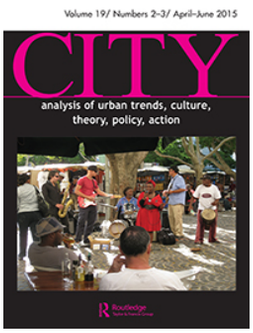

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Mark Davidson & Elvin Wyly

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Same, but different

Within London's 'static' class structure and the missing antagonism

Mark Davidson and Elvin Wyly

In this paper, we discuss (Manley, D., and R. Johnston. 2014. 'London: A Dividing City, 2001–11?' City *18 (6): 633–643) intervention into recent debates on London's contemporary class structure. We find that Manley and Johnston show evidence to support many of the claims we have previously made, providing further support against the argument that London has become increasingly a middle-class (Butler, T., C. Hamnett, and M. Ramsden. 2008. 'Inward and Upward? Marking Out Social Class Change in London 1981–2001.'* Urban Studies *45 (2): 67–88) and/or professionalized (Hamnett, C. 2004. 'Economic and Social Change and Inequality in Global Cities: The Case of London.'* The Greek Review of Social Research *113: 63–80) city. Yet Manley and Johnston's accounting of class change in London also requires critical consideration. We argue their description of London as static in terms of class change has to be read extremely carefully, since such descriptions can obscure the vast population shifts that have occurred in London over recent decades. We also question the extent to which a concern with class antagonism is absent from their intervention. In conclusion, we reflect on what recent talk of London's social class composition means for working-class politics.*

Key words: London, class, working class, Marxism, struggle

Introduction

Few urban issues generate headlines like London's housing market. Last September, North American media outlets picked up on the listing of a 'one-bedroom terraced house' in Barnsbury, North London, priced at £275,000. For this small fortune, the buyer got 188 sq. ft of living space (Osbourne 2014). The estate agent selling the house guessed it was 'possibly the smallest house in the world' (Osbourne 2014, n.p.). Media reports that circulated about the tiny one-room house were asking a simple question: why would anyone pay that amount for such a small house? At a price that is out of reach for most salaried workers, it is a reasonable enough question. But, of course, this question leads to many more thoughts. They include the implied notion that London must be (a) full of people who can afford to pay staggering amounts for even the smallest properties and (b) that any average or below-average income earner without wealth cannot live in and/or move to the city.

In this context, the recent contribution of Manley and Johnston (2014) to debates on London's class structure and geography is a

welcome intervention. As they themselves note, there is now a prevalent mythology that surrounds cities like London (641–642), one that sees them becoming overrun by plutocrats and mega-rich bankers. Such narrations, as we will discuss below, are incredibly powerful devices that shape both academic and public[1] debate over urban change (Beaverstock, Hubbard, and Rennie Short 2014). Such narratives signal to the ongoing and urgent need for critical empirical and theoretical work that understands the social changes which are occurring in global capitalism's core regions.

In this paper, we will examine the empirical claims of Manley and Johnston (2014), before turning to consider the politics of their epistemology. The sections which immediately follow will discuss Manley and Johnston's empirical analysis of 2001 and 2011 census data on London's class structure. We note that there are a number of significant contributions in their work that confirm and extend much of our own previous analysis (Davidson and Wyly 2012, 2013). Following this we revisit some of the theoretical arguments we have made previously (Davidson and Wyly 2012, 2013) relating to the relationship between class structure and class antagonism. In particular, we consider how the empiricism of Manley and Johnston's (2014) contribution might limit further debate about social class in London.

