and that the ever-strengthening struggle to defeat public education in the United States and elsewhere partly has to do with an ideological struggle where knowledge is being redefined as *knowledge for the workforce*, commodifiable and transmittable as objects, and schools themselves are being redesigned as private, for-profit businesses. (As I show in chapter 4, part of this ideological struggle has to do with an appropriation of women’s bodies as endowed with the productive capacities and knowledges of private accumulation, evident in the public discourse about gender segregation in public schools.)

Others, however, are less celebratory about how users provide free content or reconnect working bodies with creative knowledge. “Immaterial labor,” such critics forewarn, represents a repetition of certain forms of class control and imperialist expropriation in a newly feminized form. Laikwan Pang, for example, has criticized utopian interpretations of “immaterial labor,” the “information society,” or the “creative economy” for insisting that creative labor is democratically accessible (“diffuses the boundaries between manual and intellectual labor” (56)) and marks the end of exploitation because it puts the means of production—the human brain—into the control of workers. Actually, says Pang, it reinforces an unequal division of labor, often between nations: “The migration of monotonous assembly-line work is in part willed by the citizens of wealthy nations, so that they—and particularly members of the younger generation—can partake in more ‘innovative’ and ‘rewarding’ careers” (56).

“Immaterial labor” has also been interpreted as a response to crisis. Christian Marazzi, for example, has linked “immaterial labor” and the information economy with “the intensification of information flows; industrial dislocation and concentration; the internalization of the goods and services markets (‘global village’); the financialization of process of accumulation (the multiplication of securities markets); the dismantling of the welfare state, and the redefinition of the specific weights of the various economic powers” (87). In particular, Marazzi sees “immaterial labor” as arising in conjunction with the financialization of public sector spending, when workers’ savings (e.g., pension funds) are corralled into securities investments (in the early seventies, starting with the bailout of New York City) to fill in for the dwindling public resources resulting from the deflationary policies of the Federal Reserve. Workers’ household savings got diverted into global investments. Such a change meant that workers’ interests dovetailed with the interests of those who had been their wage-payers. Workers in the industrialized North would support expansionist policies at the expense of solidarity with the working-classes elsewhere. This “democratization” of securities investments required that new labor initiatives be oriented toward language, or the building of consensus and public opinion around stock trends and liquidity. Marazzi understands this overproduction of language, following Kristeva (although Marazzi does not cite her), as “the passage (the so-called ‘thetic cut’) from the intrauterine semiotic sphere to the symbolic sphere, from communication inside the mother’s womb to the completely symbolic language of the historically determined world” (31). In other words, the rise of a productive sphere of communication means the final victory of the Symbolic over the Semiotic. This demands the sacrifice of women’s work of socialization which is overtaken

by a patriarchal appropriation and circulation of language commodities and symbols (or brands).

The feminization of “immaterial labor” is seen by some critics as a pitfall, a cue where Hardt and Negri don their rose-colored blinders and shroud the tendency in invented potentials instead of recognizing the grim reality of work in some sectors of technology and electronics, particularly for immigrant and other workers outside of the industrial centers, and particularly for women. For example, even as he acknowledges how Negri’s interest in the “social worker” over the “mass worker” was influenced by “the emergence of the feminist component” (138) as part of 1960s social movements, Nick Dyer-Witford notes that “immaterial labor” is often more exploitive of women than Fordism was because “the social costs of convulsive industrialization are relentlessly offloaded onto unpaid female housework” (149). He goes on to remark: “If ‘general intellect’ is strongly associated with digital networked processes, then how does it take account of the traditional, and in many areas persisting, patterns, of masculine predominance and female exclusion that have characterized high-tech development?” (147–148). Because it exacerbates the relations of exploitation in manufacturing by importing them, unequally, into service locations between areas of the global North and the global South, “immaterial labor” does not seem capable of assuming revolutionary potential in Hardt and Negri’s terms.

