

Critical Gibson-Graham:

Reading Capitalocentrism for Trouble

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Abstract

J.K. Gibson-Graham's postcapitalist approach to diverse economies has unleashed a flourishing of research and activism for other worlds. One reason for its successes is found in the intricate links between a feminist and antiessentialist critique of political economy and an experimental, enabling, and affirmative practice of economy. While initially powered by explicitly critical and negating energies, diverse economies scholars have increasingly accentuated an affirmative, "post/critical" register. I explore here what has happened to "capitalocentrism" in this process. Initially an invitation to consider our performative complicity with the seeming inescapability of capitalism, capitalocentrism has lately been positioned as an already established theoretical object and a problem already settled. Returning to Gibson-Graham's affinities with deconstruction, I seek to re-problematise capitalocentrism through a thinking strategy I call "reading for trouble". Insisting on the theoretical and political potentials that capitalocentrism opens for critical and deconstructive practice, the notion becomes a keyword for troublesome work ahead.

Keywords:

capitalocentrism; diverse economies; deconstruction; reading for trouble; postcritique

1. From Critique to Affirmation

Since the early 1990s, J.K. Gibson-Graham's feminist economic geography has reshaped the terrain of academic research and activist praxis. Flowing from an insider critique of Marxist geography, Gibson-Graham's feminist rethinking of economies as landscapes of possibility has enabled a proliferation of research and activism for other economies (Gibson-Graham 2008a; Roelvink et al. 2015). Through moves that deconstruct capitalist hegemonies in order to work with heterogeneous, site-specific and relational economic difference, the diverse economies approach has managed to identify, foster, and defend liveable economies. The enabling and productive character of this approach is exemplified by its recent institutionalisation into a worldwide researcher-practitioner network (Community Economies Research Network), a newly founded more-than-academic institution (Community Economies Institute), and the forthcoming *Handbook of Diverse Economies* (Gibson-Graham & Dombroski 2020). What seemed like an "enticing possibility" and a "nascent community" only ten years ago (Gibson-Graham 2008a, 613) now flourishes as an increasingly global effort to rethink economies in order to take them back wherever and everywhere. Now, "the diverse economies research program is both consolidated as a powerful new economic paradigm and rethought as a major political intervention for our times." (St. Martin et al. 2015, 19)

The proliferation of diverse economies work can be attributed to the overcoming of a certain unfruitful critical stance, particularly prevalent among Marxist political economists, as diagnosed by Gibson-Graham's (2006a) *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It)* originally published in 1996. While the book provided a decidedly *critical* feminist and antiessentialist reading of Marxism, later work of Gibson-Graham and other diverse economists has been more explicitly oriented towards experimentality and affirmative engagements with/in

heterogeneous more-than-human realities: “Since the publication of *The end of capitalism*, we have been less concerned with disrupting the performative effects of capitalist representation, and more concerned with putting forward a new economic ontology that could contribute to novel economic performances.” (Gibson-Graham 2008a, 615) This shift to “become different academic subjects” entails a move away from a position of critique that has “run out of steam” (Latour 2004) and into a varied, situated, and relational practice of thinking *as* ethical-political practice.

Using Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s vocabulary, Gibson-Graham (2006b; 2008a; 2014a) and other diverse economists (e.g. Roelvink 2016; Cameron 2020) have called for a “reparative reading” and “weak theory” of economy in contrast to “paranoid reading” and “strong theory” still prevalent in much economic thought and practice. Strong theory, Gibson-Graham (2008a, 619) write, “has produced our powerlessness by positing unfolding logics and structures that limit politics” and, moreover, it can only “extend knowledge by confirming what we already know, that the world is a place of domination and oppression.” The alternative is to loosen the grip of explanations that know too much *as the same*, in the same way: “Weak theory could be undertaken with a reparative motive that welcomes surprise, tolerates coexistence, and cares for the new, providing a welcoming environment for the objects of our thought.” (ibid, 619) Although contagiously productive, this practice has also been vigorously contested, often exactly from similar positions and arguments that Gibson-Graham sought to wrench with *The End of Capitalism*. As an American student, well versed in the most rigorous tradition of “radical geography”, explained it to me, Gibson-Graham are “bad Marxists.”

I fully support the acute necessity to perform other economies and affirmatively engaged scholar-activism, which are arguably hallmarks of diverse economies praxis. My own engagements with the diverse economy framework have been, quite frankly, life changing. Nevertheless, this paper seeks to look elsewhere – *beside* this experimental and affirmative

surge – and to inquire into what has happened to the *critical* spirit that sparked the forceful feminist questioning of political economy in *The End of Capitalism*. I am especially concerned with what I call a “post/critical” reading of Gibson-Graham, a reading that positions critique and critical gestures as past and/or unfruitful tendencies in order to motivate and enable moving ”beyond” them, into affirming ”alternatives” instead. This sort of reading does not know what to do with critical projects, negative energies, and antagonistic politics, except to treat them as unfruitful, judgmental stances *others* (still) practice or as stepping stones within a methodological pipeline already leading to “solutions”. To suggest a one-way movement or rupture away from the critical – marked here by the slash between “post” and “critical” – is to posit critique as something that does not need to be taken seriously in *this* work. Simultaneously a distance is affirmed between critique and affirmation. While this separation might be productive for distancing ourselves from *certain* forms of (e.g. judgmental, paranoid, melancholic) critique, in *specific* situations, in order to *do* something, or to do something *differently*, I fear that the extrapolation of this separation risks missing the crucial stakes of rethinking critique itself with the inventive and provocative thinking tools of Gibson-Graham.

Inspired by nuanced and complex rearticulations of Sedgwick’s (2003) foundational essay on “reparative” and “paranoid” reading (see Love 2010; Anker & Felski 2017; Wright 2017), I try not to propose a move away from critique but rather to attend to what Sedgwick (2003, 145) calls “the ecology of knowing” as a complex and situated articulation of affective and epistemic relations. Although her essay is often read as a manifesto for “weak theory” and “reparative reading” – and it has surely yielded important insights via such readings – her work stems from a concern for “a shallow gene pool of literary-critical perspectives and skills” (ibid, 144): “it seems to me a great loss when paranoid inquiry comes to seem entirely coextensive with critical theoretical inquiry rather than being viewed as one kind of

cognitive/affective theoretical practice among others, alternative kinds.” (ibid, 126) Therefore, she goes on to analyse the “flexible to-and-fro movement” of “paranoid and reparative critical *practices*, not as theoretical ideologies (and certainly not as stable personality types of critics), but as changing and heterogeneous relational stances.” (ibid, 128) This “ecology” of shifting stances and tendencies of knowing interests me here in order to ask how our critical postcapitalist skills might evolve through more nuanced vocabularies.

