

<https://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article4074>



Gender and Capitalism

# The Intersectional Conundrum and the Nation-State

- Features - Sexual politics -

Publication date: Wednesday 10 June 2015

---

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

---

**It is not an easy task to reconstruct succinctly the main problematics that have traversed Marxist feminism in the last 40 years, without risking simplifications or serious omissions, or without producing a mere summary that avoids critically engaging with the subjects that it raises. And yet, I believe Arruzza's text "Remarks on Gender" accomplishes the task very well: her reconstruction of the key theses on the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism proposed by different currents within socialist and Marxist feminism from the 1970s onwards is not only lucid and informative, but also extremely clear and accessible. Furthermore, her partisan critique of the different positions on the table, alongside an indication of the most promising questions for debate, give us – as feminists who locate ourselves in the Marxist tradition(s) – a great opportunity to begin and/or deepen a much needed discussion and exchange. A new generation of Marxist feminists has emerged in the last years; it begins to question, re-articulate, expand and criticise the theorizations and disputes it has inherited from previous generations.**

I find myself mostly in agreement with the arguments put forward by Arruzza in [Remarks on Gender](#). I share her criticisms of the dual and triple system analyses and the theoretical preference for the "unitary theory" approach as well as social reproduction feminism. There are, however, two elements raised in her text that I feel require further investigation and reflection. The first concerns the way Arruzza responds to the thesis of the "indifference of capitalism" to gendered and racial oppression exemplified by Meiksins Wood. In spite of the many compelling points of critique she raises, here I think Arruzza does not really overcome the problems posed by Meiksins Wood's approach. The second element that would deserve some treatment in the context of discussions on class exploitation and gendered and racial oppression is the relationship between Marxist feminism and intersectionality theory. The latter is in fact the specter that haunts these discussions, as I will argue throughout this text.

In what follows I will try to explain in what ways I think that these two points require further examination and to sketch a proposal for future research and discussion that I believe can potentially enable us to overcome some of the pitfalls of Marxist feminism on the terrain of race and racism in particular. I should say from the outset that those that follow are not meant to be fully-fledged thoughts or conclusive reflections. They constitute only the initial and still very preliminary stages of a work in progress. I thus hope that this round-table discussion will be the initial agora for an exchange of ideas between scholars and activists who are struggling to find answers to these complex issues.

## Logical Structure and History

Let me begin from the first point. The questions about whether capitalism is structurally "indifferent" or not to gendered and racial oppression and how we can understand the relationship between these forms of oppression and class exploitation are the most controversial, but also the most challenging from a Marxist feminist viewpoint. As Arruzza notes, the thesis that capitalism does not require gendered oppression and racial inequalities to operate, but has instead forged an "opportunistic" and instrumental relationship with them, has been sustained in a particularly clear way by Ellen Meiksins Wood. In her essay "Capitalism and Human Emancipation," Wood maintains that:

*If capital derives advantages from racism or sexism, it is not because of any structural tendency in capitalism toward racial inequality or gender oppression, but on the contrary because they disguise the structural realities of the capitalist system and because they divide the working class. At any rate, capitalist exploitation can in principle be conducted without any consideration for colour, race, creed, gender, any dependence upon extra-economic*

*inequality or difference; and more than that, the development of capitalism has created ideological pressures against such inequalities and differences to a degree with no precedent in pre-capitalist societies. [1]*

Arruzza rightly notes that Wood's argument is unfortunately common currency amongst numerous Marxists who still maintain a hierarchy between principal exploitation (based on class) and secondary oppression (based on gender and race). Further, she notes that Wood's focus upon, on the one hand, capitalism's logical structure as one indifferent to gender and racial oppression, and, on the other hand, her recognition that capitalism's concrete history is one in which these forms of oppression have continuously occurred, is confusing and unhelpful from a political point of view. Insofar as capitalism always occurs in concrete historical forms – Arruzza argues – Wood's treatment of capitalism as above all an ideal type in which "extra-economic" inequalities do not play any substantial role does not explain why its unfolding has actually never done without them.