The messy empirics of the middle

In our initial intervention (Davidson and Wyly 2012) into debates surrounding London's current class composition (also see Buck et al. 2002; Hamnett 2003a, 2003b, 2004; Butler, Hamnett, and Ramsden 2008; Watt 2008), we attempted to question how the city's post-industrial present and future was being understood (see Butler, Hamnett, and Ramsden 2008). We set out to critique how unreliable census data has been used to present an image of London as becoming an increasingly middle-class city (Butler, Hamnett, and Ramsden 2008). This interpretation of class transition, we argued, created empirical fodder for those propagating the idea of a post-industrial city prospectively devoid of class difference and filled with utopian creativity (Florida 2002). We therefore welcome Manley and Johnston's (2014) contribution to debates over London's class composition since it questions the extent to which London has become a space dominated by middle-class population growth. While their paper is certainly no ringing endorsement of our previous contributions (Davidson and Wyly 2012, 2013), they appear to agree with our characterization of London's class composition as persistent (in terms of class composition), as opposed to transforming (i.e. 'social upgrading[2]'; Butler, Hamnett, and Ramsden 2008).

Occupational stability?

Manley and Johnston (2014) investigate the class structure of London in 2001 and 2011 by compiling NS-SEC (National Statistics Socio-economic Classification) categories into three main classes: (1) 'traditional' middle class, comprising of employers, managers and professionals (NS-SEC 1 and 2), (2) the service class (NS-SEC 3.2, 3.4, 4.1, 4.3, 7.3, 10, 12.7 and 13.1) and (3) the 'traditional' working class of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations (NS-SEC 7.4, 11.1, 11.2, 12.2, 12.3, 12.4, 13.2 and 13.3) (634). They use these broad groupings to compare the social composition of Census Output Areas (OAs) ($n = 24{,}200$) in 2001 and 2011. In comparing the percentage of the OAs comprised of each of these three groups, Manley and Johnston state that '[T]he main conclusion to be drawn is of little overall structural change, within a substantially increased (31%) workforce over the decade' (634). They continue: '… there is certainly no evidence that either the traditional middle class or the service class are numerically crowding out the other groups' (634). Stability, rather than change,

is found to characterize London's social class status between 2001 and 2011.

This finding is supportive of our previous argument (Davidson and Wyly 2013) that London's social geography has remained persistent over time, and that this includes the continued presence of working-class people across the city. As such, Manley and Johnston (2014) agree with us that '[T]he middle class is not taking over and the working class is not being forced out—some of whose members have affinities with the middle rather than the working class and vice versa' (641). The professionalization thesis (Hamnett 1994, 2003a) that is used to underscore the claims made in Butler, Hamnett, and Ramsden (2008) is therefore disproven, at least for the 2001–11 period. The working population of London has certainly expanded, but over the past decade this growth has not been concentrated in any particular class; at least to the extent that census data can indicate.

Making sense of these findings with regards to a more general theory of post-industrial urbanism (Bell 1974; Sassen 2001) remains a complex task. One might suggest that the 2001–11 period is not the right place to look in terms of social class transformations associated with post-industrialization. With neo-liberalism, financial deregulation and globalization all well-entrenched (Peck 2004), one might hypothesize that much of the post-industrial transformation had already occurred pre-2001. A look back to research conducted on London's social geography in the early 1980s (e.g. Congdon 1989) makes this seem unlikely since geographies of social class appear to have changed little over the past 30 years.

Stability, as Manley and Johnston (2014) suggest, is likely the principal characterization of social class composition in London. However, we should caution against 'stability' being used as the sole or principal characterization of London's social geography. Since the 1970s, and continuing between 2001 and 2011, London has been witness to drastic social changes; as Manley and Johnston (2014) note in multiple stages of their analysis. While these might have occurred within the context of relatively stable occupational composition (i.e. percentage of London's population comprised of certain classes), viewed from other perspectives we do see significant changes (Davidson and Wyly 2012; Johnston, Poulsen, and Forrest 2014). For example, the ethnic and racial composition of London's working class has undergone significant shifts. In addition, the occupations (and related work conditions) associated with working-class positions have shifted dramatically. The archetypal English working class (skilled manual occupations, white, etc.) now is a small segment of the city's proletariat (see Davidson and Wyly 2012). Much of this population has been replaced by a diversity of peoples who likely share little in common but class position. The descriptor 'stability' therefore requires careful and specified usage when applied to London's changing class composition.