Drawing on this diversity of coexisting critical practices, I am keen on following a certain critical motive *within* the work of Gibson-Graham and the wider diverse economies scholarship, namely the introduction and use of “capitalocentrism”. First introduced by Gibson-Graham (1995) to denote the kind of economic discourse in which noncapitalist economies are marginalised and treated always as insufficient or lacking with regards to a systemic and all-determining capitalism, “capitalocentrism” has since become a general placeholder for the critical and theoretical grounding of diverse economies (see e.g. McKinnon et al. 2018). Whenever the stultifying performative effects of totalising and essentialising economic discourse are called into question in order to offer alternatives, “capitalocentrism” is summoned to name the problem and to motivate its solutions.

Although surely not the only critical notion in Gibson-Graham's repertoire, I use capitalocentrism here as a proxy to ask broader questions about the continuing value of critique. What a post/critical reading does to and with capitalocentrism, I argue, is that the notion comes to denote a transparent form of undesirable “economic discourse” with its pre-established characteristics and recognised forms. Capitalocentrism becomes a theoretical-political object, both introduced *and* adequately theorised in *The End of Capitalism*, around which conceptual debate has already settled. While this reading enables diverse economists to decouple themselves from certain traditions, strategies, and affects of critical thought, I want to question the easiness of assigning “capitalocentric” as a name for what we want to avoid.

To explore the potential of capitalocentrism to provoke and challenge postcapitalist studies and politics, I ask whether the notion could still and increasingly have something to teach us about the limits of post/critical separations as well as the prospects of non-capitalist construction – and whether the notion’s history can further our understanding of critical tendencies and potentials *within* diverse economies research. In short: What kind of trouble could capitalocentrism invite and incite? Moreover, why would we want to be troubled in the first place?

My argument proceeds in four steps. First, I introduce capitalocentrism as a theoretical object and political project and describe some of its critical promises. Second, the delimitation of these promises is foregrounded through illustrating how a post/critical reading tames the prospects of this critical notion. Third, in search for frameworks that would expand rather than delimit the problematic, I re-introduce Gibson-Graham’s affinity with deconstruction in order to re-problematise capitalocentrism through a thinking strategy I call “reading for trouble”. To conclude, I draw together thoughts on the critical repositionings and haunting prospects that this discussion invites for troublesome work ahead.

2. The Problem of Capitalocentrism

“Capitalocentrism” was first introduced by Gibson-Graham (1995) in a discussion of unfixing the identity of capitalism as a totality.¹ They note the organisation of capitalist and noncapitalist economies into a “binary structure”, “in which one term has positive being and the other (whose exclusion participates in defining the former) is represented as negativity or lack.” (ibid, 277) Within the binary, noncapitalist economies – insofar as their existence is accepted – are subordinated to capitalist ones. For instance, household economies, socialisms or local and regional economies are depicted as lacking characteristics of capitalism (namely,

its efficiency and rationality, its productivity, and its global extensiveness, respectively).

“Thus, despite their ostensible variety, noncapitalist forms of economy often present themselves as a homogeneous insufficiency rather than as positive and differentiated others.”

(ibid, 278) Gibson-Graham go on to draw an analogy to Elizabeth Grosz’s feminist theorisation of “phallogentrism”, suggesting that “much economic discourse is 'capitalocentric', to the extent that other forms of economy are seen as the same as (or modeled upon) capitalism; as the opposite to capitalism; as the complement to capitalism; or as existing in capitalism’s sphere or orbit.” (ibid, 278 fn 6)

Gibson-Graham thus introduce “capitalocentrism” as a binary structure that organises economic life through privileging capitalist sites and practices while subordinating others. At stake is a specific, recurring, and often implicit relation to economic difference:

“capitalocentric discourse condenses economic difference, fusing the variety of noncapitalist economic activities into a unity in which meaning is anchored to capitalist identity.” (Gibson-Graham 2006b, 56) This entails a system of valuation, which “distributes positive value to those activities associated with capitalist economic activity however defined, and assigns lesser value to all other processes of producing and distributing goods and services” (ibid.).

Thus, capitalocentrism appears as a mode, structure, or tendency of organising economic difference in a specific way, so that capitalist categories, practices, actors, and sites (e.g. wage labour, private property, capitalist enterprise, market exchange, for-profit investment) are deemed more real, central, coherent, and determining than others (e.g. household labour, family subsistence farming, slave labour, producer cooperatives, caring, regenerative finance, the black market, the commons, forced labour). Approaching these actually existing differences without presuming them to line up according to predetermined logics or overruling identities is at the heart of Gibson-Graham’s (2006b, xxxi-xxxii) strategy of “reading for difference rather than dominance.”

Capitalocentrism is whatever makes a differentiating reading of economy often difficult and counter-intuitive; a process of placing capital(ism) and its metonymic variations “at the gravitational centre of meaning making.” (Gibson-Graham et al. 2016, 194) While this centring might mean a homogenisation of economic thought and praxis, so that the economy (or reality, for that matter) becomes primarily associated with a narrow set of sites, relations, and practices, it is also a way of organising (fostering and creating as well as restraining or smothering) and calculating economic difference in ways that benefit certain interests and possibilities, not others. Furthermore, at stake is an organisation of the spatial-temporal architecture of economy in specific ways. What coexists with capital(ism) is rendered inferior to and dependent on it – and what is differentiated from “currently prevailing” “global capitalism” is positioned through a linear-teleological logic as the precondition/origin of capitalism or as the always fleeting and abstract promise of its supersession (see Gibson-Graham 2006a). The ultimate achievements of capitalocentrism include the strong-theoretical self-assurance that often accompany accounts of “economic reality” (often in the singular) without there being any need to question the epistemic assumptions or performative effects of such taken-for-granted.

To Gibson-Graham (2006a), capitalocentrism is a performative process that produces ontological and epistemic, which is also to say material and political effects. The coining of “capitalocentrism” and other antiessentialist thinking strategies are motivated because “socialist or other noncapitalist construction” appears a “ludicrous or utopian future goal” (ibid, 263) rather than a realistic activity coterminous with whatever is considered as capitalism. The task is to think and practice *against* the continuing side-lining of noncapitalist activities and possibilities. In this sense, the notion emerges in Gibson-Graham’s repertoire as an anticapitalist tool. It names a way of producing and organising hierarchies between sites, agencies, abilities, and knowledges of change-making so that indeed, capital(ism) (understood

as the prevalence of a narrow set of economic practices/processes) comes to be understood as the most central. Capitalocentrism is thus the process of (re)producing the systemic coherence and inescapability that Fisher (2009) calls “capitalist realism”. Instead of treating these “reality effects” as a direct or unavoidable consequence of actually-existing capital(ism), the point is to inquire into how our always already heterogeneous and ambiguous coexistence (the diverse economy) is organised in such restrictive, alienating, and destructive ways that recognising more-than-capitalist alterity becomes a celebrated achievement rather than the starting point of our collective negotiation (the community economy). Thus, at stake is not another compulsive proclamation that “there are alternatives!” – this we should know by now – but rather the questioning of the capitalocentrically organised framework from which *both* our “alternatives” and their lack seem to emerge (cf. White & Williams 2016).