This notwithstanding, Arruzza continues with a critique that, in my view, lessens the force of her otherwise compelling arguments. She writes that one of Wood's mistakes is the confusion between "what is functional to capitalism and what is a necessary consequence of it." Further, she maintains that Wood's problem – like that of other Marxists – is to conflate the logical and historical level as if they could be used as interchangeable arguments and methods of analysis. For Arruzza, they should remain separate and distinguishable. Thus, she argues that while Wood might be right in contending that gendered and racial inequalities are not necessary to the inner workings of capitalism – if we think of the latter at a high level of abstraction – this nonetheless "does not prove that capitalism would not necessarily produce, as a result of its concrete functioning, the constant reproduction of gender oppression, often under diverse forms." Arruzza thus concludes that, given the difficulty of showing "at a high level of abstraction that gender oppression is essential to the inner workings of capitalism," we must instead "look for the answer at the level of concrete historical analysis, not at the level of a highly abstract analysis of capital." When we do that, she suggests, we see that the core of capitalism – i.e., the production of surplus-value – cannot exist without socially reproductive labor, which has been historically predominantly female. The unity of reproduction and production is thus the key to understanding contemporary capitalism as a complex totality that needs domination and alienation as much as exploitation.

While I agree with the idea that we need to understand capitalism as a complex totality and as an historical social production relation within which gendered and racial oppression are constantly reproduced as part and parcel of its functioning, I am both unclear about the distinction Arruzza makes between "what is functional to capitalism and what is a necessary consequence of it" and I disagree with the idea that we must keep logic and history separate.

I would argue that by conceding that capitalism at a high level of abstraction might not need gendered and racial oppression in order to survive, though it produces them as its necessary and non-contingent consequences, we fundamentally remain trapped within Wood's reasoning. In other words, if we argue that capitalism might not require gendered and racial oppression as its presuppositions at the logical structural level, but rather as its necessary byproducts at the historical level, we still need to pose the questions: why does capitalism do so? What is the inner logic of capitalism that requires gendered and racial oppression to be continuously produced and reproduced by necessity – albeit in shifting forms? What is the mechanism according to which capitalism causes gendered and racial oppression? If we say that capitalism produces oppression by necessity, we are in fact still putting forward an argument that requires explanation at the logical structural level, and not only at the historical level.

My sense is that this impasse is due to the binary thinking according to which the logical and historical levels are distinct one from the other. Instead, I think we should rather comprehend the relationship between these levels in a dialectical manner. To quote István Mészáros,

*in any particular type of humanity's reproductive order, the social structure is unthinkable without its properly articulated historical dimension; and vice versa, there can be no real understanding of the historical movement itself*

*without grasping at the same time the corresponding material structural determinations in their specificity.* [2]

In other words, we can't separate logic, or structure, from history because they are dialectically related moments of our historical materialist attempt to grasp and to change the historically determined structure of the world in which we live. In this vein, I think we should not displace our reasoning regarding the role of gendered and racial oppression onto the historical terrain alone, but try to articulate an answer at the level of the structural logic of capitalism as well.

I propose that one potentially promising way of analyzing capitalism's structural need for gendered and racial oppression while considering its concrete historical dimensions is to look at capitalism's logic of valorization through the lenses of capital's necessary political form: i.e., the nation-state.

But before I argue this point more thoroughly let me briefly discuss the second aforementioned element which I regard as haunting our discussion: intersectionality theory.

### *Intersectionality Theory*

Since its coinage by Kimberle Crenshaw in her seminal 1989 article "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," [3] the concept of intersectionality and the theoretical field it has opened up posed a serious challenge to feminist theories, Marxist and non-Marxist alike. In a nutshell, intersectionality theory – if one can talk of a theory at all and not instead of a heuristic device – maintains that each individual and group occupies a specific social position within interlocking systems of oppression. For example, the discrimination experienced by women of color in the US context should be understood as resulting from their location at the junction between gendered, racial and class based structures of oppression and exploitation.

