

**French Revolutionary Thought after the Paris Commune,
1871-1885**

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Philosophy

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Abstract

This thesis provides the first comprehensive account of French revolutionary thought in the years that followed the defeat of the 1871 Paris Commune, France's last nineteenth-century revolution. The Commune as an event has captivated imaginations for the past 150 years, but the same cannot be said of its participants. With the majority either dead, deported, or in exile, this period has traditionally been seen as one of intellectual stagnation and disarray. After the fleeting unity of the Commune, revolutionaries are thought to have admitted defeat, divided into groups, and drifted towards a series of prefabricated, orthodox intellectual positions.

I argue that this is not a satisfactory representation of post-Commune revolutionary thought. Revolutionary thought cannot be characterised using later neat assignations of 'left' and 'right'; 'Marxist', 'nationalist', or 'anarchist'. Drawing upon the work of thinkers and activists from across the revolutionary spectrum, I demonstrate that this was a period of intellectual fluidity and engagement, as activists experimented with a variety of ways to reconstruct a unified, credible, and autonomous French revolutionary movement. Even as they were increasingly physically and politically divided, they remained united by this commitment until well into the 1880s.

I trace this thought through a series of themes including revolutionary interactions with Marxism and new imperialism. This thesis thus also provides new perspectives on the construction of these wider doctrines, and on the political and social history of late nineteenth-century Europe more generally. Finally, by offering a fresh look at what has often been considered one of its most fundamental periods, I also seek to interrogate and revise our understanding of the revolutionary tradition itself – a concept that played a pivotal role in both political thought and practice for substantial periods of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

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Note on Translation

Quotes are provided in the text in English translation. All translations into English, unless otherwise stated, are my own. Originals are provided in the footnotes.

Where issues of translation are of particular academic importance, the original is provided in the text and an English translation in the relevant footnote.

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Introduction

Following the defeat of the Paris Commune in late May 1871, its participants and supporters were frequently moved to declare that while ‘le cadavre est à terre...l'idée est debout’: ‘the body may have fallen, but the idea still stands’ [IMG 1].¹ Historians, political commentators, and world leaders alike have advanced their own interpretations of the events of spring 1871 since the last shots were fired. What precisely Communards believed this idea to be, however, has never been clear. This thesis addresses itself to this question. Through an exploration of the nature and content of French revolutionary thought from the years immediately following the Commune’s fall, it demonstrates that this idea was not a specific policy or doctrine. Rather, by extensively redefining familiar concepts and using their circumstances creatively, it was the idea of a distinct, united, and politically viable French revolutionary movement that activists sought to preserve. The relative success of these efforts, furthermore, has significant implications for the ways in which scholars understand both the founding years of the French Third Republic and the nature of the modern revolutionary tradition.

In the small hours of 18 March 1871, troops from the French Army marched into Paris. Their objective was the removal of a number of cannons that had formed part of the capital’s defence during the four-month long Siege of Paris that brought to an end the Franco Prussian War. News of the soldiers’ early morning arrival spread quickly through the working-class districts of Belleville, Buttes-Chaumont, and Montmartre where the artillery was being stored. Still aggrieved by the city’s treatment at the hands of the Prussians and the French government during the war and subsequent peace negotiations, angry residents and *fédérés* from the National Guard poured out into the streets. Pleas for calm fell on deaf ears, and before long the military operation had precipitated an armed revolt. By the end of the day, two generals lay dead, rebels had

¹ See for example the cover of P.-O. Lissagaray, *Les huit journées de mai derrière les barricades* (Brussels: Au bureau du *Petit journal*, 1871); Pilotell, ‘La Commune de Paris: le cadavre est à terre et l'idée est debout (Victor Hugo)’ (1871. Musée Carnavalet, Paris); *La Bataille* (Paris), 19 March 1885. This is also the motto of the *Association des Amis et Amis de la Commune de Paris 1871*. The phrase was originally Victor Hugo’s. See V. Hugo, *La voix de Guernesey* (Guernsey: Imprimerie T.-M. Bichard, 1867), p.14.

assumed control of key strategic buildings in the city, and what remained of the army had beaten a hasty retreat to Versailles with the government hot on its heels.

For the next two months, Paris ruled itself as a revolutionary commune. It swiftly held municipal elections, passed legislation, and waged war against the national government. This situation came to an end on 21 May 1871 when the French Army re-entered Paris, commencing a week of street battles that quickly came to be known as the *Semaine Sanglante*.² As the army overcame the Communards one street and one barricade at a time, the capital went up in flames around them; the City of Light now a city on fire. Fleeing revolutionaries killed a number of hostages including the Archbishop of Paris, while the advancing troops were liable to shoot anyone they suspected of participation in the Commune.³ By the time the final Communards were defeated on 28 May amidst the graves of Père-Lachaise cemetery, thousands had been killed – the vast majority revolutionaries⁴ – in what Robert Tombs has termed ‘the worst violence committed against civilians in Europe between the French and Russian Revolutions’.⁵

In the weeks, months, and years that followed, the war against the Commune did not dissipate, but merely changed form. In the immediate aftermath, 40,000 people were arrested and marched to holding camps in and around Versailles, where hundreds died as a result of the poor conditions.⁶ Over the next five years, thousands of prisoners were tried for crimes of varying gravity by a series of specially created *conseils de guerre*. Ninety-five were sentenced to death (although only twenty-three were executed⁷) and a further 4500 deported to New Caledonia, a French penal colony in the South Pacific.⁸ While the courts martial dispensed death and justice to the Communards, the rattled Assemblée Nationale set about ensuring that the events of spring 1871 would not and could not be repeated. It swiftly introduced legal restrictions upon revolutionaries’ principal means of communication – the press and association – and left the state of siege in place in Paris and other parts of France until 1876. The defeat of the Commune, they hoped and

² For more on the genesis of this narrative see Chapter One, as well as A. Dowdall, ‘Narrating *la Semaine Sanglante*, 1871-1880’ (unpublished MPhil thesis, University of Cambridge, 2010).

³ R.P. Tombs, *Paris, bivouac des révolutions: La Commune de 1871* (trans.) J. Chatroussat (Paris: Éditions Libertalia, 2014. First published in English, 1999), p.357.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.361.

⁵ ‘la pire violence contre les des civils en Europe entre la Révolution française et la révolution russe’. *Ibid.*, p.360.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.362.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.363.

⁸ For a more in depth discussion of deportee numbers and demographics, see Chapter Four.

claimed, was more than simply the defeat of *a* revolution: it brought to a definitive close the era of modern European revolutions begun in 1789.

Revolutionaries escaping immediate death or arrest in May 1871 fled France in a mass exodus. Where previously the majority of revolutionaries had been concentrated in Paris, they now found themselves defeated, depleted, and scattered across the globe [IMG 2]. Approximately 1500 headed for Belgium, while the same number followed in the footsteps of their *quarante-huitard* predecessors and made for Britain and Jersey. A further 750 settled in Switzerland, predominantly in and around French-speaking Geneva.⁹ Smaller numbers headed west to the United States, while several individuals travelled as far afield as China and Sudan. It was not until the Opportunist Republican government reluctantly granted a full amnesty in July 1880 that the surviving exiles and deportees were able to return freely to France.

The Paris Commune has captured imaginations for almost 150 years. Mindful of Karl Marx's claim that 1871 represented 'the glorious harbinger of a new society',¹⁰ communist world leaders and activists during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries rushed to associated themselves with the Commune. Lenin's body was famously shrouded in a Communard flag, while various Chinese theorists including Mao claimed the Commune was their social inspiration during the Cultural Revolution.¹¹ Commentators on the right, meanwhile, have been equally eager to engage with the Commune in an effort to disinvest such a celebrated socialist symbol of its power and heuristic value.¹²

After a brief lull in popularity following the end of the Cold War, the Commune has recently been experiencing something of a cultural renaissance. In 2009, it was reborn as an altogether different kind of symbol in the form of the French clothing and

⁹ Dowdall, 'Narrating *la Semaine Sanglante*', p.12. For contemporary estimates of numbers in Geneva, see Intelligence report to the Préfecture de Police, 30 November 1873. Archives de la Préfecture de Police (APP) Ba431/891. For contemporary estimates of refugees in Britain and Jersey, see 'Les réfugiés à Londres' (1876). APP Ba429/1346.

¹⁰ K. Marx, *The Civil War in France* (London: Martin Lawrence Ltd, 1933. First published, 1871), p.34.

¹¹ The Shanghai People's Commune of 1967 was explicitly modelled on the Paris Commune. For more on the Paris Commune in Chinese thought, see J.B. Starr, *Continuing the Revolution: The Political Thought of Mao* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015. First published, 1979), pp.188-201; Y. Wu, *The Cultural Revolution at the Margins: Chinese Socialism in Crisis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), p.192. See also V.I. Lenin, *The Paris Commune* (London: Martin Lawrence, 1931); G. Kozintsez and L. Trauberg (dirs.), *Новый Вавилон* (The New Babylon) (1929).

¹² See for example E.S. Mason, *The Paris Commune: An Episode in the History of the Socialist Movement* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1930).

lifestyle brand Commune de Paris 1871, which draws inspiration from the imagery of 1871 and names its products after dead revolutionaries.¹³ This development has in turn recently sparked an aggrieved call to arms demanding that the Commune not be left to ‘rich *bobo* hipsters’ pricing ‘the revolutionary experience’ at €150.¹⁴ Whether as a major turning point in modern revolutionary history or the aesthetic inspiration for moderately priced shirts and watches, the Paris Commune has always possessed the power to spark admiration and debate. Indeed, it is one of the most abiding symbols of modern global social and political history.

The Commune has also proved perennially academically popular. 1871 has attracted the passing interest of numerous distinguished scholars eager to interpret its social significance, from CLR James to Henri Lefebvre, while others such as Jacques Rougerie have devoted their careers to chronicling its events and aftermath.¹⁵ Much of this attention undoubtedly resulted from the Commune’s political significance, yet academic interest in the Commune cannot simply be explained away as the result of Cold War mentalities. Unlike the political attention it once received, academic interest in the Commune has not waned since the 1980s.¹⁶ The 2014 publication of John Merriman’s *Massacre: The Life and Death of the Paris Commune* and the recent success of Tombs’s *Paris, bivouac des révolutions: la Commune de 1871* is testament to the attention that it continues to

¹³ <https://www.communedeparis1871.fr/fr> [last accessed 25 May 2015].

¹⁴ ‘bobos-hipsters fortunés’. ‘Ne laissons pas la Commune de Paris aux hipsters!’ <http://www.poisson-rouge.info/2015/06/02/ne-laissons-pas-la-commune-de-paris-aux-hipsters/> [last accessed 7 September 2015].

¹⁵ See for example C.L.R. James, ‘The showed the way to labor emancipation: on Karl Marx and the 75th anniversary of the Paris Commune’, *Labor Action* 10 (18 March 1946); H. Lefebvre, *La proclamation de la Commune, 26 Mars 1871* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965); E. Schulkind, *The Paris Commune of 1871* (London: The Historical Association, 1971); E. Kamenka, *Paradigm for Revolution? The Paris Commune 1871-1971* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1972); *Colloque universitaire pour la commémoration du centenaire de la Commune de 1871: Le mouvement social* 79 (April-June 1972). For Rougerie, see J. Rougerie, *Procès des Communards* (Paris: Julliard, 1964); J. Rougerie, *Paris libre 1871* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1971); J. Rougerie, *1871: jalons pour une histoire de la Commune de 1871* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1973); J. Rougerie, *La Commune 1871* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1988); J. Rougerie, *Paris insurgé: la Commune de 1871* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995).

¹⁶ For work from the late twentieth century, see for example R. Bellet and P. Régner (eds.), *Écrire la Commune: témoignages, récits et romans (1871-1931)* (Tusson: Du Lérot, 1994); A. Boime, *Art and the French Commune: Imagining Paris after War and Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); M.P. Johnson, *The Paradise of Association: Political Culture and Popular Organisations in the Paris Commune of 1871* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996); M.P. Johnson, ‘Memory and the cult of revolution in the 1871 Paris Commune’, *Journal of Women’s History* 9 (1997), 39-57; R.P. Tombs, *The Paris Commune, 1871* (London: Longman, 1999).

command in both Anglophone and Francophone circles.¹⁷ While its power may have waned since 1989, the Commune's allure remains as strong as ever.

In the long historiographical shadows cast by the Commune, however, its participants and supporters have been somewhat lost. Much of 1871's posthumous political utility derived from its violent end, and particularly the staggering estimates of 20,000 or more dead that quickly emerged and gained traction after the Commune's fall. For its critics, as for the French government in 1871, death on such a scale signified the finality of revolution's defeat. For the likes of Marx, Lenin, and Mao, meanwhile, it was amidst the flames and sacrifice of the *Semaine Sanglante* that a new era of revolution was born. In these interpretations, the Communards have accordingly been characterised primarily as dead bodies and mortality statistics rather than historical actors with agency and ideas.

Historians of the Commune have paid more attention to revolutionaries' fates in the wake of its fall. In *Procès des Communards* Rougerie extensively detailed the trials that followed the Commune,¹⁸ while others have traced its participants into exile and deportee life in New Caledonia,¹⁹ and Colette Wilson, Albert Boime, and JM Przyblyski have examined the fate of revolutionary Paris in the 1870s.²⁰ Yet while this work is extremely fruitful and undoubtedly more nuanced, like political uses of the Commune, it has focused on failure and finality. Whether in the form of the scale and creativity of the

¹⁷ J. Merriman, *Massacre: The Life and Death of the Paris Commune of 1871* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014); Tombs, *Paris, bivouac des révolutions*. For other recent work, see G. Larguier and J. Quaretti (eds.), *La Commune de 1871: utopie ou modernité?* (Perpignan: Presses universitaires de Perpignan, 2000); C. Latta (ed.), *La Commune de 1871: l'événement, les hommes et la mémoire* (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne, 2004); D. Shafer, *The Paris Commune: French Politics, Culture, and Society at the Crossroads of the Revolutionary Tradition and Revolutionary Socialism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); P. Starr, *Commemorating Trauma: The Paris Commune and its Cultural Aftermath* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006); R.P. Tombs, 'How bloody was *la semaine sanglante* of 1871? A revision', *The Historical Journal* 55 (September 2012), 679-704; J.-C. Caron, *Paris, l'insurrection capital* (Seysssel: Champ Vallon, 2015).

¹⁸ J. Rougerie, *Procès des Communards* (Paris: Julliard, 1964).

¹⁹ For New Caledonia, see J. Baronnet and J. Chalou, *Communards en Nouvelle-Calédonie: Histoire de la déportation* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1987); G. Mailhé, *Déportations en Nouvelle-Calédonie des communards et des révoltés de la grande Kabylie (1872-1876)* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1994); A. Bullard, *Exile to Paradise: Savagery and Civilization in Paris and the South Pacific, 1790-1900* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000). For exile, see P.K. Martinez, 'Paris Commune refugees in Britain, 1871-1880' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Sussex, 1981); Tombs, *Paris, bivouac des révolutions*, pp.365-366.

²⁰ C.E. Wilson, *Paris and the Commune 1871-78: The Politics of Forgetting* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007); J.M. Przyblyski, 'Revolution at a standstill: photography and the Paris Commune of 1871', *Yale French Studies* 101 (2001), 54-78; A. Boime, *Art and the French Commune: Imagining Paris after War and Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995). See also J.T. Joughin, *The Paris Commune in French Politics, 1871-1880*, 2 vols. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1955).

State's repression, the penury and dislocation of life outside of France, or the unlikely employment exiles found in order to survive, the conclusions reached about life after 1871 have remained essentially the same. In all interpretations, the Commune has been characterised as a watershed defeat that severely damaged, if not put a decisive end to revolutionaries' political ideas and careers. Their political careers and ideas, in other words, have been folded into the history of the event.

The broader literature on France in the years after 1871 has further reinforced the perception of the Commune as the end of revolutionary relevance. French historians such as Claude Nicolet, François Furet, and Mona Ozouf traditionally characterised 1870-1885 as a period in which revolution, Bonapartism, and monarchism were successfully eliminated from French political life as a result of the Opportunist Republicans' rise to power and the legislative reforms they enacted between 1880 and 1885.²¹ More recently scholars have sought to complicate these classic accounts of Republican *enracinement*, yet revolutionaries have nonetheless remained largely absent from their work.²² Whether a victory for a new brand of Republicans or a more lengthy and complex process, work on French politics has overwhelmingly characterised the early Third Republic as a period in which moderate politics and ideas broadly defined became increasingly entrenched, confident, and popular. While revolutionaries may have continued to exist after the Commune, they were of little significance to France or French politics. This consensus has in turn indirectly reinforced the perception that revolution and revolutionaries simply disappeared after 1871.

These revolutionaries have not, however, been entirely written out of history. Since the 1970s, historians have produced a string of biographies and intellectual biographies of notable figures such as Paul Lafargue, Paul Brousse, and Louis-Auguste Blanqui, which provide valuable, if partial insights into the state of revolutionary activism

²¹ C. Nicolet, *L'Idée républicaine en France (1789-1924)* 2nd edn (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1994. First published, 1982), p.472; F. Furet, *La Révolution de Turgot à Jules Ferry* (Paris: Hachette, 1988); F. Furet and M. Ozouf (eds.), *Le siècle de l'avènement républicain* (Paris: Gallimard, 1993).

²² See for example P. Nord, *The Republican Moment: Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); S. Hazareesingh, *Intellectual Founders of the Republic: Five Studies in Nineteenth-Century French Republican Political Thought* 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. First published, 2001); P. Rosanvallon, *The Demands of Liberty: Civil Society in France since the Revolution* (trans.) A. Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007. First published in French, 2004); C. Gaboriaux, *La République en quête des citoyens: les républicains français face au bonapartisme rural (1848-1880)* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 2010).

after the Commune.²³ Ex-Communards have also featured prominently in work on broader movements and intellectual trends. Michel Cordillot, for example, has recently detailed Communard exiles' involvement in the International Workingmen's Association, while Zeev Sternhell and Emmanuel Jousse have located the origins of French fascism and reformist socialism respectively in the 1870s and 1880s.²⁴ Unlike other bodies of literature, these studies have focused not on the devastation caused by the Commune, but on revolutionaries' attempts to bounce back from it through the adoption of new ideas and ideologies such as Marxism and public service socialism.

This attention is undoubtedly welcome, yet the complexities of the 1870s and 1880s have often been lost in the long chronological reach of such studies. While they ostensibly deal with this period, much of this work has focused primarily upon explaining the genesis either of individuals' more 'mature' thought or later events and organisations, from the Boulanger and Dreyfus Affairs to the Second International, and even the First World War. Indeed, this inclination can be glimpsed in historians' tendency project the (as yet unheard of) appellations and groupings of later years – 'reformist socialism', 'the revolutionary right' – back onto this period. While the 1870s and 1880s are often fulsomely discussed, then, these years have been treated primarily as a stepping-stone, and insights into them are few. Where elsewhere this period and these revolutionaries have been overshadowed by 1871, in this literature they have often been eclipsed by the more attention-grabbing and immediately relevant events and ideas of 1889 and beyond.

From these diverse bodies of literature, a clear portrait of the immediate post-Commune period and revolutionaries' place in it emerges. The Commune marked a definitive break, after which old revolutionary ideas and associations lost their potency. While French politics, society, and government were remade without revolution, the vanquished of 1871 were relegated – physically and intellectually – to the sidelines.

²³ S. Bernstein, *Auguste Blanqui and the Art of Insurrection* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971); M. Dommanget, *Auguste Blanqui au début du IIIe République (1871-1880): dernière prison et ultimes combats* (Paris: Mouton, 1971); D. Stafford, *From Anarchism to Reformism: A study of the Political Activities of Paul Brousse within the First International and the French Socialist Movement 1870-90* (London: Cox & Wyman, 1971); L. Derfler, *Paul Lafargue and the Founding of French Marxism 1842-1882* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991); C. Willard, *Jules Guesde, l'apôtre et la loi* (Paris: Éditions ouvrières, 1991); K.S. Vincent, *Between Marxism and Anarchism: Benoît Malon and French Reformist Socialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); L. Derfler, *Paul Lafargue and the Flowering of French Socialism, 1882-1911* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998);

²⁴ M. Cordillot, *Aux origines du socialisme moderne: La Première Internationale, la Commune de Paris, l'exil* (Paris: Éditions de l'Atelier, 2010); Z. Sternhell, *La droite révolutionnaire 1885-1914: les origines françaises du fascisme* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1978); E. Jousse, 'La construction intellectuelle du socialisme réformiste en France, de la Commune à la Grande Guerre' (unpublished PhD thesis, Sciences-Po, 2013).

Revolutionaries with any hope of remaining politically relevant were forced to change considerably, abandoning their previous ideas and drifting towards a series of prefabricated intellectual orthodoxies such as Marxian socialism or more moderate republicanism. Certainly, they had few distinct ideas of their own. Intellectually and politically, it is suggested, the 1870s and 1880s was a fallow holding period suspended between momentous events, characterised primarily by intellectual stagnation and injurious factional infighting.

The French government's initial characterisation of the Commune as the end of revolution, in other words, has been surprisingly durable. Recently, however, historians have begun to chip away at this portrayal. Revising his earlier work in 2012, Tombs offered a reinterpretation of the *Semaine Sanglante* in which substantially fewer revolutionaries were killed and 48 of the Commune's 53-strong government escaped unharmed.²⁵ A new generation of French historians has also played a leading role in these efforts. Laure Godineau, for example, has assessed the impact of the return of Communard exiles to France at the beginning of the 1880s,²⁶ while in *La Commune n'est pas morte* Éric Fournier cast a critical gaze over the subsequent political uses of 1871, transforming the Commune from a vehicle for predicting future events into a prism through which to study modern history.²⁷ In these interpretations the Commune was not a fork in the road, but rather 'a roundabout, where different temporalities crossed and overlapped'.²⁸

It is this body of historiography that this study seeks to place itself within and build upon. While Godineau, Tombs, and others have dealt extensively with revolutionaries' physical and practical circumstances, their ideas are still unexamined. In fact, there remains more on the right's ideas on revolution than those of revolutionary

²⁵ R.P. Tombs, 'How bloody was *la semaine Sanglante* of 1871? A revision', *The Historical Journal* 55 (September 2012), 679-702, at p.702.

²⁶ L. Godineau, 'Retour d'exil: les anciens Communards au début de la Troisième République' (unpublished PhD thesis, Université de Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2000). See also P.K. Martinez, 'Paris Communard refugees in Britain, 1871-1880' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Sussex, 1981).

²⁷ É. Fournier, *La Commune n'est pas morte: les usages politiques du passé de 1871 à nos jours* (Paris: Éditions Libertalia, 2013).

²⁸ 'un carrefour où s'entrecroisent et se chevauchent différentes temporalités'. Tombs, *Paris, bivouac des révolutions*, p.417.

activists themselves.²⁹ This thesis addresses this historiographical gap. It asks not just where revolutionaries went in 1871 or what they did, but also what they thought.

Revolutionaries are here defined as activists that either took part in the Commune or expressed strong affinities with it after its fall. This encompasses the groups of activists often described as French Marxists,³⁰ Possibilists or federalist socialists,³¹ and Blanquists.³² It also includes a variety of more independent theorists such as Élisée Reclus and Gustave Lefrançais, as well as others that occupied the boundaries between revolutionary and radical thought like Arthur Arnould and Charles Longuet, and numerous anonymous journalists and pamphleteers. The likes of Georges Clemenceau, Camille Pelletan, and Victor Hugo were horrified by the *Semaine Sanglante* and frequently attempted to intercede on its participants' behalf, yet they also systematically distanced themselves from its ideas and actions. Thus while this study deals with them insofar as they influence or interacted with revolutionaries, it does not consider them as principal actors.