Gibson-Graham first frame capitalocentrism as a form of discourse, but this discursivity is not understood as somehow separate from supposedly more material concerns for “reality”. As Miller (2019) highlights, it is capital that needs capitalocentric acts – or *capitalocentrism*, as he calls it – around itself in order to organise an environment supportive of its interests: “Capital, in material practice and not just in performative discourse, *does actually seek to become the center*, even as this aspiration never fully succeeds.” (2019, 79) Capital(ism) needs places where its facts can survive (cf. Mitchell 2008) and capitalocentrism is the continuous organisation of political-economic ground truths. This problemage is not only restricted to speech and text as opposed to corporeal issues: “Capitalism is not just an economic signifier that can be displaced through deconstruction and the proliferation of signs. Rather, it is where the libidinal investment is.” (Gibson-Graham 2006a, xv) Capitalocentrism, then, is also what undermines the desire of economies other than those centred on capitalist practices. Its phenomenological effects, in this sense, entail everything that “pushes back”

against those of us – and that part within us – that desires otherwise (Gibson-Graham 2006b; Healy 2010).

Capitalocentrism thus is a process of continuing subordination of non-capitalist economies as both actually existing materialities and as politically realistic opportunities that warrant attention and energy. Insofar as “capitalist realism” makes sense, this sense making is a product of performative construction. “Capitalocentrism” is a keyword for taking this construction as an object of analysis. The challenge Gibson-Graham (2008a) make becomes a jarring provocation for those engaged in critical praxis: we find ourselves *within* the problematic of reproducing capital(ism), because our interpretations are inescapably entangled in a performative play of reinscribing and reconstituting reality. Instead of letting the critics within and around off the hook by describing capitalocentrism as another political-economic concept, phenomenon, or object “out there”, we find ourselves *inside* its space, or within a space of competing hegemonic projects, some of which are characterised by a prevalence of capitalocentrism. This repositioning follows from poststructuralist theorisations of performativity, which introduce “a minimal distance between an object, such as an economy, and the ideas, theories, and words that constitute the object through description (law, social norms, and beliefs)” (Healy 2015, 122). With capitalocentrism, we find ourselves *complicit* insofar as “it is the way capitalism has been “thought” that has made it so difficult for people to imagine its supersession.” (Gibson-Graham 2006a, 4) That the critical identification and analysis of a “[c]apitalism [that] seamlessly occupies the horizons of the thinkable” (Fisher 2009, 8) is performatively entangled with this object – meaning that knowledge about capitalism is haunted by the undecidability between reflecting a pre-existing reality and performing it – becomes the contentious proposition.

A glance at diverse economies research testifies to the crucial role that “capitalocentrism” plays in identifying a problem and paving the way for solutions. For example, Gibson-

Graham (2004) call attention to how capitalocentrism works within poststructuralist rethinking of development as an unexamined centring of attention on capitalism as *the* economic system. An anticapitalocentric strategy of reading for economic difference is proposed to unearth noncapitalist economies and possibilities in Papua New Guinea (see also Gibson-Graham & Ruccio 2001). In Gibson-Graham et al. (2013), “capitalocentrism” is not mentioned, but the trope of an expert-controlled and self-contained “machine economy” plays a similar role, as it names the alienating order that dumbs our agencies and capacities, thus calling for us to “take back the economy—any time, any place.” (ibid, 188) Gibson-Graham et al. (2016) examine how critical accounts regarding the commons often work within a capitalocentric framework, as exemplified by debates on “the new enclosures” (e.g. Hardt & Negri 2009) or the reduction of the commons into a property form, thus privileging “formal and abstract legalities at the expense of actual practices of maintaining or creating commons” (Gibson-Graham et al. 2016, 198). In contrast, an anticapitalocentric strategy emerges to retrace historical processes of negotiation and struggle around different atmospheric commons in order to explore the power of re-narrativisation and reframing for a more expansive sense of agency in the present.

“Capitalocentrism” thus allows Gibson-Graham to differentiate their thinking strategies from those of others: “Working against the condensations and displacements that structure the discourse of capitalocentrism, we have produced an unruly economic landscape of particular, nonequivalent meanings. Our objective has been to dis-order the capitalist economic landscape, to queer it and thereby dislocate capitalocentrism’s hegemony.” (Gibson-Graham 2006b, 77) This differentiation, this judgment, is thus in a sense a key *critical* notion in Gibson-Graham, even as it motivates an outspoken *denouncement* of critique understood as lamentation and mastery (Gibson-Graham 2008a). The coining of “capitalocentrism” is motivated by the construction of noncapitalist economies through displacing the hegemonic

and politically counter-productive view of a monolithic economic system. This is no picnic: “To achieve this I must smash Capitalism and see it in a thousand pieces. I must make its unity a fantasy, visible as a denial of diversity and change.” (Gibson-Graham 2006a, 263–4) The imperative tone gives away just how invested the coining of “capitalocentrism”, and Gibson-Graham’s feminist critique of political economy more generally, is in *negation* (cf. Miller 2013; Madra & Özselçuk 2015). Also, it might be a good indication of how congested and disabling the affective space of theorising capitalism (as we knew it) was at the time of *The End of Capitalism* – and of the energetic surge needed from Gibson-Graham (2006a, 13) to “get out of this capitalist place”, *then and there*. Yet, this thrust to “dis-order” and “queer” a discursive hegemony should not cajole us into ignoring how their work thrives on the insights and blindnesses of critical political economy each time a specific capitalocentric situation is recognised.

3. Taming Capitalocentrism

Wherever “capitalocentrism” is in use, we find a Gibson-Graham invested in critique and negation and in view of possibilities emanating from diverse economies. Their affirmations and experimentality find purchase in the critical decomposition of capitalocentric hierarchies of valuation and imagination. Thus, when Gibson-Graham (2008a, 618) ask “how do we disinvest in our paranoid practices of critique and mastery and undertake thinking that can energize and support ‘other economies’?”, perhaps we should not take this disinvestment too lightly – nor to take their prescription as a substitute for watching how they move.ⁱⁱ I read this play of critical and affirmative elements, firstly, as characteristic of the inescapable heterogeneity of Gibson-Graham’s work and, secondly, as testimony to the richness of their thinking strategies. As Miller (2013) makes clear, there are different voices within Gibson-Graham. We might add, paraphrasing Derrida’s (2006, 41–42) remark on Marx, that we do

not have to suppose Gibson-Graham to be in agreement with themselves (see also Sharpe 2014). To appreciate critical impulses is to come to terms with an important part of what motivates and animates the diverse economies approach.