Even among the so-called “white collar” classes of the creative labor workforce, “immaterial labor” has been seen as prejudicial to women. As Melissa Gregg shows in ethnographic detail, with the personalization of computers and communications systems, the space of work has become more flexible, some of it taking place in homes and often encouraging extended working hours and requiring workers to constantly be “on call” through technological devices. This “function creep” has made women able to enter the professional workplace in increasing numbers but has also led to more time spent at work in all its forms: “The refusal to mount a sustained critique of long hours culture, and the gendered assumptions underpinning it, had the effect of making women feel grateful for so-called ‘flexible’ work arrangements. These were conditions that allowed women to maintain traditional childcare and home maintenance expectations but only in addition to paid work” (4).

Hardt and Negri do attribute to empirical forms of “immaterial labor” “intense forms of violation and alienation” (2004: 66) connected to the precarity, mobility, and flexibility in forms of labor that “blur the distinction between work time and nonwork time” (2004: 66). Yet, they also see that capital’s insufficiencies in turning ideas into property—with intellectual property rights, for example, or genetic information—have created a

certain unraveling of the concept of property itself as “the common” asserts its antagonism. The productions of the imagination, of socialization, and of language—music, texts, ideas, information, education, care, financial devices, communications, and journalism, for example—do not always easily fit into capital’s traditional methods of calculation, even as they are becoming a greater proportion of what capitalism is producing. Capital’s failure to bring the creativity and innovation that its economic development and growth require into its legal structures of ownership and profit crashes it up against its own limits. For example, “The privatization of the electronic ‘commons’ has become an obstacle to further innovation. When communication is the basis of production, then privatization immediately hinders creativity and productivity” (2004: 185). The future of social coordination through “the commons” is already inside the crisis of property within the “immaterial labor” regime. “The rising biopolitical productivity of the multitude is being undercut and blocked,” they conclude, “by the processes of private appropriation” (2004: 186). Envisioning “the way things are” as entrenched and unimpeachable, the critics of Hardt and Negri’s consideration of “immaterial” and “biopolitical” labor do not give credence to signs in the present that could attribute “women’s work”—and its sense of social coordination and affective productivity—with introducing a different future form of social organization that would break apart the domination of property. Hardt and Negri’s interpretation of the new forms of “immaterial labor” considers how the tendency of “women’s work” in the present breaks through into forms of social organization at the limits of capital’s future.

Alberto Toscano’s ruminations should be remembered here. “Women’s work” is the complicated site, in Hardt and Negri’s assessment, where the particularities of “biopolitics” merges into the universalism of living labor, often antagonistically. Dialectic thinking, from Hegel to Habermas, often traces the origin of the dialectic to the primitive and infantile—immediate sensations, pretechnological traditionalism, and domestic experience—that the movement of history and subjectivity absorbs and appropriates. Hardt and Negri, on the other hand, attribute dialectical thinking to bourgeois thinking, as nonidentical or autonomous forms of social organization—or, “use value” or “women’s work”—compromise themselves into a resistance to the system produced within the system itself by the system’s normal operations of production and accumulation. As “real subsumption” makes capital’s profitability dependent on social coordination, collective cognition, and imagination, “women’s work” as universal stands inside capital as what capitalism cannot absorb, particularizing it, exposing its limits. “Capital,” Hardt and Negri explain, “—although it may constrict biopolitical labor, expropriate its products, even in some cases provide necessary instruments

of production—does not organize *productive cooperation*... In biopolitical production, ... capital does not determine the cooperative arrangement, or at least not to the same extent. Cognitive labor and affective labor generally produce cooperation autonomously from capitalist command” (2009: 140). In “immaterial” and “biopolitical” labor regimes of “women’s work,” capital is external to productivity.

