

## Negri's tent, or, Rough outlines on the being of māori

*In which—being compared to a tent—the philosopher Antonio Negri's text "Kairòs, Alma Venus, Multitudo: Nine lessons to myself"<sup>1</sup> is pitched any-place-whatsoever along the coastline of that joyous and beautiful dislocation which we call Erewhon.<sup>2</sup>*

Kua hua te marama  
—Pēpeha<sup>3</sup>

A 'tent' is precisely a complex of space and time that could never serve as the object of any recognition whatsoever  
—Eric Alliez<sup>4</sup>

### The campsite

My little take on Negri's time problem goes something like this: if the very name 'materialism' suggests a primacy for spatial metaphors; for concepts and notions of space—matter, extension, void, fullness, division—then what of time? How might a materialist conception of time work? How might time matter to matter, within time, within matter? In this, time will not be transcendent to life, not projected onto life from the outside. Negri's thought refuses any spatialisation of time and all understandings of time as ex-trinsic measure, i.e. measure from the outside, imposed measure. If we statistically (or otherwise) take measure of that-which-has-been in an attempt to fully determine a that-which-is-coming, then we 'take away all ontological consistency from time and so any consistency from past and future.'<sup>5</sup> And similarly, when we allocate the present a determinable place on some homogenous plane of time, and proceed to divide up that present à la Zenò, then we take away much of time's positivity, much of its generative force and creativity.

Time for Negri is a corporeal relation: all the body knows is the restless present. All the body knows is an indeterminate metamorphosis of time, a time of times. The felt, temporal (self-) presence of a body—quivering, sleeping, plunging, drifting, erupting, etc.—in the inestimable here and now of its being *this*, or *that*, is often named *haecceity*. We can track the meaning of this enigmatic word, via Deleuze and Guattari and Zen poetry, back to the fourteenth century humanist scholar Dun Scotus: its sense perfectly conveys 'such-ness', 'singularity of existence'. A friendship, a season, this cresting wave, the scent of a plum, a battle: bodies, events, *haecceity*. Yet when it comes to time, Negri also turns toward Epicurus and his famous *clinamen*. Meaning 'swerve' or 'deviation', *clinamen* clearly signifies as a spatial term, hence Negri recasts its sense along temporal lines, as a passage felt and conveyed but whose qualities remain immeasurable. *Clinamen* comes to mean: a constant 'opening' of time in the present, thus allowing for the possibility of a complete separation of past from future. A swerving now-time is a potential for change, for the practical and imaginative construction of new being. With Negri then, the future (the 'to-come') is not understood as some fixed, in-built destiny of the past, but is rather imagined and expressed

in the open condition of the present. And the past ('the eternal') is not measured and judged in order to invest the strictures of a controlled future, but rather explored from within the present, experimented with, re-evaluated. Negri's eventual name for this kind of present is *kairòs*. *Kairòs*—meaning the embodied action of both singular and collective subjectivities—is both *haecceity* and *clinamen* together, but it further qualifies these terms by adding the important sense of 'a decision'.

Because exposed to all these restless elements of time, my any-place-whatsoever along the coastline of Erewhon will now require the provision of a tent, the immediate shelter and make-shift bearing of a tent.

### The groundsheet

The common name 'māori' continues to seek an adequation within the real: becoming-māori.<sup>6</sup> Yet at the same time, the continuity of becoming finds itself broken open by every decision to use this common name: being-māori. The being of māori is a temporal and open linguistic act of naming. If from within my vacillating sense of things I suddenly decide to bring together a name and a life-world by stating, "this is māori", then this act, this severing of time in the precariousness of a here and now, is also a new generation of being in that it breaks with the continuity of the past in order to somehow rejoin and enhance the future. Of course my decision is only a singular event, but it is a singular event located in a common field of other such events. Language is the community of these events—a 'being-with'—and so this act of naming can only participate in the 'dialogue and perhaps clashing' of this community. All linguistic *praxis* seeks no other truth.<sup>7</sup>

### 1st pole

Self-caused, māori is that life-world through which a desire for the co-operative generation of both subjectivity and community emerges. As such, the being of māori is said to *consist* within a kind of potential for shared productivity, or within an immanent bio-politics of aroha and non-ownership.<sup>8</sup> Those who are māori are a tribe, a tribe of tribes, an association of associations, an ohu of ohu. All self-constituting and aimed at collective action, those who are māori *are* the common. Or better, those who are māori *produce* the common. Living labour.