The shifting composition of London's working classes, both in terms of occupation and identity, has been examined in many important studies in recent years (e.g. Reay 2003; Watt 2006; Wills 2008; Jones 2012). What unites these types of studies is the conclusion that many working-class lives have become more insecure and precarious over the past four decades. We must thusly caution against stability being seen as an all-encompassing descriptor of class change in London. Notably changes in ethnic and racial composition have joined with significant changes in working-class life (Johnston, Poulsen, and Forrest 2014). The consequences of this multifaceted transformation within a degree of relative population mix stability have been multiple and likely include heightened difficulties in any effort to raise class consciousness (Clark, Lipset, and Rempel 1993; Goldthorpe 2001). To reiterate, lots of change has occurred in London's population, but it remains unlikely that significant 'social upgrading' (i.e.

significant expansion of middle-class representation) has occurred.

Pockets of upgrading

Manley and Johnston (2014) develop a G^* spatial analysis to examine if any parts of London have been subject to class-based transformation. Given the overall stability of class composition between 2001 and 2011, it is unsurprising that a limited set of changes are identified. The changes that are identified are principally related to pockets of 'social upgrading' in established areas of gentrification (e.g. Tower Hamlets and southern Hackney; see Hamnett and Williams 1980) and areas of recent new-build development along the Thames (see Davidson and Lees 2005) and regeneration around Camden and Islington (Williams 1976; Carpenter and Lees 1995). This leads to the following conclusion:

> 'Spatially, London has not become more middle class. There are some local contradictions to this statement, but the three maps in Figure 3–5 together suggest much stasis in large parts of the city … Overall, therefore, London is becoming more heterogeneous and mixed rather than homogeneous and segregated.' (Manley and Johnston 2014, 641)

This finding is yet more evidence, should it be needed, that Hamnett's (1994) professionalization thesis is ill-suited to explaining London's recent social change (see Sassen 2001). Gentrification has been a spatially concentrated process that appears not to have significantly tipped the aggregate social class composition of London. This might be viewed as a somewhat surprising conclusion given the fact that London's housing market has been experiencing an epic bubble. Yet the social class analysis of Manley and Johnston (2014) seems to suggest that the housing market bubble (and related issues of (un)affordability) has occurred without 'social upgrading' providing a boost to aggregate purchasing power.

The population and geographic analysis of Manley and Johnston (2014) therefore serves to:

> '… largely falsify Hamnett and Butler's hypotheses […] regarding London's changing geography. The middle class is not taking over and the working class is not being forced out; but the service class—some of whose members have affinities with the middle rather than the working class and vice versa—has become a major feature of inner London's, more mixed, residential landscape.' (641)

To be fair, Hamnett and Butler (2013) have stated that their claim (Butler, Hamnett, and Ramsden 2008) is not that London has become completely middle class, but rather it is moving in that direction: 'Not only do *we not* claim that London has become homogeneously middle class (we claim it has become *more* middle class and that the middle-class areas of London have grown in extent) … ' (199). Hamnett and Butler (2013) also note that our analysis of 2001 census data (Davidson and Wyly 2012) fails to consider the impact of a long-standing post-industrial transition on London's labour force. We agree, and so we should note that if London's social geography has transformed in terms of social class, even Manley and Johnston's (2014) valuable analysis of 2001 and 2011 census data can only present a limited view. Post-industrial changes have been in progress for over five decades in London. Much of the research undertaken on London's social changes has only ever offered a temporal snapshot of long-running social and economic changes. Discussions of the broad patterns of post-industrial change must therefore be mindful of the limits imposed by the methodological challenges associated with measuring social class change over time.