Conclusion

In Hardt and Negri’s account of neoliberalism, gender is not disappearing as a form of economic or cultural organization, nor can it be relegated to noncorporeal, purely symbolic, ideal, or ideological existence, since its concrete bodies are needed by capital to produce value and command over social relations. This does not mean that Hardt and Negri reduce gender to biology but rather that capital works through gender, endowing the body with gender as value to exploit. Arguing that production and reproduction have merged, they demonstrate that under neoliberalism, the exploitation of “women’s work” *is* the exploitation of labor, and the alienation of “women’s work” *is* a more extreme version of the alienation of labor described by Marx. As capitalist domination takes on the functions of industrialism’s autonomous private sphere—the functions related to socialization, reproduction, and the production of subjects—, “women’s work” has become increasingly a mechanism through which capitalist exploitation intensifies. Feminism’s wariness of class from the late sixties till now, its search for its own autonomous understanding of women’s oppression and liberation (as I analyzed in chapter 1), has paralleled capital’s increased capacities to manipulate class through manipulating the work of gender. Yet, Hardt and Negri understand that capital’s endowments of gender onto bodies also grants power to those bodies, the power of creation and generation. Hardt and Negri see women as other than their construction through work, as potentially outside of capital’s claims on them, as an autonomous form of productivity, because of their status as carriers of value under neoliberal capitalism, because reproduction has spread over production. The autonomy of “women’s work” demands the expansion of needs and worker time. Though capital realizes value by gendering bodies, gender itself exceeds capital’s command. For Hardt and Negri, as much as gender is capital’s need, it is also capitalism’s limit: capital’s demand for gender anticipates an increasingly unmanageable crisis.

Hardt and Negri’s descriptions of contemporary capitalism as “the so-called feminization of work” therefore highlight a particularly salient point for feminism: as women become the bearers of surplus and value for capital’s exploitation (as I analyze in chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4), “women’s

work” shows the fault-lines of a capitalism in crisis—“women’s work” is what forces freedom to surface. While feminism was exploring the possibilities of feminist liberation through work, Hardt and Negri would show that through “women’s work” considered as production, the creativity of the social explodes. One can easily shake one’s head at this, call it romantic, impossible, silly, liken it to a dirty version of Cinderella, to children’s tales gone wild. Or, one could judge it as cynical, as insisting that only as they sink into the harshest levels of neoliberal deprivation (read, feminization) will workers understand that they are blessed because they have nothing, not even a wage. Yet, one could also read Hardt and Negri to be saying that we *are already* in the most severe conditions of exploitation and economic polarization imaginable, with labor losing its organization, its political force, and its safety nets, but that these conditions are themselves creating types of social coordination that are the potential of something different. Hardt and Negri’s optimism is tempting, especially after postmodern theories like Baudrillard’s have made the present of production seem like a mechanized, bureaucratized field of disassociated symbols, no longer accessible to human manipulation or change. Linking up what women do or have done, their creative action, to a break in the present’s deep structures of domination (as Hardt and Negri do), reveals a necessary connection between women and freedom that is embedded in thinking gender as a marker of class struggle and class struggle as gendered through and through in neoliberalism. For Hardt and Negri, gender is the realization that the ontology of production must take into account the autonomy, affirmation, and independent creativity of its producers: their generativity of a new, multiple, and different reality. Hardt and Negri offer an invitation to feminism: they hold out the possibility that neoliberalism projects its limit onto women and, by appropriating “women’s work,” leaves its present constantly open to a new foundation.

What feminism does with this identification of “women’s work” as transition is, of course, an open question. Nevertheless, Hardt and Negri present ideas with which to work and develop in a feminist direction. For one, the difference between essence and construction is no longer valid: essence is by its very nature productiveness; people are what they do and what they construct and so are human nature and the world. Second, gender is not an ideal or an external symbolic or linguistic structure that subjects appropriate, embody, perform, and transform, or that makes sense by alienating the nonreferential, the unrepresentable, the sensory, and the “real”: gender is not a contract or an exchange with an exterior form of power, a sacrifice made for the purpose of assuming power and subjectivity, a trade-off, a negotiation, a synthesis, or a compromise. Instead, gender is invention and innovation—it is the power to constitute itself. Third, gender is not given