### 2nd pole

Here, in the world of light, the common once assumed the unfurling, generative shape of a nomadic mytho-praxis. Then came the epoch of money, commodities and the Crown, and so the common recomposed itself along fresh lines of action and resistance. The signing of the Treaty of Waitangi marked the transition between these two forms. Today a new form of the being of māori is struggling to be born.

### 3rd pole

From Epicurus to Spinoza, from Marx to Deleuze and Guattari, Negri continues a 'red thread' of politico-

philosophical thought. With Deleuze and Guattari this thread passed by way of an understanding of tribes as 'societies against the State.'<sup>9</sup> History is thus rendered both anti-evolutionary and anti-dialectical: the tribe does not predate the State as a political form, but is rather always already a contemporary counter-power to either an existing State, or to any group within the tribe that is perceived as tending towards the State form. Perhaps most groups tend towards the State form in varying degrees, so the differences would lie in the constantly emerging collective desires of the members. Hence the anti-dialectical nature of Deleuze and Guattari's thought: the political is always the coming expression of positive desires, rather than the mediation of opposite desires. *Political-forming*.

### The canvas

The conceptual dyad Sovereignty-Rangatiratanga is directly contrary to that named the common. Sovereignty-Rangatiratanga is a pure mystification of both subjectivity and community. It erects a transcendental illusion of Power that is extremely coercive and corrupt in its real effects.<sup>10</sup> When iwi choose the path of Sovereignty-Rangatiratanga over the path of the common they choose Power over biopolitics, coercion and corruption over co-operation. Any further sustained pursuit of property and juridical rights by iwi using concepts and precepts derived from State Law, and in conjunction with the force of that law, may now only result in a further loss of an amazing historical willingness and ability to partake in the militant struggle for the common. The way of the common passes through neither private property nor public ownership: all dimensions of a modern public-ness were privatised years ago, just as the politics of the State has become indistinguishable from the vicissitudes of a neo-liberal marketplace. Rather than by means of any pre-established *ethnos* as defined by the inflexible taxonomies of an Iwi-State, the way of the common proceeds via an *ethos* created by the immanent self-organisation of those who are māori.

The State fails to represent the life-world of the common, and this precisely because present conditions ensure that the State has rapidly become representative of only two things: the naked greed of global Capital, and a mobile yet never the less always pre-constituted 'imagined community'. Perhaps this is why both the Nation-State and the traditional political party now appear as redundant forms to those who desire the common. The common is neither another corrupt expression of Capital nor another illusion of identity and Power.

So who or what now represents the common? Nobody and no thing: those who are māori remain immanent to themselves and therefore require no form of representation. The life-world of the common cannot be represented by those with a 'proper' place in the present Order. Those who occupy such places can only represent themselves and their own interests, while those who are māori exclude themselves from the present Order. Or better, those who are māori *resist* (culturally, sexually, economically, artistically, etc.) their allocated places within that Order: 'desertion and exodus'. All this is rendered extremely complex and paradoxical given present (postmodern) conditions.<sup>11</sup> Today the State—locally, nationally, supranationally—and the Corporations (including iwi, the media, the financial sector, the NGOs, agribusiness, and so forth) have hybridised to produce a 'smooth' and seemingly immanent form of Sovereignty



which allows no outside. All productive (human) labour has been subsumed within a Capitalist Sovereignty.<sup>12</sup>