Yet, I want to suggest that a post/critical readingⁱⁱⁱ risks side-lining and disavowing such impulses and thus foreclosing their potential. The post/critical is here intended to identify as a partial tendency of reading rather than any systematic categorisation or full disclosure of “how capitalocentrism is read today”. It is, in other words, an invitation to think, a theoretical object to work with, perhaps even a “straw man” to provoke (cf. Gibson-Graham 2006a, 10). I am interesting in tracing how “capitalocentrism” is used and how its work depends upon a recurring structure or strategy of argumentation, a one-way movement from critique (of capitalocentrism) to affirmation (of diverse and community economies). Again, the point is not to diminish the power and effectiveness of such a movement. I keep on practicing its force myself, proceeding time after time from capitalocentrism to its alternatives. Rather, the point is to ask what drawbacks can issue from a generalisation of this trajectory into a culture of thinking coextensive with the critical vocabulary introduced by Gibson-Graham. To call these tendencies post/critical is meant as an invitation for collective work around the status of critique in diverse economies research. Let us examine shortly three intertwined characteristics of such a reading.

First, when capitalocentrism is identified as a problem in contemporary work, it most often appears as one form of transparent “economic discourse” among other options. Definitions almost invariably cite *The End of Capitalism* (Gibson-Graham 2006a) almost as if, in that book, critique and theorisation of capitalocentric economic discourse were both established *and* accomplished. The possibility that, rather than being a general theory or transcontextual concept, “capitalocentrism” might have been introduced as a situated and strategical move – in a context unavoidably different from this one, now, wherever that is – is rarely posed. The

authority of *The End of Capitalism* has a performative effect of locating critique-cum-capitalocentrism as a past project, done then and there, and one working as an adequate theoretical background for affirmative work done in the present and in the future. A disposition towards affirmative ends seems to translate into an underlying binary structure of negation—affirmation with its one-way pathway always oriented towards the latter. Critical energies are cited from a position that has already moved beyond them by “disinvest[ing] in our paranoid practices or critique and mastery” (Gibson-Graham 2008a, 618).

Gibson-Graham (2006b, 98) carefully points out that “any attempt to fix the fantasy of common being [...] closes off the opportunity to cultivate ethical praxis”, thus insisting on a continuous need to open up categories and practices, or what Miller (2013, 522) calls “the unworking of common-being.” Yet, on the one hand, capitalocentrism seems to escape such conceptual reopening, and, on the other, its “unworking” capacities as a challenge to other concepts and practices are largely left underexamined. When the problematic that capitalocentrism indexes is not situated within a certain theoretical-political project and historical-geographical moment – e.g. within specific debates on Marxist and feminist political economy in the 1990s American-Australian academia – and when its complex interplay with other notions and projects is left unreflected – e.g. by isolating “capitalocentrism” as a synecdoche for Gibson-Graham’s critical energies (I plead guilty) – the possibility ensues to avoid problematising it *in situ*. The partial and carefully articulated “theoretical object” or “straw man” (Gibson-Graham 2006a, 10) of capitalocentrism becomes a common noun that circulates well and to various effects. My point is not to categorise these effects as “good” or “bad” nor to lament the inflation of an original act of genius (from a theoretical invention to “mere” empirical appliance). However, it is worth noting that the proliferation of diverse and community economies scholarship *relies* on the trope of capitalocentrism, as it acts as a shorthand for characterising unhelpful kinds of economic

discourse. Despite this reliance, I have still to see the question posed of how exactly to recognise capitalocentrism when we see it. Nor is there much reflection available on what it means to both (representationally) identify and (performatively) enact capitalocentrism in the process of its naming. It seems that we already know what capitalocentrism looks like, so recognising it “out there” is a no-brainer. The lack of epistemic questioning makes it all too easy to believe that we recognise capitalocentrism whenever we see it – suggesting, furthermore, that wherever it *exists*, we will (be able to) recognise it. Accordingly, the resulting task is, quite simply, to speak differently, *without* capitalocentrism. What if we instead identified in capitalocentrism an open question and a task, “a space of pregnant negativity” (Gibson-Graham 2006b, xxxiii–xxxiv), an invitation “to enter rather than end the conversation?” (Gibson-Graham 2008b, 157)

Secondly, when the problem of capitalocentrism is discussed, its problematising potential is delimited and restricted – its critical affordances are tamed. Instead of a continuous, ambiguous, and polymorphic problematic that haunts us, we are left with a seemingly well-behaving, singular problem. While Gibson-Graham’s approach works to dislocate any “global coverage” or “total penetration” of *capitalism*, capitalocentrism is a different sort of beast: “In its current hegemonic articulation as neoliberal global capitalism, capitalocentric discourse *has now colonized the entire economic landscape* and its universalizing claims *seem* to have been realized.” (2006b, 55; my emphasis) That is, while the *objects* of capitalocentric discourse have only *seemingly* realised (meaning that capitalism is not everything there is), *the discourse itself* has successfully “colonised the entire economic landscape.” To think economies and economic difference otherwise, in order to foster noncapitalist possibility, we need to “revitalize the economic imaginary by freeing it from *the leaden grip of capitalocentrism.*” (Gibson-Graham 2003, 125; my emphasis). Most often known to be “hegemonic”, “prevalent”, or “dominant”, capitalocentrism has a deft sense of normativity

coded into it. Indeed, Gibson-Graham's (2020) newest reiteration of the term is "capitalonormativity". This normativity seems to *restrict* and *exclude* (the recognition of) economic heterogeneity in a rather repressive way (cf. Wiegman & Wilson 2015).

While capitalism gets shattered and dislocated in Gibson-Graham's provocative readings, capitalocentrism often paints a more solid ground to push against. Interestingly, insofar as capitalocentrism thus replaces capitalism as *the* problem to be tackled, introducing a new organisation of performative problematics, this new theoretical object behaves much like capitalism (as we knew it): as a unity, singularity, and totality (cf. Gibson-Graham 2006a). Paradoxically, this "hegemonised" problematic proves to be surprisingly easy to overcome due to its "discursive" nature. Capitalocentrism gets almost invariably discussed in close textual, theoretical, and strategical proximity to its (apparent) solutions, as if we had both no need and no time for questioning the nature the problem. Unlike, say, "ideology", "capitalocentrism" does not risk paranoia; it promises no trickery and, definitely, no nonsense. It is the clean and disposable conceptual lens used to demystify monolithic capitalism.

As a framework of repression and acquittal, a post/critical capitalocentrism does not allow a particularly heterogeneous field of power to work with. That capitalocentric practices might not be all and always unproductive for noncapitalist construction is one foreclosed implication. For example, consider the case of financial hacking or hacktivism that learns from newest financial technologies to use them against or despite capitalist profiteering (Alhojärvi 2020). Such activism is riddled with capitalocentric motivations, hierarchies, and blind spots, which reproduce images of financial "heartlands" and emancipatory (and capital-intensive) "high tech" as well as visions of a singular, more or less capitalist "global economy" – if only to suggest it all *can*, or indeed *will*, be changed, by this app or that crypto-project. Corporeal forms of capitalocentrism, akin to the operation of the "machine economy" (Gibson-Graham et al 2013) that restricts agencies and capabilities, are reproduced

in the gender dynamics and social-technical bottlenecks that keep on restricting the economic grammar and social accessibility of hacktivism. These “machine economies” order the ways economies are represented and reprogrammed, and they reproduce unfortunate hierarchies of expertise and capacity. But this is not the end of the story, since troublesome hierarchies and power-dynamics are also openings that can allow us to work with capitalocentrism as a continuous problematic. This would necessitate serious exploration of the meanings and effects of capitalocentrism in different contexts, thus building up a sense of what the notion can achieve and what is best left outside of reach (if anything). What if we treated capitalocentrism not as an object already known, an issue that is either fully prevalent (capitalocentric hegemony) or happily overcome (problem no more), and more as an invitation for situated retheorisations – for diversifying, dislocating, and reclaiming? How would we read for difference *in* capitalocentrism to “deexoticize power, accepting it as our mundane, pervasive, uneven milieu” (Gibson-Graham 2006b, 8)?