What Manley and Johnston's (2014) analysis therefore can show is that if the process of middle-class growth that Hamnett and Butler (2013) identify ever existed, they ceased to exist between 2001 and 2011. This leads to

the conclusion that something must have stopped or stalled in London's urban process during this period. Our previous analysis (Davidson and Wyly 2012) allows for a different explanation. We have claimed that the growth of the middle classes in London has been overstated; in part due to the problematic nature of census data used to measure social class change (see Butler, Hamnett, and Ramsden 2008). As a consequence, theories of urban change, such as professionalization (Hamnett 1994), that have utilized this data should be questioned. Furthermore, those urban boosters that promise this 'social upgrading' trajectory of urban change to other cities (i.e. the middle-class metropolis) should be discredited (see Peck 2005). We therefore argued that the middle-class growth Butler, Hamnett, and Ramsden (2008) find in census data resulted from a flawed analysis of problematic data. While the middle classes had expanded (as had most populations), this was a geographically concentrated and not London-wide phenomenon.

Mixing up the middle

Butler, Hamnett, and Ramsden's (2008) account of London's social composition identified growth in the census NS-SEG categories 5.1 and 5.2 as key indicators of middle-class growth. They describe the changing middle-class numbers between 1981 and 2001 in the following way:

> 'It is important to note, however, that only a third of the proportionate growth took place in the traditional upper middle classes (SEGs 1–4) which grew from 16 per cent to 21 per cent (5 ppc) compared with the lower middle classes (SEGs 5.1 and 5.2) which grew from 10 per cent to 22 per cent (12 ppc).' (Butler, Hamnett, and Ramsden 2008, 75)

While being a relatively small percentage of London's population, change in the 5.1 and 5.2 categories represent the biggest shifts in terms of population growth.

> 'This change is important and indicates the continuing "social upgrading" of inner London representing a shifting social balance between inner and outer London. The intermediate group (SEG 5.1) is not only the largest single group but also has the largest percentage point growth which, in inner London (14), is nearly twice that of England and Wales (8)—London's continued social upgrading is happening at both the top and in the middle of its social structure.' (77)

In their original analysis SEGs 5.1 and 5.2, and particularly the former, emerge as critical in understanding the nature of middle-class growth. Yet as we pointed out, and as Manley and Johnston (2014) concur, these categories are highly problematic for measuring social class since the occupations grouped within them are extremely varied. As such, an analysis of the change in these populations tells us very little about social class change. Without any ability to disaggregate the occupational data contained in SEG 5.1 and 5.2 population counts, changes in this population could represent—to again use a problematic discourse—'social downgrading' as such as 'social upgrading'.

Manley and Johnston (2014) sidestep this problem, at least to some extent, by grouping these categories—in NS-SEC form—into a unified 'service class'. They note this is a heterogeneous group which likely contains both working-class and middle-class people:

> 'Some of these may have the resources enabling them to afford living in what are generally assumed to be middle-class neighbourhoods; others may not, and are more likely to be found in what are generally perceived to be working-class neighbourhoods.' (636)

In their analysis of where the 'service class' lives in London, they find a population spread across the city. The 'service class' therefore lives in both working-class and middle-class neighbourhoods. Two possible explanations are offered for this geography. One, that the 'service class' is a uniformly middle-class grouping that elects to live in either working-

class or middle-class neighbourhoods (i.e. as a group it is inclined to class-blind neighbourhood choice). Or two, that the 'service class' is heterogeneous and its working-class elements live in working-class areas, and its middle-class elements live in middle-class areas (i.e. usual class-based residential stratification takes place). We would suggest that the second explanation is more plausible, not least because research indicates class-based residential/neighbourhood sorting is very effective in cities such as London (Butler and Robson 2003; Butler and Hamnett 2007).

The available census data does not allow for firm conclusions to be drawn on these issues; hence our previous attempt at using multivariant analysis to sketch an impression of social class geography without some of the constraints imposed by the census social class categories (Davidson and Wyly 2013). What Manley and Johnston's (2014) spatial analysis does confirm is that claims made previously about the *growth* of the middle classes across London (see Butler, Hamnett, and Ramsden 2008)—and consequent claims about professionalization and gentrification—remain misleading.

