COMMONWEALTH

Book by: *Hardt M. and A. Negri*

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Among geographers, publication of *Commonwealth* – the third volume in Hardt and Negri's trilogy on capitalism, sovereignty, and resistance – barely registered. This is a bit odd. *Empire* was widely discussed among geographers in the early 2000s, and not only in graduate seminars. It proved to be a rare book of political theory, that sparked intense political debates, while demanding serious academic responses. *Multitude*, too, generated considerable heat, particularly since the book's core concept, 'the multitude' – "the living alternative that grows within Empire" (Hardt and Negri 2004: xiii) – seems to resonate with geographers studying resistance. By contrast, *Commonwealth* has gained practically no traction. I am no empiricist. And theory is best left unquantified. But I ask you to consider the following. *Empire* has been cited 6,400+ times, *Multitude* 1,600+ times, but *Commonwealth* only 36 times.[1] Granted, *Commonwealth* was published in 2009. Nevertheless, *Commonwealth* has been cited 99.5% fewer times than *Empire.* This is surprising, considering that the authors describe *Commonwealth* as the culmination of *Empire*'s argument. This raises a rather awkward question. If the whole debate about *Empire* was genuinely important and worthwhile (as I would like to think), logic suggests that it would have been worth continuing the argument through the trilogy, even at a minimal level. Yet it seems to have stopped, and not only among geographers. After *Multitude,* the multitude stopped reading. Is there stronger evidence that the frothing debates around *Empire* were a bit overblown?

There are other plausible explanations for these data, of course, such as the possibility that 99.5% of the people who read and cited *Empire* decided to cease reading and commenting upon Hardt and Negri's studies because they came to recognize that their project was simply wrong. After the arguments of *Empire* were shown to be incorrect, say with the US invasion of Iraq, there was no further need to argue about the books. This view is quite satisfying. It suggests that our heady theoretical debates may in fact bring clear-cut answers and progress of the sort that comes by collectively judging arguments against reality. Yet I do not think this is the case. A more honest answer is that the debates around *Empire* were rather faddish, and that after a while many

1 According to a February 4, 2011, search on Google Scholar using the keywords "Hardt and Negri."

participants tired of Hardt and Negri's "boring" prose (to cite Cesare Casarino's riposte to Negri [2008: 111]). The fad ended; fatigue set in.

I am surely not the only reader who feels that, viewed retrospectively, the trilogy should have been more concise. But then I get the impression not many people, and very few geographers, read through the trilogy to its end. The pity is not only that trends in social theory are so, well, trendy. It is also that there is a good deal in *Commonwealth* that merits reading, since it refines arguments first laid out in *Empire*. If *Empire* overstated its central argument, and received more attention than was really due, *Commonwealth* suffers the opposite problems—and may even be the best book in the trilogy.[2] There is another reason to read it. For all their faults, these books – to cite one of Žižek's excellent commentaries on the trilogy – may be seen as theoretical reflections emerging from the "actual global movement of anticapitalist resistance" (2007: 46). "One can sense," Žižek writes, "behind the written lines, the smells and sounds of Seattle, Genoa, and Zapatistas. So their limitation is simultaneously the limitation of the actual movement." As usual, Žižek astutely brings us to the heart of the matter, and then exaggerates. I think their books *do* reflect our condition; but fortunately, that does not mean that all of their problems need to be ours. And so, even if we are fatigued with Hardt and Negri, I think the debates about their work are worth continuing. We should face up to Hardt and Negri, just as they face those of us who identify with the "actual global movement of anticapitalist resistance."

Précis

> The advance of industry, whose involuntary promoter is the bourgeoisie, replaces the isolation of the labourers, due to competition, by the revolutionary combination, due to association. The development of Modern Industry, therefore, cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bourgeoisie produces and appropriates products. What the bourgeoisie therefore produces, above all, are its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable.
>
> Marx & Engels (1848), *Manifesto of the Communist Party*

Any attempt to summarize *Commonwealth* runs into the problem that it is, perhaps more than the previous two books, a sprawling and multilayered text (comprised of six distinct sections and a trio of paired bridging subsections). Its central aim is to explicate the exciting possibility that capital is creating its own grave-diggers, albeit not in the form of a proletarian subject (as Marx argues in the *Communist Manifesto*) but via something the authors call 'the common.' On the opening page they write: "One primary effect of globalization … is the creation of a common world, a world that, for better or worse, we all share, a world that has no 'outside'" (vii). This "common world", the central object of *Commonwealth*, constitutes the becoming-space of the multitude:

> A democracy of the multitude [the positive aim described in *Empire* and *Multitude*] is imaginable and possible only because we all share and participate in the common. By 'the common' we mean, first of all, the common wealth of the material world—the air, the water, the fruits of the soil… . We consider the common also and more significantly those results of social production that are necessary for social interaction and further production, such as knowledges, languages, codes, information, affects, and so forth (viii).

