

Banu Bargu and Chiara Bottici (editors)  
*Feminism, Capitalism, and Critique: Essays in Honor of Nancy Fraser*  
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**Quote:** "The contributions to *Feminism, Capitalism, and Critique: Essays in Honor of Nancy Fraser* are uniformly excellent."

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Although festschrifts are notorious for the uneven quality of the essays they include, the contributions to *Feminism, Capitalism, and Critique: Essays in Honor of Nancy Fraser* are uniformly excellent. The first and last provide comprehensive guides to the scope of Fraser's work; the remaining twelve fall more or less into three categories: those that take aspects of Fraser's work as stepping-off points for their own quite interesting reflections; those that very helpfully situate her work in relation to others; and those that engage critically and illuminatingly with it.

A prominent feminist and equally prominent member of the Frankfurt School of critical social theory's third generation, Fraser takes as her task what Marx called "the self-clarification of the struggles and wishes of the age." In his contribution to the volume, Eli Zaretsky lists some of the struggles and wishes with which she has been engaged:

the "pink tide" in Latin America, the extraordinary explosion of critical theory in the Chinese and Japanese university, the struggles to redeem European social democracy in the wake of the economic crisis, the efforts to build a continuing North American radical presence--a Left--exemplified in Occupy Wall Street and the Sanders campaign, debates with Judith Butler, Axel Honneth, Seyla Benhabib, Ernesto Laclau, and Chantal Mouffe over the nature of the Left, and the struggle to redeem the egalitarian (i.e. socialist) element in the original feminist vision. (263)

In his essay, updated from a 2007 article, Richard Bernstein drills down on what he sees as the ongoing development of five themes in Fraser's work: the nature of the public sphere; the analysis of social justice in terms of redistribution and recognition; the importance of Karl Polanyi's *The Great Transformation*; prospects for a radical feminism; and the critique of neoliberal capitalism. Bernstein emphasizes a shift in Fraser's thinking: whereas her early work presupposed what she calls a Keynesian-Westphalian framing and was therefore concerned with emancipatory struggles within a territorial state, her later work takes up a post-Westphalian framing that tries to take account of issues that arise in light of globalization and transnationalism. In Bernstein's view the revisions this shift in thinking has elicited remain

abstract and lack, he says, "concrete guidance about how a revised critical theory can guide us about what is to be done." At the same time, he maintains that this problem has at least as much to do with the uncertainty "about what is still in the process of unfolding" (31) as it does with Fraser's own analytical and social-theoretical efforts.

Five of the remaining articles fall into the category of using aspects of Fraser's work as stepping-off points for their own reflections. In her 2013 collection of essays, *Fortunes of Feminism*, Fraser asks feminists and indeed all radical left thinkers to "think big." In taking up this advice, Cinzia Arruzza situates sexual and gender oppressions squarely within capitalist social relations and argues that their elimination rests on two tasks: reversing the capitalist subordination of social reproduction to production and undoing the separation between political democracy and the economic sphere. Likewise, Robin Blackburn takes his cues from Fraser's account of the place of race in contemporary financialized capitalism to trace the "ebb and flow" (51) of the relations among capitalism, racism, and antiracism beginning with US chattel slavery and continuing through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The three other articles in this category are by Frankfurt School critical theorists with whom Fraser is in frequent discussion. Rainer Forst uses his discussions with Fraser to elaborate on his account of social and critical analysis as an investigation of normative orders and webs of justification. Axel Honneth, who has had an extensive discussion with Fraser on the appropriate critical lens for analyzing struggles for social justice, here concentrates on reassessing the relative merits of Marx's and Hegel's work as contributions to social theory, and Rahel Jaeggi takes from Fraser the inspiration to return to Marx to focus, once again, on crises and what Fraser calls the "deep structural dysfunction at the core of our form of life" (210).

Perhaps more interesting from the view of understanding Fraser's work and its place within contemporary feminism and critical social theory are those articles that focus on Fraser's work more directly in order to situate it in relation to other ongoing discussions. Concerned with agency, responsibility, and the environment, María Pía Lara considers Fraser's work in relation to that of Iris Marion Young and Joaquín Valdivielso and emphasizes the importance of a "critique as disclosure" that she finds in Fraser's analysis. Hartmut Rosa shows the similarities between his own account of resonance and Fraser's pivotal standard of "participatory parity," by which she means a criterion for the justice of social interactions grounded in the participation of all as peers. Amy Allen finds in what she sees as Fraser's neo-pragmatism an alternative answer to the question of how critical theory is to be normatively grounded, an answer that avoids both the foundationalism of Forst's Kantian approach and what Allen sees as the presumption of historical progress in the Hegelian approach of Honneth, Jaeggi, and Benhabib. For her part, Johanna Oksala traces arguments for incorporating questions of sexuality into the critique of capitalism from Alexandra Kollontai to Judith Butler, and claims that Fraser's account is an improvement. Whereas Butler claims that the heteronormative family is essential to capitalism as the domain of social reproduction undergirding production, Fraser points to the ease with which capitalism maintains itself under less restrictive sexual conditions.