Through a comprehensive examination of these figures and their work, it shall become clear that the 1870s and 1880s were far from a barren intellectual wasteland dominated by the events of 1871 and 1889. Although isolated from France and everything they had previously been used to, revolutionaries were neither intellectually defeated by their physical defeat, nor overwhelmed by the situations they found themselves in. Rather, they accepted their circumstances and even attempted to turn them to their advantage. Whether in New Caledonia, America, or Europe, revolutionaries attempted to use the 1870s productively, meeting various international radical and revolutionary figures from Marx and Mikhail Bakunin to Algerians involved in the 1871 Kabyle Rebellion, and forging new alliances that they would carry back with them to France in the early 1880s. While the Commune may have prompted a distinct drop in revolutionary activity in France in other words, the ideas kept coming.

It was not only individual revolutionaries that survived the fall of the Commune, however, but also the idea of the revolutionary movement. While French activists voraciously sought out new ideas and alliances during this period, they did not do so in search of access to prefabricated orthodoxies. Neither were they willing to subjugate

²⁹ P. Lidsky, *Les écrivains contre la Commune* (Paris: Maspero, 1970); J.M. Roberts, 'The Paris Commune from the Right', *English Historical Review*, supplement 6 (1973); A. Dowdall, 'Narrating la Semaine Sanglante' (unpublished MPhil thesis, University of Cambridge, 2010).

³⁰ For example Jules Guesde, Paul Lafargue, and Gabrielle Deville.

³¹ Including Paul Brousse, Benoît Malon, and Jean Allemane.

³² Such as Henri Rochefort, Louise Michel, and of course Louis-Auguste Blanqui himself.

themselves to intellectual frameworks of other people's making. Rather, their primary objective remained the preservation of a French revolutionary movement that was at once unified, autonomous, and politically viable. The Commune was thus more than simply an historical roundabout at which different ideas and temporalities overlapped, crossed, and moved on. In addition, the brief unity that it engendered continued to provide inspiration for revolutionary theorists well into the Third Republic. Although activists frequently differed, clashed, and changed their minds as to what precisely a unified and viable revolutionary movement constituted and how to achieve it, they nonetheless remained steadfast and united in their desire to do so.

Revolutionaries pursued this aim primarily through the redefinition of words and concepts with which French audiences were already conversant. Activists drew extensively upon new work including Marx's thought on factory labour and Élisée Reclus's new universal geography, as well as experiences such as deportee life in New Caledonia to invest familiar terms such as universal equality, the right to work, and most importantly revolution itself with new meanings more attuned to the present circumstances. In doing so, revolutionaries in the post-Commune period hoped to demonstrate their intellectual flexibility and thus continued political viability, whilst simultaneously maintaining their connections to and reconstituting their historical identity. It is for these reasons that a serious history of their ideas matters. While social, political, and cultural histories have demonstrated that these revolutionaries remained active in French and international politics following the fall of the Commune, it is only with an intellectual history that we can understand why they remained so committed to their historical identity, what precisely it constituted, and how they managed to preserve its relevance.

The end date of December 1885 reflects this revised interpretation. It is a central claim of this thesis that in order to properly understand and appreciate the revolutionary thought of the immediate post-Commune period, we must dispense with the formulations of the late 1880s. Revolutionary thought in the years following the Commune bore little to no resemblance to the more clearly defined socialisms and nationalisms of the Second International, the Boulanger Affair, and beyond. 1885 has been selected to coincide with the French legislative and presidential elections of that year, as well as several important occurrences in Asia and Africa such as the Tonkin Affair and the suspicious death of the French revolutionary Olivier Pain, and incremental leadership changes within international socialism. Although I do not consider any of

these individual events synonymous with radical intellectual change, collectively they mark a considerably more apposite end than 1889.

The sources required for such a study are nominally abundant, but often surprisingly difficult to come by. Much revolutionary correspondence during this period was destroyed immediately after reading, but even surviving material is often difficult to find. Barring the Lucien Descaves collection held in Amsterdam's International Institute of Social History few exhaustive or even substantial archives exist. More abundant printed sources, which were often produced cheaply on poor quality paper, have deteriorated substantially over time. As a result, many valuable titles have been lost, while others such as the important Blanquist exile newspaper *La Fédération* have deteriorated to such an extent that they can no longer be viewed. Even as scholarly interest in the subject matter rises, the sources render sustained study increasingly challenging.

In an effort to counteract such difficulties, this thesis has cast an extremely wide net. It draws upon printed and manuscript sources – some previously unstudied – authored by diverse French revolutionaries and their allies primarily from the 1870s to the late 1880s. These include the archives of international organisations to which many French activists belonged, including the International Workingmen's Association and the Jura Federation; the political programmes of parties such as the *Fédération des travailleurs socialistes de France* and the *Parti ouvrier français*; and a diverse array of books, pamphlets, and almanachs. Originally produced in Europe, North America, and Oceania, these sources are now housed in various libraries and archives across Europe including the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris, and the Bibliothèque de Genève. Although this thesis focuses upon the years 1871-1885, in an effort to satisfactorily contextualise revolutionaries' thoughts and actions during this period, where relevant it draws upon sources produced anywhere between the 1840s and 1890s.

Two specific bodies of sources play particularly important roles in this study. The archives of the Parisian *préfecture de police* have proved extremely useful. Despite the scale of the Communards' defeat, French officials (particularly under the Moral Order governments of the 1870s) continued to fear their influence and frequently tasked police spies with infiltrating revolutionary circles. These informants produced a wealth of material including detailed reports on political meetings and commemorations.³³ Wary of

³³ See for example 'Les réfugiés à Londres' (1876). APP Ba429/1346.App Ba429/2313.

precisely such surveillance activists themselves rarely kept records of these meetings, and the official reports are thus the only window onto the quotidian lives of activists during this period and the ways in which ideas were privately discussed and formed. While of course these sources reflect official paranoia and preoccupations as much as they do revolutionaries' ideas, they nonetheless provide invaluable insights into otherwise inaccessible areas of revolutionary life.

Newspapers formed the crux of French revolutionary intellectual life during this period. Activists from all six corners of France and across the ideological spectrum poured their attention and their funds into producing papers, while editors constantly sang their praises.³⁴ Dailies and weeklies were widely acknowledged to be revolutionaries' principal means of communication. In 1882, for example, Friedrich Engels observed to Edouard Bernstein that '[i]n Paris...if one wants to influence the masses one must have a daily'.³⁵ Yet it was also in the pages of newspapers that ideas (many of which would later be published as books or pamphlets) were first articulated, debated, and formulated. The correspondence sections of larger titles, meanwhile, offered even obscure activists the opportunity to air their opinions. Newspapers were not simply a vehicle for dissemination, but rather a public service circulating ideas and connecting activists: the physical manifestation revolutionaries' intellectual aims. As such, newspapers afford access to the ideas of a wide variety of revolutionaries, rather than simply those of the movement's leaders.

Close attention to both the form and the content of their newspapers is therefore vital to understanding the nature of French revolutionary thought during this period. This thesis draws upon a wide variety. The major Parisian daily papers of the 1880s including *L'Égalité*, *Le Prolétaire*, *Le Citoyen*, *L'Intransigeant*, and *La Bataille* plus titles published outside of Paris such as Malon's *Émancipation* and Jules Vallès's *Cri du peuple* provide invaluable insight into some of the revolutionary movement's key ideas as well as their complicated relationships with French politics and with each other. Exile newspapers such as *La Fédération*, *Le Travailleur*, and *Qui vive* elaborate the nature of revolutionary thought during the 1870s as well as ex-Communards' interaction and collaboration with foreign activists such as Vera Zasulich, James Guillaume, Mikhail Bakunin, and Karl Marx. Finally in order to gain further perspective upon these, I have

³⁴ See for example 'Les journaux ouvriers', *Le Prolétaire*, 27 December 1879.

³⁵ 197: F. Engels to E. Bernstein (4 November 1882, London), in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Marx/Engels Collected Works* (trans.) R. Dixon et al., 50 vols (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975-2004), vol.46, 359-363, at p.361.

also examined a number of more mainstream contemporary titles, several prominent revolutionary publications from the 1860s such as Rochefort's *La Lanterne*, and around forty ephemeral newspapers published during the Commune.

The thesis is divided into four chapters, each of which has a triple purpose. Firstly, the chapters all explore themes or subjects that were prominent in revolutionary thought during this period: the Commune, revolution, Marxism, and empire. These themes also represent the 'crises' that supposedly put an end to the revolutionary movement: the defeat of the Commune, the rise of the Third Republic and the consequent unfeasibility of traditional revolutionary action, the increasing prominence of Marxian international socialism, and deportation and exile. Finally, the chapters may also be seen as a series of concentric circles, radiating progressively outwards to cover all of the contexts in which revolutionaries thought and operated. The first deals with the fallout of largely Parisian events, the second with the supposedly national character of revolution, the third with revolutionary involvement in (largely) European socialist organisations, and the fourth with the wider world.

While not an exhaustive encyclopaedia of all the subjects they covered, this approach enables us to better explore the forms, contexts, and languages that characterised revolutionary thought during this period. This in turn provides a much clearer picture of the shifting shape of revolutionaries' ideas and alliances, strengths and weaknesses, and successes and failures, as well as their complex interactions with French politicians, the French public, and the international revolutionary movement. Perhaps most notably, this study does not deal with republicanism or the rise of the Third Republic in a discrete chapter. This is not because it considers them to have been unimportant, but rather because it considers all revolutionary thought to have been an interaction with the Third Republic. While revolutionaries frequently referred to themselves as republicans, meanwhile, they rarely discussed or dwelled upon precisely what it meant to be a republican. This point shall be returned to in the conclusion.

Chapter One examines the defeat of the Commune and revolutionary reactions to it. Through the examination of a wide range of revolutionary work on the Commune from the period immediately after its fall, it establishes that its surviving participants were neither crushed by the events of 1871 nor often considered it a significant defeat of their ideas. Through accounts of both its tenure of power and its violent end, revolutionaries attempted to simultaneously counteract the widespread image of the Communards as lawless barbarians and repurpose their defeat as a unifying experience.

Far from attempting to forget about the Commune, revolutionaries embraced it, creatively using its memory to navigate the new circumstances in which they found themselves and to establish a foundation upon which to rebuild the idea and image of a unified French revolutionary movement that was at once autonomous and politically viable. This work cannot be classified in terms of neat later categories such as ‘left’ and ‘right’, or even those frequently used during the period such as ‘socialist’, ‘anarchist’, or ‘nationalist’. As well as the revolutionary movement’s survival, accounts of the Commune are thus also indicative of its participants’ intellectual heterogeneity.

The next three chapters delve further into the content, character, and contexts of this thought. Chapter Two asks what precisely it meant to be a French revolutionary during this period. With the failure and repression of the Commune, and the accession to power several years later of the actively reforming Opportunist republicans, traditional revolutionary action became increasingly unlikely and unpopular over the course of this period. It is therefore tempting to assume that activists’ vaunted revolutionary unity was based upon little more than memories.

This chapter demonstrates that this was not the case. Rather, using a variety of different languages and temporalities, activists from across the revolutionary movement including supposed ‘traditionalists’ such as Blanqui attempted to redefine revolution in broad, expansive terms more attuned to the political, social, and cultural circumstances of early Third Republic France. While these attempts met with mixed success, they nevertheless demonstrate that both activists and other sections of the French population continued to believe that revolution was an active and potentially viable concept.

Using the example of Marxism, Chapter Three addresses the suggestion that revolutionary thought during this period was irreparably divided along factional, ideological lines. It shows that Marx and Marx’s thought were both far more prevalent and used more reflexively than the acrimonious social and organisational history of French revolutionary socialism may suggest. Neither Marx nor his thought was the exclusive intellectual property of the self-proclaimed French Marxists. Rather, they were creatively and concurrently used by a wide variety of French revolutionaries to discuss pressing social problems, and to reinforce their marginal, revolutionary credentials in French politics. While bitter personal and political divisions certainly existed within the movement, at the same time revolutionaries noticeably struggled to ensure that it was not defined or consumed by them.

Revolutionaries, moreover, did not simply import a clearly defined ‘Marxism’ into

French thought. Early French Marxism was not a distortion or a misunderstanding of an authentic original, but rather a nuanced variation upon a theme. As this chapter demonstrates, Marx himself, in the various abridgements and French translations of his work that he oversaw, went to considerable efforts to adjust his arguments to what he thought the French might like to hear. It was thus not only French thought that was flexible, creative, and collaborative during this period, but that of the international socialist movement more generally. French revolutionaries could not be divided along hard ideological lines, for no such intellectual orthodoxies existed.

Finally, Chapter Four places this thought within a global context. French revolutionaries had always seen their ideas as universally applicable. This took on new resonance during the 1870s and 1880s, though, as thousands of revolutionaries were deported to the South Pacific and the French State began to approach imperial ventures with increasing enthusiasm and moral certainty. A purely national or continental treatment of French revolutionary thought would therefore fail to capture the multiple spheres in which these activists saw themselves as operating.

The chapter delineates the ways in which activists both in Europe and in New Caledonia thought about and interacted with issues concerning the wider world during this period. Such issues, furthermore, were more than simply prevalent and prominent in French revolutionary thought: they occupied a position of vital importance. The diverse ways in which activists dealt with these concerns served variously to demarcate the boundaries and highlight the possibilities of supposedly universal ideas such as equality, fraternity, and revolution which, as we shall see, were central to revolutionary thought during this period.

This study has three principal aims. Firstly, it intends to begin to piece together the nature and content of French revolutionary thought in the years that immediately followed the fall of the Commune. This shall provide us with a richer and more comprehensive account of how and why both revolutionary activists and the idea of a unified revolutionary movement continued to influence French politics for years after the prospect of traditional revolutionary action had disappeared. Secondly, in the process of delineating these imbrications, it hopes to revise the characterisation of the 1870s and early 1880s as a period in which both French and wider European politics became increasingly moderate and homogenous. Finally, through re-examining the thought of one of the founding moments of the modern revolutionary tradition, I aim to interrogate and provide a new perspective on a form, or forms, of politics that has played

a pivotal role in Western political thought and practice for substantial periods of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

While the Paris Commune may have been defeated in May 1871, the French revolutionary movement did not simply collapse and disappear along with it. Neither did its erstwhile members disband and drift towards a series of prefabricated political and intellectual orthodoxies. Rather, the years that immediately followed the Commune's defeat were a far more creative moment than has previously been suggested. Activists spent the 1870s and early 1880s working hard to reconstruct the idea of a French revolutionary movement capable of being at once united, autonomous, and politically viable. This was achieved largely through the creative use of both new ideas and their new circumstances to redefine revolution and what it meant to be a revolutionary. The continued visibility and survival of French revolution, in other words, was ensured at least for a time through intellectual flexibility rather than deference to staid traditions or rigid doctrines.

Chapter One: Thanks for the memories

On the edges of Père-Lachaise cemetery in Paris, the Mur des Fédérés stands as a permanent monument to the revolutionaries who lost their lives during the Paris Commune of 1871. Facing the wall are the graves of various *fin-de-siècle* activists and politicians, their commitment to the Commune immortalised in strategically placed stone. Some such as Gustave Lefrançais and Benoît Malon, had taken an active part in the Commune. Many, like Paul and Laura Lafargue, had not. In the years following the Commune's fall, activists and writers such as Malon, Lefrançais, and the Lafargues would come to enjoy success within both revolutionary and national political arenas. The Commune had been a definitive political failure, defeated in little over two months, but clearly it remained of paramount importance for both its participants and observers alike. It was with this event, this failure, that they wished to be associated in perpetuity.

This singular attachment to the Commune continued well into the twentieth century. While for a weary *Mouvement social* in 1974 the Commune remained 'indéchiffrable', others were far more certain of their allegiance.¹ More than 50,000 people took part in the centenary demonstrations of May 1971,² and the year was marked by both an attempt to blow up the tomb of Adolphe Thiers, *chef du pouvoir exécutif* during the Commune,³ and memorial services for Georges Darboy, the Archbishop of Paris executed by Communards in May 1871.⁴ The political circumstances of the late twentieth century heightened these strong opinions, namely the dichotomous ideologies of American capitalism and Soviet communism ushered in by the 1917 Russian Revolution and brought to a head during the Cold War. Following in the textual footsteps of Karl Marx, communist leaders such as Vladimir Lenin and Mao Zedong heralded the Commune as 'the glorious harbinger of a new society'.⁵ Meanwhile,

¹ J. Estèbe, 'Le centenaire de la Commune par le livre', in *Le Mouvement sociale* 86 (January-March 1974), 89-112, at p.89. See also *Paris match* 1142 (Paris), 27 March 1971.

² *Paris jour* (Paris), 24 May 1971.

³ *L'Aurore* (Paris), 26 June 1971.

⁴ *France soir*, 3 November 1971; *L'Aurore*, 3 November 1971.

⁵ K. Marx, *The Civil War in France: Address of the General Council of the International Working-Men's Association* (London: Edward Truelove, 1871), p.34. See also V.I. Lenin, *The Paris Commune* (London: Martin Lawrence, 1931).

conservative commentators and later liberal historians sought to minimise the emotional impact of such assertions, depicting it as the definitive end to a peculiarly French revolutionary tradition.⁶ Writings on the Commune have rarely been free of this symbolism. As Martin Johnson has noted, ‘explaining the Commune has always been more than a historical exercise.’⁷

Despite their overt political differences, these competing interpretations displayed a certain consensus as to what the Commune was and where its significance lay. Intellectual and political uses of the Commune have derived their saliency from two factors. The first of these has been the belief that the Commune represented above all a significant historical break. Whether the flawed dawn of a new era or the end of a tradition, the story of the Commune has traditionally been portrayed as one of largely unambiguous rupture.⁸ The second – and related – factor in accounting for the Commune’s continued popularity has been its symbolic purchase. Whether, in the evocative words of Jacques Rougerie, the Commune was an ‘aurore’ or a ‘crépuscule’, its historic importance has overwhelmingly been derived from its symbolic value.⁹ The Commune has been an empty vessel into which writers unconnected to it have poured their own ideas. While some, such as the renowned labour historian Jean Maitron and the film-maker Peter Watkins, have advanced more nuanced readings of the Commune’s place in history,¹⁰ the ‘symbolic break’ interpretation first formulated by Marx in *The Civil War in France* in 1871 and taken up with such enthusiasm by many in the twentieth

⁶ D. Thomson, *Democracy in France since 1870* (London: Cassell, 1989. First published, 1946), p.26.

⁷ M.P. Johnson, *The Paradise of Association: Political Culture and Popular Organisations in the Paris Commune of 1871* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996), p.7. For a similar sentiment, see J.-C. Caron, *Frères de sang: la guerre civile en France au XIXe siècle* (Seysse: Champ Vallon, 2009), p.229.

⁸ S. Bernstein, *The Beginnings of Marxian Socialism in France* (New York: Russell & Russell Inc, 1965. First published, 1933), p.xxi; P. Hutton, *The Cult of the Revolutionary Tradition: The Blanquists in French Politics, 1864-1893* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), p.36; C. Sowerwine, *Sisters or Citizens? Women and Socialism in France since 1876* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p.4; F. Furet, *La Révolution de Turgot à Jules Ferry* (Paris: Hachette, 1988), p.489.

⁹ J. Rougerie, *Procès des Communards* (Paris: Julliard, 1964), p.241. See also C.L.R. James, ‘They showed the way to labor emancipation: on Karl Marx and the 75th anniversary of the Paris Commune’, *Labor Action* 10 (18 March 1946); J. Chastenet, ‘La Commune de Paris, aube des révolutions modernes ou flamboyant crépuscule?’, in P. Dominique, *La Commune de Paris* (Paris: Hachette, 1962. First published, 1948).

¹⁰ J. Maitron, ‘Avant-propos’, in P.-O. Lissagaray, *Histoire de la Commune de 1871* (Paris: Maspero, 1967. First published 1876.), 5-13, at p.12; P. Watkins (dir.), *La Commune (Paris, 1871)* (2000). See also H. Lefebvre, *La Proclamation de la Commune, 26 Mars 1871* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), p.139; R. Dubois in ‘Débat: “La Commune: utopie ou modernité?”’, in G. Languier and J. Quaretti (eds.), *La Commune de 1871: utopie ou modernité?* (Perpignan: Presses universitaires de Perpignan, 2000), 407-424, at p.412.

century has proved so powerful that it still dominates even recent historiography of the Commune and its afterlife.¹¹

The Commune's symbolic purchase has rendered it and its participants superficially well known, however on an intellectual level it has effectively removed them from history. For those seeking to invest the event with their own meaning, the ideas of the Communards themselves have proved an inconvenience. Historians such as Rougerie, Johnson, and Robert Tombs have undertaken valuable work on the Commune itself,¹² while Jean Joughin and more recently Laure Godineau have produced absorbing studies of the Commune's role in the French politics of the 1870s and 1880s. Yet as Joughin reminds his reader at the beginning of *The Paris Commune in French Politics*, 'the substance of this book is practical politics', and this statement could be applied equally to Godineau's work.¹³ By contrast, very little has been written on how French revolutionaries *thought* about the Commune in its immediate aftermath. These dual concentrations on either practical politics or symbolic power have, whether directly or indirectly, reinforced the idea that the Commune's primary import is its symbolic power, and that its ideas have had no afterlife.¹⁴ In other words, for all the countless studies of the Commune, its intellectual history is still yet to be written.

This chapter aims to begin this work. Through a re-examination of writings on the Commune from the 1870s and early 1880s it shall become clear that, for ex-Communards and revolutionaries, the Commune had far more than simply symbolic value. Far from attempting to forget the failure of March-May 1871, the Commune loomed large in French revolutionary thought during this period. It is further possible to identify two predominant revolutionary interpretations of the events of spring 1871. One comprised highly detailed, personal accounts of the Commune and focused on

¹¹ For a critical look at this, see É. Fournier, *La Commune n'est pas morte: les usages politiques du passé de 1871 à nos jours* (Paris: Éditions Libertalia, 2013). For examples, see P. Darriulat, 'Le patriotisme révolutionnaire de la déclaration de guerre à la Semaine sanglante', in C. Latta (ed.), *La Commune de 1871: L'événement, les hommes et la mémoire* (Saint-Étienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Étienne, 2004), 93-105, at p.105; D. Tartakowsky, 'La Commune: "Mémoires vives", résurgences et réfolements', in Latta (ed.), *La Commune de 1871*, 319-336, at p.319.

¹² See, for example, Rougerie, *Procès des Communards*; Johnson, *Paradise of Association*; R.P. Tombs, *The Paris Commune, 1871* (London: Longman, 1999).

¹³ J.T. Joughin, *The Paris Commune in French Politics, 1871-1880*, 2 vols. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1955), vol.1, p.13. See also L. Godineau, 'Retour d'exil: les anciens Communards au début de la Troisième République' (unpublished PhD thesis, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2000).

¹⁴ See, for example, L. Assier-Andrieu, 'La Commune de 1871 et l'idéologie française', in Larguier and Quaretti (eds.), *La Commune de 1871*, 57-67, at p.66.

quotidian events, while the other eschewed this style in favour of commemoration and highly rhetorical uses of violence. Indeed it could be said that with their focus on either practical politics or symbolic turning points, subsequent historiography has often mirrored these two interpretations. While the two interpretations presented very different accounts of the Commune, both, however, were indicative of the continued engagement with and attachment to the Commune in French revolutionary circles immediately after its defeat.

This attachment to the Commune, whether in the form of its ideas or commemoration, has often been construed as a sign that revolutionaries during this period were becoming increasingly anachronistic.¹⁵ This was not the case. Rather, these uses of the Commune represented precise political interventions on several levels. For French revolutionaries at this time, discussion and commemoration of the Commune acted as a means by which they could emphasise their continued unity in a decade of division and exile. Improbably, ex-Communards were able to use the Commune to their benefit, harnessing their memories of it to create and reinforce a diverse array of politically viable revolutionary identities, whilst simultaneously projecting an image of unity. By employing precisely the failure that had threatened them with obsolescence, revolutionaries and ex-Communards aimed to reassert their relevance, and indeed their necessity in a period marked by increasingly stable and republican government. Yet there were significant limitations to the Commune's revolutionary possibility, and the ways in which it was portrayed benefited certain groups more than others. Ideas on the Commune thus also unintentionally served to illustrate the fragility of revolutionary solidarity, accentuating and visualising deep ideological cracks in the movement even as they were deployed as evidence of the Communards' solidarity.