Intersectionality has been described as "the most important theoretical contribution that women's studies, in conjunction with related fields, has made so far." [4] By highlighting some feminist currents' systematic overlooking of the different life experiences of racialized women when compared to those of white women as well as racialized men in Western societies, and also by criticizing Marxism – or at least certain economic currents within it – for considering race and racism as "secondary," or "derivative" forms of oppression with respect to class exploitation, intersectionality has obliged scholars and activists to confront the gendered dimensions of racism in unprecedented ways. As Gail Lewis put it,

*To cast intersectionality as such a powerful and creative concept, theory, and analytic is perhaps to bear witness to the generative capacity of theory making that comes from the margins. It is to acknowledge that black women and other women of color produce knowledge and that this knowledge can be applied to social and cultural research beyond the issues and processes deemed specific to women racialized as minority, that it can become part of a more generalizable theoretical, methodological, and conceptual tool kit.* [5]

Beside putting the experience of racialized women center stage, intersectionality has also underlined an important methodological question: oppression is not a matter of a single issue only, nor of adding each single axis of oppression one to the other. Instead, oppression is an intersectional field and experience; it is the result of the interlocking between different and yet connected "systems" of domination.

Moreover, intersectionality theory's refusal to conceive of racial or gendered oppressions as secondary, or derivative in relation to class – or even as mere ideologies as we still find theorized by Marxist authors like Terry Eagleton and Martha Gimenez [6] – and to think of them instead as "equal" axes of domination in capitalist society has had the salutary effect of pushing Marxist feminists to interrogate more deeply assumptions and theoretical baggage inherited from "economic" readings of class. Confronting intersectionality's pervasive intervention in feminist studies as

well as in many fields of the humanities and the social sciences, I think several Marxist scholars feel increasingly compelled to question what kind of social relation class is, as well as to excavate Marx's writings to find insights on the role played by race and gender within the capitalist mode of production. [7]

But above all, intersectionality theory speaks loudly to Marxists because it frames the problem of race, gender and class as 'dimensions' of a complex integrated totality. Intersectionality, in other words, 'implicitly' rejects the idea that capitalism is indifferent to gendered and racial oppression and maintains that all forms of oppression and exploitation play an equally pivotal role in shaping our unequal societies.

Nevertheless, the problem with intersectionality theory lies precisely in the fact that it falls short of delivering what it promises. First, most accounts of intersectionality have limited themselves to describe instances of intersections between different axes of domination, but without explaining how and why they occur in specific forms, at certain times and in determined contexts. Second, they have assumed the existence of different systems, or axes of oppression but without questioning the configuration, functioning, historical dimensions and the very nature and existence of these systems themselves (in this sense, similar to triple system analyses that Arruzza rightly criticises). Third, intersectionality theory tends to think of oppression as a spatial metaphor and as an individual experience, which I think runs the risk of reifying the subject of oppression and of not grasping the movements, changes and temporalities of oppression itself. Finally, intersectionality theory has mostly not problematized capitalism as the societal, historical and political-economic order within which these intersections take place.

Intersectionality theory, in other words, poses the right questions but has not yet produced satisfactory answers as to the problem of why and how gender, race and class together are essential to the production and reproduction of inequalities under capitalism.

### *The Nation-State*

How can we overcome the double impasse created by our dissatisfaction with both those Marxist readings that deem racial and gendered oppression as unnecessary from a structural logical viewpoint to capitalism's survival and with intersectionality theory's present limitations to provide a solid theoretical infrastructure that challenges such readings?

Before this impasse, Arruzza and other Marxist feminists have resorted to unitary theory, which argues that gendered and racial oppression do not reflect the existence of two autonomous systems but "have become an integral part of capitalist society through a long historical process that has dissolved preceding forms of social life." Furthermore, they have warned Marxists against fixating on capital as a unit of production only, but rather to see how social reproduction is essential to capitalist functioning and to the production of surplus-value itself. The unity between production and reproduction, they maintain, allows us to analyze gendered and racial oppression within capitalist societies both as legacies from pre-capitalist social formations that capitalism re-shapes in different forms, and as necessary consequences of capitalism itself.

