



Negri's Journey: A Roadmap

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In his brilliant long essay ‘Considerations on Western Marxism’, Perry Anderson makes the important observation that after the 1930s a certain schism installs itself between theoretical Marxism and proletarian action. If the ‘classical’ tradition of Marxist thought understood itself as inextricably linked with socialist practice, lending insight to, and offering interpretations of, collective action, that embeddedness could no longer be taken for granted by the 1930s. It was a decade when three of the grand theoreticians of Marxism, who had been leaders and organisers of mass upheavals, found themselves cut off from revolutionary practice: Antonio Gramsci, founder of the PCI, had been incarcerated and then died in prison in 1937, Georg Lukacs had been expelled from the Hungarian Communist Party, and Karl Korsch was in exile. These developments, says Anderson, ‘marked the end of the phase in which Western Marxism was still at home among the masses.’ (Anderson 2016, 32).

Negri’s intellectual-political journey is a defiant and indefatigable effort at a recuperation. ‘Theory becomes a material force once it has gripped the masses,’ states Marx famously in 1844, in his *Introduction to A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*. The long trajectory of Negri’s political engagement, as it emerges from the ‘workerist’ Italian strand of Marxism of the 1960s, through to the ‘autonomist’ Marxism of the ‘years of lead’ of the 1970s, all the way to the ‘multitude’ of *Empire* is an insistent, imaginative, often brilliant, endeavour to reclaim an adequate form of theoretical practice that might lend itself as material force to the collective self-legislation of the labouring people. And throughout it, Negri is careful not to outrun the historical pace of that endeavour, and keen to remain with the ineliminable dimension of subjectivity and of the *collective subject position*.

We will identify three phases in Negri’s theoretical trajectory. The first early stage comprises his involvement with the *operaismo* (‘workerism’) movement of the far-Left in Italy in the 1960s, marked by the sharp divide between it and both the Com-

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unist Party, led at the time by Togliatti, on the one hand, and official trade unionism on the other. If workerist ‘autogestion’ names labour’s sovereign gesture of collective self-legislation, the second phase marks the break away from the ‘mass worker’ focus of the workerists, and the opening out to new constituencies of the proletariat with the launch of the *Autonomia* movement and Negri’s key innovative concept of the *operaio sociale* (the socialised worker). The third phase, initiated while he was *in carcere*, involves the reconceptualization of the proletariat at a global level as ‘multitude’. These varied instantiations of the constituent retain an unwavering commitment to antagonism, on a plane that with Negri we will use the adjective ‘immanent’ to describe: a ‘being against’, as he will put it later, without the promise of (Hegelian) transcendence.

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In the early 1960s two political journals launched, and then helped to consolidate, the ‘mass worker thesis’ thereby inaugurating the classical phase of workerism in which Negri was a key participant. The first was *Quadreni Rossi*, launched by Raniero Panzieri in 1961; the second was Mario Tronti’s journal *Classe Operaia*, launched in 1964. Their focus was on the mass worker; the wage struggle was the immediate terrain of political conflict; and, in the way that Tronti conceptualised it, labour was the driving force within capitalist society. 1963 had been the year of extensive wildcat strikes at the FIAT plant in Turin. These, for the workerists of *Classe Operaia*, were signs of the mass vanguard in motion. The battlelines were drawn, on the one side with the state whose recourse to violence had become pronounced during the whole decade, and on the other with ‘union officialdom’. The ‘machinery of the bourgeois state,’ proclaimed Tronti in his epoch-making book *Operai e Capitale* of 1966/2019,¹ ‘must today be broken within the capitalist factory.’ (Tronti, 1966/2019, 34)

Key to the workerist thesis is the radical reversal between labour and capital on the question of valorisation which is envisaged as effected at the sites of production. This topography consigns the revolutionary process to the *factory*. It is here that the concentration of labour power can throw the antagonism into relief, and it is here that the confrontation emerges most clearly around the stakes of the struggle. It is this premise that Negri holds firm, giving workers’ struggles primacy in the understanding of capitalism, most clearly discerned in his writings on proletarian sabotage and insurrection. It is, for him, always the same workerist gambit at play. For Negri, workers’ autonomy and self-valorisation involved tapping the constituent energies of the movement with its driving importance on agency and organisation as they emerge materially on the antagonistic plane with capitalism in ever-shifting determinate figurations.