This chapter draws primarily on well-known revolutionary pamphlets and memoirs on the Commune published between 1871 and 1885. Revolutionaries penned numerous accounts of the Commune, but in the interests of ensuring a wide contemporary readership I shall focus on a number of the most widely known.¹⁶ Police

¹⁵ Hutton, *Cult of the Revolutionary Tradition*, p.36.

¹⁶ For example, G. Lefrançais, *Étude sur le mouvement communaliste à Paris en 1871* (Neuchâtel: G. Guillaume Fils, 1871); B. Malon, *Le troisième défilé du prolétariat français* (Neuchâtel: G. Guillaume Fils, 1871); C. Beslay, *1830-1848-1870: Mes souvenirs* (Neuchâtel: James Attinger, 1873); A. Arnould, *Histoire populaire et parlementaire de la Commune de Paris*, 3 vols. (Brussels: Imprimerie A. Lefevre, 1878); J. Andrieu, *Notes pour servir à l'histoire de la Commune de Paris en 1871* (Paris: Payot, 1971). Although not published until 1971, Andrieu's *Notes* was widely known within the revolutionary community during the 1870s and 1880s. For more, see M. Rubel, 'Introduction', in Andrieu, *Notes pour servir à l'histoire de la Commune*, 7-40.

intelligence reports and weekly newspapers such as *Le Prolétaire* and *L'Égalité* provide more immediate insights into the extent and form of commemorations of the Commune, as well as the ways in which they changed from year to year. Finally, in order to contextualise satisfactorily revolutionary accounts of the Commune, they have also been compared with reactionary, 'neutral', moderate, and radical republican works, as well as earlier nineteenth-century French writings on revolution.¹⁷

Parts One and Two of the chapter are concerned with the two different schools of interpretation used in French revolutionary writings about the Commune during this period. Part One deals with 'realist' interpretations. It explores how highly detailed and heavily contextualised accounts of the Commune enabled exiled Communards to reconstruct themselves as legitimate revolutionaries and responsible political actors, combatting widespread perceptions of the Commune as a lawless event. Part Two examines 'violent' interpretations. It delineates the productive power of revolutionary focuses on the violent end to the Commune, examining how writers used it to simultaneously criticise Third Republic politicians, gloss over the Commune's own mistakes, and project an image of revolutionary unity based on the shared experience of violent trauma. Finally, Part Three places these different interpretations within the context of international socialism and French republicanism, suggesting that revolutionary writings on the Commune at once provided a bedrock upon which revolutionaries of various stripes were able to begin to reconstruct their thought and image, and served to accentuate and exacerbate the often deep intellectual divisions within the movement.

Sanja Perovic recently noted of the historiography of the French Revolution that both 'liberal' interpretations emphasising chronology and 'socialist' readings focused on utopian futures fail to convey the complexities and possibilities that revolution signified for contemporaries.¹⁸ Similarly, the dichotomy of the end of traditional revolutions versus the dawn of a Marxist future is an inadequate perspective from which to examine the place of the Commune in French revolutionary thought during the 1870s and early 1880s. The Commune represented both more and less than these teleological interpretations suggest. Rather than a beginning or an end, an *aurore* or a *crépuscule*, revolutionaries during this period interpreted the Commune using something more akin

¹⁷ For example, P.-J. Proudhon, *Idée générale de la révolution au XIXe siècle: (Choix d'études sur la pratique révolutionnaire et industrielle)* (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1851); C. Pelletan, *Questions d'histoire: le comité central et la Commune* (Paris: Lagny, 1879).

¹⁸ S. Perovic, *The Calendar in Revolutionary France: Perceptions of Time in Literature, Culture, Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.240.

what Peter Starr has termed ‘a historical logic in a tripartite form, neither/nor/and yet’.¹⁹ For contemporary revolutionaries, there were many different iterations of the Commune. It represented not a single, definitive, symbolic break, but rather an intricate patchwork of smaller tears and continuities.²⁰ It was at once a model for the future that drew its strength and legitimacy in large part from the past, and provided revolutionaries with a means by which to reassert their relevance, indeed their necessity in the present.

I: Truth

I

The Paris Commune, it was generally agreed at the time, had been a spectacular political failure. The movement had lacked a clear and unified intellectual programme, and quickly dissolved into factional infighting between the majority – comprised mainly of neo-Jacobin adherents of Louis-Auguste Blanqui – and the minority federalists and self-proclaimed socialists. In addition to this intellectual discord, the Communards were also ill-prepared for the administrative and bureaucratic aspects of government. Having fought for many years in small, secretive cells under hostile regimes, they had little to none of the knowledge required by quotidian politics.²¹ Reflecting on his experience several months later, Jules Andrieu would admit that the Commune was ‘staged worse than a drama on the boulevards’,²² and that the revolutionaries had ‘only the administrative capability of an office boy’.²³ Even by Communards’ own accounts, then, the Commune had clearly been an abject failure on many levels. Revolutionaries had proved themselves divided and unfit to rule a city effectively, let alone a country.

Non-revolutionary writers and politicians seized upon the Commune’s failings following its fall. Most prominent among the multitude of accounts that appeared was

¹⁹ P. Starr, *Commemorating Trauma: The Paris Commune and its Cultural Aftermath* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), p.61.

²⁰ Robert Tombs has similarly suggested that we approach the Commune not as a stopping point, but as ‘un carrefour où s’entrecroisent et se chevauchent différentes temporalités’. See R. Tombs, *Paris, bivouac des révolutions: la Commune de 1871* (trans.) J. Chatroussat (Paris: Éditions Libertalia, 2014. First published in English, 1999), p.417.

²¹ For more on traditional French revolutionary tactics see for example S. Bernstein, *Auguste Blanqui and the Art of Insurrection* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971).

²² J. Andrieu, ‘The Paris Commune: A chapter towards its theory and history’, in *The Fortnightly Review* vol.X (October 1871), 571-598, at pp.590-91.

²³ ‘n’avait au point de vue administratif que les facultés d’un garçon de bureau’. Andrieu, *Notes pour servir à l’histoire de la Commune*, p.98. See also G. Lefrançais, *De la dictature* (Geneva: Ziegler, 1875), p.14.

Maxime du Camp's *Convulsions de Paris*.²⁴ Drawing upon sensationalist images such as that of the *pétroleuse* [IMG 3], official and reactionary accounts had from the beginning of the Commune represented its participants as thoughtlessly destructive: 'nothing but rioters'.²⁵ The Commune, hostile accounts argued, had been an event 'outside history'. Its participants' actions in spring 1871 had demonstrated that they had none of the characteristics required to be good citizens, and as a result posed a serious danger to modern European society [IMG 4]. It was this characterisation of the Communards that formed the basis of the government's rationale for the mass prosecutions and deportations that unfolded over the next few years.

A similarly dim view of the Commune was taken by parliamentary republicans such as Camille Pelletan. Pelletan was horrified by the events of the *Semaine Sanglante*, opposed attempts to demonise the Communards, and was forceful in his demands for a general amnesty, however he was not sympathetic to the Commune itself. In *Questions d'histoire*, for instance, he separated both the Commune and its participants from previous French revolutions and revolutionaries, arguing that 'it was not a revolution, for it had prepared neither a programme nor a government'.²⁶ While reactionary and republican writers strongly disagreed on the reasons for their condemnation of the Commune and its participants, then, they were nevertheless in agreement on a key point. Whether they classed the Commune as maliciously criminal or a tragic mistake, both agreed that it had been undeniably wrong.

Surprisingly, commentators on the left were barely more sympathetic. Marx's *Civil War in France* [CWF], delivered as a speech to the General Council of the International Workingmen's Association days after the Commune's final defeat, is widely considered to be the paradigmatic defence of the Commune. Samuel Bernstein in *The Beginnings of Marxian Socialism in France*, for instance, observed that '[e]very page of it breathed a spirit of hatred for the conquerors of the Commune'.²⁷ Whilst Marx was certainly blistering in his condemnation of Thiers, though, he was not concerned with resuscitating the reputations of the Communards themselves. In CWF he applauded the

²⁴ M. du Camp, *Les convulsions de Paris*, 4 vols. (Paris: Hachette, 1878-1880).

²⁵ 'vous n'êtes que des émeutiers'. C. Mendès, *Les 73 journées de la Commune*, 5th edn (Paris: E. Lachaud, 1871), p.153. For more on *pétroleuses* see G.L. Gullickson, *Unruly Women of Paris: Images of the Commune* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996). For more on hostile interpretations of the Commune, see J.M. Roberts, 'The Paris Commune from the Right', *English Historical Review*, supplement 6 (1973).

²⁶ 'ce n'est pas une révolution, car il n'y a pas de programme ni de gouvernement préparé'. Pelletan, *Questions d'histoire*, pp.68-69.

²⁷ Bernstein, *Beginnings of Marxian Socialism in France*, p.44.

Communards' effort, accepting that they had been motivated by firm convictions.²⁸ Simultaneously, however, he suggested these ideas had ultimately failed and that the time of both Paris and the Communards was over, terming it an act of 'heroic self-holocaust'.²⁹ Indeed, privately Marx was even more dismissive of the Commune, writing in a letter to Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis in 1881 that 'the majority of the Commune was in no sense socialist, nor could it have been.'³⁰ While, unlike du Camp and Pelletan, Marx celebrated the Commune's occurrence, *CWF* was far from a glowing endorsement. Although Marx's reading and use of the Commune required him to praise the event, it did not necessitate a rehabilitation of either its participants or ideas.

II

Communards and French revolutionaries were well aware of the potential of these interpretations for damage and their need to formulate an alternative.³¹ Many began this work by taking a more sober approach to the Commune. Charles Longuet, for example, warned revolutionaries against publishing emotive or sensationalist accounts, arguing that 'it is more useful to talk about the causes of defeat than glorification of the past',³² and many newspapers exhibited a similar attitude. *L'Égalité*, the international French exile newspaper *Qui Vive!* and *Les Droits de l'homme* all reported on the Versailles courts martial that followed the Commune, and presented 'evidence' of official wrongdoing in the form of unamended Versaillais speeches and newspaper articles from during the *Semaine Sanglante*.³³ Many revolutionaries, then, sought to distinguish themselves from rival accounts by presenting their memoirs as attempts to precisely recover the history of the Commune rather than as judgements upon its worth. Whilst it is not surprising that an author would seek to distinguish their work by claiming it as the authoritative (or at least a unique take on) the truth, such a style contrasted with many other contemporary takes of the Commune.

²⁸ Marx, *Civil War in France*, p.25.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.31.

³⁰ 42: K. Marx to F. Domela Nieuwenhuis (22 February 1881, London), *Marx/Engels Collected Works*, 50 vols. (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975-2004), vol.46 (1992), 65-67, at p.66.

³¹ *Lettres de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, Fonds Louise Michel, International Institute for Social History (IISH), 930.

³² 'Le citoyen Longuet croit qu'il est plus utile de parler des causes de la défaite que du glorification du passé.' 'Le 18 mars à Londres', *Le Prolétaire* (Paris), 3 April 1880.

³³ For the war council minutes, see for example *Qui vive!* (London), 19 October 1871; 20 October 1871. For the *Semaine Sanglante* material, see for example *Les Droits de l'homme* (Paris), 26 May 1876; 'La décade sanglante', *L'Égalité* (Paris), 26 May 1878.

This style of account was widespread in Communard and revolutionary circles. Historians such as Emmanuel Jousse have noted the emphasis on precision and truth-claims before in passing. They have tended, however, to move swiftly back to more familiar territory, focusing primarily on revolutionary memories of the Commune as a ‘traumatic’, or ‘sensory’ experience.³⁴ As we shall see, these ideas certainly played a central role in some revolutionary accounts of the Commune. Yet the historiographical concentration on them has given the impression that this was the primary form in which revolutionary thought on the Commune was articulated, and thus that accounts framed as truth-claims were either uncommon or unremarkable. This regard for precision, however, was to be found in a wide variety of revolutionary publications from this period. Newspaper columnists such as Prudent Dervillers in the widely read *Prolétaire* frequently expressed the opinion that the falsification of history was a serious offence,³⁵ and this attitude was also manifest in works such as Prosper-Olivier Lissagaray’s *Histoire de la Commune de 1871*.

Lissagaray’s *Histoire*, first published in 1876, was perhaps this period’s most widely read revolutionary account of the Commune. Although banned in France upon publication, it was successfully smuggled into the country until the passage of the *loi sur la liberté de la presse* in 1881.³⁶ It eventually ran to many editions,³⁷ newspapers repeatedly reproduced extracts,³⁸ and in 1896 the Parisian municipal council donated 121 copies to local libraries.³⁹ Lissagaray expressly positioned himself against writers ‘who amuse themselves with uplifting histories’, arguing that they were ‘just as criminal as the geographer who draws up incorrect maps for navigators’,⁴⁰ and that ‘[a]ll the

³⁴ E. Jousse, ‘La construction intellectuelle du socialisme réformiste en France, de la Commune à la Grande Guerre’ (unpublished PhD thesis, Sciences-Po, 2013), pp.121-22. See also K.S. Vincent, *Between Marxism and Anarchism: Benoît Malon and French Reformist Socialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p.40; Starr, *Commemorating Trauma*; Godineau, *Retour d’exil*, p.466; pp.518-19.

³⁵ ‘Les responsabilités devant l’histoire’, *Le Prolétaire*, 18 March 1879. See also Lefrançais, *Étude sur le mouvement communaliste*, p.12; ‘L’avènement’, *Le Citoyen & La Bataille* (Paris), 19 March 1883; F. Jourde quoted in A. Dowdall, ‘Narrating *la Semaine Sanglante*, 1871-1880’ (unpublished MPhil dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2010), p.35.

³⁶ For details of revolutionaries’ success in smuggling literature and propaganda into France during the 1870s, see Dowdall, ‘Narrating *la Semaine Sanglante*’, pp.14-20.

³⁷ Maitron, ‘Avant-propos’, at p.9.

³⁸ *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne* (Geneva), 3 June 1877; 24 June 1877. *Le Citoyen & La Bataille*, 12 December 1882; 29 March 1883; 2 April 1883; 21 May 1883.

³⁹ Godineau, *Retour d’exil*, pp.514-5.

⁴⁰ ‘Celui qui fait au peuple de fausses légendes révolutionnaires, celui qui l’amuse d’histoires chantantes, est aussi criminel que le géographe qui dresserait des cartes menteuses pour les navigateurs.’ ‘Preface to the first edition’, in Lissagaray, *Histoire de la Commune*, p.14.

revolutionary eulogising about 18 March 1871 is not worth one page of true history'.⁴¹ For Lissagaray, then, as well as for many other writers, the Commune was of far more than merely symbolic importance. Given the concern for this particular kind of truth in prominent publications such as *Le Proletaire* and Lissagaray's *Histoire*, it seems accurate to term this a widespread interpretation, and it is this that the first section shall be concerned with. For the purposes of this chapter, I shall refer to it as the 'realist' interpretation of the Commune. The intention in naming it thus is not to make a judgement upon the 'truth content' of such accounts, but rather to reflect the authors' professed intentions.

This authorial regard for the truth was frequently accompanied by an acknowledgement that determining the truth about the Commune was impossible for them. Reviewing Charles Beslay's *La vérité sur la Commune*, the Swiss exile periodical *Le Travailleur* criticised the title, deeming it '[m]uch too weighty a title in our opinion...he cannot presume to tell *the truth about the Commune*'.⁴² A review of Lissagaray's *Histoire* in the same journal suggested that their basis for truth was personal experience, as they judged 'the best part of the work is that which deals with the Comité Central. This the author saw with his own eyes'.⁴³ Realist accounts of the Commune thus indicated a more complicated vision of truth than simply the recitation of received facts. Despite the vocal commitment to clarity in many works on the Commune, the majority of these writers made no claims to universality for their own thought. Given that knowledge was derived from personal experience, it was impossible for any one author to ever know 'the truth' about, for example, the Commune. In such accounts there therefore existed a tension or duality between the author's high valuation of 'truth' and their simultaneous inability to provide it. They were defined by the failure to offer what they themselves had identified as most valuable.

Such admissions of fallibility, however, were often beneficial. This period witnessed the publication of numerous revolutionary accounts of the Commune, often with vividly competing narratives. Combining claims about the importance of truth and their own authorial inadequacies enabled Communards both individually and collectively to assert control over this situation. By acknowledging, through the definition of truth as personal experience, that multiple histories of the event could coexist, these authors were

⁴¹ *La Bataille* (Paris), 19 March 1885.

⁴² 'Titre trop lourd à porter selon nous...il ne peut prétendre à dire *la vérité sur la Commune*.' *Le Travailleur* (Geneva), October 1877, p.30. Emphasis original.

⁴³ 'A nos yeux, la partie la mieux traitée de l'ouvrage est celle qui a trait au Comité Central. Ici l'auteur a vu de ses yeux'. *Ibid.*, May 1877, p.27.

able to rationalise the uncontrolled publication of multiple, competing accounts of the Commune. Indeed, it even enabled them to make a virtue of it. The suggestion that collaboration could lead to further clarification emphasised the need for the Commune's participants to unite and discuss their experience. By acknowledging that individually they were ignorant, but that collectively they held the truth (or were at least able to approach it), realist writers were able to frame their accounts as a kind of inquest or forum for consultation. The form and professed objective of these works thus also began the work of repositioning revolutionaries as rational and responsible actors, offering a direct contrast to the image popularised by other accounts of the Commune.

At the same time, this conceptualisation of truth also served to discredit non-Communard accounts of the Commune. If truth required personal experience, then only the Communards themselves were qualified to dispense it. Focusing on truth therefore united revolutionaries in a number of ways. Not only did it promote the exchange of ideas and responsible discussion within the movement, but it also provided a negative form of unification, distinguishing personal recollections from the second-hand accounts of authors like du Camp and Marx. Focusing on this conception of the truth as personal experience, then, also served to reclaim the Commune and its legacy for the Communards themselves.

III

Realist writers joined their claims about truth based on personal experience with a process of intensive contextualisation. *L'Égalité* pronounced 18 March 'a complex event',⁴⁴ whilst Raoul Urbain criticised writers who restricted their analysis to the Commune's immediate circumstances, arguing that '[a] lot has been said about the cannons. The cannons were not the cause of this revolution at all. They were merely the opportunity.'⁴⁵ *Le Travailleur* and *Le Proletaire* echoed demands for a longer perspective, arguing that 'the Commune is only understandable when it is explained in the context of the facts that brought it about: June, December, the awakening of the final years of the

⁴⁴ 'un fait complexe'. 'Le 18 mars', *L'Égalité*, 24 March 1878. See also Beslay, *Mes souvenirs*, p.461; V. Marouck, 'Le Socialisme officiel sous la Commune', in *La Revue Socialiste* 7 (Paris, 5 June 1880), 330-36, at p.330. For a similar sentiment from a radical republican, see Pelletan, *Questions d'histoire*, p.157.

⁴⁵ 'On a beaucoup parlé de ces canons. Les canons ne furent pas du tout la cause de cette révolution. Ils n'en étaient que l'opportunité'. R. Urbain, 'Vae Victis', Fonds Lucien Descaves (IISH), 1035, p.16.

empire'.⁴⁶ In a direct challenge to assertions that the Commune had been an exceptional event outside of history, then, revolutionaries argued that only through contextualisation within the previous months and years could the Commune be properly understood.

This recontextualisation also partially shifted the burden of responsibility for 18 March from revolutionaries to the government at the time. Emphasising revolutionaries' initial high hopes and their subsequent disappointment in the Government of National Defence [GND] that had come to power following the fall of the Second Empire in September 1870, Gustave Lefrançais wrote that, as honourable men, the revolutionaries Gustave Tridon and Benoît Malon had felt compelled to resign from government 'less than *one month* after their election...convinced of the impossibility of retaining their dignity in such a milieu.'⁴⁷ Complaints of political profligacy were supplemented by descriptions of the state of the capital during the Franco-Prussian War. Describing the devastation in Paris following the removal of the National Assembly to Bordeaux and Léon Gambetta to Tours during the siege, Andrieu wrote that 'there may have been men in military dress in Paris, but there were no longer soldiers, there was no longer an army'.⁴⁸

In siege conditions and without the proper rule of law, revolutionaries implied, Paris had been obliged to rebel. As Malon argued in *La revue socialiste*, '[a]fter the ruin of the *patrie*, the Parisian proletariat...had to take up arms'.⁴⁹ By throwing light upon the wider context of the Commune, realist writers attempted to shift some of the blame for 18 March (which, until this point, had fallen squarely upon the Communards) away from themselves. As one Citizen Combault was at pains to stress at a banquet in London, '[i]t is not right to say that the Revolution of 18 March was a surprise'.⁵⁰ Adequately contextualised within the wider circumstances of 1870-71, they argued, 18 March was simply the inevitable result of broader and deeper injustices. Simultaneously, by

⁴⁶ 'la Commune n'est compréhensible que tout autant qu'elle est éclairée, expliquée par le récit des faits qui l'ont engendrée: Juin, Décembre, le réveil des dernières années de l'empire'. *Le Travailleur*, May 1877, p.27. See also 'Origines du 18 mars', *Le Prolétaire*, 19 March 1881.

⁴⁷ 'les sincères, les honnêtes, qui donneront alors leur demission...moins *d'un mois* après leur élection...convaincus de l'impossibilité de rester dignes dans un pareil milieu.' G. Lefrançais, *Un Communard aux électeurs français* (Geneva: Publications de la Revue Socialiste, 1875), p.14.

Emphasis original. See also *Le Travailleur*, May 1877, p.3. For an example of such disappointment, see 'La patrie en danger', *La patrie en danger* (Paris), 7 September 1870.

⁴⁸ Andrieu, 'The Paris Commune', at p.585. See also P.-O. Lissagaray, 'Lions et ânes', *La Bataille*, 11 August 1883.

⁴⁹ 'Après la ruine de la patrie, les prolétaires parisiens...durent prendre les armes.' B. Malon, 'Les Partis ouvriers en France', in *La Revue socialiste* 5 (5 May 1880), 257-269, at p.262.

⁵⁰ 'Il n'est pas vrai de dire que la Révolution du 18 mars a été une surprise.' 'Le 18 Mars à Londres: le banquet des réfugiés', *Le Prolétaire*, 3 April 1880.

abnegating its obligations to the capital, the State itself became an equal player in the outbreak of revolution. In this interpretation, the Communards were far from disruptive; rather, they had been pushed into action by the inaction of others.

This context not only reflected badly upon the Commune's opponents but, equally importantly, reflected well upon the Communards themselves. Writers such as Arthur Arnould stressed the 'essentially *conservative*' nature of the Commune 'against the official government',⁵¹ and the London exiles agreed, asserting that

'without them [the Communards] there would be no Republic. They fought for it under the Empire and when a monarchy was being prepared on 17 March. Remember that without the dogged resistance of Paris, today you would be ruled by a Bonaparte, a Chambord, or an Orléans.'⁵²

The national government, revolutionaries reminded their readers, had retreated first to Bordeaux during the Siege of Paris, and then to Versailles on 18 March. Politicians had systematically abandoned the national capital, 'carrying off ledgers and coffers, taking employees, and leaving Paris in complete disorganisation'.⁵³ In contrast, *Le Prolétaire* argued, the people 'did not recoil in the face of responsibilities abandoned by others'.⁵⁴

By emphasising so forcefully the context in which the Commune came about, revolutionaries aimed to justify an event that, in its immediate aftermath, was widely considered unjustifiable. Thus viewed, the Commune ceased to be an inexplicable event or an act of barbarity. Rather, it was a legitimate, even necessary reaction to official neglect and injustice. Likewise, the Communards themselves became responsible actors rather than the 'savage wolves and brigands' that the conservative historian Hippolyte Taine had complained about in a letter to his wife.⁵⁵ Contextualising the Commune in this way, then, enabled revolutionary writers to adjust the balance of responsibility for

⁵¹ 'essentiellement *conservateur* contre le gouvernement officiel'. Arnould, *Histoire populaire et parlementaire*, vol.2, p.34. Emphasis original.