While I agree with the underlying premises of unitary theory, and that social reproduction theory offers crucial resources for understanding gendered oppression under capitalism, I also think that more work is needed to show if and in what ways social reproduction theory can account for racial oppression. Moreover, we need to clarify whether social reproduction theory enables us to explain not only the historical dimensions of gendered and racial oppression under capitalism, but also why they are necessary to the structure of capitalism. In other words, we still need to explain why capitalism needs to oppress women and racialized people. That is, we need to combine our historical understanding of capitalism as a societal order that requires the constant reproduction of labor-power with an understanding of the logical structure of capital accumulation as a process that both requires this work to be done by women (and perhaps racialized people too) and as a mechanism that presupposes the subjugation of women and

the racialization of certain people in particular.

As I wrote above, I certainly do not claim to have answers to these very complex issues, whose rigorous treatment would require not only the hard work of the concept, but also empirically and historically grounded demonstrations. However, I would like to propose tentatively that one possible way of dealing with the double dissatisfaction with the Marxist thesis of “indifferent capitalism” and with intersectionality’s lack of explanatory power and, thus, one way of trying to produce an account of the intersection (and unity) of gendered and racial oppression with class exploitation as necessary presuppositions and not only consequences of capitalism, is to look more closely at capital’s inseparable friend: the nation-state.

Capital accumulation is not possible without the nation-state as its political form, its framework and its necessary mediator. As Marx wrote in Volume 3 of Capital, the state is the “political form of the relation of sovereignty and dependence” which is integral to the “specific economic form, in which unpaid surplus-labor is pumped out of direct producers.” [8]

For instance, Marx analysed the creation of the world-market itself as resulting from the competition and uneven development between different national capitals. [9] For reasons of space, I cannot go into the enormous debate on the relation between capital and the state, which has engaged numerous Marxist scholars often from very different perspectives. [10] To give an idea of why capital accumulation requires the nation-state as its necessary framework and mediator I will briefly quote a passage by Neil Davidson, which has the benefit of being extremely clear and, in my view, right on the point. As Davidson puts it:

*The capitalist class in its constituent parts has a continuing need to retain territorial home bases for their operations. Why? Capitalism is based on competition, but capitalists want competition to take place on their terms; they do not want to suffer the consequences if they lose. In one sense then, they want a state to ensure that they are protected from these consequences – in other words, they require from a state more than simply providing an infrastructure; they need it to ensure that effects of competition are experienced as far as possible by someone else. A global state could not do this; indeed, in this respect it would be the same as having no state at all. For if everyone is protected then no-one is: unrestricted market relations would prevail, with all the risks that entails. The state therefore has to have limits, has to be able to distinguish between those who will receive its protection and those who will not. [11]*

Not only is the state the necessary framework and mediator of capital accumulation in a global marketplace, but also nationalism is the “necessary ideological corollary of capitalism.” [12]

By putting forward the hypothesis that the valorization of value, or capital accumulation and capitalist reproduction, needs by necessity the nation-state as much as it requires formally free labor-power to exploit, we can begin framing the problem of the intersection (and unity) between class exploitation and gendered and racial oppression in new ways.

As postcolonial feminism in particular has compellingly showed, [13] the nation-state as capital’s chief political form is not thinkable without the oppression of women. This occurs in a twofold manner. On the one hand, the nation as the allegedly homogenous community, with a common origin/destiny and kinship that is ‘attached’ to the state, can only think of women as its symbolic markers as well as cultural and biological reproducers. This is true not only for ethnic conceptions of the nation as Kulturnation and Volknation, but also in those cases in which the nation as such is the driving force of liberation movements. Even when nationalism has played the role of a liberating force, such as in the context of the decolonization, and the issue of women’s rights has accompanied that of national independence, the results for women have often been disappointing. After independence, women’s role has frequently been reaffirmed as that of biological reproducers of the (new, liberated) nation. For instance, despite their key role during the Algerian war of independence from France and in the National Liberation Front, at the end of the conflict Algerian

women did not gain the equality and rights they had wished for. One of the reasons for this limitation was, as Moghadam argues, that the struggle was one for “national liberation, not for social (class/gender) transformation.” [14] In other words, the nation – any nation – cannot do without exercising its control over women’s bodies and women’s child-raising role, because the very future of the nation depends on them.