A key text from this period is ‘*Domination and Sabotage: On the Marxist Method of Social Transformation*’.² In it, Negri says: ‘A constructive project is possible ... The polemic within the movement can only develop if it takes as its practical and

¹ The book was first translated into English over half a century after its publication in Italian: see Tronti, M, *Workers and capital*. Verso Books, 2019.

² Included in Negri, *A Books for Burning* (2005b).

theoretical starting point the deepening of both the concept and the experiences of proletarian self-valorisation.' The constituent project requires a 'deepening' of 'proletarian experience' to the point where 'labour-power' may be conceived as 'invention power', a 'transition that can be qualified in material terms', that is, on the terrain of experience, needs and desires. 'We define invention power as a capacity of the class to nourish the process of proletarian self-valorisation in the most complete antagonistic independence: the capacity to found this innovative independence on the basis of abstract intellectual energy as a specific productive force.' (Negri, 2005b, 268) And intriguingly: 'the reappropriation of productive force transforms class composition from a passive result into a motive force, from an effect into a cause.' (ibid.) 'Intriguingly' not merely because Negri's take on Tronti launches the thinking in the direction of the constituent 'project'; but also because we have here the first fragmented signs of a thought that will only later (with the turn to Spinoza) be able fully to think the proletariat as a 'self-caused cause' (rather than effect of, or overdetermined by, capital) and leverage it beyond what is still, at this stage of his thinking, an 'impossible' class. A class whose action must be 'non-homologous' to the power it counters (2005b, 238) and which involves (he borrows from Foucault's *La volonté de savoir* here) 'straining after a notion of productivity, a creativity of an unknown quantity located beyond the cognitive horizon.' (2005b, 239)

But what does this 'impossibility' and 'unknowability' mean for labour's collective subject position and its own understanding of its action? Let us take the latter first. For Negri constituent power is action undertaken as *counter-power* to capital, undertaken antagonistically to capital, acted out (here still before the more explicit turn to violence of the 1970s) in the withdrawal of work, absenteeism, wildcat strikes (those *not* organised by the 'conciliatory' unions), forms of action, and inaction, that were popularised under the slogan of 'the refusal of work', which is, as Negri defines it, '*first and foremost sabotage, strikes, direct action.*' (2005b, 270, *emph* in the original) For this first period of Negri's work then, revolutionary action – praxis – consists primarily in the 'refusal of work'. Negri develops the *refusal of work* into a demand that encompasses critical and strategic opportunity. 'Our task is the theoretical reinstatement of the refusal to work in the program, in the tactics, in the strategy of communists.' (2005b, 270) Such refusal cuts directly against capitalist command over labour, as well as the 'bargaining strategies' of 'conciliatory unionism', and performs 'a fundamental tactical function in the de-structuring of the enemy' (2005b, 271) For Negri, refusal reclaims the value of work as part of self-valorisation by making its availability dependent on labour initiative rather than capital command, and by breaking the link between labour and income. The refusal to work paralyses production. And the link to income is broken through a range of demands, demands, for example for a uniform wage for the workforce across all strata of workers, and, in what was termed 'bad faith reformism', demands that the management could not meet while holding on to any workable profit margin.

But if the 'refusal of work' signals liberation *from* work rather than through work, does this in turn not make the *working* class an 'impossible class', a self-defeating predication of sorts? The claim as it inheres in the negative (*de*-structuration, the *withdrawal* of action, etc) presents us with a problem, and a possible objection to Negri. How does a perspective fashioned on negativity translate into a positive constituent

project? Notwithstanding certain allusions to the idea of a ‘material self-constitution’ of the proletariat, are we not left with the impossibility of sustaining the revolutionary subject position *within* capitalist command, and yet leaving it groundless outwith it, as dependent on the availability of the work it was able to offer *and* withhold, since capital is what makes work available, and work what forges collective identity?

We may have to postpone a full answer to this question until we discuss Negri’s totalising gesture of ‘Being-against’ in *Empire*, his unwavering insistence on an *immanent antagonistic* project and his rejection of the dialectic. But already we can discern in the present context a first response. Essentially Autonomist theory required an *affirmative* counter-point to the *destructive* tendencies represented in the withdrawal of work. Labour’s constative significance to capitalist production, its primacy vis-à-vis capital, comes emphatically to the fore, and Negri can claim that ‘the refusal of work does not negate *one* nexus of capitalist society, *one* aspect of capital’s process of production or reproduction. Rather with all its radicality, it *negates the whole of capitalist society.*’ (2005b, 270) It is ‘the name given to the project of the destruction of the capitalist mode of production.’ Given labour’s constitutive significance to capitalist production its unanticipated withdrawal, over time – in Negri’s terms of sabotage and exodus -is potentially catastrophic in Sorelian terms. For Georges Sorel, the great figure of revolutionary syndicalism of the early 20th Century, the general proletarian strike was paradigmatic constituent action, in opposition to mere ‘political strikes’ with their incremental demands.³ If it is the sole means of the overthrow of capitalism it is because the comprehensive withdrawal of labour, shorn of occupational demands and short-term ameliorations of the class position of workers, is *catastrophic* to capital.