but multiple and multiplying; it is what elicits capital's drive to privatize it but, connected to life, it is what capital cannot count. Fourth, "women's work" and women's bodies are no longer mired in particularisms that limit and determine their sphere, bog them down in nature, and remove them from history. Though the universalizing of femininity seems to head toward a cheapening of everything and a privatizing of work as well as a forgetting of inequalities, it also extends the cooperative social relations of the factory over the entire social field, remaking "women's work" as "the commons." Fifth, Hardt and Negri resuture class and gender without reducing either one to the other. Sixth, gender is power, that is, the power of self-creation and the creation of life: of imagination. Seventh, gender is action. Unlike the orientation toward "identity" in many of the poststructuralist theories that Hardt and Negri criticize, action does not only imply a set of power relations inflected from institutional structures, languages, and the apparatuses of power, and expressed onto bodies through a "call," but also indicates the intentions of those who invent it and produce it in their bodies by working and creating. Ideology is less of an ideal or a reflection of exchange than in other Marxist or semiotic-inspired analyses because the production of its symbols, materials, social relations, and communications is riven with the intentions of its producers, and particularly of its exploited producers. As productivity, gender's being is the work of those who are life and being with it. Thus, gender is permanent revolution.

- does Leavis make explicit the particular role of the school in setting in place symbolic frames of cultural conflict over women's roles.
16. Comparing herself to Mlle. St. Pierre, one of the teachers from the region, Lucy ruminates, "She was of little use as far as the communication of knowledge went, but for strict surveillance and maintenance of rules she was invaluable" (140).
 17. Lauren Goodlad also understood Victorian schooling narratives as caught between a "materialist objectification" (190) of calculation and surveillance, on the one hand, and, on the other, a sense of "character"—outside of social hierarchy—that resisted bureaucratization: "character as a manifestation of the potential for humanist or Christian development" (190). Schooling narratives were conflicted "by the prospect of a world unable to distinguish between exchange-value, a value measured in relation between things, and the value of nurturing human potential" (191), a value, that is, that could not be calculated. Goodlad, however, is less concerned with how this quandary is caught in a struggle over what counts as labor, and how this affects gender. Goodlad's concern is, rather, the construction of a particular culture of liberalism in Britain.
 18. Krakauer explains that Mortenson built the schools in Afghanistan in places that were not riveted by violence or populated by the Taliban: "Only a small fraction of his schools are found in locales that might be characterized as breeding grounds for terrorists. In Afghanistan, the majority of schools CAI has established are in areas where the Taliban has little influence or is simply non-existent" (44). Krakauer labels Mortenson's claims to be directly confronting the Taliban as "fear-mongering" (46).
 19. None other than "friend and hero" of feminism and die-hard supporter of female intellectuals, Larry Summers, agrees: "[A]n extensive body of recent research . . . has convinced me that once its benefits are recognized, investment in girls' education may well be the highest return investment available in the developing world . . . Expenditures on increasing the education of girls do not just meet the seemingly easy test of being more socially productive than military outlays. They appear to be far more productive than many other valuable categories of investment" (as cited in Herz and Sperling, 38). Lawrence H. Summers—who formerly filled various roles in the Clinton Administration's Treasury, Chief Economist of the World Bank, and then President Barack Obama's economic advisor—famously said, while he was president of Harvard University, that the reason there were so few professional women in science and engineering fields was because women had lower aptitudes. Mortenson cites a book on international promotion of girls' schools where this Larry Summers quote appears.

5 Gender Work: Feminism after Neoliberalism

1. In my prior work, I have called this: the "re-privatization" of women's work. For example: "I show the tendencies of a 're-privatization' of women's labor within