### 1st guy-rope

Negri's philosophy of the common conducts a devastating critique of this new form of Sovereignty, 'from within it', as a form of resistance. It brings fresh conceptual tools to the task of a coming social transformation. Unwilling to request a return to the theoretical conditions of a long past modern world, i.e. the separation of the State—as the mediator and enforcer of contracts—from civil society and Capital, the singularities and communities who both compose and enact the common have welcomed Negri's thought into the open-scape of their thinking and dwelling. And by way of a prior, reciprocal gesture, his 'lessons' to himself unfold and extend a unique, almost poetic hospitality out into the magic void of time whence coming events 'will not have been begun by chance.'<sup>13</sup>

### 2nd guy-rope

In the course summary of his 1975–76 seminars at the Collège de France, Michel Foucault correlates the birth of the modern Nation-State with two emergent discourses of power: a juridico-philosophical one of mediation, legislation and universal rights; and a historico-political one of struggle, resistance and strategy. The subject who speaks from within the former is the jurist, 'standing between the adversaries, at the centre of and above the fray, imposing an armistice, establishing an order that brings reconciliation', while the subject of the latter speaks from amongst the 'fray', presenting 'the perspectival and strategic truth that will allow him to be victorious.'<sup>14</sup> Contra Hobbes—a 'jurist' for whom the only way out of humanity's continual state of war was via a peace mediated and guaranteed by State Sovereignty—Foucault situates his own discourse firmly in 'the camp' of the historico-political strategists.<sup>15</sup> Exemplary as a virtual mode of struggle and resistance, Foucault's philosophy transforms itself here into a political activism dedicated to the forensic task of analysing all the blood splattered and smeared mirrorings of a very real, very 'modern' dialectic: war and peace, peace and war, war=peace. Today Negri, like Foucault before him, conducts his own 'war on war'. A thousand new problems begin here.

### The flysheet

Race. Here on the common there is but a single race: the multi-coloured, mutating difference of the all.<sup>16</sup> So

why say that the Foreshore and Seabed Act is racist? The danger of this assertion would be that it ends up mirroring the pure, oppressive ideology of the State. The Act was designed to limit the statutory Power of iwi, so things should extend from there, that is, from whether one agrees or disagrees with the statement, 'the statutory Power of iwi requires limiting.' For those who desire the common, all forms of transcendent Power require limiting. Our question then: how best to achieve these limits? Would yet more contracts and law be the best form of limit? Given that these kinds of limit stem directly from the coercive and corrupt Power of the State, then the contradictions and difficulties in using them to limit Sovereign Power itself seem obvious. Put differently, if we are to limit the contractually defined Rangatiratanga of iwi, aren't we then equally obliged to limit the Sovereignty of the State? The State's and iwi *recognition* of the Treaty of Waitangi as binding means in effect that no signatory retains a greater or lesser claim to absolute legitimacy (seniority notwithstanding). Given that in this region of global Power there exists a very real fusion of both iwi and State, it would seem contradictory to limit the Rangatiratanga of iwi while not reciprocally limiting the Sovereignty of the State.<sup>17</sup>

#### 4th pole

This is a similar problem to the one Marx grappled with *vis-à-vis* both Hegel's concept of civil society and the French situation in 1848. How is it possible for the State to limit its own transcendent and coercive elements and thereby become the self-determination of a community, the unmediated 'content' of a common people? Marx's answer was of course through the constituting of 'true democracy' (communism with a small 'c'), by which he meant the ongoing political expression of a 'concrete' people, *minus* the 'abstract' illusion of transcendent Power.<sup>18</sup> And yet who are 'the people' of the postmodern Empire? And just who is colonising who here in the Society of the Spectacle? Nations, peoples, races; these abstractions no longer satisfy any imagination. In the becoming-slum-and-palace of a very Imperial world, Marx's problem is today reconfigured, and in his place Negri asks: who are the locals who everywhere are capable of subtracting transcendent Power from the global situation?<sup>19</sup>

#### 5th pole

On a coastline all claims to the indigenous dissolve like sea-foam in the wind. The whenua fractalises here, allowing thought to be cast out over the edge of things like a net sweeping the maritime void. Everything eternal is now awash and now reappearing in the vast, indeterminate arrival-departure time of a future common world.