It is perhaps in the wake of the widespread industrial unrest of the end of the decade that a proper reckoning with the question of constituent power can be had. By 1969, occupations, strikes and mass assemblies had spread across industrialised Italy. In Italy’s industrial heartland, and specifically in the city of Turin, the ‘Hot Autumn’ had been precipitated by strikes over wages, housing, and protests over the police shooting of striking Sicilian workers, police actions that had served to unite northerners and southerners, skilled and unskilled workers, students and workers. Massive demonstrations swept through the city. It was the great factories of Northern Italy, Pirelli and Fiat amongst them, that became the epicentre of industrial unrest and it is here in particular that the influence that the radical leftists of workerism could be felt. The situation exploded into one of the biggest strike waves in European history. Much has been written about the Hot Autumn of 1969, the societal fracture that it reflected, and effected, and the turn to extremism that followed it in the 1970s in the decade that came to be known in Italy as the ‘years of lead’. The wave of industrial action which had swept Italy was finally spent, and the country languished in the grip of violence of urban guerilla groups on the one hand, of severe state-police action on the other. It is in this context that new subjects of resistance emerge, and it is in order to explore this emergence that we now turn to track the second phase of Negri’s trajectory.

³ See Sorel, 1908/1999. For an analysis of the notion of the ‘constituent’ in Sorel, see Christodoulidis 2021, pp. 500-7.

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Capital's reaction to the crisis that culminated in the 1969 mass strike was a decisive attempt at the re-organisation of production away from the sites that had made it vulnerable to mass industrial action. If Fordist industrial organisation had accelerated the flow production through assembly-line organisation and the subdivision and fragmentation of tasks, it had allowed, if not inadvertently fostered, the development of class identity and solidarity on the shop floor. The rigidity of the organisation of Fordist mass production was also the source of its vulnerability because it enhanced the negative power of organised labour, their potential for slow-downs, sabotage and strike action, and for the many forms of disruption of assembly line production.

A new phase of the organisation of production was gradually ushered in in the decade that followed. Assembly line production in the mass industrial plants was partly abandoned and competitiveness was re-aligned to the opportunities of mobility and fluidity. The re-organisation of production, away from the rigidities of capital 'sunk' in mass industrial sites, and toward the flexibility afforded to it through decentralization, fragmentation, and the moving of elements of production abroad, outpaced much of what workerism was able to offer to the organisation of resistance. The mutation to post-Fordism in the economic system is accompanied by a significant development in the political system, i.e. in the role of the state during this period and the heightening of its police functions. These peak with the so-called 'historical compromise' forged between the PCI and the ruling Christian Democrats in 1973, which, Negri writes in 1976, caused an 'air of decay' to linger for years to come. (Negri, 2005b, 121) As Sergio Bologna puts it, 'since the "historical compromise" the form of the state has taken a great leap forward, towards the organisation of a party system which no longer aims to mediate or present movements in civil society, and against the political programme of the new composition of the class.' (Bologna 1980, 61).

It is in this economic and political context of the 'historical transformation of capitalism into an increasingly parasitical and politically violent social relation' (Toscano, 2009, 76) that we need to understand the emergence of the significant political movement of the *Autonomia Operaia*, led by Negri in 1973, and his suggestion of a decisive conceptual shift from the mass worker to the 'socialised worker' (*operaio sociale*) as subject of resistance. Let us look at what this shift meant and entailed.

For Negri if class consciousness was forged in the confrontation with capital,⁴ then the dispersal of capital, its re-organisation, the abandonment of large factory plants, the transferal to new areas of heavy investment (property, real estate and the built environment, epitomised by the boom in the construction industry in particular

⁴ One might identify a crucial change of direction at this point for Negri, and a decisive break from Tronti. In the pages of "Domination and Sabotage" there was still significant continuity with the workerist thesis. When Negri argued there that "capitalist crisis has to have a direction ... which is imposed and dominated by proletarian power" (2005b, 232), he was still within the tradition of *operaismo*, its unconditional faith in working-class agency, its raising of "from below" to an ontology of sorts.

during the 1970s)⁵ involved new sites of confrontation in the fields of communication, and therefore of socialisation more generally. Self-valorisation moved out of the factory to claim new sites. Negri strikes out in this direction, to talk of *emergent* strata of the generalised proletariat, of the emergence of a disseminated figure of the worker, a dynamic evolution of class composition that must consolidate in spite of its fundamental non-homogeneity.