To say the least, the common is a broad concept, immanent in everything that facilitates production. Obviously 'the common' is the hero of the book, an achievement of the 'multitude', and squared against 'Empire.' What is novel in Hardt and Negri's narrative is that these three forces – Empire, multitude, common – are argued to share a common ontology. All are said to emerge *within* capitalism,

2 *Multitude* is the weakest, in my view (see Wainwright & Kim, 2008). For my thoughts on *Empire*, see Wainwright (2004).

or more specifically from changes in the form and organization of global capitalism since around the 1970s. In this sense the trilogy is a *Communist manifesto* for our times, since it attempts to diagnose why Marx's expectation of the inevitable fall of the bourgeoisie went wrong, and offer in its place a new conception of communism (i.e. the struggle for the common).[3]

Much of this argument, introduced in *Empire*, hinges on the notion that Marx overemphasized the "development of Modern Industry" (as in the epigram) and the singularity of the industrial proletariat as the revolutionary subject. Hardt and Negri argue that the reorganization of capitalism has created new circumstances that are giving rise within capitalist society to a new generation of grave-diggers. As they explain in *Commonwealth*'s introduction: "contemporary capitalist production by addressing *its own needs* [i.e., not as a result of class struggle by the proletariat] is opening up the possibility of and creating the bases for a social and economic order grounded in the common" (p. x, my italics). The possibility of communism is emerging from the contradictions within capitalism: stated in these terms, this is truly Marx redux.[4] They even offer elegant *Manifesto*-esque formulae to distinguish between different kinds of communism. "At a purely conceptual level we could begin to define communism this way: what the private is to capitalism and what the public is to socialism, the common is to communism" (2009: 273). The strategy that follows is to celebrate the creative activities of the multitude, immanent to global capital, that produce and sustain common wealth.

Again, this all sounds like Marx redux. Yet there are also decisive departures from Marx in *Commonwealth*, their would-be *Manifesto.* In this review I will focus on one of these, which I regard as fundamental: their rejection of Marx's theory of value.

Value theory in *Commonwealth*

While value theory has received little commentary among the many reviews of Hardt and Negri's trilogy, I contend their departures from Marx, their originality to the Marxist tradition, and their works' key limitations cannot be understood apart from it. I find Hardt and Negri's discussions of value to be central to their political analysis, yet freighted with unconvincing propositions (that are frequently repeated without becoming stronger analytically). These are complex matters and a full discussion is beyond the scope of my review, but I hope to clarify limits in their argument.

Value theory may seem like a marginal aspect of this trilogy to emphasize, particularly if one has not read *Commonwealth*, since it seems peripheral to their argument in *Empire* and *Multitude*. However value theory becomes increasingly important to the arc of their argument over the three books.[5] Their arguments on value comprise one of its most novel threads, and this novelty can be traced to Negri's theoretical work on Marx from the 1970s (as I discuss below). Over the course of the trilogy, their position moves further away from Marx's value theory, reaching a point in *Commonwealth* where they depart from Marx fundamentally (in a direction anticipated long ago by Negri). And yet, for all

3 Žižek (2001) makes a similar argument. Passavant (2010) notes a discontinuity in the project here: "The strengths of *Commonwealth* as a political manifesto, however, only amplify the theoretical weaknesses of the *Empire* project. *Empire*, celebrating the constituent power of the multitude, is critical of constituted power. Hardt and Negri continue to insist that their advocacy on behalf of an organization of the multitude is still anti-state (355). Nevertheless, a call for the invention of institutions to create some consistency of good political effects—to institutionalize or to conserve political gains, or to create a *structure* for resolving conflicts—seems indistinguishable from constituted power (*cf.* 350, 357)."

4 Critchley notes that the analysis that results from Negri's conception of value "risks retreating into the very anti-dialectical materialist ontology of substance that Marx rightly criticized in his early work and also because it makes … capitalism and the resistance to capitalism originate in the same ontological substance" (2005: 225). What is risky for Critchley is virtuous for Hardt and Negri in *Commonwealth*: a Spinozist notion of an ontological substance which is common to capital and its exterior.