⁵² 'souvenez-vous qu'il n'y aurait pas sans eux de République, qu'ils lutteraient pour elle sous l'Empire, que la monarchie était préparée le 17 mars, que, sans la résistance acharnée de Paris, vous seriez aujourd'hui sous un Bonaparte, un Chambord ou un d'Orléans'. J. Joffrin, C. Langevin, L. Landrin, P. Vichard, and E. Maujean, address to London exiles. London (undated, May-June 1877). Archives de la Préfecture de Police, Paris (APP), Ba429/2254. See also 'L'anniversaire du 18 mars 1871', *Le Prolétaire*, 18 March 1879; P.-O. Lissagaray, 'La loi du drapeau', *La Bataille*, 4 June 1885.

⁵³ 'le gouvernement fuyait à Versailles, emportant livres et caisse, emmenant les employés et laissant Paris dans la plus complète désorganisation.' Malon, *Le troisième défaite*, p.70. See also Lissagaray, *Histoire de la Commune*, p.131.

⁵⁴ 'L'anniversaire du 18 mars 1871', *Le Prolétaire*, 18 March 1879.

⁵⁵ J. Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic: A History of Political Thought in France since the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.288.

the events of spring 1871, implicating the GND in 18 March and using this to recast themselves as responsible political actors.

This perspective tapped into well-established prejudices against the government that had arisen in the wake of Napoleon III's fall. Many relatively radical republicans also blamed the GND for the conflict that occurred in spring 1871, as did numerous writers and politicians on the right. The *Enquête*, for example, was full of denunciations of the GND's folly. 'Realist' revolutionary writers, then, were not the only ones to blame the GND for the Commune. Rather, their accounts both drew upon and formed a part of a broader narrative regarding the GND's inefficacy.

Whilst contextualising the Commune enabled its participants to acknowledge its failings without discrediting themselves, they often simultaneously used it to absolve themselves of precisely these failings. Many revolutionaries freely accepted blame for the Commune's administrative and political deficiencies.⁵⁶ Ultimately, though, while it was agreed that the Communards had failed in many ways, the Commune's more serious shortcomings were ascribed largely to circumstance. Malon, for instance, concluded that while the Communards may have been 'beneath their task', regardless 'they could not do in those tempestuous days what they would have done in calmer times. Neither theories nor men can be fairly judged'.⁵⁷ Arnould pushed this line of reasoning further, arguing:

'these failings are nothing to be ashamed of...They were the result of such overwhelming circumstances that even a union of geniuses would not have been able to navigate the reefs and make it into port without mistakes, no longer the ship of State, but a wave-beaten bark bearing the people and their fortune.'⁵⁸

In the same way that contextualising the Commune rendered its occurrence less shocking, it also enabled revolutionaries to offer alternative reasons for the vices and failings that had manifested themselves during its brief existence. In this interpretation, the Commune's most grievous fault (if it could even be called that) had been its circumstances rather than its ideas. If its actors had been foiled by events beyond their

⁵⁶ Andrieu, 'The Paris Commune', at p.597. See also Arnould, *Histoire populaire et parlementaire*, vol.1, p.85; Malon, *Le troisième défaite*, p.221.

⁵⁷ 'Les hommes de la révolution communale furent au-dessous de leur tâche...mais ils ne purent pas donner dans ces jours de tempête ce qu'ils auraient pu donner dans des temps plus calmes. Ni les théories, ni les hommes ne peuvent être équitablement jugés'. Malon, *Le troisième défaite*, p.177.

⁵⁸ 'ces fautes n'ont rien de honteux...Elles ont été le résultat de circonstances tellement écrasantes que l'on peut se demander si même une réunion d'hommes de génie aurait pu éviter tous les écueils et conduire au port, sans fausse manoeuvre, non plus le vaisseau de l'Etat, mais la barque battue des flots qui portait le peuple et sa fortune.' Arnould, *Histoire populaire et parlementaire*, vol.2, p.104. See also *Le Travailleur*, October 1877, p.32.

control and almost certain defeat, it became harder to blame the Communards for its failure and its excesses. The focus on context thus also importantly enabled revolutionaries to partially relieve themselves of culpability whilst simultaneously accepting the events of the Commune.

Contextualising the Commune therefore not only helped to shed light on the ‘truth’ of its circumstances, but also played an important role in combatting the widespread hostile perceptions of it and its participants. The depiction of the Commune as the embattled ship of State trying to steer itself safely into port was designed to take the heat out of the hostile images created of it in the years immediately following its fall. In this reading the Communards were not enraged or wantonly destructive, but desperate and attempting (although often failing) to make responsible decisions – decisions that nobody else had been willing to make. Elaborating the difficult conditions in which the Commune found itself, it was hoped, would render the decisions taken by revolutionaries during spring 1871 more understandable to the general public, and their failings more excusable.

This seemingly responsible take on the Commune was not simply exculpatory, though, and it also enabled its participants to recast themselves as responsible political actors in the present. If the course of the Commune had been dictated by fate and circumstance, then neither the surviving Communards nor their ideas could be blamed for its worst excesses or its failure. Indeed, despite their apparent willingness to accept responsibility for their actions, the primary aim of realist texts was arguably to remove the Commune from revolutionary control. The preoccupation with identifying unfavourable circumstances, mistakes, and scapegoats permitted realist writers to not only show that the Commune could have succeeded, but also simultaneously absolve themselves of responsibility for the fact that it had not.

IV

Thus absolved of responsibility for the Commune’s more egregious acts, realist interpretations returned to its ideas. As we have seen, both hostile and Marxist accounts of the Commune centred upon the idea that its participants had been either intellectually barren or severely misguided. Contradicting such assertions, Lefrançais in 1871 argued that the Commune had in fact been motivated by ideas, affirming that the ‘part that we played in the movement that began on the 18 March was the result of firm convictions

rather than thoughtless, reckless momentum'.⁵⁹ Arnould similarly emphasised the Communards' intellectual engagement, contrasting them favourably with previous revolutionaries. Whereas 'in 1830, in Lyons, on the 24 February 1848 the people had nothing but vague aspirations', he argued, '[i]n 1871, this was not the case.'⁶⁰ Indeed, he characterised the Communards as 'not merely soldiers, but *living ideas*', performing their thought through their revolutionary actions.⁶¹ In addition to their emphasis on the importance of context, realist interpretations were simultaneously eager to emphasise that the Commune had been more than simply a tragic event. While its possibilities may have been foreclosed by the circumstances it found itself in and the Communards may have been below their task, the Commune had nonetheless been intellectually motivated.

More importantly, they claimed, the Commune's ideas had remained relevant even after its fall. Many writers proudly drew attention to its reforms on matters such as divorce, education, and night work, as well as its declaration of the separation of Church and State.⁶² More importantly, writers also defended the Commune's ideas more broadly. In 1878, the French- and Swiss-edited anarchist *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne* observed that currently '[i]deas that were still confused in 1870 and 1871 are being clarified daily through discussion.'⁶³ While the article acknowledged that the ideas of the Commune and the early 1870s had lacked definition, nonetheless, its reference to their on-going discussion suggested that the content of the Commune's ideas was essentially the same as that of those held by socialist revolutionaries in the late 1870s. Likewise, writing of the need for workers to establish 'a new plan of action', Lefrançais affirmed, '[w]e believe that the revolutionary movement of 18 March 1871 provided the necessary principles, and that will be its honour in the history of humanity.'⁶⁴

⁵⁹ 'La part que nous avons prise au mouvement commencé le 18 mars, étant le résultat de convictions arrêtées et non d'un entraînement irréflecti et inconscient'. Lefrançais, *Étude sur le mouvement communaliste*, pp.11-12. See also 'Souvenons-nous!', *Le Prolétaire*, 18 March 1880.

⁶⁰ 'Mais en 1830, mais à Lyon, mais le 24 février 1848, ce peuple n'avait que de vagues aspirations...En 1871, rien de semblable.' Arnould, *Histoire populaire et parlementaire*, vol.3, pp.50-51.

⁶¹ 'non seulement des soldats, mais qui sont des *idées vivantes*'. *Ibid.*, vol.2, p.150. Emphasis original.

⁶² Malon, *Le troisième défaite*, p.272; 'Souvenons-nous!', *Le Prolétaire*, 18 March 1880; 'La Semaine de sang', *Le Prolétaire*, 22 May 1880; *Le Prolétariat*, 14 March 1885. See also C.L.R. James, 'They showed the way to labor emancipation: on Karl Marx and the 75th anniversary of the Paris Commune', *Labor Action* 10 (18 March 1946).

⁶³ 'Les idées, encores confuses en 1870 et 1871, s'éclaircissent chaque jour par la discussion'. *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne*, 18 March 1878.

⁶⁴ 'Or, ce plan d'action, nous pensons que le mouvement révolutionnaire du 18 mars 1871 en a fourni les principales données. Ce sera son honneur dans l'histoire de l'humanité.' G. Lefrançais,

Realist interpretations, then, were not merely interested in a symbolic rehabilitation or celebration of the Commune. For these writers, the afterlife of the Commune lay not in symbolism, but in its ideas. Few disputed that the Commune had been of historical significance (whether positive or negative), but by linking its ideas to those of later revolutionaries, realists sought in addition to demonstrate its continued intellectual significance, depicting it as an event that had both developed and given a platform to important new ideas. While realist depictions of the Commune as a new socialist dawn may have been superficially similar to Marx's conceptualisation of it as 'the glorious harbinger of a new society', in qualitative terms they were extremely different. For Marx, the Commune's significance lay in its status as the symbolic beginning of a new era of social revolution. For realist writers, it meant this and more. Not only was it symbolically important, but it was the Commune's ideas, its intellectual content, that would power this new revolution.

For realist writers, the Commune's most significant intellectual contribution lay in its delineation of progressive social ideas. Arnould, for example, averred that

‘The idea [of the Commune] was great and just...*the Paris Commune was something more than and entirely different from a revolt.* It was the advent of a principle, the affirmation of a politics. In a word, it was not merely *another* revolution. It was a *new* revolution, carrying in the folds of its flag an entirely original programme’.⁶⁵

Lefrançais similarly argued in 1873 that it was ‘precisely the solution to the social question, which grows more and more important each day, that particularly preoccupied the partisans of the movement of 18 March 1871’.⁶⁶ By emphasising the Commune's links to questions of social equality, revolutionaries aimed to strengthen the case for the Commune's lasting intellectual, as well as historical significance. They thus positioned it as an early example of discussions that would come to dominate French revolutionary

L'idée libertaire dans la Commune de 1871 (Paris: Cahiers de contre-courant, 1958. First published, 1874), p.16. See also ‘Souvenons-nous!’, *Le Prolétaire*, 18 March 1880.

⁶⁵ ‘L'idée était grande, juste...*la Commune de Paris fut plus et autre chose qu'un soulèvement.* Elle fut l'avènement d'un principe, l'affirmation d'une politique. En un mot, elle ne fut seulement une révolution *de plus*, elle fut une révolution *nouvelle*, portant dans le plis de son drapeau tout un programme original et caractéristique.’ Arnould, *Histoire populaire et parlementaire*, vol.2, pp.80-81. Emphasis original.

⁶⁶ ‘Or, c'est précisément de la solution de la question sociale, qui se pose d'elle-même chaque jour davantage, qu'étaient particulièrement préoccupés les partisans du mouvement du 18 mars 1871’. G. Lefrançais, *République et Révolution: de l'attitude à prendre par le prolétariat en présence des parties politiques* (Geneva: V. Blanchard, 1873), p.21.

circles in this period.⁶⁷ At the same time, this emphasis on the Commune's social qualities also served to separate their ideas on the Commune from those of radical republicans such as Pelletan, who classified it as an 'exclusively political' event.⁶⁸

The problem, realists argued, was not that the Commune had been intellectually bankrupt, but rather that it was too progressive. Not only had it been a rational reaction to circumstances, but it was also (and more importantly) an incubator of highly ambitious and vital new ideas. Arnould, for example, classified it as 'one of the most prodigious efforts to conquer the future';⁶⁹ a 'new step in revolutionary thought', presenting a vision of the future that circumstances were unable to accommodate.⁷⁰ The Commune had not only been a desperate response to current circumstances, but also a manifestation of a genuine intellectual and social alternative to contemporary French society. By classifying the Commune thus, realist writers were able to at once explain away the Commune's failure and credibly retain their faith in what they claimed had been the Commune's ideas. As an event that was simply too progressive for its own circumstances, revolutionaries implied, the Commune had been bound to fail, and there was nothing that could have been done about it. It was now their responsibility to preserve these ideas for the future.

II: Violence

I

Realist interpretations, then, focused on context and quotidian events in an attempt to restore intellectual content to the Commune. More prominent in the general historiography of the Commune, though, have been accounts centred on violence. Whether in the form of Communard excesses such as the executions of Archbishop Darboy and Generals Clément-Thomas and Lecomte, or official violence perpetrated by the Versailles army, the violence of the Commune has captivated writers since the last week of its existence. The number executed in cold blood during the *Semaine Sanglante* is

⁶⁷ For such a diagnosis, see for example A. Theisz, 'Le mouvement social: la grève des mineurs de Denain', *L'Intransigeant*, 1 November 1880.

⁶⁸ Pelletan, *Questions d'histoire*, p.84.

⁶⁹ 'un des plus prodigieux efforts pour la conquête de l'avenir'. Arnould, *Histoire populaire et parlementaire*, vol.2, p.21.

⁷⁰ 'l'étape nouvelle de la pensée révolutionnaire'. *Ibid.*, vol.1, p.9.

now reliably estimated to have been less than 2000.⁷¹ In the 1870s, however, reports quickly emerged that it had been ten times this figure,⁷² and by 1885 20,000 had grown to 40,000.⁷³ Historians throughout the twentieth-century have subsequently reproduced these figures uncritically, feeding the legend of the Commune as an event of unparalleled violence.⁷⁴ Indeed, John Merriman's recent *Massacre: The Life and Death of the Paris Commune* is proof of the continued potency of this myth.⁷⁵

In the immediate aftermath of the Commune, a wide variety of writers contributed to the construction of this narrative of violent holocaust. As we have seen, hostile accounts such as du Camp's *Convulsions de Paris* often focused the lawlessness and brutality of the Communards, but they did not shy away from official violence. Indeed, as Alex Dowdall has demonstrated early commentators on the right often embraced the *Semaine Sanglante* as an 'event to be inscribed on the memory and consciousness of the nation itself, in order to teach lessons, ensure vigilance, and guard against future social extremism'.⁷⁶ Radical republicans such as Camille Pelletan, meanwhile, promulgated the idea of unprecedented official violence in an effort to discredit the Moral Order government, which they regarded as a threat to the Republican State.⁷⁷ Ex-Communards were no exception to this fixation, and violence in the form of the State's actions often featured prominently in memories of 1871.⁷⁸ In fact, many Communards claimed it was this that had motivated them to write.⁷⁹ I term this body of work the 'violent' interpretation.

It will perhaps first be useful to briefly delineate who precisely was constructing and using these narratives. Writers and publications occasionally employed both realist and violent interpretations. The most notable example of this was perhaps Lissagaray,

⁷¹ R. Tombs, 'How bloody was *la semaine sanglante* of 1871? A revision', *The Historical Journal* 55 (September 2012), 679-704, at p.697.

⁷² *Ibid.*, at pp.701-702.

⁷³ See for example P.-O. Lissagaray, 'La loi du drapeau', *La Bataille*, 4 June 1885.

⁷⁴ See for example B.H. Moss, *The Origins of the French Labor Movement 1830-1914: The Socialism of Skilled Workers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p.62; E. Bottigelli and C. Willard (eds.), *La naissance du Parti ouvrier français: Correspondance inédite de Paul Lafargue, Jules Guesde, José Mesa, Paul Brousse, Benoît Malon, Gabrielle Deville, Victor Jaclard, Léon Camescasse et Friedrich Engels* (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1981), p.12.

⁷⁵ J. Merriman, *Massacre: The Life and Death of the Paris Commune of 1871* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014). See also J. Moreau, *Les socialistes français et le mythe révolutionnaire* (Paris: Hachette, 2003), p.53.

⁷⁶ Dowdall, 'Narrating *la Semaine Sanglante*, 1871-1880', p.34.

⁷⁷ C. Pelletan, *La semaine de mai* (Paris: M. Dreyfous, 1880).

⁷⁸ In some exceptional cases, Blanquists even embraced rumoured Communard violence. See 'Aux communeux' (1874), in L. Michel, *La Commune* (Paris: P.V. Stock, 1898), 413-423, at p.422.

⁷⁹ J. Bergeret, *Le 18 Mars: Journal Hébdomadaire* (London and Brussels, 1871), p.1.

whose *Histoire* was doubtless a ‘realist’ account but also, along with his *Les huit journées de mai derrière les barricades*, was a mainstay of the violent interpretation.⁸⁰ It is nonetheless possible, however, to make certain general distinctions between the two. Propagators of realist interpretations such as Arnould and Lefrançais had for the large part been members of the Commune’s minority. In contrast, those advancing violent interpretations such as Jules Bergeret and Gustave-Paul Cluseret had overwhelmingly been majoritarians and Blanquists. These demarcations continued to be of note in exile; in other words, the period in which many of these texts were produced and published. Surviving Blanquists predominantly fled to England, whereas former members of the minority headed for Switzerland.

The violent nature of the Commune, in particular the *Semaine Sanglante*, framed accounts in this interpretation. Jean-Baptiste Clément, for example, reminded his readers of the violence of the Commune’s demise, asking ‘[i]s it possible to forget the bloody saturnalia of the week of May...?’⁸¹ while Henri Rochefort in *L’Intransigeant* overlooked the duration of the Commune, concentrating instead upon the *Semaine Sanglante*. After briefly mentioning the Commune as ‘a battle of two and a half months’ in an article on the legacy of 1871, he swiftly moved on to a discussion of the *Semaine Sanglante*, describing a scene in which ‘[c]orpses floated down the Seine, and the swollen streams bathed the pavements in blood.’⁸² This article, like many others, not only provided a description of the violence of the Commune, but placed it in a position of primary symbolic and intellectual importance. This was in marked contrast to realist accounts. Whereas realist writers were primarily concerned with explaining the Commune’s beginning and detailing its duration, violent interpretations focused overwhelmingly on its end; its failure. Indeed, they argued, these factors defined the Commune.

This is not to say that realist writers ignored such violence, but rather that their interpretations were distinct from their violent counterparts. In 1871, Lefrançais spoke of the Commune’s end not as a failure but as a pragmatic act, arguing that the blood of

⁸⁰ P.-O. Lissagaray, *Les huit journées de mai derrière les barricades* (Brussels: Au bureau du *Petit Journal*, 1871). Lissagaray was also instrumental in publicising and legitimating progressively higher death tolls for the *Semaine Sanglante* over the course of the period. See for example P.-O. Lissagaray, ‘La loi du drapeau’, *La Bataille*, 4 June 1885.

⁸¹ ‘Est-il possible d’oublier les saturnales sanglantes de la semaine de mai’. ‘Le prolétariat ne peut pas désarmer’, *Le Prolétaire*, 29 May 1880. See also ‘Les fusillés du Père-Lachaise’, *Le Prolétaire*, 29 May 1880.

⁸² ‘Une lutte de deux mois et demi... Pendant huit jours, la Seine charria des cadavres, et les ruisseaux gonflés baignèrent de sang les trottoirs.’ ‘De 1871 à 1885’, *L’Intransigeant* (Paris), 19 March 1885.

labourers would ‘purify the city and reaffirm *good principles*.’⁸³ Similarly, in the *Histoire* Arnould wrote that:

‘There are occasions when one must know how to die, for dying is to confess ones faith. Dying is to affirm a principle, to fly a flag, to launch a new and true idea into the world with ones blood.’⁸⁴

In both realist and violent interpretations, then, the Communards who died had made a heroic sacrifice, but the nature of this sacrifice was different. While realist writers such as Arnould and Lefrançais focused on the pragmatic nature of the Communards’ deaths, in accounts the same sacrifice was transformed into a desperate one. In the former, the emphasis lay upon the creative possibility and potential of people ‘know[ing] how to die’. For violent writers on the contrary, the *Semaine Sanglante*’s significance lay in the fact that it had been ‘sanglante’ – in other words in its decisive violence, and its finality.

The Commune of violent interpretations, then, was notably and distinctly different from that of realist ones. Specifically, the Commune’s ideas were nowhere to be seen. Henri Brissac in *Le Citoyen* in 1882 described the Commune’s principles as ‘embryonic, undecided, and confused’,⁸⁵ and similar sentiments can be inferred from the vague interpretations of many other publications.⁸⁶ In 1885, Malon claimed in *L’Intransigeant* that the Commune was regarded as ‘the new political axis of peoples’, but this was not due to respect for or even engagement with its intellectual content. Rather, he observed, people ‘glorify its acts, adopt its martyrs’ and invest it with ‘the importance of a popular religion’.⁸⁷ While the two interpretations may have shared their veneration of the Commune, the definition and content of ‘the Commune’ was strikingly different in each. In violent interpretations, the Commune’s importance was no longer tied to the value of its ideas. Indeed these ideas were not simply overlooked, but were considered

⁸³ ‘cela épure la cité, en même temps que les *bons principes* s’en raffermissent.’ Lefrançais, *Étude sur le mouvement communaliste*, p.386. Emphasis original.

⁸⁴ ‘Il y a des circonstances où il faut savoir mourir, lorsque mourir, c’est confesser sa foi, lorsque mourir, c’est affirmer un principe, arborer un drapeau, jeter dans le monde avec son sang une idée nouvelle et vraie.’ Arnould, *Histoire populaire et parlementaire*, vol.2, p.22; see also pp.116-17.

⁸⁵ ‘Où nous en sommes’, *Le Citoyen* (Paris), 30 April 1882.

⁸⁶ See for example ‘Le dix-huit mars’, *L’Intransigeant*, 20 March 1881; ‘L’avènement’, *Le Citoyen & La Bataille*, 19 March 1883.

⁸⁷ ‘ils glorifièrent ses actes, adoptèrent ses martyrs... toute l’importance d’une religion populaire’. ‘Étudiants et prolétaires’, *L’Intransigeant*, 22 February 1885. For a similar comparison, see ‘Le dix-huit mars’, *L’Intransigeant*, 20 March 1881.

actively unnecessary.⁸⁸ The Commune's form became more important than its content. Violent revolutionary thought on the Commune effectively argued that the Commune had not had any thought.

This was reflected in revolutionaries' parallel engagement with commemoration. Following their return to Paris after the 1880 declaration of amnesty, revolutionaries conducted a long campaign for the construction of a memorial to the Commune in Paris, eventually succeeding in the form of the Mur des Fédérés, and funerals (which enabled them to sidestep restrictions on association⁸⁹) also became focal points for revolutionary association.⁹⁰ Shortly after Jules Vallès's death, Paul Lafargue remarked on this enthusiasm for commemorative events in a letter to Friedrich Engels:

‘That lucky beggar Vallès had the finest funeral in Paris since Gambetta's: over a hundred thousand people followed it: it made a great many people envious, they would kill themselves to be buried so magnificently: funerals are one of the most important ceremonies in the Frenchman's life.’⁹¹

Revolutionary enthusiasm for commemoration, though, was perhaps most visible in the ongoing reaction to Blanqui's death in January 1881.⁹² *L'Intransigeant* voiced its concern that revolutionaries organise ‘a funeral fitting of this great citizen’,⁹³ and a year later suggested erecting a monument to Blanqui.⁹⁴ By 1885, Malon noted that Blanqui's grave had ‘become a place of revolutionary pilgrimage.’⁹⁵ This commemoration, with its emphasis on ritual and ‘revolutionary pilgrimage’, was indicative of the stylistic and intellectual differences between realist and violent interpretations of the Commune.

⁸⁸ ‘Le banquet du *Prolétaire*’, *Le Prolétaire*, 2 December 1882. See also ‘Infamies politiciennes’, *Le Prolétaire*, 20 January 1883; ‘Souvenirs de Mars 1871’, *Le Prolétariat*, 14 March 1885; 21 March 1885.