What informs the move to the ‘socialised worker’ is Negri’s careful reading of Marx’s *Grundrisse*, developed in his important book *Marx beyond Marx* which returned to the overtly political tones of Marx’s ‘practico-political synthesis of the revolutionary struggle,’ as Negri puts it. (Negri 1991, 2) What attracts Negri to the *Grundrisse* is that in them Marx documents the revolutionary possibilities that he saw alive in the crisis of 1857 not in terms of any systematic unfolding of the laws of history but in erratic opportunity; not in negation as precursor to synthesis but in antagonism; not in objective tendency but in subjective initiative. If revolutionary possibility comes alive as constituent praxis here it is because Marx makes no attempt to ‘... destroy the dynamism of the process by hypostatizing it, by rigidifying it in a totality with its own laws of development that one might be able to possess, or dominate, or reverse.’ (1991, 9) For Negri, Marx’s *Grundrisse* came alive in the Italian conjuncture where the mass worker of Italian Fordism gave way to the “socialised worker” and where surplus value was being harvested beyond the walls of the factory. Against the laws of the dialectic, against any process that can be read into the objective unfolding of history, against determinism or teleology, the constituent here is grafted onto the unpredicted and unpredictable forms of antagonistic agitation.

In fact, for Negri Marx’s account of the largely spontaneous forces that emerged in the situation of crisis that he was describing, was not far from the loose coalitions and alliances that the new forms of social resistance capture in all their fluid expression in Italy of the 1970s. Let us repeat: Negri’s hypothesis is of a new proletariat *disseminated* throughout society. And it is ‘disseminated’ because Negri moves away from the workerist exclusive attention to the field of production, to identify class *re*-composition across strata of students, the unemployed, women stuck in domestic labour, homosexual and other marginalised identities. The analysis builds on what Marx identifies as the processes of ‘real subsumption’. The term refers to the deepening of the capitalist extraction of surplus value as it comes increasingly to encompass all facets of social reproduction. The ‘integral socialization of capital’ extends its reach to all activities of social reproduction, including intellectual and unremunerated labour. It is this expansive reach of capital that new social forces rise to counter. The arrival of the new class figure of the *operaio sociale* would finally call the whole meaning of workerism into question and by the middle of the decade we witness the collapse of the workerism of *Potere Operaio*. The move attracts much criticism from his erstwhile comrades, over ‘the pot-pourri of different subjects with completely autonomous motivations’. For his former comrade Sergio Bologna, Negri’s generalising gesture loses traction with struggles on the ground, his ‘assertions,’ he

⁵ For an analysis of ‘capital switching’ from the ‘primary circuit’ (manufacturing industry) to the ‘secondary circuit’ (housing etc.) during this period, see Bologna (1980).

writes, 'as emphatic as they are unconvincing'.⁶ Unperturbed, Negri turns his attention to struggles endorsing the practice of mass illegality: the unilateral reduction of bills and payments (in transport, public services, utilities, etc) that came to be known as 'auto-reduction', rent strikes, widespread house occupations, women's grassroots assemblies, the gate-crashing of cultural events, etc. These actions which were typical of the 'autonomist' movement in the 1970s were conceptualised as an attempt to force antagonism with the state across the manifold expressions of its ever-greater arbitrariness of command. An 'overwhelming hypothesis begins to take shape,' explains Negri: 'whilst the "category "working class" has gone into crisis ... it continues to produce all its own effects on the entire social terrain, as a proletariat.' (Negri 1976, 126) 'Today, against capital, rises up the social figure of immaterial labour'. (Negri 2005a, xlix). And finally: 'Advanced capitalism directly expropriates labouring cooperation. ... Capital has insinuated itself everywhere, and everywhere attempts to acquire the power to coordinate, commandeer and recuperate value.' The productivity of the socialised worker involves 'communication and the communication of knowledge. Capital must therefore appropriate communication ... and superimpose itself on the autonomous capability of managing knowledge.' (Negri 1989, 116) Under conditions of 'real subsumption', a contradiction emerges – that sweeps asunder any optimal conditions of discourse as per Habermas - as communication emerges as *both proper and contrary* to the reproduction of capitalism.