5 On value theory in *Empire*, see especially pp 29, 86, 222-224, 294, 354-359, 392, and 405; in *Multitude*, pp 144-150, 212, 217, 261; in *Commonwealth*, § 3.1, 3.2, 5.2, 5.3, and *De Homine* 2. In my view the two most important sections on value theory in the trilogy are the Excursus on Marx's method in *Multitude* (pp 144-150) and the section *De Homine* 2 (pp 312-321) in *Commonwealth.*

this, unlike the key concepts 'Empire', 'multitude', 'sovereignty', and 'power', 'value' as such is never treated to a careful, extended analysis in the trilogy. This is I think symptomatic, because their arguments about value seem untenable, yet provide a foundation to their broader argument.

The logical starting point for this reading is a claim fundamental to their argument across the trilogy, that "the contemporary economy is defined by a hegemony of immaterial production" (2004: 141). Hardt and Negri argue that changes since the 1970s have transformed capitalist society to such an extent that material relations of production and exchange – i.e., the very relations that Marx's theory of value helps us to understand – are no longer hegemonic (they do not deny that they *exist*; only that they are no longer *hegemonic*). Further, they claim that this shift has given rise to new possibilities as the valorization of material commodities "is increasingly dependent on and subordinated to immaterial factors and goods" (2009: 132).

Two questions immediately arise: what does it mean to have 'hegemony' of a particular type of commodity? (Neither Marx nor Gramsci spoke of such a condition.) And how do we determine whether immaterial production is in fact hegemonic? By my reading, Hardt and Negri fail to answer these questions satisfactorily. But let this quibble pass so that we may stay with their logic, and ask a more pertinent question: suppose that 'immaterial' factors and goods are indeed hegemonic in the core capitalist economies today. Well, so what? Their reply to this question brings us to the heart of their argument's novelty, as well as the reason that they must reject Marx's value theory. Hardt and Negri claim that Marx's conception of value was pinned to old-fashioned material production in an era of industrial capitalism, in order that Marx could demonstrate the objective existence of exploitation (i.e. extraction of surplus value from labor to facilitate capital accumulation). Yet, they contend, such attempts to measure the movement of value are no longer possible today; like the factory workers it was meant to inspire, Marx's theory of value has been made redundant by changes in capitalism.

Lest this seem a minor point, I emphasize that Hardt and Negri's hopes for communism rest on the argument that capital's difficulties in quantifying and measuring the movement of value are causing "ever more difficulty creating a coherent cycle of production and … subsuming labor-power in a process of value creation" (2009: 150). The cycling of capital that defines capitalism, they claim, is today in crisis—and Marx's means of accounting is of little use to see it. Consider these two passages from *Commonwealth:*

> [1.] Living labor oriented toward producing immaterial goods, such as cognitive or intellectual labor, always exceeds the bounds set on it and poses forms of desire that are not consumed and forms of life that accumulate. *When immaterial production becomes hegemonic, all the elements of the capitalist process have to be viewed in a new light*, sometimes in terms completely inverted from the traditional analyses of historical materialism (2009: 25, my italics).

> [2. T]he Marxist tradition … has generally focused on measurement and quantitative methods to understand surplus value and exploitation. Biopolitical products, however, tend to *exceed* all quantitative measurement and take *common* forms… (2009: 135-6).

Slavoj Žižek elegantly summarizes the political implications of these claims:

> The wager of Hardt and Negri is that this directly socialized, immaterial production not only renders owners progressively superfluous (who needs them when production is directly social, formally and as to its content? [and, for that matter, who needs a boss when biopolitical products exceed quantitative measurement and take common forms quasi-automatically?—JDW]), but the producers also master the regulation of social space since social relations (politics) *are* the stuff of their work: economic production becomes political production directly—the production

> of society itself. The way is thus open for 'absolute democracy,' [and commonwealth—JDW,] for the producers directly regulating their social relations without even the detour of democratic representation (2007: 47).

The political attractiveness of Hardt and Negri's theoretical position is thus two-fold. On one hand, it seems to offer a simple way of distinguishing the disastrous consequences caused by 20th century Marxisms by finding a recent, radical break in the history of capitalism, since real communism could only emerge after 'immaterial labor' became hegemonic. Second, they provide a theoretical argument for creating common wealth today, amidst capitalism: release your biopolitical production from quantitative measurement!