- current formations of capitalism: That is, I show how the current organization of corporate power seeks to bypass the regulatory state by reframing labor according to the conventions of work in the industrialized home, and then directly capitalizing on this type of work, for example, a status of legal exceptionalism, of existing beyond the law and public interventions, as submissive, as underremunerated and unprotected, and the like” (*Feminist Theory in Pursuit of the Public*, 16).
2. In this formulation, Hardt and Negri are not insensitive to race and the way it creates inequalities in the workforce. The basest forms of service, care, and “Third World” labor are exactly what they are talking about by the terminology of “the so-called feminization of work.” However, because all work tends toward these forms, Hardt and Negri treat all work as equally abstractable, and this is what makes it so difficult to locate in their work ways of addressing inequalities in income distributions along the North-South divide.
 3. There have been a few noteworthy exceptions. See, for example, Federici (2004), Federici (2012), Weeks (2011), Fortunati (1995), Quinby (2004), Del Re (2005), Dalla Costa and Dalla Costa, eds. (1999), McRobbie (2010), Sassen (2004), Parvulescu (2012), Corsani and Murphy (2007), and Dyer-Witherford (2005).
 4. “A man would never get the notion of writing a book on the peculiar situation of the human male. But if I wish to define myself, I must first of all say: ‘I am a woman’; on this truth must be based all further discussion... Woman has ovaries, a uterus; these peculiarities imprison her in her subjectivity, circumscribe her within the limits of her own nature. It is often said that she thinks with her glands” (xxi).
 5. Oftentimes, even while using these terms to reconceptualize the capital/labor relationship in ways that look like “women’s work,” Hardt and Negri need to disqualify women from the tendency. For example, taking on the issue of “absolute surplus value,” Negri notes, in parentheses: “A specific exception, which takes the definition of absolute surplus value back to its origins as an individual measure of exploitation, concerns female labour—housework and the reproduction of the species, with its unlimited extension of the working day” (2003: 62). At this point in the analysis, “absolute surplus value” has been defined as when capital captures the entire social field, turning production into reproduction. Marking his uncertainty with parentheses, Negri defensively portrays women’s labor as “*exogenous* to the system” (2003: 54), a possibility that he earlier denies by showing how the exogenous is always internal in this period of “real subsumption.” In fact, in many of their workings-through of the terms of contemporary capitalism, women’s work is assumed as the frame of capital’s complete socialization without women being imagined as the actors.
 6. For Negri, “the social factory” moves beyond Michel Foucault’s “disciplinary society.” He picks up this idea from Gilles Deleuze’s descriptions of the “Society of Control”: “nineteenth-century capitalism is a capitalism of concentration, for production and for property. It therefore erects a factory as a space of enclosure, . . . but also . . . other spaces conceived through analogy (the worker’s familial

house, the school) ... But in the present situation, ... [t]his is no longer a capitalism for production but for the product, which is to say, for being sold or marketed. ... [T]he factory has given way to the corporation ... The conquests of the market are made by grabbing control and no longer by disciplinary training, by fixing the exchange rate much more than by lowering costs, by transformation of the product more than by specialization of production ... Marketing has become the center or the "soul" of the corporation. We are taught that corporations have a soul, which is the most terrifying news in the world. The operation of markets is now the instrument of social control and forms the impudent breed of our masters. Control is short-term and of rapid rates of turnover, but also continuous and without limit, while discipline was of long duration, infinite and discontinuous. Man is no longer man enclosed, but man in debt" (6).