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Autonomia was to be crushed by the mass arrests of 1979-80.⁷ Negri, along with a number of his colleagues at the University of Padua, was arrested on 7 April 1979 on charges of having 'organised and led an association called the Red Brigades, constituted as an armed band.' The same warrant contained the charge of having led 'an association called Potere Operaio ... which aims to subvert by violence the constituted order of the state by means of propaganda and incitement to practice so called mass illegality.'⁸ An extraordinary number of postponements later, and after four years in preventative detention, Negri went on trial in February 1983, though the charges linking him to the Red Brigades had, in the meantime, been dropped. In the same year Negri ran for a seat in the lower house of the Italian Parliament, and having won it, was granted immunity as elected representative and released from prison. By July 1983 a campaign had been launched to strip him of the immunity. The day before the vote in Parliament, and in anticipation of the result, Negri fled to France, and was subsequently convicted *in absentia* to thirty years in prison. In 1997 he decided to return to Italy to serve the remainder of his sentence in the Rebibbia prison in Rome, where Gramsci had also been held. He remained there until 2003 when he was granted full parole. It is during this period in prison that he studied Spinoza, and

⁶ As described in detail in Wright 2002, pp141ff. (all quotes from Wright,2002, 172, 171.)

⁷ See Italian historian Carlo Ginzburg's fascinating account of the prosecutions and trials (focusing on another member of Lotta Continua, Adriano Sofri) in *The Judge and the Historian* (1999).

⁸ See Murphy, Introduction, in Negri, 2005.

wrote his famous book on the Dutch philosopher (*The Savage Anomaly* (2000)) as well as a number of essays collected under the title *Subversive Spinoza* (2004).

The turn to Spinoza is significant. For a theorist like Negri, so intent on capturing the crisis points of capitalist development in order to direct strategic opportunity directly at them, and so cautious to resist both the suggestion of any ‘utopian’ future or any ‘dialectic’ transcending of the present situation of labour, it is Spinoza’s work alone that allows him to turn to *affirmative* revolutionary alternatives. This is how Negri explains his debt: ‘What interests me in fact is not so much the origins of the bourgeois state and its crisis but, rather, the theoretical alternatives and the suggestive possibilities offered by the revolution in process. (2004, xx) and then: ‘I, one poor scholar among many, will interrogate a true master with a method of reading the past that allows me to grasp the elements that today coalesce in a definition of a phenomenology of revolutionary praxis constitutive of time-to-come.’ (2004, xxi) In Spinoza he will seek the operation of ‘constructing a “beyond” for the equally weary and arthritic tradition of revolutionary thought itself.’ (2004, xix) and toward a multitude ‘no longer as negative condition but positive premise of the self-constitution of right.’ (2000, 194).

What would this ‘beyond’ look like, one that is not delivered through the dialectic of history? The recourse to Spinoza is, after all, recourse to the philosopher of immanence *par excellence*. ‘In Spinoza’s *Political Treatise*, the specific and immediate basis of the idea of democracy, and even more so the concept of the multitude, is human universality.’ (2004, 9). From Spinoza, Negri will borrow the foundational distinction between *potestas* and *potentia*. The first term names power in its fixed, institutionalised, *constituted* form that it takes in the contractarian tradition. The second term, *potentia*, captures power in its fluid form and as eruption of radical novelty, what is called *constituent* power. ‘Potentia’ is the immanent, immediate ‘extension of practical being’, and it is what will release revolutionary subjectivity: ‘the multitude no longer a negative condition but the positive premise of the self-constitution of right’ (Negri 2000, 194) underdetermined as ‘multitude’ but assuming determinate form in ‘the physical accumulation of movements’ (226) and in its engagement across plural terrain. Negri’s own visionary intensity maps onto Spinoza’s treatise about boundless capacity of world-making – or making and unmaking the order of things.