On the other hand, the state as the territorialization of centralized political authority and administrative machine guaranteeing and reproducing unequal class relations is the principal “organizer” of gender orders in a society. The state is not only the dispenser of policies that have overtime systematically disadvantaged women and discriminated against racialized people in different spheres of social life. It is above all the most important “mediator” of social reproduction as well as the “fabricator” of racism as an institution.

In *Caliban and the Witch*, Silvia Federici shows how the consolidation of capitalism in the 16th and 17th century in Europe required state interventions to guarantee the growth of the population; that is, a secure basin of labor-power for the growing industries. These interventions included forms of punishment for women who tried to maintain some control over procreation. Furthermore, the establishment of the nuclear family as the center for the reproduction of the work-force took place under the auspices of the modern nation-state at the time when capital was consolidating its position as the dominant mode of production across the Western World.

The Factory Acts in the United Kingdom in the 19th century that limited the employment of women and children in the factory created for the first time the figure of the full-time housewife within the working class family. Throughout the 19th century and especially the 20th century, the creation of the male breadwinner as the main income earner in the family was the product of state legislation meant to shape a disciplined workforce and above all to avoid capital paying the costs for the social reproduction of labor-power. In Europe in the 20th century up until the 1970s, the relegation of social reproduction within the family, where women were to take on the bulk of domestic tasks for free, was possible thanks to a number of welfare state provisions that allowed the mono-income family to survive.

Even now, when more and more women enter the paid labor force and do less social reproductive work (but only to be exploited in ways that have been described as increasingly feminized), social reproduction has not been socialized through public state care provisions, or paid by capital, but increasingly commodified. The commodification of social reproduction (elderly and child care, housekeeping etc.) is possible thanks to so-called cash-for-care state monetary transfers, which push individuals and families to seek for caretakers and housekeepers on the market. And, quite importantly, migrant racialized women from post-socialist countries and the Global South constitute the lion’s share of the supply of these caretakers and housekeepers on the market. A crucial moment of intersection (and unity) between gendered and racial inequalities takes place at this juncture then. In order to guarantee the reproduction of the work force (which includes more and more women), the state uses public funds from taxpayers (mostly exploited workers) to provide families with small budgets that allow them to employ racialized women as care and domestic workers in slave-like conditions. This does not happen by chance. The employment of migrant women for socially reproductive work in fact allows the capitalist driven nation-state both to maintain traditional gender-roles in place and to reproduce sexual and racial divisions of labor in society. The fact that it is racialized women who do socially reproductive work most often in informal (illegal and undocumented) and very exploitative conditions allows capital to maintain social reproduction on the edge between market and non-market relations – and thus to guarantee its reproduction at no costs for capital – and it permits the nation-state to avoid providing public care facilities.

This now brings me to discuss why the nation-state as capital’s chief political form is unthinkable not only without the oppression of women, but also without the construction and subjugation of racialized people. Again, there is an immense literature on the links between capital, the nation-state and racism, which I could not even begin to discuss adequately here. [15] I will limit my comments instead to pointing to one passage from Marx’s letter to Sigfried Meyer which in my view helps us to see in what ways racial oppression is a necessary presupposition of, or condition for, capitalist accumulation when scrutinized through the lenses of the nation-state. He wrote:

*All industrial and commercial centers in England now have a working class divided into two hostile camps, English proletarians and Irish proletarians. The ordinary English worker hates the Irish worker as a competitor who forces down the standard of life. In relation to the Irish worker, he feels himself to be a member of the ruling nation and, therefore, makes himself a tool of his aristocrats and capitalists against Ireland, thus strengthening their domination over himself. He harbors religious, social and national prejudices against him. His attitude towards him is roughly that of the "poor whites" to the "niggers" in the former slave states of the American Union. The Irishman pays him back with interest in his own money. He sees in the English worker both the accomplice and the stupid tool of English rule in Ireland. This antagonism is kept artificially alive and intensified by the press, the pulpit, the comic papers, in short by all the means at the disposal of the ruling class. This antagonism is the secret of the English working class's impotence, despite its organization. It is the secret of the maintenance of power by the capitalist class. And the latter is fully aware of this. [16]*