I find their line of argument unconvincing. The problem starts right from the concept 'immaterial labor'—a concept Marx rejected. When Marx sets up his analysis of capitalism in *Capital* (1867), and examines 'abstract labor' and the living labor-labor power distinction, describes the manifold ways that living labor exchanges with the world to produce commodities, and so on, there is no place for the material-immaterial distinction. In *Capital*, everything relates through material practices and forms of exchange. Hardt and Negri know this, but suggest that things have changed recently: "The form of value creation," Negri argues, "has been modified by the hegemony – tendential but increasingly actual[6] – of immaterial labour (intellectual, relational, linguistic, affective, and so on)" (2008: 73). How, we might ask, does the form of value – what Marx calls '*Wertform*' in *Capital* – change as a result of the 'tendential' hegemony of immaterial labour? Hardt and Negri do not say. Instead they offer many fascinating illustrations of contemporary life and labor (e.g. at Microsoft; 2004: 145) which are contrasted with the old days of factory work. And yet, the workers at Microsoft, who contribute their surplus value by committing their living labor, surely engage in material exchanges just as much as coal miners or anyone else. Or consider for that matter a university professor. Her theoretical work and geography lectures may be highly abstract, but insofar as they cannot be separated from her body, her social relations, and the world, they are surely material.

I could go on, but I must add a rather awkward comment here: I am convinced that Negri agrees with my critique on this point. Consider this passage from the *Historical-Critical Dictionary of Marxism*'s entry for 'immaterial labour' (Haug 2009: 177):

> In the context of neoliberal discourse, especially about the 'new economy' and talk about the 'dematerialisation of the economy', the expression 'immaterial labour' has had a second life at the end of the twentieth century, this time with a broad influence, radiating even over the Left. Strictly speaking, it is a non-concept [*Unbegriff*], with at most a polemical function against sedimented notions of labour from the iron-and-coal age of industry…. 'Of course it is nonsense to speak of "immaterial labour". Labour is always material!', says Antonio Negri (1996: 97).

I simply do not know how to square Negri's assertion here – which I view as correct – with the tremendous importance given to their thesis about the hegemony of immaterial labor in the trilogy.

This issue, only latent in the first two books, explodes at the end of *Commonwealth*—and, we might say, it blows up in Marx's direction. The key section here is "*De Homine* 2: Cross the Threshold" (pp 312-321), which Marxists will wish to read carefully (space does not permit close reading here). The section begins with the questionable claim that the value of corporations today are increasingly dependent on "immaterial assets" and a discussion of "intangible value" (2009: 312-3), a claim which only introduces further confusion since, within any sort of Marxist framework, value is inherently intangible.[7]

6 Note that this claim is hedged. This sort of qualification is all too common in Hardt and Negri's work.

7 At the conclusion of his discussion of the fetishism of commodities in *Capital*, Marx writes: "no chemist has ever discovered exchange-value either in a pearl or a diamond. The economists who have discovered this chemical substance, and who lay special

But let it pass. Shortly we arrive – at the end of their trilogy – at their ultimate claim apropos value theory: "all of the *dispositifs* intended to measure labor and value… are now in crisis and cannot be applied in biopolitical society. At this point we need a new theory of value" (2009: 316). A new theory of value—no small matter! And to underscore their departure from Marx, they then ask, "But will it really be a theory of value?" (Ibid.). Everything points to the answer, no.

This is troublesome at several levels. To begin, these important claims are extremely vague. They fail to answer the obvious question: if we need a "new theory of value" which is not "a theory of value", what will it be and why do we need it? Insofar as I can follow their explanation, Hardt and Negri would like to produce a theory of "life activity as a whole," which "traverses the entire biopolitical fabric of society" (Ibid., 317). But that, I want to cry out, is what Marx's theory of value has been all along—a theory that allows us to grasp how life as a whole in capitalist society, the entire biopolitical fabric of society, comes to be organized by value form.

In short, as Hardt and Negri have shifted their reading of Marx through the three volumes of their trilogy, they have moved steadily away from Marx's value theory, to a point where by the end of *Commonwealth* they part ways with it fundamentally—yet without offering a substantive alternative. This is deeply regrettable, in my view. Retrospectively, their trilogy should be read not only as a *Manifesto* for our times but equally as a critique of *Capital*, and one resting on highly questionable and unsupported propositions. To appreciate the significance of this shift, and also to provide a different, stronger reading of *Capital*, let us briefly contrast Negri's writings on value in counterpoint with those of the Marxist philosopher Kojin Karatani.