⁸⁹ Tombs, *Paris, bivouac des révolutions*, p.392.

⁹⁰ For the campaign, see ‘Le droit au souvenir’, *L'Intransigeant*, 4 December 1880; ‘Souscription pour le monument des fédérés’, *Le Prolétaire*, 12 January 1884; ‘La tombe des fédérés’, *Le Prolétaire*, 26 January 1884. See also M. Rebérioux, ‘Le mur des fédérés’, in P. Nora (ed.), *Les lieux de mémoire, tome 1: la République* (7 vols.) (Paris: Gallimard, 1984-1992. 1984), 619-649, at p.620.

⁹¹ 143: P. Lafargue to F. Engels, 27 February 1885 (Paris), in F. Engels, P. and L. Lafargue, *Correspondence*, 3 vols. (trans.) Y. Kapp (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959), vol.1, 267-269, at pp.268-269.

⁹² Over 100,000 people attended Blanqui's funeral, and over 60,000 that of Vallès. For figures, see D. Tartakowsky, *Nous irons chanter sur vos tombes: le Père-Lachaise, XIXe-XXe siècle* (Paris: Aubier, 1999), note 11, p.230.

⁹³ ‘des funeraillles dignes de ce grand citoyen’. ‘Blanqui’, *L'Intransigeant*, 4 January 1881.

⁹⁴ ‘Un monument à Blanqui’, *L'Intransigeant*, 15 February 1881; 28 February 1881.

⁹⁵ ‘La tombe de Blanqui est devenue un lieu de pèlerinage révolutionnaire.’ B. Malon, ‘Blanqui socialiste’, in *La revue socialiste* 7 (July 1885), 586-597, at p.587.

Unlike their realist counterparts, violent interpretations were more interested in symbolism than ideas, and in the transformation of violence into martyrdom.⁹⁶

II

The violent interpretation underwent a pronounced rise in popularity over the course of the period 1871-1885.⁹⁷ In 1879, *Le Prolétaire* urged revolutionaries not to dwell extensively on martyrs, asking ‘[l]et us move on: the dead are dead. We are in 1879 not 1871’,⁹⁸ yet a year later the paper’s attitude had shifted, and it now encouraged its readers to ‘[t]hink on your heroic defeats, on the periodic massacres whose victims were all of your class’.⁹⁹ This change was particularly noticeable in discussions of the *Semaine Sanglante*. Whereas in *Le troisième défaite du prolétariat français* Malon had barely addressed the *Semaine Sanglante*, several years later in May 1880, he would make it the centrepiece of another account of the Commune, describing it as an event that had ‘apotheosised’ the social revolution.¹⁰⁰ The distinction between Blanquist violent writers and minority realists, then, did not account entirely for these two different revolutionary interpretations of the Commune. It is also possible to discern a shift in language and focus in the work of revolutionaries writing frequently on the Commune between 1871 and 1885. Whereas the period before 1880 saw many accounts focusing on the workings and ideas of the Commune, increasingly writers like as Malon and Lefrançais distanced themselves from such interpretations, concentrating instead on the violence and failure that had characterised its final week.

Commemoration provided the clearest example of this temporal shift. In *The Paris Commune in French Politics*, Joughin suggested that by 1875 a ‘cult of the Commune’ was already emerging.¹⁰¹ On the contrary, though, revolutionaries in the 1870s –

⁹⁶ Tombs has also briefly linked this rise in commemoration to interest in the end of the Commune. See Tombs, *Paris, bivouac des révolutions*, p.392.

⁹⁷ For a similar suggestion, see R. Bellet, ‘Trois représentations de la Commune de Paris par Jules Vallès: *Le Cri du peuple*, *La Commune de Paris*, *L’Insurgé*, in Larguier and Quaretti (eds.), *La Commune de 1871*, 353-367, at p.367.

⁹⁸ ‘Le socialisme et le parti radical’, *Le Prolétaire*, 14 June 1879.

⁹⁹ ‘Aux Travailleurs!’, *Le Prolétaire*, 17 January 1880.

¹⁰⁰ B. Malon, ‘Les Partis ouvriers en France’, in *La Revue socialiste* 5 (5 May 1880), 257-269, at p.262. A similar shift can be observed in Lefrançais’s work. Compare Lefrançais, *Étude*, p.336; with G. Lefrançais, *Souvenirs d’un révolutionnaire*, 2nd edn, (ed.) J. Černý (Paris: Société Encyclopédique française et Éditions de la Tête de Feuilles, 1972. First published 1903), p.435.

¹⁰¹ Joughin, *Paris Commune in French Politics*, vol.1, p.88; see also p.499. Dowdall has also suggested that accounts of the Commune increasingly ‘crystallised’ around violence in the 1870s. See Dowdall, ‘Narrating *la Semaine Sanglante*’, p.57.

scattered and in exile – appear to have taken a largely sober approach to remembrance. As a police agent noted in 1872, '[t]he majority of the exiles do not want to make common cause with the Genevans. They prefer to celebrate it [18 March] alone amongst themselves.'¹⁰² Indeed, in Brussels in 1878 there was no commemoration at all.¹⁰³ Although, as a police agent noted 1877, exiles were proud to have taken part in the Commune,¹⁰⁴ for the most part French revolutionary remembrance of it in exile remained tightly regulated and detached.¹⁰⁵ Rather than openly displaying their adherence to the Commune in public demonstrations, many exiled revolutionaries in the 1870s preferred to draw as little attention to themselves as possible, marking anniversaries *en famille* in private or educational gatherings. Their method of commemoration was effectively a physical manifestation of the more muted, introspective realist written remembrances.

By the 1880s, partly due to the Communards' changing circumstances, this had begun to change. The majority of those exiled or deported in the 1870s returned to Paris at the turn of the decade following the declaration of a full amnesty on 14 July 1880. They returned, however, to a much-changed France. Although officially founded following the fall of the Second Empire in September 1870, the early years of the Third Republic had been a time of considerable political uncertainty. Martial law did not end in Paris until five years after the Commune, and ruling Moral Order politicians spent much of the 1870s attempting to restore the monarchy. As Joughin has noted, 'at the beginning of the 1870s France had a Republic in name, a strong body of convinced Monarchists, and an uneasy bloc of convinced Republicans'.¹⁰⁶ This changed only in 1877, with the resignation of President MacMahon and the installation of an actively republican and reforming government. In these circumstances, revolutionary action was neither possible nor popular, and publicly remembering the Commune represented an alternative way for ex-Communards to reassert their revolutionary identity.

¹⁰² 'Les proscrits en majorité ne veulent plus faire cause commune avec les Gênois; ils veulent être seuls et le célébrer entre eux.' Intelligence report to the Préfecture de Police, Geneva, 15 March 1872. APP, BA431/99. For a similar attitude, see *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne*, 25 March 1877; *Le Républicain* (Geneva), 19 March 1878.

¹⁰³ Communication to the Préfecture de Police. Brussels, 21 March 1878. APP, BA427/491. This was not always for want of trying. See, for example, 'La liberté des manifestations', *Le Prolétaire*, 15 May 1880.

¹⁰⁴ Intelligence report to the Préfecture de Police, March 1877 (London). APP Ba429/2152.

¹⁰⁵ For tight regulation, see intelligence report to the Préfecture de Police, Geneva, 20 March 1875. APP, BA432/1438.

¹⁰⁶ Joughin, *Paris Commune in French Politics*, vol.1, p.62. See also M. Agulhon, *The French Republic 1879-1992* (trans.) A. Nevill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993. First published in French, 1990), p.1.

This period also saw a widespread rise in the popularity of politicised commemorative sentiment.¹⁰⁷ The first public walk to Père-Lachaise took place in May 1880 several months before the declaration of amnesty, and newspapers noted a sharp rise in the number of attendees over the next few years.¹⁰⁸ By 1885, *La Bataille* was listing thirty-six separate events across France (although mainly concentrated in Paris) to mark the Semaine Sanglante.¹⁰⁹ Communards were also increasingly willing to view themselves as part of an international revolutionary or socialist community, with newspapers publishing salutations on 18 March from diverse places including Portugal, Romania, and Algeria.¹¹⁰ Whereas commemorative events for the Commune during the 1870s had largely been small or insular affairs, during the 1880s they both multiplied in number and grew considerably in size.¹¹¹ The shift in written work towards a focus on violence, then, was accompanied by the increasing visibility of a symbolic, and more evocative, Commune in general life (at least in Paris). Moreover, while it goes without saying that commemorations in Paris prior to the amnesty would have been small, gatherings were also small in large and active exile communities that were not subject to the same restrictive legislation as Paris.¹¹² A definite chronological shift in thought on the Commune is thus identifiable, along with the minority-majority intellectual distinction that persisted throughout the period.

III

This focus on the Commune's violent end may seem surprising. Given the resounding nature of their defeat, it may be assumed that revolutionaries would be eager to forget about or distance themselves from the violence that had signalled the Commune's end rather than increasing their attention to it over time. The Semaine Sanglante had drained the revolutionary movement of many of its members and the high

¹⁰⁷ K. Varley, *Under the Shadow of Defeat: The War of 1870-71 in French Memory* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

¹⁰⁸ 'Anniversaire de mai 1871', *Le Prolétaire*, 3 June 1882; 'L'anniversaire', *Le Prolétaire*, 2 June 1883; 'Anniversaire de la Semaine Sanglante', *L'Intransigeant*, 27 May 1884. Numbers attending social events also grew, see for example 'Le 18 mars', *L'Intransigeant*, 19 March 1884. For more on this, see Reberieux, 'Le mur des fédérés', at p.620.

¹⁰⁹ *La Bataille*, 23 May 1885. See also 'Ce qu'a été l'anniversaire du 18 mars', *Le Prolétaire*, 22 May 1880; 'L'anniversaire du 18 mars', *Le Citoyen & La Bataille*, 4 March 1883; 6 March 1883.

¹¹⁰ For Portugal, see 'Echos de l'anniversaire du 18 mars', *Le Prolétaire*, 1 April 1882; for Romania, *L'Intransigeant*, 19 March 1884; for Algeria, 'L'anniversaire du 71 en Algérie', *L'Intransigeant*, 7 June 1884.

¹¹¹ Godineau has also observed this shift. See Godineau, *Retour d'exil*, p.592.

¹¹² For more on remembrance in Paris prior to the amnesty, see Tartakowsky, *Nous irons chanter sur vos tombes*, p.61; Fournier, *La Commune n'est pas morte*, pp.34-36.

death toll functioned as a visible reminder of the drastic drop in revolutionary support. In fact, though, the mythologisation of violence constituted a central and fiercely active part of many revolutionary accounts of the Commune.

The violence of the *Semaine Sanglante* was often more uncomfortable for others than for revolutionaries themselves. Many of the republican politicians of the 1870s and 1880s had openly supported the Versailles government during the Commune (or at least openly opposed the revolutionaries), and writers frequently drew attention to this fact.¹¹³ Lefrançais advised against voting for supposedly radical republicans, reminding his readers of their complicity in the reaction to the Commune: ‘do not forget that... Gambetta himself has not stopped glorifying the ex-Bonapartist army for having flooded Paris... with the blood of the *fédérés*’.¹¹⁴ Dervillers similarly emphasised the Communards’ separation from other republicans, castigating radical republicans such as Louis Blanc, Victor Schoelcher, Georges Clemenceau, and Henri Tolain for not having endorsed the Commune when their voters had clearly supported it.¹¹⁵ Such criticism, moreover, was not targeted only at republicans. By focusing on the violence of government forces during the *Semaine Sanglante*, revolutionaries also called into question the moral fibre and fitness to rule of Moral Order politicians such as MacMahon who were unconcerned with maintaining an aura of republicanism, but staked their reputation on their ability to ‘preserve order’.

In this context, revolutionaries’ constant vocalisation and visualisation of the Commune was a form of political engagement. Both moderate and radical republican politicians and newspapers during this period were keen to forget the Commune or place it firmly in the past, along with what was often deemed their complicity in the violence of its final week.¹¹⁶ Both the abundance and content of violent accounts of the Commune directly contradicted this quest for oblivion. Constantly highlighting radical and moderate complicity in the Versailles reaction acted as a way for writers in the violent

¹¹³ See for example *Le Prolétaire*, 16 December 1882; ‘Infamies politiciennes’, *Le Prolétaire*, 20 January 1883. For more on opposition between more moderate republicans and Communards, see S. Hazareesingh, *Intellectual Founders of the Republic: Five Studies in Nineteenth-Century French Republican Political Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. First published, 2001), p.209.

¹¹⁴ ‘n’oubliez pas que... Gambetta lui-même n’a cessé de glorifier l’ex-armée bonapartiste d’avoir inondé Paris... du sang des fédérés de la Commune!’ Lefrançais, *Un Communard aux électeurs français*, p.7. For more on politicians’ hypocrisy, see Beslay, *Mes souvenirs*, p.470; Malon, *Le troisième défaite*, p.510.

¹¹⁵ ‘Les responsabilités devant l’histoire’, *Le Prolétaire*, 18 March 1879. See also H. Rochefort, ‘Le blâme platonique’, *L’Intransigeant*, 18 March 1881.

¹¹⁶ See for example *Le Tricolore* (Paris), 1 June 1871. For a radical republican advocacy of ‘political amnesia’, see Pelletan, *Questions d’histoire*, pp.186-87 and Pelletan, *La Semaine de mai*, p.406. For a revolutionary accusation of this, see *Les Droits de l’homme*, 3 November 1876.

tradition to attempt to reduce rising popular support for the Third Republic and claw back some of the good will they had lost during the Commune, using the *Semaine Sanglante* to question first the moral credibility and then the republican values of those in power.¹¹⁷ By remembering the Commune in terms of its violent failure, revolutionaries attempted to shift public focus away from their own failings during March-May 1871 and onto the violent and often extra-legal actions of their opponents. The Commune's lasting significance, they suggested, lay not in what it had to say about the revolutionary movement, but in the ways it visualised the failings of those in power, and of centralised power itself.

The emphasis on the *Semaine Sanglante*, though, was more than simply a way in which to criticise various French governments, and writers also employed it in their attempts to begin to rebuild a united revolutionary community.¹¹⁸ As we have seen, hostile writers and publications made frequent reference to the factional divisions that had riven the Commune. In 1874, for example, *Paris-Journal* observed that '[a]fter three years, the Communards, who have been fighting amongst themselves right from the beginning, are as disunited as it is possible to be.'¹¹⁹ In contrast to these undeniable divisions, the violence of the *Semaine Sanglante* had been an experience shared by all Communards. In his *Souvenirs*, for example, Lefrançais claimed that divisions between the minority and the majority had disappeared during this final week.¹²⁰ Focusing on the Commune's violent end rather than its beginning or its duration, then, was seen as reconstitutive. It acted as a way for revolutionaries to attempt to move past the divisions that had been both accentuated and created by the Commune. By concentrating on a trauma that they had all shared and could all actively condemn, writers employing this narrative were able to gloss over both their differences and their failings during spring 1871, depicting themselves as above all victims of the Versailles.

Moreover, by reconstituting their community on this basis, writers emphasised the continued need for revolutionary action. At a commemorative banquet in London in March 1880, revolutionaries sought to transform resentment at the way in which the Commune had fallen into concrete political action, arguing that the coming Revolution

¹¹⁷ See also *Le Travailleur*, May 1877, p.11.

¹¹⁸ For a contemporary discussion of the unifying benefits of violence, see E. Renan, *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation? Conférence faite en Sorbonne, le 11 mars 1882* (Paris: Calmann Levy, 1882), p.27.

¹¹⁹ 'Après trois ans, les communards...sont aussi désunis qu'il est possible de l'être'. *Paris-Journal* (Paris), 21 March 1874. APP, BA429/1409.

¹²⁰ Lefrançais, *Souvenirs d'un révolutionnaire*, p.419.

must be conceived of as ‘absolute revenge...for the defeat of 1871’.¹²¹ The Blanquist pamphlet ‘Aux Communeux’ stated similar sentiments more explicitly:

‘We still see the endless assassinations of men, women, and children; the throat-cutting that caused rivers of the People’s blood to run through the streets...We see the wounded buried along with the dead; we see Versailles, Satory, the pontoons, the penal colony, and New Caledonia. We see Paris and France bowed under terror, continuous oppression...Communards of France, Exiles, let us unite against the common enemy; let everybody, according to their ability, do their duty!’¹²²

Remembering the Commune as violence, then, was not simply an attempt to reconstitute a revolutionary community or a tool for criticising those in power. Rather, such deaths acted as a motivational tool, an obligation. Contrary to realist interpretations, this was not an obligation to continue the Commune’s ideas. Indeed as we have seen, these were actively overlooked. Instead, in violent interpretations this obligation was to the dead. While it went without saying that such martyrs had died for a cause, in violent interpretations that cause quite literally *went without saying*. It was not clearly defined. Instead, dying, and the manner of the Communards’ deaths, was what were important. By attempting to rebuild a community on a foundation of shared trauma, writers in the violent interpretation sought to galvanise their readers in the face of an increasingly reforming republican government, using the Commune’s violent end to remind them of the continued need for revolution and begin to rebuild some of the public support they had lost in 1871. Death during the Commune was not a subject to be avoided; rather, it was the creator of revolution.

Finally, it should be noted that while these two schools of interpretation were extremely different, there remained considerable similarities. Despite their varying focuses, realist and violent explanations were far from mutually exclusive. It was entirely possible for the Commune to have been both intellectually motivated and to have met a violent end. Both, moreover, shared a common aim in the promotion of revolutionary

¹²¹ ‘La Révolution doit être une revanche absolue...de la défaite de 1871.’ ‘Le 18 Mars à Londres: le banquet des réfugiés’, *Le Prolétaire*, 3 April 1880. See also ‘Un anniversaire’, *Le Prolétaire*, 22 May 1880; ‘La Semaine de sang’, *Le Prolétaire*, 22 May 1880; ‘La semaine sanglante’, *Le Prolétaire*, 26 May 1883.

¹²² ‘Nous voyons encore ces assassinats sans fin, d’hommes, de femmes, d’enfants; ces égorgements qui faisaient couler à flots le sang du Peuple dans les rues...Nous voyons les blessés ensevelis avec les morts; nous voyons Versailles, Satory, les pontons, le bain, la Nouvelle-Calédonie. Nous voyons Paris, la France, courbés sous la terreur, l’écrasement continu...Communeux de France, Proscrits, unissons nos efforts contre l’ennemi commun; que chacun, dans la mesure de ses forces, fasse son devoir!’ ‘Aux communeux’, at p.422.

unity, and the theoretical tools that they employed in order to effect this were also often the same. Writers in both interpretations, for example, went to great lengths to shift popular focus and responsibility for the Commune away from the Communards and onto either the State or whoever was in government at the time. While both interpretations sought to restore ownership of the Commune to those that they perceived to be its rightful guardians (in other words, themselves), simultaneously revolutionary writers were concerned with removing agency from the Communards, and taking the Commune out of revolutionary control. In other words, it is necessary to remember that there were many fundamental similarities between these different interpretations.

III: Legacy

I

This attachment to the Commune, whether in the form of its ideas or its end, has often been seen as symptomatic of the increasing marginalisation of French revolutionaries and their ideas during this period. In *The Cult of the Revolutionary Tradition*, Patrick Hutton drew a sharp line between Blanquist commemoration and useful or productive action, arguing that

‘[f]rom the time of the Commune, the Blanquists passed from their role as activists in a revolutionary movement to another as ideologists of the cult of the revolutionary tradition.’¹²³

This shift, he argued, signified a withdrawal from conspiratorial politics; in this post-Commune landscape, revolutionaries ‘passed the frontier into that imaginary land wherein they could fulfill the aspirations of their aesthetic reverie free of the intrusion of harsh realities.’¹²⁴ For Hutton, attachment to the Commune was a sign of increasing anachronism. The Commune was a decisive break in the history of French revolution, after which activists were either integrated into one of the Third Republic’s various republican parties or drifted towards an intellectually distinct Marxist international socialism. While individual actors may have continued to be involved in revolutionary

¹²³ Hutton, *Cult of the Revolutionary Tradition*, p.36.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.169.

action, the Commune brought an end to ‘the French Revolution’.¹²⁵ On this reading, following the fall of the Commune revolutionaries hoping to remain relevant were forced to make a distinct choice between republican nationalism and international socialism.

Yet French revolutionary thought on the Commune from this period provides scant support for the thesis of decisive change. As we have seen, writings on the Commune certainly did not indicate that ex-Communards were amenable to integration into more mainstream republican parties. Neither did they signify a conscious shift towards Marxian socialism. The revolutionary movement’s relationships with Marx and his ideas were extremely complex, and this entanglement shall be fully addressed in Chapter Three. For the purposes of this chapter, though, it will suffice to observe that Marx’s interpretation of the Commune was not well received. While some certainly accepted the classification of the Commune as a socialist dawn,¹²⁶ this was far from universal, and those more fully endorsing the views expressed in *CWF* were often verbally attacked.¹²⁷ Indeed some writers actively sought to distance themselves from any association with communism.¹²⁸

As we have seen, French revolutionary ideas on the Commune (particularly those in the ‘realist’ school of interpretation) often intersected with those of Marx, however this did not signify a definitive shift towards or integration into a Marxist position. Indeed, with its emphasis on the importance of the Commune’s ideas, the realist interpretation was arguably a direct contradiction of Marx’s account of the Commune as intellectually irrelevant. The suggestion that French revolutionary thought on the Commune during this period was indicative of a wholesale or even widespread shift towards Marxism is thus highly unsatisfactory. Communard and French revolutionary thought on the Commune may have been a response to Marx, but it was certainly not an endorsement of his views.¹²⁹

The continued revolutionary focus on the Commune during this period, then, was certainly not a sign of their increasing detachment from meaningful action and thought, or of the inevitable ascendance of a Marxian revolutionary ideology. Rather, it

¹²⁵ See also Furet, *La Révolution de Turgot à Jules Ferry*, p.489.

¹²⁶ ‘Le 18 Mars’, *L’Égalité*, 18 March 1880; ‘La Commune’, *Le Prolétaire*, 18 March 1882; ‘Le dix-huit mars’, *Le Citoyen*, 19 March 1882; G. Deville (ed.), *Le Capital de Karl Marx* (Paris: Henry Oriol, 1883), p.58.

¹²⁷ *Le Prolétaire*, 21 October 1882.

¹²⁸ Beslay, *Mes souvenirs*, p.390; *La Fédération* (London), 24 August 1872, 31 August 1872.

¹²⁹ For similar criticisms of the idea of the Commune as a communist phenomenon, see J. Plamenatz, *The Revolutionary Movement in France 1815-71* (London: Longmans, 1965. First published, 1952), pp.156-7; Johnson, *Paradise of Association*, p.12.

represented an attempt to remain visible and involved in French affairs. Expressing ideas through the medium of the Commune was a way for exiled revolutionaries to both guarantee themselves a wide exposure and to maintain an independent position in French politics in spite of their physical absence, demonstrating that while ‘[t]he Revolution was defeated, ... Thiers was not a victor.’¹³⁰ Meanwhile in international revolutionary circles, Communard and French revolutionary attempts to establish and maintain an autonomous yet viable identity for themselves also centred upon recollections of the Commune. Indeed, it could be said that revolutionary thought on the Commune during this period represented an effort to preserve or recapture both the status and the identity that French revolutionaries had enjoyed prior to the events of spring 1871. While different authors within the revolutionary movement attempted to fashion a variety identities, nonetheless the aim of creating a distinct yet viable revolutionary position and the use of the Commune in order to do so were common features of all these texts.