The class hypothesis

> 'The law of contradiction is what for the moment we can call a "hypothesis" for the grouping of empirical facts. All men use hypotheses for the grouping of facts. That is what logic consists of.' (James 1947, n.p.)

Manley and Johnston's (2014) contribution to understanding recent social class change in London is valuable. It produces an updated impression of London's social structure and it avoids many of the methodological problems we have previously discussed. It also continues a collective effort of thinking critically about London's class structure in a way that can effectively deal with the limitations of census-based analysis. All of this is important analysis because it generates a very different picture of the post-industrial metropolis compared to those proffering 'professionalization' (Hamnett 1994) and creativity-based renewal (Florida 2002). Yet our commendation of the work does not extend to their epistemology since their account of class change in London contains a glaring omission: class antagonism.

We have previously argued the following: '. . . whilst occupational structures may have changed dramatically, there is little evidence to suggest that these can be read as a decline of (urban) social antagonisms' (Davidson and Wyly 2012, 402). Our attempt at pairing quantitative census analysis with Marxian social theory intended to ensure that a discussion of occupational structures (used as an indicator of class composition) did not become separated from a concern with class antagonism. A basic theoretical assertion motivated this effort, namely, that class results from an antagonistic social relation. This antagonism is founded in the conflicting interests of capital and labour and it is realized across the complex social field that is constructed by and within such an economic arrangement.

Unfortunately this point has been lost in recent debate, with Hamnett and Butler (2013) reading our argument as a claim that we do not think the middle class exists. We do not feel there is much we can do to remedy such a profound and amusing (mis-)interpretation. However, we do think it is worth reiterating the dangers of a class analysis that fails to incorporate a substantive engagement with the issue of class antagonism. Particularly so, given Manley and Johnston (2014) give us another example of an analysis that omits the antagonistic dimension of class. By limiting themselves to an empirical explanation of London's class structure, Manley and Johnston (2014) miss the opportunity to articulate why their class analysis matters.

The idea of class struggle

Even in the popular presses, it is apparent that an ideological crisis has accompanied the

recent financial crisis (see Žižek 2010). The 1990s and 2000s enjoyed a relatively stable neo-liberal ideological configuration (Harvey 2005), one that was popularized and resuscitated by pseudo-leftists like Tony Blair and Bill Clinton (see Giddens 1993; Griffiths and Hickson 2010), where antagonistic class relations were often seen to have been replaced by meritocratic social differences. Critical debates have extensively demonstrated the failures of this ideology, particularly with respect to the growing social inequalities that have resulted from neo-liberal reform (Dorling 2014). Yet critical debate still tends to problematize social inequalities only to the extent that they are deemed too large (Picketty 2014). The problem with such critique is that class distinction itself—presumably that which can be overcome in a meritocracy society that allows for social mobility (Young 1958)—is accepted.

It seems to have taken a severe economic crisis to have shaken this ideological frame. Only in recent times, where the distribution of costs associated with recession have been so apparently placed upon the poor, has the class antagonism re-emerged as something requiring popular explanation. For example, in 2013 *Time Magazine* carried a story—somewhat predictably—entitled 'Marx's Revenge' (Schuman 2013). In it the author writes:

> 'Karl Marx was supposed to be dead and buried. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and China's Great Leap Forward into capitalism, communism faded into the quaint backdrop of James Bond movies or the deviant mantra of Kim Jong Un … Or so we thought. With the global economy in a protracted crisis, and workers around the world burdened by joblessness, debt and stagnant incomes, Marx's biting critique of capitalism—that the system is inherently unjust and self-destructive—cannot be so easily dismissed. Marx theorized that the capitalist system would inevitably impoverish the masses as the world's wealth became concentrated in the hands of a greedy few, causing economic crises and heightened conflict between the rich and working classes. "Accumulation of wealth at one pole is at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole", Marx wrote.' (n.p.)