In this passage Marx does a few important things. Firstly, he shows that nationalism is an important source of racism (though he does not use the latter concept). Racism takes the form of the antagonism between workers of different nationalities, whereby the English proletarian as a member of the ruling nation "harbours religious, social and national prejudices against" the Irish proletarian as a member of the ruled nation. Secondly, he shows that racism is constructed and intensified by "all means at the disposal of the ruling class"; in other words, racism is a key element of the ideological state apparatuses. Racism is thus constructed and nourished by the ruling nation-state in order to stigmatize migrant members of the ruled-nations. Thirdly, Marx shows that racism, or the antagonism between "native" and "migrant" workers, is the secret of capitalists' power. It is its secret not only because such antagonism prevents the working class from uniting against its real enemy (i.e., the capitalist class), but also because the presence of migrant workers who compete with native workers for wages allows capital to have a reserve army of labor, which is what makes accumulation possible.

Marx describes the reserve army of labor in *Capital* Volume 1 as "a mass of human material always ready for exploitation." [17] In Marx's analysis, (a) the increase in the magnitude of social capital, that is, the ensemble of individual capitals; (b) the enlargement of the scale of production and (c) the growth of the productivity of an increasing number of workers brought about by capital accumulation, creates a situation in which the greater "attraction of laborers by capital is accompanied by their greater repulsion." [18] These three interrelated processes, for Marx, set the conditions according to which the laboring population gives rise, "along with the accumulation of capital produced by it, [also to] the means by which it itself is made relatively superfluous, is turned into a relative surplus population; and it does this to an always increasing extent." [19] Marx describes this as a "law of population," which is peculiar to the capitalist mode of production just as other modes of production have their own corresponding population laws.

The paradox of the creation of the surplus laboring population under the capitalist mode of production is that while it is "a necessary product of accumulation," this surplus population is also the lever of such accumulation; namely, it is that which "forms a disposable industrial reserve army, that belongs to capital quite as absolutely as if the latter had bred it at its own cost." [20] The reserve army of labor is not constituted only of migrant workers. However, Marx well understood that capitalists benefit greatly from a migrant, non-native disposable workforce in particular, because it permits them to maintain the working class divided along artificially created national lines of separation. The state, on the other hand, makes sure the migrant workforce remains available and disposable for capital by denying migrant workers citizenship rights and thus keeping them in a state of political and economic fragility. We can thus see in what ways racism, just like gendered oppression, is not only produced and reproduced by capital through the mediation of the nation-state, but is also an essential premise for the logical structure of capital accumulation.

## Concluding Remarks



My hypothesis that the nation-state could be the lens through which we can try to see the necessity of gendered and racial oppression, alongside class exploitation, as preconditions and not only consequences of capital accumulation certainly would need to be tested through hard conceptual, theoretical and empirical-historical work. Such work would also need to consider the many mediations at the ideological, symbolic, psychological and political level that bridge gender and race to capital and the nation-state, as well as to clarify the dialectic between the logical structure and history of capital accumulation. Furthermore, we should clarify what is the adequate level of abstraction at which we can analyze the logical structure of capital; whether it is exclusively the microeconomic level in which we consider capital as a relationship between formally free and equal individuals, or also the macroeconomic level in which we consider the spheres of circulation, consumption and reproduction more fully.

Arruzza's important critique of dual and triple system analysis and of the "indifferent capitalism" thesis for their lack of coherence regarding the explication of gender, race and class oppression and exploitation as key constituents of capitalism pushes us to think through these complexities and to strive to find answers that not only can improve our understanding of oppression and exploitation but that also can help us to find ways to put an end to them.

May 4, 2015

This article is part of a dossier entitled *Gender and Capitalism: Debating Cinzia Arruzza's "Remarks on Gender."* published on [Viewpoint Magazine](#).

---

[1] Ellen Meiksins Wood, "[Capitalism and Human Emancipation](#)," *New Left Review* 1/167 (1988), 6.1

[2] István Mészáros, "[The Dialectic of Structure and History: An Introduction](#)," *Monthly Review*, Vol. 63.1 (2011).