Negri contra Karatani

> [To the extent that] the form and content of value are … linked in exploitation, [and] all re-form [of value] is a deepening of the content of exploitation, the antagonism is placed at that level of totality… [Thus] there is no revolution without a destruction of bourgeois society, and of wage labor, as a producer of value, and of money… .
>
> Negri, *Marx beyond Marx* (1991: 26-7)

Hardt and Negri's departure from Marx's value theory in *Commonwealth* should be seen as the culmination of a path first cut in Negri's unorthodox reading of Marx's value theory in lectures given in Paris in 1978-9 (and later published as *Marx beyond Marx* [1991]). In these lectures, Negri provides a creative and insightful reading of Marx's value theory in the *Grundrisse*. Negri specifically examines Marx's theory of value in lessons two and four, arguing against then-orthodox interpretations of Marx in several respects. He criticizes economism and those approaches to Marx that overemphasize *production*; he savagely criticizes the notion that the sole political surface in capitalist society is the site of commodity production, that this alone is where exploitation is found or labor's subjectivity or power may be found. Moreover he questions whether we should presuppose that "*Capital* constitutes the most developed point in Marx's analysis" (p. 5) and reads the *Grundrisse* for a theory "of revolutionary subjectivity," which Negri implies is missing in *Capital* (e.g., p. 5).[8]

In his magisterial *Transcritique* (2003), Kojin Karatani compliments Negri for "challeng[ing] the Marxist convention that the proletariat becomes an

claim to critical acumen, nevertheless find that the use-value of material objects belongs to them independently of their material properties, while their value, on the other hand, forms a part of them as objects. What confirms them in this view is the peculiar circumstance that the use-value of a thing is realized without exchange, i.e. in the direct relation between the thing and man, while, inversely, its value is realized only in exchange, i.e. in a social process" (1867: 177).

8 Negri argues that "We can only reconquer a correct reading of *Capital* (…for the revolutionary conscience of the masses) if we subject it to the critique of the *Grundrisse*, if we reread [*Capital*] through the categorical apparatus of the *Grundrisse*, which is traversed throughout by an absolutely insurmountable antagonism led by the capacity of the proletariat" (1991: 19). This conception of *Grundrisse* and *Capital* is unduly polemical. We cannot "reconquer a correct reading" of *Capital*. We can only read it.

autonomous subject in the process of production. Returning to *Grundrisse* … he sought the moment for the proletariat's subjectivity" (p. 290). Negri's search for this moment, Karatani explains, "corresponds to the moment that the workers stand in the buying position, in the process of circulation" (Ibid.). Reiterating one of the central arguments of *Transcritique,* Karatani adds: "The split between production and consumption constitutes capital, while it is also this moment that can terminate capital" (291). Karatani emphasizes that Marx finds the *salto mortale*, the gap between production and consumption, *within the very circulation of capital*. This brings us to Karatani's critique, that Negri "still follows the convention that surplus value, being detached from circulation, exists only in the process of production" (Ibid.).

I think Karatani's critique is valid. Negri seems to believe that Marx thought that value only exists through production, and that Marx follows Ricardo's labor theory of value in this respect.[9] Notwithstanding Negri's attempted break from the 'productivism' of orthodox Marxism, the result is like a shift in polarity: from the productivism that was conventional in the 1970s to an overemphasis on circulation (and later, biopolitical production by immaterial labor). What is lost is the inherent gap between production and consumption, and thus capital's value form.[10]

These conceptual details may seem abstract and politically superfluous. But remember that Negri's intention in *Marx beyond Marx* is to theorize revolutionary subjectivity through a reading of Marx's texts. This project was left incomplete by Negri's incarceration, and was first realized with the conclusion of his trilogy with Hardt. What is at stake is how Marxists read Marx to conceptualize the relationship between subjectivity and political struggles within-and-against capital. Karatani explains:

> In *Marx beyond Marx*, [Negri] emphasizes that the theory of surplus value introduces the fact of exploitation into the theory of political economy, while the Marxian theory of circulation introduces class struggle. (Thus [Negri] proposes … shifting our focus from surplus value theory [i.e., from *Capital*] to circulation theory [i.e., *Grundrisse*].) … [Yet] we rather have to find the moment for class struggle in the theory of value form in *Capital* (2003, p. 291).