Thirdly, while capitalocentrism was first introduced to name a problematic, complicitous space in which we find ourselves as analysts of capital(ism), and as a challenge for reinventing critical praxis so as not to reproduce a restricted sense of possibility, it now often is framed through distantiation – as a problem of others and a problem “out there”. This links to the “intuitive” recognition of the primary forms and sites of its existence. Instead of being a destabilising notion, a field in the process of deconstruction, capitalocentrism is something *we* are invited to “destabilise” (Gibson-Graham 2008a, 623), “refute” (White and Williams 2016, 326), “deconstruct” (Barron 2015, 173; Werner 2015, 77) and “reveal” (McKinnon et al. 2018, 337). Instead of a challenge to *ourselves* or a thorn within *our* projects, we get a solid grasp of the problem in order to proceed to solutions. The transparent object is coupled with and available to capable, self-conscious subjects. Again, it is noteworthy that a temporal dynamic is at play, so that the representational distance to capitalocentrism is established

through Gibson-Graham's past work: "What Gibson-Graham's vision of economic difference did was to *liberate* these [noncapitalist] practices from "capitalocentrism"" (St. Martin et al. 2015, 3; my emphasis). This liberated zone of *noncapitalocentrism* provides stable ground for "performing alternatives" *outside* the gravitational pull of capital(ism).

This post/critical setting^{iv} summons questions: To the extent that we find ourselves in a place that is "beyond" capitalocentrism, what does this tell us of the problem of capitalocentrism that we have thus "overcome"? How will the question have been identified, justified, and governed for us to find ourselves having answered it? Take, for example, a simple commodity – like this peer-reviewed article you are reading. Is it controversial to call it a commodity? No, insofar as it is undoubtedly entangled in relations of "academic capitalism" (Paasi 2005). Is it *capitalocentric*? It depends on how we inscribe this commodity-ness alongside and within other, *always* more-than-capitalist economies, and how we trace the heterogeneous relations also taking place within and beside whatever is capitalistic about it: the paywalls transgressed, the unpaid work performed, the uncalculated waste produced, the mutual aid reciprocated, etc. To the extent that we make the "small facts" speak to the "large concerns" of academic capitalism (cf. Gibson-Graham 2014a), we might need to question the capitalocentric *effects* of our interpretations and to ask our framings to produce more room for action. But perhaps the more jarring question is: Would it be capitalocentric *not* to call it (also) a capitalist commodity? If capitalocentrism concerns the reproduction of capitalist common sense – the unquestionability, incontestability, and irreplaceability of capitalist value(s) – then would not a silence about what is capitalist in the production and distribution of these words right here be a primary example of capitalocentrism? And if this is the case, then does it not mean that capitalocentrism is, more or less, *everywhere*, in all economical silences unless they are broken through a critical analysis of their inscription within capitalist economies *and* the further reinscription of these economies within diverse economies?

There is no way getting beyond a problem unless it has been predefined or assumed as overcomable. This is not to argue against decisions between more or less capitalocentric economic discourses or performatives – deciding and acting upon those decisions is indispensable – but the smoothness and automatisedness of these operations is what raises my suspicion. What if, instead of a promise of liberation, we would posit capitalocentrism as that which already haunts *our* perception of economy? As something that precedes, enables, and restricts *my* intuition and sensibility (as in making sense *and* as availability to the senses) – my being? Furthermore, what possible use could such an undoubtedly paranoid thinking strategy, to borrow Sedgwick’s (2003) vocabulary, yield?

To conclude, these post/critical tendencies – which are always partial, unexhaustive – seem to produce a setting that is too stable and comforting. Such a capitalocentrism is an already accomplished theoretical and empirical task, a tamed problem that imposes no need for situated reopenings and unworkings. Again, this is not to argue that such a problem is without benefits. Proceeding “beyond capitalocentrism” (White & Williams 2016), “outside of a capitalocentric frame” (Gibson-Graham 2014a, S149), and “outside the confines and strictures of capitalocentrism” (Gibson-Graham et al 2016, 195) undoubtedly grants force to postcapitalist praxis. As The Free Association (2010, 1028) puts it, “[i]t’s difficult to start swimming in open water: it’s much easier to push off against something.” This is an important role for capitalocentrism as a theoretical and political object, as something we can and will need to resist – and as something recognised as hegemonic in order to be replaced. Yet, I reckon that associating capitalocentrism with an already accomplished theoretical task and a past critical phase might paradoxically leave us with a problem that is *too* easy in the sense of restricting our hold of problemage and of critical skills necessary to keep on dealing with it. How might we think of capitalocentrism productively as something that needs to be

confronted and negotiated repeatedly, as a problem whose absence might not only testify of its overcoming but also of an underexplored political and theoretical ground?

4. Reading Capitalocentrism for Trouble

Indexing “capitalocentrism” with these problematising questions is my aim here, and pretending to answer them risks the closure of the problematic. Yet, as Miller (2019, 27–28) proposes, we must hedge these risks and negotiate – “*know[ing]* that the articulation generated is performative, is implicated in and complicit with that which is represented, yet *pursu[ing]* the work nonetheless” from a “no noncomplicit place”. Perhaps Haraway’s (2016) practice of “staying with the trouble” (as opposed to avoiding, solving, or overcoming it) is what we need to experiment with, embracing the haunting space of performative complicity and entanglement that “capitalocentrism” announces. But how are we *to stay* with a trouble that we do not *have* in the first place – or anymore? And why would we want to get (back) into such trouble?

“Our task is to make trouble, to stir up potent response to devastating events,” writes Haraway (ibid, 1), “as well as to settle troubled waters and rebuild quiet places.” Thus, I propose an additional “anticapitalocentric reading” (Gibson-Graham 2006b, 72) of capitalocentrism itself – one entertaining the “delightful” (Wright 2017) energies of suspicion, complicity, and the continuous reinvention of critique. Or, a strategy of *reading for trouble* to accompany (and challenge) its by now well-established sibling of “reading for difference rather than dominance.” (Gibson-Graham 2006b, xxxi–xxxii) Not that the point is to “return” to any sort of dominance or totalising vision of power. Quite the contrary: the play of trouble and difference that a different take on capitalocentrism will allow needs to be judged based on the enlarged movement space it offers (or fails to offer) for a postcapitalist politics.