II

The idea of the Commune, then, opened many doors for revolutionaries during the 1870s and early 1880s. Yet at the same time there remained significant limitations to its possibilities. Even during the Commune’s short life, its participants had never really been united by anything other than its existence. Composed of a variety of different revolutionary groups, the experiences of the Commune served primarily to accentuate the differences between these factions. These were again further deepened during the period of exile, as different revolutionary groupings fled to different countries. In the *Histoire*, Arnould claimed that when he thought back to the Commune, ‘I forget the minority and the majority’,¹³¹ however several pages later he directly contradicted this, confessing that he had lost many friends as a result of their decision to join a different faction.¹³² Likewise, revolutionaries continued to trade personal insults over the handling of the Bank of France for years after the Commune’s fall.¹³³ While many accounts of the Commune claimed that the divisions between majority and minority had disappeared at

¹³⁰ ‘La Révolution était vaincue, mais Thiers n’était point vainqueur.’ Arnould, *Histoire populaire et parlementaire*, vol.2, p.19.

¹³¹ ‘J’ignore s’il y a eu une minorité et une majorité’. *Ibid.*, vol.3, p.92.

¹³² *Ibid.*, vol.2, pp.95-96.

¹³³ See for example ‘La Banque de France’, *Le Citoyen*, 11 September 1882.

the first sign of danger in late May 1871, then, this was clearly not the case.¹³⁴ Accounts of the Commune from this period rather demonstrated that divisions that had been either created or deepened in spring 1871 had not disappeared in the ensuing years. The history of revolutionary thought on the Commune is one of fracture as well as of unlikely possibility.

As may be expected, the most significant of these divisions remained that between survivors of the Commune's majority and minority. For majoritarians such as Gustave-Paul Cluseret, Jules Bergeret, and the London exile newspaper *La Fédération*, the Commune's disorganisation had been a 'fatal consequence of Proudhon's theory of anarchy'.¹³⁵ They contrasted Parisian political and intellectual advancement with 'the animals of France',¹³⁶ and consequently suggested that the Commune both could and should have assumed national sovereignty.¹³⁷ Meanwhile, members of the minority such as Arnould, Malon, and *Qui Vive!* celebrated the Communards as 'sincere representatives of...communal and social ideas',¹³⁸ and claimed that the Commune 'did not dream of governing France and, victorious, she would not have had any pretensions to do so.'¹³⁹ Although revolutionaries claimed that the experience of the Commune had ultimately been a unifying one, their thoughts on it and opinions on what had constituted its successes and failures illustrated that this was far from the case. Competing conceptions of the Commune exposed not just minor disagreements, but the persistence of fundamental intellectual divisions on what the revolutionary movement was and what its ideas and goals should be. Revolutionary writings on the Commune of various hues thus not only exposed the divisions of the past, but also served to exacerbate them, both creating and highlighting intellectual fault lines and disagreements that would plague the movement in the coming years.

The frequent and insistent geographical focus on Paris also created tension. Although Paris remained the most famed uprising of spring 1871, communes had in fact been proclaimed in many other regional cities such as Lyons and Marseilles. The participants in these communes had also been punished (although not on the same scale

¹³⁴ Lefrançais, *Souvenirs d'un révolutionnaire*, p.419.

¹³⁵ 'Conséquence fatale de la fameuse théorie de Proudhon sur l'anarchie'. G.-P. Cluseret, *Mémoires du Général Cluseret*, 3 vols. (Paris: Jules Levy, 1887-88), vol.1 (1887), p.4.

¹³⁶ Bergeret, *Le 18 Mars*, p.3.

¹³⁷ Cluseret, *Mémoires du Général Cluseret*, vol.1, p.38.

¹³⁸ 'les représentants sincères des idées communales et sociales'. Malon, *Le troisième défaite*, p.179.

¹³⁹ 'elle ne songea pas à gouverner la France, et, victorieuse, elle n'eût élevé aucune prétention à cet égard'. Arnould, *Histoire populaire et parlementaire*, vol.3, p.95; see also p.55; p.128; p.144. For more on municipal liberty, see *Qui vive!*, 20 October 1871.

as the Parisian Communards), yet their efforts in spring 1871 were often overlooked.¹⁴⁰ Malon, for example, devoted only one chapter of *Troisième défaite* to the provincial communes, while other writers barely mentioned them at all.¹⁴¹ Paradoxically, while exile physically united a variety of Communards, it also brought such geographical tensions to the fore, driving a wedge between Parisian and provincial revolutionaries. A Préfecture informant in Geneva reported that such focus on the Parisian movement had caused unrest at a meeting, with exiles from other communes asking

‘[i]n France in 1871, was there only the Paris Commune? Did Lyons, Marseilles, St. Etienne not declare before Paris? ... You cannot, therefore, specify the *Paris* Commune.’¹⁴²

As this oversight regarding provincial communes showed, revolutionary writings on the Commune exposed not just divisions within the movement, but also the shortcomings of attempts to regain their previous post-Commune position, as well as their persistent geographical myopia. Although writings on the Commune were theoretically of universal appeal, at the same time they manifested a multitude of continued practical differences between Parisian revolutionaries and their counterparts in regional urban centres.

While many of these divisions had been present in one form or another in the revolutionary movement for years, the changed circumstances following the Commune’s fall drastically altered their import. As Lefrançais observed, ‘18 March...distinctly reformulated the revolutionary question.’¹⁴³ It reformulated the question, though, in a way that only truly benefited survivors of the minority. This was partly a case of straightforward numerical advantage. Whereas well-known Blanquist Communards such as Raoul Rigault and Théophile Ferré had lost their lives as a result of the Commune, many of the minority’s most prominent members had survived. These revolutionaries were generally more visible than survivors of the majority during the 1870s and 1880s, indeed most of the period’s most prominent revolutionaries had either belonged to or

¹⁴⁰ For more on provincial communes, see L.M. Greenberg, *Sisters of Liberty: Marseille, Lyon, Paris and the Reaction to a Centralised State, 1868-1871* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971); M. César, *1871. La Commune révolutionnaire de Narbonne* (Sète: Éditions singulières, 2008); J. Girault, *Bordeaux et la Commune. 1870-1871* (Périgueux: Fanlac, 2009).

¹⁴¹ Malon, *Le troisième défaite*, pp.346-96.

¹⁴² ‘En France en 1871, n’y a-t-il eu que la Commune de Paris? Est-ce que Lyon, Marseille, St Étienne ne l’ont pas proclamée avant Paris? ... Vous ne pouvez donc pas spécifier: Commune de Paris? Intelligence report to the Préfecture de Police, Geneva, 3 October 1874. APP, BA432/1276.

¹⁴³ ‘Le 18 Mars... a nettement reposé la question révolutionnaire.’ Lefrançais, *Un Communard aux électeurs français*, p.16.

identified with this faction. Their dominance was especially noticeable in terms of publication.¹⁴⁴ This advantage in terms of diffusion enabled them to emphasise specific parts of the Commune and ensured that, while the likes of Ferré were celebrated as martyrs, dead Blanquists were also widely blamed for the majority of the Commune's excesses.¹⁴⁵ Despite the focus upon symbolic violence that would come to predominate in late nineteenth- and twentieth-century writings on the Commune, during this early period, it was realist interpretations that flooded the market.

This numerical disadvantage was but a small part of the Blanquists' problems. The majority's domination during the Commune had effectively exposed the impracticality of their political ideas. As David Stafford has observed,

‘the memory of the Commune discredited the old Blanquist ideas of the *coup de main*, of the revolutionary uprising in the streets, and instead forced attention on the need for organisation and discipline and the avoidance of premature action.’¹⁴⁶

Members of the minority often attempted to downplay their responsibility for the Commune's failures by drawing attention to their relative lack of influence. Arnould, for example, stated that ‘the minority...exercised no influence over the material march of affairs...We could be critics, but we were not obstacles.’¹⁴⁷ Majoritarians, however, had no such escape route. Given their heavy involvement in its policies and administration, effectively the only way in which the Commune could remain a positive experience for Blanquists was by jettisoning most of the elements that had distinguished Blanquism from other forms of revolutionary thought. It was for this reason that the violent interpretation proved so popular with Blanquists, as it enabled them to divert attention away from their actions during the Commune whilst simultaneously reconstructing it as a bonding experience. Besides being physically outnumbered when it came to accounts of the Commune, then, Blanquists were also intellectually outgunned.

Blanquists also had particular problems learning lessons from the Commune. This was most visible in the case of revolutionaries' relationship with the peasantry. Paris had received little support from the rest of France during the Commune, with

¹⁴⁴ For a breakdown of the majority and the minority, see Arnould, *Histoire populaire et parlementaire*, vol.2, p.86.

¹⁴⁵ Andrieu, *Notes pour servir à l'histoire de la Commune*, p.89.

¹⁴⁶ D. Stafford, *From Anarchism to Reformism: A Study of the Political Activities of Paul Brousse within the First International and the French Socialist Movement 1870-1890* (London: Cox & Wyman, 1971), p.22.

¹⁴⁷ ‘la minorité...n'exerçait aucune influence sur la marche matérielle des événements...Nous pouvions être des critiques, nous n'étions pas des obstacles.’ Arnould, *Histoire populaire et parlementaire*, vol.3, pp.27-28.

many in the provinces considering it an attempt by the capital to arbitrarily impose its will upon the country. At the same time, Communards had thought little of the countryside. Indeed, this disregard and failure to elicit broader support would come to be considered one of the Commune's greatest failings. The experiences of 1871 thus demonstrated the need for revolutionaries to reach outside of both Paris and urban regional centres to the countryside and, as Henri Lefebvre has noted, one of the most effective ways to do this was through a language of federation.¹⁴⁸ Certainly, many members of the minority also remained largely unconcerned with the provinces.¹⁴⁹ Federation and municipal liberty, however, had occupied a central role in their ideas during the Commune, and they were able to emphasise this in their retrospectives.¹⁵⁰ *Le Prolétaire*, for example, stressed that in terms of

‘municipal liberties, they [the Communards] wanted complete decentralisation. In this way, hostilities between Paris and the provinces would cease, communes would govern themselves, and all towns in France would rally to federate in order to defend the Republic’.¹⁵¹

L'Égalité and other papers also frequently published details of 18 March celebrations in the provinces.¹⁵² Such rhetoric, though, was clearly inimical to both the long-standing Blanquist veneration of Paris and their favoured organisational structure of small cells of activists.¹⁵³

Blanquists, effectively, were unable to learn from the Commune's mistakes, for in the changed circumstances of the 1870s, their ideas *were* the mistakes. Geographical and ideological divisions remained much the same as they had in the run up to and during the Commune, but this was not symptomatic of stasis within the revolutionary movement. The circumstances in which they were operating had changed drastically around them, and this slowly altered the purchase and credibility of their ideas. Whereas thinkers from

¹⁴⁸ Lefebvre, *La proclamation de la Commune*, p.154.

¹⁴⁹ See for example Malon, *Le troisième défaite*, p.75. See also Chapter Two.

¹⁵⁰ See, for example, Malon, *Le troisième défaite*, p.535; Lefrançais, *République et Révolution*, pp.21-2; *Le Travailleur*, January-February 1878, p.4; quotes on universalism and federation in an intelligence report to the Préfecture de Police, Geneva, 14 March 1880. APP, BA433/2960.

¹⁵¹ ‘Relativement aux *libertés municipales*, ils voulaient la décentralisation la plus complète: de cette manière, la cessation de l’antagonisme entre Paris et la province, le gouvernement de la commune par la commune, et la fédération de toutes les villes de France solidarisées pour la défense de la République.’ ‘L’anniversaire du 18 mars 1871’, *Le Prolétaire*, 18 March 1879.

¹⁵² ‘Le 18 mars en province’, *L'Égalité*, 23-26 May 1880; ‘Anniversaire du 18 mars’, *Le Citoyen & La Bataille*, 19 March 1883; ‘Le 18 mars à Nice’, *Le Citoyen & La Bataille*, 29 March 1883; ‘Le banquet’, *Le Citoyen & La Bataille*, 13 May 1883.

¹⁵³ ‘Aux communeux’, at p.421.

the minority were able to use their lack of influence and the circumstances of March-May 1871 to transform the Commune into a positive learning experience and even a vindication of their ideas, these very same ideas marginalised Blanquist elements of the revolutionary movement. Even as revolutionaries used the Commune to project an image of unity, their accounts exposed the fallacy of such claims.

The suggestion that commemoration of the Commune was not particularly beneficial to revolutionaries during this period, then, is likely correct. Contrary to the thesis advanced by Hutton in *The Cult of the Revolutionary Tradition*, though, this was not because commemoration or violent interpretations themselves were inherently flawed.¹⁵⁴ Indeed, as we have seen, they were theoretically incredibly effective, enabling revolutionaries to divert attention towards the State's actions in May 1871 and gloss over their own failings. By privileging these memories of violent shared trauma, revolutionaries aimed to begin to both internally reconstruct a united revolutionary community, and simultaneously regain some of the external, popular support they had lost during the Commune. While the Blanquists may have practiced 'a politics of anniversary remembrance', as Hutton terms it, this need not necessarily have been a problem.¹⁵⁵

Rather, violent interpretations' problems derived largely from the effectiveness of their realist counterparts. Realist interpretations were simply better able to take advantage of the situation that revolutionaries found themselves following their 1871 defeat. Former members of the minority were able to go further than majoritarian accounts and embrace not only the final, bloody week of the Commune, but its entire two month duration, acknowledging and (apparently) taking responsibility for their mistakes. Likewise, while the focus on violence may have enabled Blanquists to gloss over their own political, intellectual, and administrative shortcomings, simultaneously the realist accounts of the likes of Arnould, Lefrançais, and Andrieu unearthed and exposed the Blanquists' role in the Commune's failure. Realist writers were thus able to define the Commune not only as a tragic event, but also as an occurrence of considerable intellectual significance. In doing so, they established the Commune as a foundation upon which to begin to build a carefully theorised and viable alternative to both the Third Republic and Marxian socialism in a way that the Blanquists could not.

¹⁵⁴ Hutton, *Cult of the Revolutionary Tradition*, p.36.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.11.

The historian Philippe Darrulat has claimed that '[t]he hundred days that followed [18 March] are well known to us all.'¹⁵⁶ This, however, has not historically been the case. Whilst the image of the Commune was near ubiquitous in the twentieth century, its participants and their ideas have been strangely absent from history. This historiographical absence, though, was not synonymous with a lack of thought. Indeed, revolutionary ideas on the Commune in the years immediately following its fall were abundant. Like its later counterpart, the immediate historiography of the Commune was dominated by two interpretations. One, the realist, focused upon precision, personal experience, and heavy contextualisation of 18 March in order to begin to reinvest the Commune with intellectual import. The other, the violent, ignored the Commune's ideas and its duration, focusing instead on the shared experience of its violent end in an attempt to obscure the mistakes that many revolutionaries had made in spring 1871.

Much as twentieth-century interpretations of the Commune shared a belief in what the Commune was and where its significance lay, the two revolutionary interpretations from our period also shared a similar conviction. French revolutionary thought on the Commune during this period had two interconnected aims: to establish a united French revolutionary identity that was at once politically viable and distinct from both its French and international rivals, and to begin to regain some of the support they had lost during the Commune. Likewise, many of the devices used in order to achieve these intellectual aims were extremely similar. Both realist and violent writers, for example, attempted to relieve the Communards of responsibility for the events of spring 1871 primarily by shifting public focus to the actions of the GND and the Versailles army.

This attachment to the Commune was indicative of neither creeping anachronism nor the poverty of French revolutionary thought. Rather, it constituted an active and pragmatic choice. For revolutionaries cast adrift in the uncertain political circumstances of the period – exile, Moral Order, Opportunist Republicanism – the Commune proved a life raft as they attempted to remain active, and to reorient themselves and their ideas. Yet even as revolutionary writers managed to repurpose this defeat, their ideas on the Commune both emphasised and created deep intellectual divisions and personal grievances that would mark the revolutionary movement for years to come. As a unifier

¹⁵⁶ 'Les cent jours qui suivent nous sont bien connus.' P. Darrulat, *Les patriotes: la gauche républicaine et la nation 1830-1870* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2001), p.278.

and a foundation upon which to rebuild revolutionary identities and ideas, the Commune was fractious and fragile.

This early historiography of the Paris Commune was not at all indicative of the directions that interpretations of 1871 would later take. The realist accounts most popular immediately after the Commune's fall were very much products of their time and place. The reconstruction of the Commune as an intellectually significant event was, as we have seen, only truly beneficial to a small group, and even here its utility was ultimately limited. The 1880 amnesty granted revolutionaries greater access to both the French public and the means by which to reach them. As the decade progressed, the arena in which revolutionaries were able to test or implement their ideas multiplied, and the need to define themselves through the Commune consequently decreased. By the end of the decade, a violent Commune that visualised a dark underside to Opportunist republicanism was more useful to its former participants. Whilst revolutionaries between 1871 and 1885 of course also commoditised the Commune, their thought on the subject was often in marked contrast to the interpretations that would later become dominant.

Contemporary revolutionary thought on the Commune thus directly contradicts the idea that the Commune very quickly became 'the Commune as legend'.¹⁵⁷ Rather, the Commune, as Tombs has argued, 'left various possible memories'.¹⁵⁸ Although moving towards a more purely symbolic interpretation by 1885, for the majority of this period revolutionary thought on the subject was heterogeneous and undefined. Buffeted by the changeable and uncertain circumstances that followed spring 1871, contemporary revolutionary thought on the Commune shifted and swirled in a variety of different directions. This thought cannot be characterised using later neat assignations of 'left' and 'right', or even the labels that are commonly used to distinguish different revolutionary groups during the late nineteenth century, such as 'socialist', 'nationalist', or 'anarchist'. Rather, Communard and French revolutionary thought on the Commune during this period was all of these things at once, often in the ideas of individual writers and publications. In order for the Commune to become an 'event' or a 'legend', it was necessary to achieve some form of closure. During this period, however, no such closure existed. The Commune was still a lived (and living) experience, and its meaning and structure were unclear.

¹⁵⁷ Johnson, *Paradise of Association*, p.276.

¹⁵⁸ Tombs, 'How bloody was *la semaine sanglante*?', at p.703.

Nevertheless as the foundation upon which many revolutionaries sought to rebuild their ideas after 1871, accounts of the Commune touched upon many points that were central themes in revolutionary thought during the period 1871-1885. What exactly was the relationship between French revolutionaries, Marx, and Marxism? How would future revolutions link to those of the past? Did revolutionary change necessitate violence? If so, how should activists go about achieving and justifying this under a republican government? If not, how would they distinguish themselves from these republicans? How would exile, and especially deportation, affect their ideas? It is to these questions, amongst others, that we now turn.

Chapter Two:

Revolutions are never over

The Paris Commune had left revolutionaries battered and bruised. Its survivors were scattered across the globe, and the events of spring 1871 had exposed and deepened the intellectual cracks within the revolutionary movement. Yet the Commune did not, as has previously been suggested, lead to the movement's dismemberment. Rather, in the years that followed 1871 diverse French revolutionaries actively and vocally strove to preserve a sense of unity, emphasising above all the fraternity that their experiences had engendered. Through their use of the Commune and the idea of revolution more broadly, they aimed to rebuild the foundations of a movement that was at once intellectually autonomous and politically viable.

Yet historians have overwhelmingly characterised revolution as a thing of the past by the 1870s. In *La Révolution de Turgot à Jules Ferry*, François Furet famously remarked that in May 1871, '[i]n this burning Paris, the French Revolution said its goodbyes to History'.¹ Robert Tombs has likewise dated the end of revolution as a viable political action to the fall of the Commune, remarking that the myth of the *Semaine Sanglante*

'gave an awful warning against future insurrection, so that even self-proclaimed heirs of the Commune had good reason not to overstep the mark between rhetoric and action'.²

Judgements such as Furet's and Tombs's have been bolstered by the chronological range of work on the revolutionary movement by the likes of John Plamenatz and Philippe Darriulat, which often ends decisively in 1871.³ In this interpretation, any unity based on

¹ 'Dans ce Paris qui brûle, la Révolution française fait ses adieux à l'Histoire'. F. Furet, *La Révolution de Turgot à Jules Ferry* (Paris: Hachette, 1988), p.489.

² R.P. Tombs, 'How bloody was *la semaine Sanglante* of 1871? A revision', *The Historical Journal* 55 (September 2012), 679-704, at p.703. See also R.P. Tombs, *Paris, bivouac des révolutions: la Commune de 1871* (Paris: Éditions Libertalia, 2014. First published in English, 1999), p.368.

³ See for example J. Plamenatz, *The Revolutionary Movement in France 1815-71* (London: Longmans, 1965. First published, 1952); P. Darriulat, *Les patriotes: la gauche républicaine et la nation 1830-1871* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2001).

the idea of revolution was exclusively retrospective. With the scope for revolutionary action in France almost entirely curtailed by the reprisals that followed the Paris Commune and the legal restrictions subsequently implemented by the government, revolution was now a thing of the past.

This perception has proceeded in large part from the widespread association of revolution with recent French history and tradition. Whether taking their cue from Pierre Nora's claim that French national identity has been constituted through a selective 'highlighting of the past' or simply from the seminal events of the late eighteenth century, scholars have devoted a great deal of space and effort to elaborating the political and cultural uses of the French Revolution by subsequent historical actors.⁴ Work entitled *Children of the Revolution*, *Sons of the Revolution*, and *The Past in French History* have proclaimed that it is 'only in the light' of the Revolution that subsequent French history can be understood.⁵ Unsurprisingly, this focus on tradition has been particularly prevalent in work on later French revolutionaries.⁶ The elucidation of such connections is undoubtedly fruitful. Yet the sheer abundance of work on tradition and the force with which historians have emphasised its importance has given the impression that revolution in France during the nineteenth century was understood exclusively in the light of 1789.⁷

According to this definition, those openly identifying as revolutionaries during the 1870s and early 1880s could only ever be anachronistic. Bounded by the parameters of late eighteenth-century France, 'revolution' embodied a specific set of symbolic and

⁴ P. Nora, 'General Introduction: Between Memory and History' in *Realms of Memory, Vol. 1*, ed. P. Nora, 1-21, at p.5. The literature on this subject is vast. See for example A. Gérard, *La Révolution française: mythes et interprétations (1789-1970)* (Paris: Flammarion, 1970); F. Furet, *La Gauche et la Révolution française au milieu du XIXe siècle: Edgar Quinet et la question du Jacobinisme 1865-1870* (Paris: Hachette, 1986); G. Best (ed.), *The Permanent Revolution: The French Revolution and its Legacy 1789-1989* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988); S. Hazareesingh (ed.), *The Jacobin Legacy in Modern France: Essays in Honour of Vincent Wright* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁵ R. Gildea, *The Past in French History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p.61. Emphasis mine. See also J.F. Stone, *Sons of the Revolution: Radical Democrats in France 1862-1914* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996); R. Gildea, *Children of the Revolution: The French, 1799-1914* (London: Allen Lane, 1998).

⁶ See for example R. Soltau, *French Political Thought in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1931), p.xvii; C. Willard, *Socialisme et communisme français* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1978. First published 1967), p.8; P. Hutton, *The Cult of the Revolutionary Tradition: The Blanquists in French Politics, 1864-1893* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), p.3; P.H. Hutton, 'The role of memory in the historiography of the French Revolution', *History and Theory* 30 (February 1991), 56-69; M. Crapez, *La Gauche réactionnaire: mythes de la plèbe et de la race* (Paris: Berg International Editeurs, 1997), p.15; J. Moreau, *Les socialistes français et le mythe révolutionnaire* (Paris: Hachette, 2003), p.26.

⁷ J. Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic: A History of Political Thought in France since the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.390.

conceptual characteristics: attempts to violently overthrow a pre-existing regime, for example, or a strong commitment to republicanism. In the new democratic Republican State of the 1870s, none of these characteristics represented a viable form of political opposition. While the memory of revolution may have lived on, historians have suggested, the threat of a real, material revolution was dead – and with it, the concept's power to incite meaningful political opposition. The 'revolutionary quest', to quote Eugen Weber, became 'increasingly eccentric to real life and real politics' during this period.⁸

It is thus tempting to assume that the revolutionary unity identified in Chapter One was based upon little more than memories. In the changed circumstances of early Third Republic France, where traditional revolutionary action was no longer either practicable or popular, what revolution could activists possibly have had in mind other than memories of the Commune and of other revolutions past?