In one of his conversations with Cesare Casarino, Negri confirms the correctness of Karatani's reading of his work. Negri explains that he "always find[s] Marx very annoying when he spins all these tales about the commodity form," since "one need to get to them only later … after the analysis of class struggle!" (2008: 55). But as I read Marx, the key point of those "tales" about commodities is to show us that capitalist production always entails class struggle. Why? Because the very rending of our lives and labor by value form imprisons us within an unjust and unstable social formation. Much as I admire Negri's work, I cannot help but think that before we enter the "field of revolution", we need to transcend value form. Indeed, as I read Marx, that *is* the revolution.

Let's take one step further. We should ask – following Zizek (2007: 48) – whether Hardt and Negri's conception of the multitude ruling itself and its common wealth does not express "the ultimate *capitalist* fantasy, the fantasy of capitalism self-revolutionizing perpetual movement freely exploding

9 Negri's lectures concern the *Grundrisse*, and one could argue (as Karatani does) that Marx's conception of value underwent a substantial shift between *Grundrisse* and *Capital*. See Negri (1991); Karatani (2003); Mann (2008); Mann and Wainwright (2008).

10 Žižek makes a similar point, arguing that Hardt and Negri "neglect … the *form* [of value] in the strict dialectical sense of the term" (2007: 47). I agree, but note that Žižek reads Marx's theory of value form in standard Hegelian fashion; thus what is celebrated by Žižek (Marx's Hegelian conception of value) is problematic for Negri. For instance, Negri claims that Marx's "passage from money-form to commodity-form, from the *Grundrisse* to *Capital,* only adds abstraction and confusion. Despite all the intentions and declarations to the contrary, … [*Capital*'s treatment of value and commodity-form reflects] a more idealist, Hegelian method" (1991: 39). To the contrary, in my view Marx's discussion of value is more explicitly Hegelian in *Grundrisse* than in *Capital.* In this debate I find myself favoring a third position, i.e. Karatani's celebration of Marx's *Wertform* on Kantian grounds. Compare Mann (2008).

when freed of its inherent obstacle?" I think the answer is yes. Regardless of how we answer that question, I agree with Karatani's more circumscribed criticism, i.e. that Negri misses the importance of Marx's shift between *Grundrisse* and *Capital*. And for this reason, I stress that returning to *Marx beyond Marx* is crucial to understanding *Commonwealth*, for the two texts crystallize Negri's long shift away from Marx's value theory. And like Karatani, I think we can and should find our analysis of class struggle – and one adequate to our time – within Marx's theory of value form in volume 1 of *Capital*. We should bear this counterpoint in mind when reading *Commonwealth*.

On cheerleading and class struggle

Let me anticipate a criticism: no, not every Marxist must repeat Marx's arguments from *Capital.* Certainly not. But when a Marxist theorist of Negri's stature proposes a radical break with Marx's theory of value – which Marx regarded as his greatest contribution to political economy – careful analytical explanation is due.

Then again, perhaps Negri gave us his explanation long ago, in his Paris lectures from the late 1970s. In lesson two of *Marx beyond Marx,* he claims that Marx's "theory of value, as a theory of categorial synthesis, is a legacy of the classics and of bourgeois mystification which we can easily do without in order to enter the field of revolution" (23). Well, there you have it. Negri wants revolution without or against Marx's *Capital.* He says as much in a recent (2010) interview, arguing that revolutionary struggles today emerge from 'below' in the sense that they oppose "the 'above' of sovereignty. Communist being is realised from this 'below', from the turning of constituent desires into expressions of power and alternative contents. So there can also be a revolution, as Gramsci taught, 'against *Das Kapital*.'" He concludes his trilogy with Hardt on the same point. Negri has thus come full circle from his lectures on the *Grundrisse:* disavowing Marx's theory of value in *Capital,* in order to write a new *Manifesto*.

Hardt and Negri frequently invoke the 1999 protests in Seattle as an illustration of multitudinous revolt (for a critique of this interpretation, see Wainwright & Kim 2008). One of my clearest memories from those protests were the antics of the 'radical cheerleaders' troupe that raised our spirits and kept our chants in time as we waited for the riot police to clear the city. Reflecting on their trilogy I see Hardt and Negri as the theoretical wing of the radical cheerleaders. They offer the multitude works of "left uplift" (Morton 2007: 189). We may disagree with them, as I do, often fundamentally. And yet still they keep trying to cheer us on in dark times. I genuinely appreciate their spirit. Enough to keep reading their books, despite my disagreements—and the occasional boredom.

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