Jane Mansbridge's "The Long Life of Nancy Fraser's 'Rethinking the Public Sphere,'" puts Fraser's work at the beginning of a discussion rather than at the end. Here she shows the way Fraser's 1990 essay criticizing the gender blindness of Habermas's *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* anticipates at least four areas of ongoing development in the theory of

deliberative democracy. First, Fraser's claim that societal equality is necessary for political democracy has led to empirical studies of impediments to women's equal participation in political deliberation and to normative questions of what equal participation looks like. Second, her insistence that a single public sphere can exacerbate the effects of inequality gestures toward Mansbridge's own later insights into "enclaves of resistance" where marginalized groups can develop counter-discourses and alternative interpretations of their needs. Third, where Fraser questions the idea that discourse in public spheres should concern only the common good, she anticipates the current acknowledgment of the rightful place of self-interest and other considerations in democratic deliberations. Finally, Fraser's rejection of a sharp distinction between civil society and the state anticipates the attempts of some deliberative democrats to institutionalize direct problem-solving by citizens.

Whereas the essays in this second group succeed in sketching out the place Fraser's work has within critical theory, participatory accounts of equality, sexuality studies, and theories of deliberative democracy, two articles engage more critically with the work. William E. Scheuerman focuses on Fraser's engagement or, more accurately, lack of engagement with modern law. In his view, because of the way she combines Marxian, Foucaultian, and Habermasian theories, Fraser takes either a negative view of the law, stressing only its role in supporting injustice and illegitimate power, or a peculiarly instrumental view of its role that neglects the independent importance of legal rights and legal recognition. Here Scheuerman sees the same cultural foreshortening of the analysis of recognition that Honneth finds in Fraser's work. Fraser offers an analytical frame for analyzing issues of social justice that distinguishes between struggles for recognition and struggles for resource redistribution and argues that any critical theory has to attend not only to both but also to the way they can pull in opposite directions. Giving due recognition to women's parenting roles, for instance, can exacerbate income inequality. Yet with Honneth, Scheuerman stresses the importance of legal recognition and the fundamental ways in which the law and legal recognition or misrecognition shape our social interactions in spheres of both cultural recognition and resource distribution.

Like Scheuerman, Alessandro Ferrara also thinks Fraser overlooks the importance of modern law. Ferrara applauds the insights Fraser gains from reconsidering Karl Polanyi's double movement whereby economic liberalism and the attempt to establish self-regulating markets call forth "social protections" aimed at supporting those most adversely affected by the market's workings. Why, Fraser asks, do we not get this double movement under conditions of financial capitalism and neoliberalism? Her answer, as Ferrara points out, is that we need to think in terms of a triple movement that includes struggles for emancipation from oppressive hierarchies. As a result, social protection is blocked by what she sees as a "dangerous liaison" between struggles against patriarchal, colonial, and racial forms of authority, on the one hand, and neoliberal enterprises that style social protection as a fetter on freedom, on the other. Yet if we ask where we might then look for opposition to neoliberal, financialized capitalism, Ferrara thinks it is to legal rights and, perhaps surprisingly, to the power of consumption. As he writes, "Nothing prevents us qua theorists of emancipation from injecting a strong normative content into consumer-protection through class action and from understanding class action, especially in legal systems that supplement it with provisions about punitive damages, as the implementation of a strong principle of equality that forces the market to truly vindicate one of the premises on which its appeal rests--the equal standing of the contracting parties" (180).

Their criticisms of Fraser aside, like the rest of the contributors to the volume, Scheuerman and Ferrara are clear about the significance of Fraser's work. The essays in *Feminism, Capitalism, and Critique* achieve what its editors say they set out to achieve: the contributors "not only celebrate the accomplishments of an incredibly prolific, resourceful, and erudite scholar, but . . . also acknowledge and honor her role in inspiring each of us toward attaining a more sophisticated understanding of capitalism and a renewed commitment to struggle for justice" (14).