The affinities between Gibson-Graham's antiessentialist project and the practice of deconstruction might provide surprisingly fruitful ways for rethinking capitalocentrism (cf. Gibson-Graham 2000; 2006a; 2020).^v Let us return to the analogy Gibson-Graham (1995, 278, fn6) construe between their "capitalocentrism" and Grosz's feminist theorisation of "phallocentrism." In her theorisation of phallocentrism, deconstruction, and feminism, Grosz (1995) argues that deconstruction proposes to feminism the fundamental and jarring challenge of complicity, which "refuses the idea of a space beyond or outside, the fantasy of a position insulated from what it criticizes and disdains." (ibid, 62) This means that feminism is already implicated in patriarchy and phallocentrism, constitutively bound to the objects of its critique. As we have seen, a similar complicity or constitutive binding is precisely what Gibson-Graham introduce with "capitalocentrism" – this time a performative bind to capital(ism). But what happens if we imagine an unrelenting complicity not only with different economic practices and relations but also *with capitalocentrism* – the capitalocentring tendencies of thought and praxis?

This would mean finding ourselves in a space always already constituted partly by capitalocentrism, profoundly troubling any (self-)positioning outside its purview. Were we to understand capitalocentrism as an economic metaphysics, it would, like metaphysics more generally, invite not a task for (immediate, absolute, unproblematic etc.) transgression but rather for skilled attentiveness, selective inheritance, and critical interpretation: "The quality and fecundity of a discourse are perhaps measured by the critical rigor with which this relation to the history of metaphysics and to inherited concepts is thought." (Derrida 2001, 356) The problem of capitalocentrism becomes something that precedes and preconditions any effort to "overcome", "solve", or even "identify" it. This would mean not presupposing its problematic nature to consist of a transparent "economic discourse" (as in a way of speaking

and writing) fully available to our analyses and negotiation (cf. Rose 1997), but instead a more troubled, compromised, and suspicious terrain of recurring, situated work.

Any claims at *noncapitalocentric* transgression would need to be treated with suspicion:

“Breaks are always, and fatally, reinscribed in an old cloth that must continually, interminably be undone.” (Derrida 1981, 24) What would raise our concern, then, is the possibility that capitalocentrism does not leave us in peace. “It” precedes, enables, restricts, stays, and haunts in ways that are irreducible to definite localisations, calculable manifestations, or recognisable subjects – “*es spukt*” (Derrida 2006, 216). We would need to suspect that what emerges as intelligible or sensible might already be (to an extent) constituted by a capitalocentric logic. This inheritance, in all of its “radical and necessary *heterogeneity*” (ibid, 16), would need to be negotiated in our deeply limited yet absolutely indispensable capacities for ethical negotiation and political intervention. As Gibson-Graham (2010, 125) highlight, their

“decision *not* to privilege the dominance and spread of capitalist class relations cleared the way to privileging the non-capitalist (and capitalist) diversity of economic landscapes. [...] This is a choice that must be made and remade. As Derrida taught us, deconstruction is never finally successful and the radical heterogeneity it produces has to be performed and reperformed. The end of capitalism (or of knowledge about Capitalism) never arrives with any finality.”

We thus find ourselves within a troubled space – and a troubled space is found within. Instead of proceeding to the liberated land of *noncapitalocentrism*, then, I suggest we become more modest and more haunted by the prospects of capitalocentrism. This does not prevent us from engaging in *anticapitalocentric* readings (Gibson-Graham 2006b) – nor any *relative* non-capitalocentricity as a situated and strategic task – but it warns against putting our trust in any apparent outside to or absolute break from capitalocentrism. For, as Gasché (2016, 19) argues, “[t]he belief that one can cut all ties with the system of metaphysics, especially from a

position outside the system, is an illusion fostered by metaphysics itself (to reabsorb the critic better, as it were).”

What would it mean to consider capitalocentrism – *this* metaphysics – as something fostering illusions of its overcoming? In the spirit of what Miller (2019, 27) calls “strategic paranoia”, let us consider capitalocentrism as a process of *capital sensing and thinking through us*.^{vi} Insofar as capital(ism) needs places where its facts can survive, and to the extent that it “seamlessly occupies the horizons of the thinkable” (Fisher 2009, 8), capitalocentrism makes sense as a reproduction of these horizons by disavowing the existence of other economies and of economic heterogeneity and undecidability in general. Moreover, these disavowals need themselves to be disavowed – erased from everything archived under “economy” – so that a restricted number of non-contradictory, self-conscious, power-full capitalist nodes populate the economic landscape, quite naturally. From this perspective, capitalocentrism becomes a continuous process that capital(ism) needs, a relational geography of what Sedgwick (2003) calls “periperformatives” gathering spatially-temporally around (and within) capitalist sites and practices (cf. Roelvink 2016).^{vii}

Enclosures work best when people (are forced to) perform the authority, legitimacy, and unbreakability of hedges. What goes on beside, under, over, or through them is better left exceptional – written out of books. Capitalocentrism is thus not only about what is explicitly said (“This hedge keeps us out.”) but also about silences – supple submissions, breaches in the dark, sounds of the self-evident – that either conform to or reject the hedge in a way that is calculable, governable, forgettable, and/or profitable. But of course, what is to recognise “a hedge” as a thing in the first place, for it “to ping” (Morton 2010) *anyhow*, even if to evoke a rejection or attempts at unlearning its mastery, if not a belated re-cognition and re-affirmation of some sort of capitalocentric violence that has already taken place? An *unlearning* of enclosures would necessitate an absolute indifference to the hedge to render it *illegible* as

something that separates, orders, and enforces hierarchies. Insofar as such illegibility is impossible – we are *already* literate and schooled (in compulsory education) – we are stuck with the repercussions of capitalocentrism. Necessarily so, since the legibility (of capitalocentrism) is where we can bear witness to our (capitalocentric) literacy in order to inherit it differently.

It is crucial not to imagine an outside to this process but instead to treat capitalocentrism as a problem forcing us to reflect, critically, on the material implications and preconditions of our capacities for sense making. It could be useful to conceptualise capitalocentrism in terms of a *capitalocentric matrix* (cf. Butler 1990), a framework of experience and intelligibility – one reproducing capital(ism)s, not (only) vice versa. Capitalocentrism would come to name an inheritance prior to intentional subjects consciously reflecting on and deciding upon their fate. This means its stickiness comes before, beyond, and after intentional choice. Following this path, we would need to reconstruct histories and archival economies with an eye on the material-semiotic (for the lack of better words) performance needed for economic common sense to work. For “capitalism” to make sense as *the* globally prevalent system of our times, a long history and geography of archival work (remembering *and* forgetting) will need to have taken place and to have organised reference points (implicit or explicit) that constitute the “origins of capitalism” and enable us to “intuitively” locate ourselves within this “system”, or as “economic subjects” in the first place. It helps if archives of more-than-capitalist diverse economies are lacking, if economies of archival are themselves not read as heterogeneous, and if much of what is noncapitalist has never been archived or cannot be archived.