7. Negri: "Here the assumption of the command in all the intensity of its general political functioning is ... primary ... Here in Marx ... money is taken as the form of bourgeois hegemony—as the monetary horizon of command" (1991: 61). Negri's idea that the field of economic transactions has been taken over by politics and, in particular, is controlled by command—this idea is one that rankles Callinicos most fervently. In Negri's view, says Callinicos, "The politicization and socialization of the relations of production implies their reduction to straightforward relations of force, and capitalist domination is reduced to 'pure command'" (176). Callinicos believes that economic processes are still governed by competition rather than politicization, and that economic relations have been depoliticized rather than politicized under neoliberalism. Negri, however, like Althusser, would not agree that either politics or command would need to reside in the state, although he would see that as one place (not the strongest) where command resides. Additionally, Negri would see "command" and "politicization" as a tendency within the present rather than as a totalizing descriptor. As capital consolidates, its movements are less governed by open market fluctuations than by decisions, and many if not most of these decisions are political.
8. Negri: "In destroying time-as-measure *capital constitutes time as collective substance*. But for capital this temporal collectivity cannot show itself as such; it must rather be reduced to an analytic collectivity, to a collectivity without time. It is here that the *antagonism* erupts. The time of cooperation constitutes itself as a subject against capital. It is *use-value*" (2003: 59; Negri's emphasis).
9. As Carlo Vercellone explains, "In the activities in which the cognitive and immaterial dimension of labour is dominant, we witness a destabilization of one of the structuring conditions of the wage relation, that is to say, the renunciation—compensated by the wage—by the workers to any claim on the property of the product of their labour. In cognitive-labour-producing knowledge, the result of labour remains incorporated in the brain of the worker and is thus inseparable from her person. That helps explain, together with other factors, the pressure exercised by the enterprises in order to attain a strengthening of the rights of intellectual property and to re-enclose, in a new phase of the primitive accumulation of capital, the social mechanisms at the base of the circulation of knowledge" (33).

10. As Cesare Casarino describes it: “if the real subsumption of society by capital has entailed that there is no longer virtually any aspect and indeed any time of our lives that is not productive for capital, time then—Negri seems to suggest—is that which capital needs now more than ever and yet that which capital always hopes against all hope to reduce to zero. The impossible dream of capital, after all, has always been to have production and circulation in no time and without time” (2003: 190).
11. Negri: “*Capitalist production, when it takes over society, renders inextricable the linkage of production and circulation*” (1991: 180; Negri’s emphasis).
12. “Real subsumption” did not just happen one day, did not just begin. In “real subsumption,” there is no before and after, no progress from one to the other, no break between phases of the working-day, no division between a time of rest and a time of work, no lag-time when capital waits for goods and equipment to arrive so the next cycle can start, because everything is production: production is “being,” so time is restlessness, like the collision of falling atoms, a living force (e.g., Negri: “[T]he common appears as the product of an eternal agglomeration of elements, as a great shower of matter” [2003: 194]). Different temporal speeds coordinate in a singular process as different phases of production and the working-day overflow into each other. I find the naturalistic metaphors taken from physics less compelling and more theological than the ones that connect capital with birth and socialization. They come out of Negri’s reading of Spinoza and feed some of the criticisms that say that Negri reduces resistance to a spontaneous reaction. The idea of materialist ontology—where this movement of time is historicized—would seem to me to be trying to block this naturalization.
13. Hardt and Negri (1994): “All privatistic alternatives that single capitalists could express are negated, not by the laws of development but by the directly expressed and directly effective political law of collective capital” (62).
14. Baudrillard, for example, “What society seeks through production, and overproduction, is the restoration of the real which escapes it” (44).
15. Hardt and Negri: “The sites delegated to popular representation and the continuous production of constitutional ordering are impiously permeated by these constricting logics of command, and what remains of them is only an empty carcass that the communicative simulation of the ‘democratic media’ tires to camouflage in aesthetic garb” (1994: 299).
16. “The entire machine of the State is seen developing on the basis of the necessity to control this socialization of the capitalist relationship of exploitation” (Hardt and Negri, 1994: 160).
17. “It would be one thing to claim that the *potential* for such exists in the virtual Empire being forged in the ongoing passage from colonialism to neo-colonialism, from formal subsumption to real subsumption, from modernity to postmodernity: with that I would willingly agree. It is quite different to claim that such potential is actually being realized, or even that it is likely to be realized. This is a probability assessment for which they provide very little evidence—but for