#### 4th guy-rope

Back in the 1980's, while Mururoa atoll suffered the ignominy of remaining a nuclear test-site, many went around exclaiming: "Keep French theory out of the South Pacific!" And to this others replied: "The French military-industrial complex, yes!—but theory? To the contrary, we urgently require fresh thought and therefore must seek out the best, and right now the French are the best!" Of course Negri is not French; he was born in the Veneto, in Padua, but spent many years of political exile living in Paris during the post-'68 period of French intellectual radiance. But situations and conditions change. Negri now lives in Rome from where he launches his exquisitely crafted texts, his *tāonga-Roma*, thus adding his *mana* to the 'general

intelligence' of the common. And today, rather than simply *emitting* from charged centres, revolutionary philosophical thought also *emerges*, post-Seattle/Genoa, along the pathways of a multidimensional, global network of radiance.

Yet a perverse sense of distance, fear and isolation still haunts the world: divine laws of the local, xenophobia, various nationalisms, nativisms. Witness Israel. In opposition to this, and held firmly in a positivity of desire, the 'elsewhere' (and the 'other') of those who create the common is nothing if not the immanent, fertile void of every local site; the empty place-holder around which all 'heres and nows', all singular beings, gather. Viva marae!

#### 5th guy-rope

And so on the common, *within* the common, even the living thought of the ancestors is located and acquired globally: '[a]cquisition of this sort essentially means a gathering in of inalienable qualities from power-filled places of origin somewhere in geographically distant space/time, so that the uninterrupted flow of cultured human existence, begun and continued by ancestral benefactors also located in cosmological space/time, may continue unabated. All those who honourably engage in this activity for the social good are evidencing an aspect of ideal human behaviour, are acting "ancestrally."<sup>20</sup>

#### 6th guy-rope

The Proper name New Zealand names the One, the Nation-State. Yet we continue to use another name, Aotearoa. The name Aotearoa does not name the One. Aotearoa names the multiple, the tribal. The names New Zealand and Aotearoa are not synonymous; they don't mean the same thing. When we refer to this region of islands here in the southern Pacific as 'New Zealand/Aotearoa', we are in effect saying that *two* political forms both operate and confront each other here: the tribal form and the State form. This does not mean, however, that the tribal form is the prerogative of iwi. The tribal is a virtuality traversing and empowering the all. If I have been calling this virtuality 'māori'—with a small 'm'—then it was only in an attempt to bring a perhaps forgotten meaning to the fore. Through a wonderful juxtaposition of sense, the name 'māori' signifies not only 'common' but also 'fresh'. The life-world of māori can thus said to be composed of those events in which a profoundly quotidian relation forms and extends itself via both a renewed giving of gifts, and a further reaching of agreements in fresh association.

#### 7th guy-rope

I have been opposing all this to the transcendent domain of legal contracts and written pacts, and to the general fencing and policing of the world that stems directly from these. But without wishing to get lost in the misty aporias and swamplands of postmodern gift-theology, we immediately sense a problem here. In giving, or by donating something, are we imposing another *kind* of obligation on the person or group who receives the gift? Or is all trace of a gift used-up, destroyed in the very act of giving? In other words, is a gift of no return ever possible? A giving-without-taking would simply equate to a taking-without-giving, they travel the same infinite and vicious circle, the same eternal-return of gifts and theft, debt and guilt. Yet wouldn't to give and to take, to take and to give, be best... ungreedily?<sup>21</sup> Perhaps the *mana* (*virtu*) of the common lies only in an ability to create—and

constantly recreate—both adequate and splendid pathways for the living, flowing distribution of time's pure generosity.