Post-2008, our popular political discourse has struggled to bridge between the apparently antagonistic class relations of our society and hegemonic understandings of merit, social mobility and (national) community (Žižek 2012). The difficulty of any contemporary class analysis is therefore to pair a detailed understanding about how class relations become manifest in the social field together with an appreciation of the antagonistic relationship between capital and labour. This problem has only become more pronounced in the post-industrial period (Goldthorpe 2001).

Our prior discussion of London's class composition that combines analysis of class structure with class antagonism has now received two responses. The first, offered by Hamnett and Butler (2013), accused us of claiming the middle classes did not exist. The claim is illustrative. Drawing on Žižek (1999, 2006), we argued that the middle classes are a 'non-class'. By this, we meant that middle-class occupations result from the more abstract relationship between capital and labour being manifest through the organization of a division of labour. This is hardly a groundbreaking claim on our part, but we thought it was worth stressing given the prevalence of middle-class urban utopianism in much planning discourse (e.g. Florida 2002). The second response has now been offered by Manley and Johnston (2014). This involves a focus on class structure as an essentially empirical problem. While such a choice seems methodologically sound and politically banal, we think not.

If the class antagonism originates from the relationship between capital and labour, it is clear that we will never see this antagonism perfectly reflected in the social field (contra

Marx). A world composed purely of capitalists and labourers never did, and never will, exist. Any capitalist society will therefore have multiple class positions. Class struggle therefore does not take a 'positive' form:

> '. . . the moment we translate class antagonism into the opposition of classes *qua* positive, existing social groups (bourgeoisie versus working class), there is always, for structural reasons, a surplus, a third element which does not "fit" this opposition (lumpenproletariat etc.) . . . One is even tempted to say that the symbolic/structural articulation of the Real of an antagonism is always a triad; today, for example, class antagonism appears, within the edifice of social difference, as the triad of "upper class" (the managerial, political and intellectual elite), "middle class", and the non-integrated "lower class" (immigrant workers, the homeless . . .).' (Žižek 2005, 325)

In this formulation of class antagonism + class structure, two factors become apparent. First, that there will always be a task of understanding how class antagonism is infused into the class structure. Dean (2005) gives us a brief explication of this class infusion into the social field:

> 'Class modifies and impacts particular and identity based struggles, constituting a kind of extra barrier to their successes. Feminists have witnessed precisely this barrier as college educated upper and middle class women rely on lower class women to work in their homes and care for their children.' (n.p.)

Second, and consequently, the representation of class structures is always a political and empirical task. Given the class antagonism cannot be represented positively, the task becomes one of seeing the antagonism within other fields (i.e. the varied and multilayered class structure). If a city such as London has witnessed growing heterogeneity within its stable class composition, it is therefore imperative that, at least, the question be posed about how antagonism/struggle is mapped across newfound differences.

The empirical and ideological should therefore not be separated in class analysis. Indeed, there is an urgent need to reinvigorate the study of their linkage. Our ongoing economic crisis continues to undermine the post-industrial promise of a meritocratic middle-class city/society. The popular self-identification of being middle class in places such as the UK and USA means less and less. Housing bubbles, debt-driven consumerism, precarious pensions and employment insecurity are now an established part of the austerity landscape (Wolff 2010; Davidson and Ward 2014). We must therefore strive to go beyond debates over class composition and structure, as important as they are, and seek to develop an understanding of how these growingly complex social configurations are infused with class struggle.

It is therefore our hope that the ongoing debate over London's social structure can continue on with a heightened concern about the ways in which a heterogeneous working class is (variously) positioned in relation to the class antagonism. It seems more and more clear that much of London's (and other cities) middle-class growth has been overstated. Recent debates in *City* have begun a process whereby a revision of this understanding of post-industrial social change can begin. With this, we can accept the need to trace out how class struggle is playing out across and within the socially heterogeneous metropolis. Such efforts should be providing the academic contribution towards a reinvigoration of class consciousness and related social movements that seek to change the direction of recent austere (aka class warfare) social reform (Chakrabortty 2013).