This historical-spatial organisation may not have happened outside the capitalocentric matrix, meaning that the archival economies (what gets (not) stored, disseminated, and remembered; who does memory work; where and how memories are stored; etc.) are also implicated.

Capitalocentrism – or, a capitalisation on memory and amnesia – from which the performative

effect of “hegemonic capitalism” emerges to rule the economic landscape. In other words, capitalocentrism should not be presumed to be found sitting and awaiting in the archives, but instead to be a problematic also of the organisation and constitution of collective memory: a tendency of erasing the traces of more-than-capitalist heterogeneity (cf. Gabriel 2011), time and again, and erasing signs of this erasure. Even before this, perhaps before capital(ism) (whether logically or historically), the very possibility of accounting comes along with its economical restrictions of space and time: an incapacity to account for it all, to centre on or put in reserve anything much more than a few heads or capitals at a time, to difficulties of accounting for the unaccountable that fails to fit within any restricted *oikos* and *nomos*.^{viii} Perhaps we should explore such an “originary” capitalocentrism (cf. Derrida 1997) to refine our faculties for distinguishing it from secondary or capitalist capitalocentrism. This difference makes all the difference for analysing capitalocentric heritages without subordinating them (from the start) under any logic of capital(ism). Yet, Gibson-Graham’s (2006a) impatience towards totalising narratives and any “politics of postponement” warns us against simply raising the stakes of capitalocentric problems. We also need to reflect how capitalocentric silences replicate themselves in any singular descriptions of *the* capitalocentric logic of archives or accounts. How to refuse the (singular) capitalocentric past – and speak to and for other archives as well as archival otherness? How to read for heterogeneity and alterity *in* capitalocentrism?

The grounds of intelligibility in capitalocentrism may be studied as an *economy of violence* (Derrida 2001; Malabou 1990) deeply enmeshed with other forms of violence, normalisation, hierarchy, and oppression. While Gibson-Graham (1995, 2006a, 2006b) emphasise the *discursive* violence perpetuated by capitalocentrism, we might have to remind ourselves that this “discursivity” has, alas, little to do with non-materiality or non-corporeality. Quite the contrary, the continuation of capitalocentric violence is seen in the continuing

marginalisation, silencing, exploitation, and oppression of bodies devalued in capitalocentring hierarchies – bodies contributing to, getting sustenance from, and reproducing interdependencies through and as more-than-capitalist relations of the diverse economy. This also means that the epistemic privileging of capitalist economies should be theorised alongside and intersecting with the all-too-real violence of gendered, racialized, ethnicised, speciesist, ableist, and classists hierarchies, among others. Again, we stand not outside but deep within these ruinous inheritances, inescapably wrapped in the “old cloth” (Derrida 1981, 24). Capitalocentric violences will have already happened, and for crucial ethical and political reasons we should work within and starting from a “no noncomplicit place” (Miller 2019, 28). Only *within* can we start negotiating what this inheritance means for a postcapitalist politics.

Everything depends on how we stay with/in the trouble. With Grosz (1995, 62), we might hope to succeed only insofar as we become “implicated in and part—admittedly a recalcitrant part—of” the problem she calls patriarchy and, we might add, capitalocentrism. For if any restricted economy is undoubtedly implicated in these violent relations, any political-theoretical heritage building upon layers upon layers of privileging certain political agents, sites, and processes can only be understood as a systematic capitalisation on these privileges and omissions, if only to challenge them. To have a class struggle, an avant-garde, a theory of social transformation, or a community economy, a different – or *différential* – politics will have been foreclosed. As Derrida (1999, 221) asks of what he calls the “*theoretical-and-political* disasters” of totalitarian Marxism: “they should trouble us, should they not?”

5. Inheriting troubles

While I have sketched some critical openings within and expanding upon Gibson-Graham’s essential work, none of this is to disparage research and politics from reflexively side-lining

such impulses. There will be work to do on all fronts, and post/critical impulses have had and will continue to have important effects. Also, we need to recognise that the re-entry of critique in this framework risks the re-entry of unhelpful kinds of paranoid and judgmental practices. But avoiding such stances is not aided by a post/critical reading that situates critical energies as a past achievement and theorises problems only insofar as they can provide quick solutions. With these ruinous economies and as part of a species “threatened with extinction” (Gibson-Graham 2014b), we simply cannot afford to disavow existing critical energies or to foreclose their potential for thinking ahead – nor to leave critique (or negation, for that matter) to those who only use them to cement capitalist realism.

To return to Miller’s (2015, 366) question “why must we choose?”: “Can we not construct forms of action and subjectivity in which critique and experiment, rage and hope, and opposition and possibility coexist and even coconstitute one another?” I contend that we can and need to, acutely so. Yet, all the arguments against post/critical separations of critique and affirmation notwithstanding, these elements do not need to be reducible to and modularly combinable under any singular “framework”. It can be equally tempting to either situate critique as just a tamed theoretical-methodological step within a framework oriented towards “alternatives” or to extend the strong-theoretical reach of critical reflections so as to shoot down any situated attempts to perform “alternatives”. None of this is to compromise the acute need to work with constructing noncapitalist realities, and simultaneously, none of it is to claim the possibility of a time and place when critique will be *passé*. Different situations will have called for different practices.

The complicity that capitalocentrism introduces re-muddles our organisation of friends and foes. What comes to matter is the potential of becoming differently and attentively capitalocentric. Insofar as *reading for trouble* can be a productive strategy for re-envisioning how capitalocentrism still needs to challenge us, any situated understanding of this task will necessitate its accompaniment by *reading for difference*. Without difference, without situatedness, without new names, we have a totalised problem we cannot work with and need to either dwell on endlessly or attempt to overcome with all-too-hasty moves. It might well be worth noting, paraphrasing Sedgwick (2003, 150), that sometimes the most capitalocentric-tending people are able to, and need to, develop, and disseminate the richest noncapitalist practices. This underlines the need to delink capitalocentrism from an *a priori* sense of undesirability, providing more space to empirical questions around what capitalocentrism is and does, in each different situation. Another complication stems from seeing the beneficial effects, for some, of political-economic and governmental capitalocentrically concentrating on the “tip of the iceberg” (Gibson-Graham 2006b). Many forms of economic diversity will have had good reasons to stay under the radar. “The job of peasants,” Scott (2009, 34) reminds us, “is to stay out of the archives.” We will need a much more nuanced vocabulary and attentiveness, one that rejects the binary division between capitalocentric—noncapitalocentric practices and instead opts for studying the diverse and situated differences within the shared inheritance of capitalocentrism. Different(ly) capitalocentric acts produce different effects. To conceptualise a shared and endlessly differentiated capitalocentric heritage as the starting point allows us to work with materials and perspectives otherwise all-too-readily categorised as undesirable or unproductive. Thus, when Harvey (2015) declares that “capitalo-centrism matters”, perhaps he is right (though, we might add, for the wrong reasons^{ix}). Perhaps it matters through saying something about the performative practices and prerequisites of capital(ism) that help us understand where any seeming lack of “alternatives” stems from –

and how capital(ism) organises itself through us and our continuous marginalisation of noncapitalist realities. Perhaps it matters through enabling us to reorganise anti- and postcapitalist critique in more creative and thoroughgoing ways – pushing us to challenge critics within and around to work towards other frameworks of sensibility/intelligibility *and* to account for the complicities of such “others”. If we turn the tables to think capitalism (e.g. as *the* present, as the marginality of other economies) as a performative effect of capitalocentrism, avoiding and/or overcoming the latter *topos* becomes quite symptomatic of our condition.