## 8th guy-rope

Are we māori enough yet?

### The tent pegs

1. This text, along with another entitled "The Constitution of Time", is to be found in A. Negri, *Time for Revolution*, trans. M. Mandarini (London and New York: Continuum, 2003).
2. The title of Samuel Butler's novel *Erewhon* provided Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari with a way of rethinking utopia: *Erewhon* 'refers not only to no-where but also to now-here.' In this sense, utopia becomes an immanent struggle occurring both within and against the real of present conditions. See their *What is Philosophy?* trans. G. Burchell and H. Tomlinson (London & New York: Verso, 1994), p. 100.
3. 'The moon is full.' Moko Mead and N. Grove, *Ngā Pāpeha a ngā Tīpuna* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2001), p. 272.
4. E. Alliez, *The Signature of the World, Or, What is Deleuze and Guattari's Philosophy?* trans. E. R. Albert and A. Toscano (London & New York: Continuum, 2004).
5. A. Negri, *Time for Revolution*, p. 162.
6. If an important division lies between Proper names and common names, then this essay is in part an exploration of, and experimentation with, that division. My starting point for this thematic was to highlight to myself a perhaps minutely perceived difference in meaning between the Proper name 'Māori' and the common name 'māori'; to make this difference grow until the two versions of the name took on a rather complex and unstable relationship. The strange thing was that in order to achieve this it seemed necessary to refrain from using the Proper name 'Māori' anywhere in the body of the text. Given the rapidly growing dangers of any politics based in ethnic identity, I felt a space needed to be opened up in which the openness and co-operation of a belonging-as-such was what was important for the coming world. Meaning 'ordinary, or common' and 'fresh', the common name 'māori' seemed to me exemplary when attempting to imagine the topography of such a space. In contrast, the meaning of the Proper name 'Māori' seems thoroughly overdetermined and therefore somewhat out of bounds to the imaginary.
7. Arriving at things from a different angle, Giorgio Agamben puts it like this: "[t]he originary nucleus of signification is neither in the signifier or the signified, neither in writing nor in the voice, but in the fold of the presence on which they are established: the *logos*, which characterises the human as *zoon logon echon* (living thing using language), is this fold that gathers and divides all things in the 'putting together' of presence. And the human is precisely this fracture of presence, which opens a world and over which language holds itself." G. Agamben, *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture*, trans. R. L. Martinez (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 156.
8. Following Negri, who follows Foucault, we oppose biopolitics to Biopower: "One must be clear about the concept of biopolitics. It literally means the intertwining of power and life. The fact that power has chosen to place its imprint upon life itself, to make life its privileged surface of inscription, is not new: it is what Foucault called '[B]iopower,' whose birth at the end of the eighteenth century he described. But resistance to [B]iopower exists. To say that life resists power means that it affirms its own power, which is to say its capacity for creation, invention, production, subjectivation. This is what we call 'biopolitical': the resistance of life to power, from within it—inside this power, which has besieged life." A. Negri, *Negri on Negri: Antonio Negri in Conversation with Anne Dufourmantelle*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), p. 64.
9. Deleuze and Guattari's theory of history is laid out in "1227: Treatise on Nomadology—The War Machine" and "7000 B.C.: Apparatus of Capture", two parallel chapters of their extraordinary text *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. B. Massumi (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). The 'nomadology' contains their tribute to the memory of Pierre Clastres, the anthropologist from whose text, *Society Against the State: Essays in Political Anthropology*, trans. R. Hurley and A. Stein (New York: Zone Books, 1989), they adopt the definition of tribal societies as those which retain *anticipation-prevention* mechanisms, these coordinating reciprocal, distributive forms of ritual and exchange and thus both opening and closing the virtual limits of the group's various milieus. For tribal societies, all productivity connects the flows of the social body with those of the world-space and the time of the cosmos along lateral, immanent projections: the body of the earth. However, for the State, production flows vertically, towards the body of the Emperor and his transcendent God. The permanence of 'land' and property is constituted in a re-turned, reterritorialised projection of this transcendence: the Law. 'E ka huakina! E ka huakina! E ka tohungia! E ka tohungia!'
10. Corruption can be understood here in at least four ways: the neo-liberal promotion of individual choice (privatisation); the managed exploitation of co-operative labour; the linguistic corruption of ideology; and a complete lack of any resonance between value and being. See: M. Hardt and A. Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 201–203 & 389–392.
11. Negri is exemplary in his continued use of the term 'postmodern' when naming the present era. The global 'event' of '68 severed this era from its former, the 'modern'. See especially: A. Negri, *Time for Revolution*, p. 188; and M. Hardt and A. Negri, *Empire*, pp. 137–143.
12. I use Deleuze & Guattari's term 'smooth' with reference to the world-space of the nomadic war machine. Global Imperialism has today captured this space, by blending with it and adopting its contours, its *modus operandi*—with one aim in mind: to control and plunder, through a complex and dynamic interplay of 'territorial rootedness' (Corporatised Nation-States and tribes); diffuse and autonomous webs of communication (air-space, highways, infomatics, etc); the constant reproduction and circulation of a global market; and the 'management' of monetary and financial measure—all guaranteed by a 'supranational' force (the planetary military-industrial complex). 'In order to respond to the power of the multitude [the power of those who are māori], sovereignty extends its centre of gravity within deterritorialised horizons.' Negri, *Time for Revolution*, p. 228.
13. A. Negri, *Time for Revolution*, p. 146.
14. M. Foucault, "*Society Must Be Defended*": *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76*, trans. D. Macey (London and New York: Penguin Books, 2003), pp. 265–272.
15. As Negri states, 'There is no truth that does not derive from choosing sides, because truth is never neutral [...] Political militancy is the form through which the joy of truth and the pleasure of life are rendered accessible. Militancy develops a linguistic field that corresponds to the fullness of passions.' A. Negri, *Negri on Negri*, p.38.

