

Declaration of Dependence: Gregory Sholette

As part of an ongoing lexicon of imaginary idioms my contribution to the prompt “Declaration of Dependence” offers a newly amalgamated term that nevertheless riffs off of the more familiar concept of commonwealth, or common weal: *a traditional English term for a political community founded for the common good.*¹

The **unCommon Weal** (modified noun + Old English | wēl | Wela’wealth) gracelessly patches together reference to an excessive jumble of sundry *underassets*—agonistic communities, interstitial spaces, trans-species alliances, indigenized tellurian holdings, dark matter operatives, shadow archives, informal gift economies, undercommons, and overlooked and undervalued forms of reproductive labor—all of which appear, if they appear at all, to be liabilities for capitalist modes of production and privatized wealth accumulation. As anthropologist Marisol de la Cadena explains with regard to something so commonplace as water: after a group of Peruvian activists established themselves as the “guardians of the lagoon” in opposition to a copper mine set on draining local waterways, it was everyday H₂O, so she asserts, that took on an *unCommon* politicized presence: “The water from these lagoons emerges as it emplaces entities and makes itself uncommon nature, or nature already occupied by local bodies and therefore unavailable for transformation into the state or the corporation’s interest if they do not coincide with those of their bodies.”² In other words, once defended and politicized, colorless, ubiquitous water reawakens within the shared space of the *unCommon Weal* as a liberated species “elusive to the kind of either/ or analyses that require ontological agreement about what is.”³

At the same time, such acts of resistance, or *unCommoning*, expose two fundamental paradoxes inherent to contemporary collectivism:

- 1) No population can be dispossessed of its collective value, wealth, or subjectivity when these very same resources have already been stripped away from them, any more than;
- 2) the affliction of the common folk—the multitude, proles, plebes, lumpen, and what have you— is such that they can not possibly declare their collective sovereignty without first embracing the very state of interchangeable commonality and prosaic redundancy whose abstract ontological condition defines them within the cold, cyclopean gaze of capital. Which is why, in light of current, globally-expanding, post-democratic circumstances, the *UnCommon Weal* materializes as a spectral presence, one whose swelling ectoplasmic tendrils and pseudopodia distend and expand with utter disregard towards institutional norms, fixed identities, and gentrifying enclosures.

By way of remedy we perform a tender act of negation that escorts our hoped-for communal *unBecoming* onwards into the *unCommon Weal*’s viscid bosom, a non-space in which the near-total hegemony of 21st century ultra-financialization does not so much wither away (if only!), as it is deliriously (though provisionally) ransacked. Ergo, (in)Dependence declares itself by way of dizzying excess.

¹ Wikipedia: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commonwealth>

² Marisol de la Cadena, “Uncommoning Nature: Stories From the Anthro-not-Seen,” a 2009 paper accessible online at: <http://www.lasisummerschool.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Uncommoning-Nature-Anthropos-and-the-Material-July-5th.pdf>

³ Ibid