I believe Gibson-Graham have named a problem that will need to haunt us for a long time – a problem that names the continuing performative omitting, silencing, and marginalising of diverse economies and more-than-capitalist realities. As an organisation of intelligibility and of collective memory that erases the traces of its work, capitalocentrism names a trouble we will need to read *for*. It does not present itself in full transparency and availability to our intentional acts (or insofar it does, we might need to question its problematisation). The seemingly restricted nature of the problem might very well be an *effect* of capitalocentrism. And such a capitalocentric matrix might be older than capital(ism) and much more haunting a tendency than a post/critical reading enables us to understand. Constructing situatedly anticapitalocentric counter-histories and counter-geographies of silenced and marginalised diverse economies as well as their economies of archival and remembrance is not the smallest of tasks that ensues. Reading for trouble means admitting how constitutive the problem is and how fundamental our complicity. The good news is that we can find sites for critically important work *everywhere*. The most promising of our emancipatory projects and postcapitalist imaginaries inescapably implicated in a fabric of sedimented layers of capitalocentric hierarchies and violence. Our vision burdened by centuries of capitalocentrism

ignorance. Our “otherwise” always already compromised by capitalocentric inheritances. They should trouble us, should they not?

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ⁱ There is also a pre-history of “capitalocentrism” worthy of note. The earliest mention I have found is in the work of French historian René Gallissot (e.g. 1983). Gallissot is concerned with the effects of a teleological Marxist conceptualisation of space and time, in which “the key to the understanding of all anterior societies is that all of history and space are put in gravitation around a kernel that is less Europocentric and more capitalo-centric” (1983, 206-207; my translation).

ⁱⁱ I’m here thinking of Heather Love’s (2010) brilliant guide for reading Sedgwick without dismissing the aggression and negativity of her thinking: “we do Sedgwick a disservice when we read her solely through a reparative mode. A reading of her work as all about love suggests that we are not listening to her, nor watching how she moves.” (Love 2010, 239)

ⁱⁱⁱ Although my diagnosis of the “post/critical” is indebted to debates surrounding Sedgwick’s work and the wider phenomenon of “postcritique” (see Anker & Felski 2017), the term (with a slash) is here reserved to indicate a practice that seeks to move “beyond” critique in a one-way trajectory rather than to denote a complex *rearticulation* of critique.

^{iv} The prevalence of this setting is an interesting question, which I consider necessary to keep open. Again, the point is not to make a definite argument about how capitalocentrism is supposedly understood everywhere, “today”. My intentions are more modest – and I am conscious of the contradictorily performative work done in naming the “post/critical”. For empirical illustration, though, it is worth visiting the forthcoming *Handbook of Diverse Economies*. In the more than 70 varieties of “capitalocentrism” in the book (including my own two essays), I find no sign of *other than* post/critical takes on the term.

^v My argument relies on an alliance if not similarity between deconstruction and critique. Although this relationship has been and is hotly debated, let us contend, for now, with Gaon’s (2018, 209) understanding of deconstruction “as a form of ‘critique’ insofar as it allows us not only to see but to intervene in what *in particular* is harmed by or closed off from a *specific* prescription or norm or ethical good, in a *specific* case, and in a *particular* social, political and historical context.” Among other things, this means that the critical force of deconstruction, insofar as there is one, here, must attend to the specificities of heterogeneous capitalocentrism in whatever the situation “to bear against the dogmatism, chauvinism, racism (and so on) that constitute the social order.” (ibid, 209)

^{vi} As in Miller’s (2019, 27) case, such a paranoid strategy should be coupled with “an explicit acknowledgment of the dangers of such a move.” The irony is, of course, that no paranoia thinks of itself as other than “strategic”. It is, after all, *just about* to reveal how everyone (else) is being tricked into believing X while in reality Y (Sedgwick 2003). To read for capitalocentric troubles, here, no doubt risks performative tautologies – “unearthing” capitalocentrism as a “real cause” behind X all the while (re)producing it – in ways that need to be carefully judged.

^{vii} Or perhaps capitalocentrism consists of periperformatives around periperformatives, a rendering more in line with Gibson-Graham’s (2006a) “overdetermination”. For what everything points at might be a simple thing, say a hedge or a paywall, but beyond “simple things” these are also social relations (of value). What is (at) the centre of capitalocentrism? A real abstraction, perhaps, or an abyss – an atopolitical place. Whatever capitalocentrism is, it is also a mode of periperformative literacy vis a vis whatever is written and archived on the hedge or the paywall and what thus makes it legible and present: a simple thing, performative of capital(ism).

^{viii} How are we to archive “the diversity we are given” (Rose 2018) if not in ways tragically/ironically insufficient for the task? Consider, for example, the genre of acknowledgments at the end of articles such as this one. What else is this than a calculated, restricted economy of a debt that is incalculable? This is not to argue there are no better and worse calculations, of course. To begin with, I wish I could acknowledge every meal I have eaten while writing this paper and every cook who has prepared those meals, every plant and earthworm and drop of oil involved... A (very) diverse economy, if there ever was one. While such calculations would no doubt make much more sense than the genre usually known as acknowledgments, they can, by default, be just the tip of the iceberg. Our being is too finite, the debt is incalculable. As always, I will be able only to centre attention on a few heads (*capitas*) that have helped my writing in some calculable way. This act of gratitude, however honest and indispensable, is also hilariously and/or tragically deficient – capitalocentric from the start.

^{ix} Harvey’s point, here, follows from his earlier critique of Gibson-Graham (without citing them): “In certain circles it is fashionable to derogatorily dismiss studies such as this [ie. Harvey’s] as ‘capitalo-centric’.” (Harvey 2014, 10) Against such dismissals, he accentuates the “imperative” need for “much more sophisticated and profound capitalo-centric studies to hand to facilitate a better understanding of the recent problems that capital accumulation has encountered.” (ibid, 10) I have a hard time seeing how understanding “capitalo-centricism” as a “derogatory dismiss[al]” might result from anything other than an active and perennial evasion of Gibson-Graham’s arguments. This said, Harvey does have a point, in that the risk of capitalocentrism must be borne. This “must” and the necessity of such studies do not make them any less problematic.