The most complete account of the *multitude* as the bearer of the immediacy of collective political constituent expression is contained in the book that Negri co-wrote with Michael Hardt in 2001, the publication sensation that was *Empire*.⁹ What, in the autonomist days was thought about as the *emergent* strata of the generalized proletariat, a dynamic evolution of class composition, finds in this book, decades later, its most ‘emphatic’ articulation. Since its publication in 2001, *Empire* attracted both

⁹ Held by Slavoj Žižek as the ‘Communist Manifesto for our time, *Empire* proved to be ‘the most successful work in political theory to come from the left for a generation.’ (Bull 2020, 84). The key concept that replaces the term ‘proletariat’ in this phase of Negri’s work is further elaborated in Hardt & Negri, *Multitude*, 2005.

significant attention and virulent critique from both the liberal right and the Marxist left.¹⁰

Let us take it gradually. Empire names the generalisation of economic reason and the consolidation of capital at the global level. In the way that Hardt and Negri describe it, it is the forcefield of diffuse, networked power; it comprises flows of people, information and wealth, too unruly to be monitored from any centre, with regulations and legalities proliferating and interlocking at supranational levels. Consistent with the principal reversal that had driven both *operaismo* and autonomist thinking, it is capital that *is parasitic* on labour; it is capital that has been forced to restructure; and where 'the action of Empire is effective, this is due to the fact that it is driven by the rebound from the resistance of the multitude against imperial power.' (2001, 360) So, it is the global proletariat, the multitude, that has forced capital to decentralize production, increase the mobility of workers and capital, circumvent sites of labour protection, etc. And it is in response to its confrontation with the multitude, a global proletariat overflowing with insurgent energies, that Empire reconfigures all divisions and conceptual distinctions that organise the political imaginary: state/society, public/private, inside/outside, war/peace, control/ freedom. Empire, this 'decentred and deterritorialised apparatus of rule' can be described, Gopal Balakrishnan suggests, 'as the planetary gestalt of those flows and hierarchically organized divisions.' (in Callinicos et al. 2020, xii).

What sustains the solidarities of the multitude, its loose associations, mutually 'incommunicable' struggles and fleeting alliances, is their 'being-against' Empire. It is not that the struggle is explicitly, self-consciously or organisationally anti-systemic; instead it is that because Empire is everywhere that it is vulnerable at all points by events no matter how marginal. 'Having achieved the global level capitalist development is faced directly with the multitude without mediation.' (2001, 237) This is class composition in the twenty-first century; 'the global multitude embracing all those who work, or are just poor, from the computer scientists in Palo Alto to slum dwellers in Sao Paulo forms a class that, in its very quotidian mode of existence, is somehow revolutionary.' ' (Balakrishnan, in Callinicos et al. 2020, xiv).

It would perhaps be apposite to end this short account of Negri's long journey on this note of optimism. Against capitalism's 'arrogant illusions', he writes in his 1990 'postscript' to *Communists like Us*, 'more and more people are asking themselves how to achieve a democracy that includes the democratic management of production,' since 'democracy cannot be simply political emancipation but must include social and economic liberation. ... Every form of democratic government must yield to a new, free organisation of cooperation in production.' (171) 'For in the countries where capitalism reigns idiotic and triumphant, corrupt and incapable of self-criticism, arrogant and confused, here as well the subject who constantly proposes to revolt is the same: the new productive subject, students, scientists, workers,. . .etc.' Or so this 'most optimistic picture of globalization by the radical Left', as Arrighi puts it,

¹⁰ Amongst many here, see Bob Lumley 'Negri's apocalyptic absurdities in which the proletariat does indeed appear as a sort of St George always ready for insurrection', (quoted in Beasley-Murray 1994) and Ellen Meiksins Wood characterization of the multitude as 'a philosophical abstraction', 'nowhere rather than everywhere' (2020, 73) and a 'counsel for surrender' (2020, 63).

(Arrighi 2020, 32) would have us theorise constituent power as boundless capacity. Our debt to Negri is above all, perhaps, to his insistent invitation to recuperate that collective capacity.

Instead let me end on a divergent note, one that perhaps most tellingly collects so many of Negri's extraordinary insights and faith in the resilience of the proletariat, however that subject is re-signified. It is an incident first relayed by Alexis de Tocqueville in his *Recollections* and retold by Negri in *Ghostly Demarcations*, a book of responses to Derrida's *Spectres of Marx*. 'We're in a lovely apartment on the Left Bank, seventh arrondissement, at dinnertime. The Tocqueville family is reunited. Nevertheless, in the calm of the evening, the cannonade fired by the bourgeoisie against the rebellion of rioting workers resounds suddenly – distant noises from the Right Bank. The diners shiver, their faces darken. But a smile escapes a young waitress who serves their table and has just arrived from the Faubourg saint Antoine. She's immediately fired.' And Negri concludes: 'Isn't the true specter of communism perhaps there, in that smile? ... Isn't a glimmer of joy there, making for the specter of liberation?' (Negri 1999, 15).

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