- which they need provide no further evidence, as long as Empire is understood primarily as a philosophical concept" (129).
18. "The remainder of the use value of workers' labor is completely subsumed by capital and by virtue of that produces surplus value" (Negri, 1991: 74).
 19. Negri: "The tendency: it is not simply what permits a passive construction of the categories on the basis of a sum of historical acquisitions; it is above all what permits a reading of the present in light of the future, in order to make projects to illuminate the future. To take risks, to struggle. A science should adhere to that. And if occasionally one is an ape, it is only in order to be more agile" (1991: 49).
 20. Negri: "The time of constituent power, in the void of determinations to which it has been reduced, is conceived as a negative substance. It becomes time of 'being for death'—the implacable perspective and totalitarian reduction of the being of the world to the negative... In what sense? In the sense of death... This is constituent power formally assumed and posed as the dark appearance of a will to power—certainly fully untouched by the ghosts of modernity—but at the same time absolutely inimical to any determination of the strength of the multitude" (1999: 317). And with Casarino: "The limit is creative to the extent to which you have been able to overcome it qua death: the limit is creative because you have overcome death... And while Spinoza tell us to free ourselves from the presence of death, Heidegger tells us the contrary" (2004: 175).
 21. Pierre Macherey reads Negri's challenges to dialectical thinking as an affirmation of the independent development of freedom for the purposes of constitution. The elements of the social body "are deployed in the extensiveness of an expanding body, in the conquest of its own domain" (26). Macherey's depictions of Negri's dismissal of the dialectic are constantly embedded in such language of human development and birthing in order to outline the terms of Negri's notion of autonomy: for example, "Thus, by projecting itself onto the terrain of liberation, the constitutive power of Being undergoes a veritable mutation: it becomes precisely practice, subjectivity, an opening onto a world of possibilities or an ethical world in which it tends consciously and voluntarily to be realized" (22).
 22. In an interview with Cesare Casarino (2004), Negri remarks, "I felt that in the end Foucault's archeology was unable to turn into an effective process of power: the archeological project always moved from above in order to reach below, while what concerned me most was precisely the opposite movement from below. For me, this was his project's main limitation" (152).
 23. "This common is not only the earth we share but also the languages we create, the social practices we establish, the modes of sociality that define our relationships, and so forth" (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 139).
 24. Negri: "Now, postmodernism... poses citizenship (Man) and market (society) in a relation of uninterrupted circulation, almost as an equivalent tautology, ... going so far as to speak of an 'end of history'" (2003: 202).

25. Negri: “*The fundamental law of crisis lies therefore in the contradictory relation between necessary labor and surplus labor, that is, in the functioning of the law of surplus value*” (1991: 97; Negri’s emphasis).
26. Negri: “The more surplus value is developed, the less one can compress necessary labor, and less is the quantity and the quality of the creative activity which capital can subsume in the labor process” (1991: 83).
27. Negri’s ideas about excess evolve from the concept developed by Georges Bataille in *The Accursed Share*. Bataille unconventionally believes that marriage is set up originally as a social control on “a kind of inner revolution whose intensity must have been excessive” (48), or eroticism, rather than as an institution to protect rights of property and inheritance. According to Bataille, marriage systematized the prohibition against this excess alongside the periodic letting-up of the prohibition by, for one, restricting the understanding of women to “their fecundity and their labor” (49). Sometimes the excess had to do with women’s bodies or with women as objects that circulate and are exchanged. Negri’s treatment of excess relies on a similar construction of an excess internal to women’s labor and visible in bodies, only for Negri, as a post-Hegelian thinker, excess does not grant transcendence but rather introduces antagonism. Negri faults Bataille for being a “technician of urbanism” and “rather shallow” (Casarino, 2004: 162).
28. Rancière: “The familiar police logic that...militant feminists are strangers to their sex, is, all in all, justified. Any subjectification is a disidentification, removal from the naturalness of place, the opening up of a subject space where anyone can be counted since it is the space where those of no account are counted, where a connection is made between having a part and having no part” (1999: 36).
29. Rancière: “Politics ceases wherever this gap no longer has any place, wherever the whole of the community is reduced to the sum of its parts with nothing left over” (1999: 123).
30. In its affiliations with Freudian psychoanalysis, second-wave feminism has been concerned foundationally with the relationship between the development of a full-fledged, socially adapted, appropriately sexed adult female and a symbolics of femininity that does not necessarily connect to that psychic formation. In his lecture on “Femininity,” Freud himself did not only make it seem nearly impossible for an infant child to progress toward becoming a woman, but he also mystified the symbolic itself, concluding “that what constitutes masculinity and femininity is an unknown characteristic which anatomy cannot lay hold of” (114). Though, he continues, “when you say ‘masculine’, you usually mean ‘active’, and when you say ‘feminine’, you usually mean ‘passive’” (114), there is no concrete biological determination or causal factor and, what is more, femininity often contains a fair amount of aggressivity, according to Freud, as in lactation. This break between femininity’s experiences and its symbolic codings has been an important one in feminist thinking, even as it passes through Lacan (e.g., “There is an antinomy here that is internal to the