[3] Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," Chicago Legal Forum, special issue: "Feminism in the Law: Theory, Practice and Criticism" (1989), pp. 139-167. Although of course the problematic related to intersectionality does not begin with Crenshaw's seminal intervention. For instance, one should trace it back at least to Sojourner Truth's famous speech "[Ain't I A Woman](#)."

[4] Leslie McCall, "[The Complexity of Intersectionality](#)," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol. 30.3 (2005), 1771-1800, 1771.

[5] Gail Lewis, "Unsafe Travel: Experiencing Intersectionality and Feminist Displacements," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, Vol. 38.4 (2013), 869-892, 871.

[6] In *The Illusions of Postmodernism* Terry Eagleton argues that: "Social class tends to crop up in postmodern theory as one item in the triptych of class, race and gender, a formula which has rapidly assumed for the left the kind of authority which the Holy Trinity occasionally exerts for the right. The logic of this triple linkage is surely obvious: racism is a bad thing, and so is sexism, and so therefore is something called 'classism.' 'Classism,' on this analogy would seem to be the sin of stereotyping people in terms of social class." See Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 1996, 56-57. Noting Eagleton's intervention, Martha Gimenez wrote: "To refer to class as 'classism' is, from the standpoint of Marxist theory, 'a deeply misleading formulation' because class is not simply another ideology legitimating oppression; it denotes exploitative relations between people mediated by their relations to the means of production." See Martha Gimenez "[Marxism and Class, Gender and Race: Rethinking The Trilogy](#)," *Race, Gender & Class*, Vol. 8.2 (2001), 23-33.

[7] An increasing number of Marxist scholars in the last years have discussed intersectionality in more or less critical ways. See Kevin Anderson, "[Karl Marx and Intersectionality](#)," *Logos*, Vol. 14.1 (2015); Susan Ferguson, "Canadian Contributions to Social Reproduction Feminism, Race and Embodied Labor," *Race, Gender & Class*, Volume 15.1-2 (2008), 42-57; Abigail Bakan, "Marxism, Intersectionality and Indigenous Feminism," Paper presented at the Historical Materialism Annual Conference, London, 2013; Himani Bannerji, *Thinking Through: Essays on Feminism*,

## The Intersectional Conundrum and the Nation-State

---

*Marxism and Anti-racism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

[8] Karl Marx, *Capital*, Volume 3, in *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, Volume 37 (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1976), 778.

[9] For a discussion of this point see Massimiliano Tomba, *Marx's Temporalities*, trans. Peter D. Thomas and Sara R. Farris (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

[10] Bob Jessop, "[Globalization and the National State.](#)" in *Paradigm Lost: State Theory Reconsidered*, eds. Stanley Aronowitz and Peter Bratsis (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 185-220; Chris O'Kane, "[State Violence, State Control: Marxist State Theory and the Critique of Political Economy.](#)" *Viewpoint Magazine*, Issue 4, 2014.

[11] Neil Davidson, 2008, "[Nationalism and Neoliberalism.](#)" *Variant*, No. 32 (Summer 2008).

[12] *Ibid.*

[13] Anne McClintock, "‘No Longer in a Future Heaven’: Gender, Race, and Nationalism," in *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*, eds. Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 89-122. For an overview of different interpretations of the theme of women and the nation, see Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (London: ZedBooks, 1986); Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation*, (London: Sage, 1997); *Between Woman and Nation: Nationalisms*, eds. Caren Kaplan, Norma Alarcon, and Minno Moallem (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

[14] Valentine Moghadam "Introduction," *Gender and National Identity*, ed. Valentine Moghadam (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994), 12.

[15] David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1999); Satnam Virdee, *Racism, Class and the Racialized Outsider* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014).

[16] Karl Marx, "Letter to Sigfrid Meyer and Karl Vogt," *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, Volume 43 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976), 475.

[17] Karl Marx, *Capital*, Volume I, in *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, Volume 35 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976), 626.

[18] *Ibid.*, 625.

[19] *Ibid.*

[20] *Ibid.*, 626.