This chapter seeks to free late nineteenth-century French thought on revolution from the shadow of 1789. Through a comprehensive reassessment of the various contexts in which the word 'revolution' was used during this period, it shall become clear that activists' definitions and understandings of revolution during this period were considerably more multilayered than has previously been assumed. Revolutionary activists did not see revolution only in terms of recent French history, and neither did they conceive of it as a thing of the past. Rather, drawing upon a variety of different 'traditions' and temporalities, revolutionaries defined revolution in three interrelated but distinct ways: as an historical occurrence, a religious experience, and a force of nature. These cast the concept in broad, flexible, and expansive terms designed to simultaneously appeal to convinced activists, seek out new audiences, and redefine large swathes of the population as 'revolutionaries', thus ensuring their own continued political relevance.

In his seminal 1979 work *Futures Past*, Reinhart Koselleck observed that for the contemporary reader,

⁸ E. Weber, 'The nineteenth-century fallout', in Best, *The Permanent Revolution*, 155-181, at p.171. See also E. Jousse, 'La construction intellectuelle du socialisme réformiste en France, de la Commune à la Grande Guerre' (unpublished PhD thesis, Sciences-Po, 2013), p.174.

‘[t]he semantic content of the word “revolution”...ranges from bloody political and social convulsions to decisive scientific innovations; it can signify the whole spectrum, or alternatively, one form to the exclusion of the remainder.’⁹

‘Revolution’, in other words, was a broad church capable of accommodating various different meanings, whether successively or all at once. French revolutionaries in this period also conceived of revolution in these terms. They were neither insensible to the problems created by the fall of the Commune, nor reliant upon the memory of revolutions past for their continued unity.

This broad conception of revolution, however, was not simply a response to the failure of the Commune and the changed circumstances of the Third Republic. While it was undoubtedly beneficial during this period, it had been a feature of revolutionary thought since at least the 1850s. Eager to prove that their political ambitions were not naïve or utopian, in the wake of 1848 radicals and revolutionaries across Europe had begun to search for alternative ways to define and present revolution. While the specific formulations of the 1870s and early 1880s may have differed from those of 1870-71, the ways in which activists conceived of revolution and its place in French society had not changed. In fact, they were much the same. If there were a point during the nineteenth century at which the means of thinking and talking about revolution changed, it was 1848 rather than 1871.

In order to delineate the nature and success of these concurrent definitions, this chapter draws upon a diverse array of primary material. It examines various books and newspaper articles on revolution published during this period, but also reaches beyond these traditional sources.¹⁰ The 1870s and early 1880s saw revolutionaries such as the academic geographer Élisée Reclus deliver various public lectures on relevant subjects, and the chapter draws heavily upon the transcripts of these.¹¹ In addition to work intended for a primarily revolutionary audience, the chapter also takes into account literature intended for wider dissemination, including pamphlets on revolution smuggled

⁹ R. Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (trans.) K. Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004. First published in German, 1979), p.44.

¹⁰ For example C. Beslay, *1830-1848-1870: Mes souvenirs* (Neuchâtel: Imprimerie James Attinger, 1873); G. Lefrançais, *République et Révolution: de l'attitude à prendre par le prolétariat en présence des partis politiques* (Geneva: Imprimerie Ve Blanchard, 1873); A. Regnard, *Études de politique scientifique: la révolution sociale, ses origines, son développement et son but* (London: publisher unspecified, 1876); A. Arnould, *L'État et la Révolution* (Lyons: Éditions Jacques-Marie Laffont et Associés, 1981. First published, 1877); J. Guesde, *Collectivisme et Révolution* (Paris: Librairie des Publications Populaires, 1879).

¹¹ É. Reclus, *La nouvelle géographie: la terre et les hommes*, 19 vols. (Paris: Hachette, 1876-1894); É. Reclus, *Évolution et révolution: conférence faite à Genève, le 5 mars 1880* (Geneva: Imprimerie jurassienne, 1880).

into France during the 1870s to the various newspapers established by revolutionaries outside of Paris in the 1880s.¹² Finally, in order to delineate the breaks and continuities in characterisations of revolution, the chapter also compares the material from this period to relevant revolutionary and radical work from the 1850s, 1860s, and the *année terrible* of 1870-71.¹³

The chapter is divided into three sections, each of which examines a different context in which revolution was discussed. Section One addresses the widespread suggestion that revolution during this period was defined by the parameters of 1789. By exploring more fully the links between history, France, and revolution, demonstrates that these connections were indicative neither of deep revolutionary attachment to the French Revolution nor the construction of an enduring 'revolutionary tradition'. Section Two further delineates activists' continued belief in the viability of revolution, exploring their attempts and ultimate failure to appeal to the countryside and broaden its national support-base through the characterisation of revolution as a religious experience. These continued attempts to thrust revolution upon the French population, however, were not entirely quixotic, and Section Three explores the ways in which activists sought to rejuvenate revolution by situating it within the context of evolution and the natural world, simultaneously neutralising their own recent failures and redefining revolution as the practice of everyday life.

I: History

Certainly, as much of the secondary literature has indicated, works on the future of revolution from this period repeatedly referred to the past. For many activists, revolution was a profoundly historical concept. Victor Marouck, for example, warned readers of the *Revue socialiste* that a revolution could not be separated from the past, for it

¹² For example, F. Pyat, *Lettre au peuple de Lyon* (London: *Courrier révolutionnaire*, 1875); A. Rocher, *La vie du Citoyen Jésus-Christ par le Citoyen Satan* (Geneva: Imprimerie V. Blanchard, 1875); *L'Émancipation* (Lyons, October-November 1880).

¹³ For example G. Flourens, *L'histoire de l'homme: cours d'histoire naturelle des corps organisés au Collège de France* (Paris: Imprimerie de E. Martinet, 1863-64); *La patrie en danger* (Paris), September 1870-March 1871.

‘takes place in history’.¹⁴ Jules Andrieu likewise averred that knowledge of the history was central to the success of revolution, observing:

[t]here can be no radicalism without a knowledge of causes. He who wishes to find a cure must make a diagnosis of the past as well as the present. He must know the roots of the problem in order to uproot them.¹⁵

Revolution, in other words, was an occurrence firmly embedded in time and experience. It was not merely connected to history, but inseparable from it. Knowledge of the past was indispensable to the proper understanding of present discontents, and if the revolutionary movement aspired to either widespread support or a realistic chance of success, it had first to establish an historical basis for its ideas.

I

The historical events to feature most frequently in work on revolution during this period were undoubtedly the French Revolution and its successors of 1830 and 1848 [henceforth referred to collectively as 1789 or the Revolution].¹⁶ Channelling Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès’s famous maxim, writers frequently referred to workers as ‘the Fourth Estate’ – the latest stage in a long revolution.¹⁷ Revolutionary events, meetings,

¹⁴ ‘une Révolution prend place dans l’histoire’. V. Marouck, ‘Le Socialisme officiel sous la Commune’, in *La Revue Socialiste* 7 (5 June 1880), 330-36, at p.333. See also A. Arnould, *Histoire populaire et parlementaire de la Commune de Paris*, 3 vols. (Brussels: Imprimerie A. Lefevre, 1878), vol.2, p.159.

¹⁵ ‘Il n’est point de radicalisme sans la connaissance des causes; qui veut guérir doit porter un diagnostic autant sur le passé que sur le présent. Il doit connaître les racines du mal pour les extirper radicalement.’ J. Andrieu, *Notes pour servir à l’histoire de la Commune de Paris en 1871* (Paris: Payot, 1971), pp.154-55. See also Beslay, *Mes souvenirs*, p.7; B. Malon, *Exposé des écoles socialistes françaises* (Paris: A. Le Chevalier, 1872), p.229; ‘L’anniversaire du 18 mars 1871’, *Le Prolétaire* (Paris), 18 March 1879; ‘Il y a cinq ans’. *L’Égalité* (Paris), 19 November 1882;

¹⁶ See for example intelligence report to the Préfecture de Police, Geneva, 26 September 1876. Archives de la Préfecture de Police (APP) BA432/1989; J. Bergeret, *Le 18 mars: journal hebdomadaire* (London and Brussels, 1871), pp.31-32; G. Lefrançais, *Étude sur le mouvement communaliste à Paris en 1871* (Neuchâtel: Imprimerie G. Guillaume Fils, 1871), p.340 and p.356; ‘Preface to the second edition’ (1896), in P.-O. Lissagaray, *Histoire de la Commune de 1871* (Paris: Maspero, 1967. First published, 1876), p.15; ‘Le 18 Mars’, *L’Égalité*, 18 March 1880; B. Malon. ‘La réserve révolutionnaire’, *L’Intransigeant*, 1 December 1883; H. Rochefort, ‘Les entrailles de Jules Ferry’, *L’Intransigeant*, 30 June 1884.

¹⁷ ‘le Quatrième État’. Intelligence report to the Préfecture de Police, 24 February 1881 (Lyons). APP Ba199/476; Arnould, *L’État et la Révolution*, p.69; J. Guesde, *Services publics et socialisme* (Bordeaux: Imprimerie E. Forastié, 1883), p.4; J. Guesde, ‘L’opportunisme ouvrier’, *L’Égalité*, 10 February 1878; ‘L’anniversaire du 18 mars 1871’, *Le Prolétaire*, 18 March 1879; ‘Étude sociale’, *Le Prolétaire*, 25 October 1879; ‘Aux Travailleurs!’, *Le Prolétaire*, 17 January 1880; V. Marouck, ‘Les socialistes en France’, in *La revue socialiste* 2 (20 February 1880), 108-112, at p.111; B. Malon, ‘Les Partis ouvriers en France’, in *La revue socialiste* 5 (5 May 1880), 257-269, at p.266; J. Guesde, ‘République et socialisme’, *L’Émancipation*, 31 October 1880.

and congresses were similarly swathed in the symbolism of 1789, from busts of Marianne to red caps of liberty,¹⁸ and newspapers daily reaffirmed these connections in the form of the revolutionary calendar and titles nostalgic for the great papers of the 1790s.¹⁹

Activists during this period thus went to considerable lengths to link themselves to the French Revolution. Indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to suggest that it was everywhere. Wherever the contemporary revolutionary turned, whether they were at a political meeting, in a café, or simply at home reading the news, they were likely to stumble across the Revolution.

Historians have often interpreted the frequency of these references as evidence of a strong attachment to 1789. Patrick Hutton, for instance, placed the recent French past at the centre of the Blanquists' political thought during this period, arguing that they sought to overcome the tactical blow dealt to them in spring 1871 by positioning themselves as the supreme guardians of a 'French revolutionary tradition'.²⁰ More recently, Jacques Moreau suggested in *Les socialistes français et le mythe révolutionnaire* that all French socialists conceived of revolutionary action within and through the framework of their nation's recent past. Revolutionaries during this period, he claimed, had

lived through 1870-71, their parents remembered 1848 and even 1830, and the memory of the Great Revolution was less than a hundred years old. When they spoke of revolution, it was an event of this kind that they envisaged?²¹

Despite their differences of opinion as to the precise nature of its role, then, historians have overwhelmingly agreed that clear memories of 1789 and strong convictions regarding its contemporary political utility formed the basis of activists' understandings of revolution and their own place in society during this period.

¹⁸ 'Quatrième congrès national-socialiste-ouvrier', *L'Émancipation*, 20 November 1880.

¹⁹ In fact, seven newspapers during this period were called some permutation of *Le Père Duchêne*: *Le Vrai Père Duchêne* (Paris), March 1871; *La grande colère du Père Duchêne* (Paris), March-May 1871; *Le fils du Père Duchêne illustré* (Paris), April-May 1871; *Le Père Duchêne: journal des honnêtes gens* (Paris), June-July 1876; *Le Père Duchêne* (Sèvres), June-August 1878; *Le Père Duchêne illustré* (Paris), December 1878-January 1879; *Le Père Duchêne: journal quotidien*, August-September 1885. For more on this, see M. Crapez, *La Gauche réactionnaire: mythes de la plèbe et de la race* (Paris: Berg International Editeurs, 1997), p.28. For more on the revolutionary calendar, see S. Perovic, *The Calendar in Revolutionary France: Perceptions of Time in Literature, Culture, Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

²⁰ Hutton, *The Cult of the Revolutionary Tradition*, pp.14-15; p.166.

²¹ 'Les militants du POF avaient vécu 1870-1871, leurs parents avaient connu 1848, voire 1830, et le souvenir de la Grande Révolution n'était vieux que de moins d'un siècle. Quand ils parlaient de révolution, c'est à un événement de cette nature qu'ils songeaient.' Moreau, *Les socialistes français et le mythe révolutionnaire*, p.26. See also Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic*, p.390; F. Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution* (trans.) E. Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981. First published in French, 1978), p.5.

Upon closer inspection, however, revolutionaries' relationships with 1789 appear to have been considerably more complicated than this. While Benoît Malon, for example, vaguely recommended that contemporary activists draw inspiration from their eighteenth-century predecessors, he did not specify which of many eighteenth-century revolutionaries he meant or the form that such inspiration should take.²² Others, meanwhile, vacillated about the Revolution over several texts. In 1874 Gustave Lefrançais attempted to distance the Paris Commune from all other nineteenth-century revolutions, asserting that 'the movement of 18 March 1871 has nothing in common with the political revolutions that have occurred since 9 Thermidor'.²³ Several years later, however, he readily likened 1871 to 1848, even describing the similarities between the two as 'striking'.²⁴

During the nineteenth century, many writers presented detailed historicophilosophical interpretations of the Revolution that left little doubt as to their ideas on recent French history or its relationship to contemporary politics.²⁵ Revolutionaries from this period, however, were visibly not among them. Rather, although they may have mentioned it frequently, many activists appeared uncertain as to what they thought of the Revolution, and even what constituted it.

Still others, meanwhile, sought to distance themselves from 1789 altogether. Reflecting upon the last century of French history in 1878, Arthur Arnould observed dispassionately that, while memorable, its revolutionary upheavals had been overwhelmingly unsuccessful:

'after six Revolutions in less than a century, a beheaded king, four others dead in exile, and three Republics, the people in France are no more advanced than they were on day one, and find themselves always on the cusp of a new Revolution,

²² B. Malon, 'Les Partis ouvriers en France', in *La revue socialiste* 5 (5 May 1880), 257-269, at p.268; B. Malon, 'L'économie politique du Conseil municipal de Paris', *L'Intransigeant*, 1 January 1882.

²³ 'le mouvement du 18 mars 1871 n'avait aucun rapport avec les révolutions politiques qui l'avaient précédé depuis le 9 thermidor'. G. Lefrançais, *L'idée libertaire dans la Commune de 1871* (Cahiers de contre-courant 66, April 1958. First published, 1874), p.18. See also Intelligence report to the Préfecture de Police, Geneva, 28 February 1878. APP, BA433/2297; Intelligence report to the Préfecture de Police, Paris, 7 September 1879. APP, BA433/2764; G.-P. Cluseret, *Mémoires du Général Cluseret*, 3 vols. (Paris: Jules Levy, 1887-1888), vol.2, p.265.

²⁴ 'saisissante'. G. Lefrançais, 'Juin 1848: les Républicains bourgeois devant la République sociale', *Le Travailleur* 2:1 (January-February 1878), p.32. See also 'Un anniversaire', *Le Prolétaire*, 18 March 1882. Compare also 'Notre abstention', *Le Prolétaire*, 24 July 1880; 'Juillet 1789', *Le Prolétariat*, 11 July 1885.

²⁵ For more on using the Revolution as a historicophilosophical concept, see Koselleck, *Futures Past*, p.51. See for example Furet, *La Gauche et la Révolution française au milieu du XIXe siècle*; L. Blanc, *Histoire de la Révolution française*, 12 vols. (Paris: Langlois et Leclerc, 1847-1862); J. Michelet, *Histoire de la Révolution française*, 9 vols. (Paris: Chamerot, 1847-1853).

which will be as sterile as the others if we do not finally get ourselves out of this rut.²⁶

Le Prolétaire appeared similarly unimpressed, asking of 1793, '[i]t defeated Europe, erased federalism, decapitated the reaction, and seemed victorious; and then what?'²⁷ While such forceful criticisms remained unusual, their presence – especially in widely read publications such as *Le Prolétaire* – is nonetheless instructive. Not only were parts of the revolutionary movement unsure as to their thought on 1789, but also others were actively hostile towards the precedent it set. Far from an example to be emulated or venerated, for the likes of Arnould and *Le Prolétaire*, France's recent revolutionary history was rather evidence of what to avoid.

In fact, wariness of 1789 and the idea of a 'revolutionary tradition' permeated the entire revolutionary movement. 'Realist' writers such as Arnould and Andrieu frequently claimed that the Commune's reverence for the Revolution had been one of its gravest failings.²⁸ So too, however, did many former members of the majority. In his *Mémoires*, the Blanquist general Gustave-Paul Cluseret lamented that '[a]s soon as a fleeting triumph puts power in the hands of the people, they use it to reconstitute the past'.²⁹ The Blanquist exile newspaper *La Fédération*, which fiercely defended many of the majority's decisions, likewise sought to dissociate its ideas from the recent French past, not mentioning 1789 even when discussing concepts with a decidedly revolutionary

²⁶ 'après six Révolutions en moins d'un siècle, après un roi guillotiné, quatre autres morts en exil, après trois Républiques, le peuple en France, n'est pas beaucoup plus avancé qu'au premier jour, et se trouve toujours à la veille d'une nouvelle Révolution qui sera aussi inféconde que les précédentes, si on ne sort enfin de l'ornière.' Arnould, *Histoire populaire et parlementaire de la Commune*, vol.3, p.124. See also S. Lacroix, 'De 1792 à 1876', *Les droits de l'homme*, 22 September 1876; H. Rochefort, 'Retour à l'ancien régime', *L'Intransigeant*, 18 August 1883; 'Le 31 Octobre 1870', *Le Prolétariat*, 25 October 1884.

²⁷ 'La force', *Le Prolétariat*, 13 December 1884. For more criticisms of early revolutions, see Lefrançais, *L'idée libertaire dans la Commune de 1871*, p.6; B. Malon, 'Un chapitre de la genèse propriétaire à propos du 14 juillet', *Le Prolétaire*, 15 July 1882; 'Amnistiel', *Le Prolétariat*, 12 July 1884.

²⁸ Arnould, *Histoire populaire et parlementaire de la Commune*, vol.2, p.83, see also pp.103-04; Andrieu, *Notes pour servir à l'histoire de la Commune*, pp.100-01. See also R. Urbain, 'Vae Victis', *Foundations* Lucien Descaves, International Institute of Social History (IISH), 1035, p.5; Lefrançais, *Étude sur le mouvement communaliste*, p.247 and p.277; Lefrançais, *République et Révolution*, p.8; 'Moralités révolutionnaires', *Les droits de l'homme*, 12 August 1876; C. Bouis, 'Demain', *Le Citoyen*, 15 July 1882; P. Brousse, 'La force', *Le Prolétariat*, 13 December 1884; P.-O. Lisaagaray, 'La loi du drapeau', *La Bataille*, 4 June 1885.

²⁹ 'Aussitôt qu'un triomphe éphémère met le pouvoir aux mains du peuple, le premier usage qu'il en fait est de reconstituer le passé.' Cluseret, *Mémoires du Général Cluseret*, vol.2, pp.217-18; see also vol.1, p.38. See also Bergeret, *Le 18 mars*, p.9; 'La contagion cléricale', *L'Intransigeant*, 30 July 1880; J. H. Rochefort, 'Le blâme platonique', *L'Intransigeant*, 18 March 1881; M. Talmeyr, 'L'in vraisemblable', *L'Intransigeant*, 24 January 1882.

heritage such as liberty and equality.³⁰ Ambivalence towards the Revolution was thus not simply the preserve of a few publications or small parts of the revolutionary movement. Rather, it was extremely widespread, and even the Blanquists – the purported architects of the ‘revolutionary tradition’ – routinely sought to distance themselves from it.

Despite their frequent references to it, then, activists in the immediate post-Commune period neither defined nor interpreted revolution in the terms of 1789. Rather, revolutionary interactions with 1789 were considerably more complicated and ambiguous than the clear and unqualified respect that historians have often suggested. Certainly activists frequently made reference to the Revolution and appeared interested in establishing a general connection to it. Yet at the same time, revolutionaries did not advance a clear interpretation of 1789 as a movement or as individuals, and their references to it denoted neither a strong emotional commitment to 1789 nor any clearly defined intellectual positions on it. In fact, revolutionaries actively sought to distance themselves from strong, definitive connections to 1789 and any suggestion of a ‘revolutionary tradition’.

II

Rather, it was elsewhere that activists found their revolutionary history. Revolutionary work on the Paris Commune provides a particularly clear illustration of this. Writers employing both the realist and violent interpretations identified in Chapter One were eager to provide the events of 1871 with a long historical genealogy and prove that the ‘idea of the Commune’ was, to quote Andrieu, ‘as old as it is new’.³¹ Malon, for example, began *Le troisième défaite du prolétariat français* by observing, ‘it is not only in our times that the exploited have risen up against their oppressors’,³² while *Qui Vive!* and others traced the Commune’s heritage back to medieval ‘revolutionaries’ such as Étienne Marcel.³³ Charles Beslay similarly compared the Commune to ‘[t]he slave revolts of

³⁰ ‘Projet pour une fédération socialiste’, *La Fédération* (London), 28 September 1872.

³¹ ‘L’idée de la Commune, quoique beaucoup plus neuve, tant elle est vieille’. Andrieu, *Notes pour servir à l’histoire de la Commune*, p.99. Some writers also attempted to place the Commune within a wider spatial as well as temporal context; see B. Malon, *Le troisième défaite du prolétariat français* (Neuchâtel: G. Guillaume Fils, 1871), pp.29-30.

³² ‘ce n’est pas de nos jours seulement que des exploités se sont soulevés contre les exploités’. Malon, *Le troisième défaite du prolétariat français*, p.7.

³³ *Qui vive!* (London), 12 October 1871. For more feudal references, see also Lefrançais, *Étude sur le mouvement communaliste*, p.393; Arnould, *Histoire populaire et parlementaire de la Commune*, vol.2, pp.48-49.

antiquity',³⁴ and Cluseret named 'Spartacus, Jan Hus, Munster, and all the others who, defeated, also pulled down the regimes that had defeated them' as inspirations.³⁵ Revolutionaries certainly mentioned 1789 in their work on the Commune, yet their historical reflections did not end at the late-eighteenth century. They also reached considerably further back into the past for their examples, indeed often suggesting that they identified far more closely with these than with 1789 and its successors. While 1789 featured in revolutionary accounts of the Commune's history, simultaneously these longer genealogies self-consciously provincialised it.

By providing these additional historical precedents for the Commune, revolutionaries sought to establish an alternative rationale for revolution. In both revolutionary literature and wider political culture during this period, the French Revolution was chiefly characterised as a struggle for the provision of legal and political rights.³⁶ The earlier historical figures that revolutionaries chose to associate themselves with, on the other hand, were overwhelmingly associated with social or populist revolts. Spartacus had helped to instigate the Third Servile War against the Roman Republic, while Étienne Marcel was renowned for his opposition to the throne and defence of Parisian craftsmen during the fourteenth century. In establishing links to such characters as well as to 1789, revolutionaries pointedly attempted to construct an image of the Commune, revolution, and themselves that was not bounded by modern French revolutionary traditions. Revolutionaries were not simply seeking to build upon or enhance the historical legitimacy provided by 1789. Instead, they also sought to prove it with an alternative rationale by establishing a much older source of legitimacy, and in doing so redefining revolution as an action that transcended the political.

Revolutionaries were also concerned to emphasise that the Commune had been a specifically French event. Writers frequently compared the official reaction to the Commune to the Wars of Religion and dubbed the Semaine Sanglante a 'socialist Saint Bartholomew'.³⁷ The Albigensian Crusade also proved a popular point of comparison.

³⁴ 'Les soulèvements des esclaves dans l'Antiquité'. Beslay, *Mes souvenirs*, p.472. See also B. Malon, *Spartacus, ou la guerre des esclaves* (Verviers: Imprimerie d'Emile Piette, 1876).