16. Deleuze and Guattari put it like this: 'The race-tribe exists only at the level of an oppressed race, and in the name of oppression it suffers: there is no race but inferior, minoritarian; there is no dominant race; a race is defined not by its purity but rather by the impurity conferred upon it by a system of domination. Bastard and mixed-blood are the true names of race.' *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.379.
17. Traditionally, the Labour Party was an attempt to represent the 'mixed-blood and inferior' race i.e. those who identified as working class, the oppressed, etc. By passing the Foreshore and Seabed Act, the present government is actually displaying its socialist roots. In this sense there may be a potential for the Act to symbolically limit the Powers of both State and iwi. All the juridical debates come into play here: liberalism vs. pragmatism, Western positivist law vs. Eastern natural law, etc.
18. For a brilliant recent analysis of the formation of Marx's thought regarding democracy see: S. Kouvelakis, *Philosophy and Revolution: From Kant to Marx*, trans. G. M. Goshgarian (London and New York: Verso, 2003), especially pp. 309–311.
19. Asking the same urgent question, Mike Davis investigates the incredible situation inside megacities of Asia, Africa, South America, etc. See his 'future' report: "Planet of Slums: Urban Involution and the Informal Proletariat" (London: *New Left Review*, March/April 2004), pp. 5–34.
20. M. W. Helms, *Craft and the Kingly Ideal: Art, Trade, and Power* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993), p. 145.
21. I am following a late essay by Deleuze. Co-written with his wife Fanny Deleuze, "Nietzsche and Saint Paul, Lawrence and John of Patmos" is a vital, intimate study of D. H. Lawrence's text *Apocalypse; and the Writings on Revelation* (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1995). The essay offers a precise set of reflection-points on the problem of 'the gift' in Western thought. Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. 36–55.

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