Conclusions: back to the politics within?

> 'If, for once, we let the thoughts of those who are not "destined" to think unfold before us, we may come to recognize that the relationship between the order of the world and the desires of those subjected to it

> presents more complexity than is grasped by the discourses of the intelligentsia. Perhaps we shall gain a certain modesty in deploying grand words and expressing grand sentiments. Who knows?' (Rancière 1989, 250)

In the above quotation, Rancière reminds us of the dangers in thinking for the working classes. In *The Nights of Labor*, Rancière (1989) provides a sweeping account of those working-class lives that did/do not adhere to popular conceptions. In documenting the rich (sic), and sometimes contradictory lives, of these classed subjects in 1830s Paris, Rancière shows how it was the ideological placement of workers (i.e. what they were expected and presumed to be) that stimulated their radical politics. Hardship and exploitation therefore were secondary to the pressures of socially imposed tropes (also see Žižek 1989).

Such work should serve as a critical reminder to ongoing debates in *City*. Since 2012, we have seen a productive and stimulating debate on London's changing class composition. These debates have engaged with the question of how the UK census measures class status and the ways this is mapped out across the city. Various attempts have now been made at this analysis, and all have produced varied results. The danger of this debate is, of course, that the production of an intelligentsia's discourse (Rancière 1983) continues on without any radical intent (see Wyly 2014). A discussion of London's social class composition must therefore seek to connect quantified descriptions of social geography with the intent to make political (see Davidson and Iveson 2014) the transgressive acts of the city's working classes. Rancière ([1983] 2004) offers an outlining of such acts in 1830s Paris:

> 'The French workers who, in the nineteenth century, created newspapers or associations, wrote poems, or joined utopian groups, were claiming the status of fully speaking and thinking beings. At the birth of the "workers' movement", there was thus neither the "importation" of scientific thought into the world of the worker nor the affirmation of a worker culture. There was instead the transgressive will to appropriate the "night" of poets and thinkers, to appropriate the language and culture of the other, to act as if intellectual equality were indeed real and effectual.' (219)

There is much to be drawn from Rancière's historiography when it is read as a lesson in the politics of (working) class representation. When solely shown as exploited, uneducated, uninformed and so on (i.e. the fate of the working class under neo-liberalism [see Harvey 2005]), the equal status of the working classes is denied; and politics diminished. The ability to be transgressive, to be political in multiple ways, must be granted *within representations* of the working class.

Given the extent of class warfare that has played out over recent decades, and the reams of academic research that have documented the persistence and denigrated lives of the working classes, our commentaries on census classification and resulting analysis are at particular risk of producing, to use Rancière's terminology, a 'policing' intelligentsia discourse. Descriptions of the working classes as 'lingering' (Butler, Hamnett, and Ramsden 2008) and, indeed, our own factoral labelling of working-class neighbourhoods (Davidson and Wyly 2012) can serve to deny a properly political voice to those whose cause we feel a part of. We must therefore find ways to ensure our work contributes to the movements that reside deep within the trenches of London's embattled working-class districts. For us in our recent *City* contributions, this has involved a commitment to seeing class as an antagonistic relation, but it must become more than this. We say this with straight faces as middle-class professors (see Hamnett and Butler 2013, 198).

Notes

1 Newspaper headlines, such as 'London, Playground of the Rich' (Mostrous 2011), regularly feature in the British press. In these features, London is often

presented as becoming a space owned by the global elite: 'Russian oligarchs, Middle East sheikhs, African despots … how did the capital become a haven for the glitterati?' (Mostrous 2011).

2 The terms 'social upgrading' and 'social downgrading' are placed in quotation marks to denote their problematic associations.

Disclosure statement

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Mark Davidson is Assistant Professor of Geography at the Graduate School of Geography, Clark University. Email: mdavidson@clarku.edu

Elvin Wyly is Associate Professor of Geography at the Department of Geography, The University of British Columbia. Email: elvin.wyly@geog.ubc.ca