assumption [assumption] by man (*Mensch*) of his sex: why must he assume the attributes of that sex only through a threat or even in the guise of a deprivation?" [575]). We see it as well in Simone de Beauvoir's famous dictum that one is not born a woman but becomes one: "It would appear, then, that every female human being is not necessarily a woman; to be so considered she must share in that mysterious and threatened reality known as femininity" (xix). It plays out further in Julia Kristeva's split between the Semiotic and the Symbolic, where the Semiotic operates separately but still feeds into the Symbolic to boost it up, and then in Judith Butler's performativity, where the Symbolic calls the subject into being but the subject never quite fits the expectations of its Symbolic constitution, producing the Symbolic anew by answering the call. Reading this split from the Symbolic of femininity as, finally, a total rupture of the subject or failure of identity, Jacqueline Rose notes, "[P]sychoanalysis is no longer best understood as an account of how women are fitted into place (even this, note, is the charitable reading of Freud). Instead, psychoanalysis becomes one of the few places in our culture where it is recognized as more than a fact of individual pathology that most women do not painlessly slip into their roles as women" (91). Negri takes this disassociation, or alienation, to a new level.

31. "[B]iopolitical production," they emphasize, "particularly in the ways it exceeds the bounds of capitalist relations and constantly refers to the common, grants labor increasing autonomy and provides the tools or weapons that could be wielded in a project of liberation" (2009: 137).
32. "On the biopolitical terrain . . . where powers are continually made and unmade, bodies resist. They have to resist in order to exist" (2009: 31).
33. Casarino faults Negri for not substantially distinguishing pleasure from desire (the time of productivity, the time of consumer capitalism). In contrast, Casarino sees in Marx's *Grundrisse* a doubling of pleasure, where it is both attached to the commodity and attached to a refusal of capital's demand for "self-denial" in the worker. Pleasure serves to "broaden *the sphere of non-work*, that is, the sphere of their own needs, the value of necessary labor" (2003: 200–201) in ways that Negri fails to recognize. It gets in the way of surplus value. Additionally, "[a]s the sphere of pleasures widens, it does not disavow the present and yet also projects itself towards an undetermined future of experimentation" (2003: 202).
34. Negri: "In essence, the problem that I was struggling with—and I think Gilles [Deleuze] too was struggling with it, without nonetheless having any desire whatsoever to find a solution for it—was a classical problem of the phenomenological tradition, namely, the problem of the relation between intention and act. But if one lives this problem from a collective standpoint—that is, from the standpoint of collective subjectivities—this then becomes a fundamentally historical problem, the problem par excellence of constituent power. And this is also the fundamental problem that the main traditions with the philosophy of right—namely, juridical formalism and critical realism—repeatedly faced, without ever being able to come to terms with it adequately, because within these traditions the birth of the norm is always a transcendent act" (Casarino,

- 2004: 156–157). Also: “In some way or other, all I think, say, write or do is an attempt to understand... what are the mechanisms of decision that can posit the multitude as subjectivity” (Casarino and Negri, 2008: 96).
35. “The... notion of the common is dynamic, involving both the product of labor and the means of future production. This common is not only the earth we share but also the languages we create, the social practices we establish, the modes of sociality that define our relationships, and so forth” (Hardt and Negri, 2009: 139).