³⁵ 'Spartacus, Jean Huss, Munster et tant d'autres qui ont eu la leur [leur histoire], et dont la chute, par parenthèse, entraîna celle des régimes qui les avaient vaincus'. Cluseret, *Mémoires*, vol.1, p.10. See also Bergeret, *Le 18 mars*, pp.22-23.

³⁶ See for example Intelligence report to the Préfecture de Police, 11 September 1877 (London). APP Ba429/2406; Lefrançais, *République et Révolution*, p.21; 'Prudence!', *Le Prolétaire*, 8 December 1883.

³⁷ 'saint-Barthélemy du socialisme'. Malon, *Le troisième défaite du prolétariat français*, p.398; Andrieu, *Notes pour servir à l'histoire de la Commune*, p.141; Beslay, *Mes souvenirs*, p.6; 'Souvenons-nous!', *Le Prolétaire*, 18 March 1880; H. Rochefort, 'Le vrai Trinquet', *L'Intransigeant*, 14 January 1881. For

Referring to its infamous massacre and immolation by Catholic forces in 1209, for instance, Arnould accused Thiers of having ‘made Paris into an Albigensian Béziers’.³⁸ Indeed, *Qui Vive!* claimed that communalism had originated with King Aétius of the Franks.³⁹ These descriptions of the Commune’s French origins were accompanied by parallel emphases upon the foreign origins of the revolution’s perceived enemies.⁴⁰ It has often been suggested that activists during this period faced a choice between viable revolution and loyalty to France.⁴¹ This, however, was quite clearly not the case. Although the Commune represented the iteration of a potentially universal idea, revolutionaries remained keen to emphasise that its ‘social’ nature had not been its sole defining characteristic; it had also been a specifically French revolution.

In fact, maintaining the connections between revolution and France was particularly important for activists during this period. Bismarck’s comprehensive victory in the Franco Prussian War had led to many misgivings about contemporary France’s moral stature, yet the French population remained demonstrably attached to their nation. Writing to Friedrich Engels in 1885, for example, Laura Lafargue noted that

[n]othing acts on the imagination and the feeling of Frenchmen like the sudden news of disaster in their wars abroad: the horror of want of work and food at home leaves them tame in comparison and indeed takes the heart out of them, while the fact that a few hundred Frenchmen have fallen on foreign battlefields will, at any time, sting them into madness.⁴²

While they frequently condemned contemporary nationalism as a bourgeois distraction, revolutionaries were not insensible to patriotic sentiment either. Reflecting on his years in exile, the deportee Achille Ballière noted while it was

another reference to the Wars of Religion, see B. Malon, ‘Les Partis ouvriers en France’, in *La Revue socialiste* 5 (5 May 1880), 257-269, at p.262. For a reference to the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, see P. Martine, *Souvenirs d’un insurgé de la Commune*, (ed.) J. Suffel (Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin, 1971), p.306.

³⁸ ‘il a fait de Paris un Béziers au temps des Albigeois’. Arnould, *Histoire populaire et parlementaire de la Commune*, vol.3, pp.24-25; p.104. For another reference to the Albigensian crusade, see P. Lafargue, ‘Blagues bourgeoises: la patrie’, *L’Égalité*, 17 November 1884.

³⁹ *Qui vive!*, 8-9 October 1871.

⁴⁰ See for example Andrieu, *Notes pour servir à l’histoire de la Commune*, p.34.

⁴¹ Bernstein, *Beginnings of Marxian Socialism*, p.xxi. See also C. Cruise O’Brien, ‘Nationalism and the French Revolution’, in Best, *The Permanent Revolution*, 17-48, at p.46; Darriulat, *Les patriotes*, p.281.

⁴² 149: L. Lafargue to F. Engels, 1 April 1885 (Paris), in F. Engels, P. and L. Lafargue, *Correspondence*, 3 vols. (trans.) Y. Kapp (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959), vol.1, 279-280, at pp.279-80.

‘true that all people are brothers, ...amidst all of these brothers, one always needs a place to rest one’s head, and the preferred place is always of course in one’s home country. Is it really living if one lives so far from his own, his *patrie*, the country where he was born, where he speaks the national language, far from the sites, the woods, the meadows where he felt the first stirrings of his own thought?’⁴³

Forcing a choice between France and revolution would thus have been vastly unpopular, indeed suicidal, not only with the general population, but within the revolutionary movement itself. In order to retain their support base as well as their intellectual distinctiveness, it was necessary for activists to construct a revolution that was distinctly French yet not reliant upon 1789.

Alongside a social vision, revolutionary accounts of the Commune thus also offered their readers a kind of alternative patriotism. In linking the Commune to a series of French outcasts and historical ‘losers’ such as the Albigensians and the Huguenots, revolutionary writers attempted to establish an alternative French history of minority groups defeated by monolithic contemporary ‘forces of order’.⁴⁴ In turn, this acted as a way for writers to encourage their readers to reflect on what it meant to be French, and to position the Commune as a struggle for the right to express French (or indeed any) citizenship in plural ways.

In *The Paradise of Association*, his account of political clubs during the Commune, Martin Johnson claimed that

‘Communards interpreted their struggle as part of a larger process, a battle of two worlds, begun by the revolution of 1789 and continuing in new guises throughout the intervening eighty years.’⁴⁵

Johnson is certainly correct that the French Revolution featured regularly in revolutionary work both during and after the Commune. Activists during this period, however, did not regard 1789 as either the chronological or intellectual origin of their

⁴³ ‘Les peuples tous des frères, c’est convenu...mais encore faut-il, au milieu de ces frères, une pierre pour reposer sa tête, et celle que l’on préfère est toujours celle qui se trouve au pays natal. Est-ce vivre que de vivre loin des siens, loin de sa patrie, loin de la contrée où l’on a ressenti les premiers élans de la pensée?’ E.-A. Ballière, *La Déportation de 1871: Souvenirs d’un évadé de Nouméa* (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1889), p.414. See also Intelligence report to the Préfecture de Police. 3 August 1877 (London). APP Ba429/2363; H. Rochefort, ‘Merci!’, *L’Intransigeant*, 15 July 1880; C. Bouis, ‘Le 14 juillet’, *L’Intransigeant*, 16 July 1880; H. Rochefort, ‘L’invasion étrangère’, *L’Intransigeant*, 6 September 1883.

⁴⁴ See also E. Renan, *Qu’est-ce qu’une nation? Conférence faite en Sorbonne, le 11 mars 1882* (Paris: Calmann Levy, 1882), p.27.

⁴⁵ M.P. Johnson, *The Paradise of Association: Political Culture and Popular Organisations in the Paris Commune of 1871* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996), p.281.

present struggles. Rather, they reached far further back into the past in their attempts to provide an historical genealogy for the Commune and their present actions. In doing so, revolutionaries were able to depict themselves as patriotic citizens without involving themselves in modern bourgeois nationalism or compromising their own unique position. By abandoning 1789, they argued, they were not counterposing revolution and nationalism, but rather attempting to pull the two together.

III

This expansive approach towards revolutionary history was unsurprising given the changing status of revolution and the Revolution in France during this period. By the end of the 1870s, the security of the Republican State was to all intents and purposes assured. The passage of the 1875 Constitutional Laws had reorganised the government, the Senate, and the relationship between the two, giving the Republic a clearly defined political system. The fall of the Moral Order government two years later and the subsequent installation of the actively republican and reforming Opportunists put the final nail in the coffin of the attempts at monarchical restoration that had characterised the early 1870s. Several powerful and influential sections of society including the army and the Church, however, remained unconvinced of the ability of either the Opportunists or republican government more generally to adequately represent their interests.⁴⁶ Indeed, the Catholic Church did not endorse the Republic until the 1892 encyclical *Au milieu des sollicitudes*. While the Republican State may have become legally and constitutionally secure in the second half of the 1870s, for many years republicans' place within it was not and the precise form that the government would take remained to be decided.

Aside from automatic ideological opposition, concerns about republican government derived in large part from the persistent association of it with revolution. In 1873, for example, Lefrançais complained that

⁴⁶ Plamenatz, *The Revolutionary Movement in France*, p.162; P. Nord, *The Republican Moment: Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp.247-49.

‘[f]or almost a century, Republic and Revolution have walked in tandem in our history and...people have come to believe that the more or less unforeseen arrival of the first must therefore lead to the revival and triumph of the latter.’⁴⁷

Satisfactorily resolving this situation, as Sudhir Hazareesingh has observed, was one of the most important tasks that advocates of republican government faced, both in opposition during the 1870s and after the Opportunists came to power.⁴⁸ On the one hand, republicans were eager to pay the Revolution the respect that they as well as many liberals and radicals believed it deserved.⁴⁹ Yet on the other, it was essential to reassure sceptical citizens and social institutions that a truly Republican State would ensure political, social, and economic stability rather than destroy it.

Seemingly paradoxically, the Revolution played a central role in the government’s efforts to prove its political worth. Rather than seeking to distance themselves from France’s revolutionary history, republicans embraced it. After being welcomed back to France with open arms in 1870, *quarante-buitard* exiles such as Victor Hugo and Louis Blanc quickly took up seats in the Assemblée nationale, while public events such as the 1878 Festival of Work and Labour were enthusiastically draped in the symbolism of the late eighteenth-century. In 1880, the government declared the Fête de la Bastille a national holiday, and the Revolution’s centenary in 1889 was also lavishly celebrated. The *Exposition universelle* even included a scale replica of the Bastille and its surroundings, enabling visitors to place themselves in the shoes of famous revolutionaries past. The horrors of the Paris Commune clearly had not put the Opportunists and their allies off the French revolutionary past. Indeed, during this period it was promoted and celebrated on a scale not seen since the 1790s.

At the same time as they lauded revolution, though, these celebrations also historicised it. Republicans during this period demonstrably did not seek to draw any lessons for the future from 1789, but rather emphasised its historical character. It is no coincidence that the creation of the first professorial chair in the history of the

⁴⁷ ‘Depuis bientôt un siècle, République et Révolution marchent de pair dans notre histoire et...le peuple en est arrivé à croire que l’avènement plus ou moins fortuit de la première doit forcément amener le réveil et le triomphe de l’autre.’ Lefrançais, *République et Révolution*, p.6.

⁴⁸ S. Hazareesingh, *Intellectual Founders of the Republic: Five Studies in Nineteenth-Century French Republican Political Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. First published, 2001), p.297.

⁴⁹ For liberal praise of the Revolution see for example É. Laboulaye, *Le parti libéral: son programme et son avenir*, 4th edn (Paris: Charpentier, 1864), p.316. For more on the Revolution’s broad appeal, see Hazareesingh, *Intellectual Founders of the Republic*, pp.294-5.

Revolution took place in 1886.⁵⁰ By promoting, indeed apotheosising the events of 1789 to such a degree, republicans hoped to definitively tie revolution the action to Revolution the historical event, and in doing so simultaneously demonstrate that revolution was an exceptional occurrence that neither could nor should be repeated rather than a potentially ongoing process. Revolutions, in other words, did not take place in history: they were history. Through this, they sought to neutralise two diametrically opposed threats to republican government concurrently, both denying political legitimacy to potential future revolutionaries and reassuring more conservative members of the population that they too sought stability.

Indeed, they suggested, republican government was more than simply in favour of social and political stability: it was essential to its maintenance. In both their discussions and celebrations of the Revolution, republicans primarily emphasised the value of its early events and achievements such as the fall of the Bastille, the *Declaration of the Rights of Man*, universal suffrage, and the abolition of the monarchy. Historically, of course, this defined the Revolution as a republican event, but more importantly in terms of contemporary politics, it tied both the end of revolution and the final achievement of its aims specifically to republican government. It was the Republic that had instituted full and democratic elections, and the Opportunists who had put an end to attempts at restoration, first by supporting the 1875 laws and then by entering into government themselves. It was thus republicans, their ideas, and their tenure of power that kept revolution at bay. Their specific conceptualisation of the Revolution was therefore a warning as well as a reassurance. Through its promotion, Opportunists and radicals alike sought to stabilise the position of truly republican government by cautioning its detractors that a return to anything else could bring about a reversal of the previous decade's progress and the relative political stability that France enjoyed during the early 1880s.

⁵⁰ The chair was created at the Sorbonne. For more on Augustin Cochin, the first holder of the chair, see 'Augustin Cochin: the theory of Jacobinism', in Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, 164-2-4. For more on the professionalisation of history in the Third Republic, see I. Noronha-DiVanna, *Writing History in the Third Republic* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2010). For histories of the Revolution either written or republished during this period, see for example F.P.G. Guizot, *L'Histoire de France, depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu'en 1789, racontée à mes petits enfants*, 5 vols. (Paris: Hachette, 1872-1876); H. Taine, *Les origines de la France contemporaine*, 5 vols. (Paris: Hachette, 1875-1893); F.P.G. Guizot, *L'Histoire de France, depuis 1789 jusqu'en 1848, racontée à mes petits enfants, leçons recueillies par Mme de Witt, née Guizot*, 2 vols. (Paris: Hachette, 1878-1879); A. de Lamartine, *Histoire des Girondins*, 10 vols. (Paris: Hachette, 1881. First published, 1847).

It is in this context that revolutionary uses of 1789 during this period must be understood. Revolutionaries were well aware of the attempts by parliamentary republicans and their supporters to use 1789 itself to excise revolution from contemporary French political life. *Le Prolétaire*, for example, railed against such efforts, dubbing the government ‘bourgeois plagiarists of the past’.⁵¹ So too were they aware of the growing popularity of this interpretation. Reviewing the stage premier of Victor Hugo’s *Quatre-Vingt-Treize* in 1881, Gabrielle Deville complained that

‘[t]he public love and respect [the Revolution]. They bow religiously before “the immortal principles” inscribed in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* without examining whether, for the immense majority, they are anything other than a trick of the eye.’⁵²

Revolutionaries’ own complicated engagement with 1789 was central to their attempts to respond to the challenge of a republicanism that venerated the Revolution, but neither wanted nor needed to endorse revolution.

By publicly associating themselves with its imagery, activists attempted to reestablish their own connections to the recent French past and, if not wrest control of 1789 from the government, then at least remind the population that the Revolution’s aims had been wider than those suggested. At the same time, situating 1789 within a much broader historical genealogy enabled revolutionaries to deal with the unquestionable popularity of the Opportunists’ interpretation, diminishing 1789’s significance, whilst simultaneously positioning themselves and revolution as indispensable facets of contemporary French political life.

IV

While activists’ ambivalent attitudes towards the Revolution were politically advantageous in these circumstances, though, they were not solely a product of them. Rather, this ambivalence had been a regular feature of their thought since before the Commune. In order to demonstrate this, let us once again take a more specific example:

⁵¹ ‘La guerre d’Afrique’, *Le Prolétaire*, 23 April 1881. See also A. Lavy, ‘Le 14 juillet’, *Le Prolétaire*, 14-17 July 1880; H. Rochefort, ‘Les nouveaux révolutionnaires’, *L’Intransigeant*, 1 November 1885.

⁵² ‘Le public admire et respecte; il s’incline religieusement devant “les principes immortels” inscrits dans la Déclaration des droits de l’homme, sans examiner si, pour l’immense majorité, il y a là autre chose qu’un trompe-l’oeil.’ G. Deville, ‘Quatre-Vingt-Treize’, *Le Citoyen*, 26 December 1881. See also Malon, *Exposé des écoles socialistes françaises*, p.230; Cluseret, *Mémoires du Général Cluseret*, vol.2, pp.217-18.

the thought of Louis-Auguste Blanqui. Unlike many of the younger, more prolific activists of the 1870s and early 1880s, by 1871 Blanqui was a long-standing member of the revolutionary movement. In fact, by his death in January 1881 he had been involved in revolutionary and radical politics for almost sixty years.⁵³ During this time, he had taken part in two major revolutions, masterminded numerous smaller *attentats*, and spent long years in prison as a result. As well as an activist, Blanqui was also a theorist, and over the years aired his ideas in a variety of media – in books, pamphlets, and newspapers where possible, and also in speeches from the dock during his numerous court appearances.⁵⁴ Upon his death, then, Blanqui had spent long years at the heart of the revolutionary movement and experienced almost everything that it had to offer. His work thus provides an excellent window through which to examine the place of history and the Revolution in revolutionary thought, both during this period and prior to it.

Blanqui had very little to say about the Revolution between the Commune and his death. This was not for want of opportunity. As well as editing the newspaper *Ni dieu, ni maître* during 1880, Blanqui also published two full length texts after 1871, both of which dealt with ideas of revolution and the future of society. The first, 1872's *L'éternité par les astres* approached these questions through the prism of cosmology and overlooked human history entirely.⁵⁵ In the second, the 1880 *L'armée esclave et opprimée*, Blanqui addressed the subject of conscription and standing armies, which he argued were the source of contemporary France's moral malaise, and the desirability of a citizen militia.⁵⁶

Here, unlike in *L'éternité par les astres*, he made considerable use of historical detail. Yet although militia had played a prolific role in France's recent revolutionary history (including the National Guard during the Commune), Blanqui advised instead that contemporary activists and politicians should draw inspiration from either 'the grandeur of the famous Republics of antiquity', or America during the Civil War.⁵⁷ Unlike many other activists during this period, Blanqui had been personally involved in many of the

⁵³ Blanqui joined the Carbonari in 1824.

⁵⁴ For more on Blanqui's use of court appearances, see D. Dodds, 'Funerals, Trials, and the Problem of Violence in Nineteenth-Century France: Blanqui and Raspail' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 2010).

⁵⁵ L.-A. Blanqui, *L'éternité par les astres* (ed.) L. Block de Behar (Geneva: Éditions Slatkine, 2009. First published, 1872).

⁵⁶ L.-A. Blanqui, *L'armée esclave et opprimée: suppression de la conscription enseignement militaire de la jeunesse armée nationale sédentaire* (Paris: Au bureau du journal *Ni dieu ni maître*, 1880).

⁵⁷ Blanqui, *L'armée esclave et opprimée*, pp.25-26. For further references to ancient republics, see pp.13-14 and p.18; for the American Civil War, see pp.16-17. Other prominent Blanquists such as Louise Michel later made similar suggestions. See H. Rochefort, 'Louise Michel et ses juges', *L'Intransigeant*, 1 April 1883.

most important events in recent French revolutionary history. Perhaps as a result of his career, Blanqui has been widely considered – by both contemporaries and later historians – to be one of the activists most steadfastly, even slavishly dedicated to the veneration of the Revolution and its ‘tradition’.⁵⁸ In spite of these connections and much like the revolutionaries discussed above, however, he rarely discussed or even mentioned the Revolution during this period.

Even prior to the failure of the Commune, however, Blanqui had not been slavishly devoted to the Revolution. This was perhaps most clearly demonstrated in his newspaper *La patrie en danger*, which was published for several months between late 1870 and early 1871, and Blanqui both edited and wrote for. *La patrie en danger* certainly mentioned recent French history more than Blanqui’s later work, running several articles on the Revolution within two weeks in October 1870.⁵⁹ Again, however, Blanqui did not use these articles to suggest that contemporary revolutionaries should seek to replicate the actions of their eighteenth-century predecessors. While he may have mentioned the Revolution more frequently in *La patrie en danger* than he did after the public defeat of his tactics during the Commune, these mentions nonetheless indicated no deep intellectual commitment.

La patrie en danger’s references to the Revolution derived primarily from the context of the Franco-Prussian War. Following France’s shocking, comprehensive loss in the Battle of Sedan and the subsequent swift advance of the Prussian Army, various writers, theorists, and politicians turned to emotive and patriotic rhetoric in an attempt to galvanise the French population.⁶⁰ Much of this rhetoric drew upon memories of France’s recent history. Victor Hugo, for example, called upon all Frenchmen, ‘rich, poor, worker, bourgeois’ to fight the Prussians for the sake of humanity and civilisation:

‘Frenchmen, you will fight. You will devote yourselves to the universal cause, because France must be great in order for the world to be enfranchised...because it is time to show that virtue exists, that duty exists, and that the *patrie* exists. You will not fail...and the world will know by your example that while diplomacy is weak, the citizen is brave; that although kings exist, so too do peoples; that if the

⁵⁸ See for example 137: P. Lafargue to F. Engels, 23 December 1884 (Paris), in Engels, P. and L. Lafargue, *Correspondence*, vol.1, 256-257, at p.257; Bernstein, *The Beginnings of Marxian Socialism in France*, p.12.

⁵⁹ ‘Le Girondisme’, *La patrie en danger*, 15-16 October 1870; ‘1792-1870’, *La patrie en danger*, 26 October 1870 and 30 October 1870.

⁶⁰ See for example ‘La circulaire de M. Jules Favre’, *L’Electeur libre* (Paris), 20 September 1870.

monarchical continent eclipses itself, the Republic will shine forth and that if, for an instant, there is no longer a Europe, there will always be a France.⁶¹

In referring to the nation's revolutionary past, it was this rhetoric that *La patrie en danger* aimed to engage in. Indeed, in its first issue Blanqui explicitly stated that '[i]n the presence of an enemy, parties and differences disappear.'⁶² The purpose of Blanqui's references to the Revolution during this period was thus demonstrably not to foment internal discord or a new French revolution. Rather, they formed part of a patriotic myth that a diverse array of writers combined to create in order to promote widespread unity during a moment of extreme national crisis.

It is tempting to view contemporary activists' ambivalence towards the Revolution in the 1870s and early 1880s as a definitive shift in revolutionary thought and rhetoric. Prompted by the very visible failure of the Commune and the changed political context of the Third Republic, revolutionaries abandoned their previous commitment to 1789 in search of a more appropriate historical genealogy for revolution. These circumstances, as we have seen, undoubtedly contributed towards the intellectual decisions that activists made in this period, yet their attitudes towards the Revolution cannot be attributed entirely to them. As Blanqui's work suggests, intellectual neutrality on the subject of 1789 was a continuity of revolutionary thought rather than a significant change. By summer 1871, activists had not sought to systematically define revolution in terms of France's recent history for some time. Rather than a shift in thought, their ambivalence during the 1870s and early 1880s represented the continuation of a pattern. The pattern was simply different from what most historians have assumed.

⁶¹ 'riche, pauvre, ouvrier, bourgeois...Français, vous combattrez. Vous vous dévouerez à la cause universelle, parce qu'il faut que la France soit grande afin que la terre soit affranchie...parce qu'il est temps de montrer que la vertu existe, que le devoir existe, et que la patrie existe; et vous ne faiblirez pas...et le monde saura par vous que si la diplomatie est lâche, le citoyen est brave; que s'il y a des rois, il y a aussi des peuples, que si le continent monarchique s'éclipse, la République rayonne, et que si, pour l'instant, il n'y a plus de l'Europe, il y a toujours une France.' 'Victor Hugo au peuple français', *L'Electeur libre*, 18 September 1870.

⁶² 'En présence de l'ennemi, plus de partis ni de nuances.' 'La patrie en danger', *La patrie en danger*, 7 September 1870.

II: Religion

I

French activists during the 1870s and early 1880s, then, worked hard to dissociate revolution as a concept from the French Revolution, constructing for it alternative genealogies more attuned to their new situation during the early Third Republic. Human history even broadly conceived of, though, was apparently incapable of fully conveying revolution's appeal, and many activists also turned to the divine, reconceptualising revolution as a transcendent or religious experience. Immediately after the defeat of the Commune, for example, Jules Bergeret attempted to comfort readers of *Le 18 mars* by assuring them that acts of revolution, even if unsuccessful, were a 'sacred duty'.⁶³ In his 1872 quasi-cosmological tract *L'éternité par les astres*, meanwhile, Blanqui guaranteed that revolution would bring salvation.⁶⁴

This practice was extremely common. Descriptions of revolution in religious terms spanned the entire period and beyond,⁶⁵ and could be found in the work of a diverse array of revolutionaries, from Blanquists such as Bergeret to socialists from a variety of different groupings. These texts, furthermore, boasted a religious lexicon that covered every possible part of the revolution. Activists used religious terminology to condemn the revolution's enemies (the Opportunists were 'as clerical as the pope'⁶⁶), to contest disputes internal to the revolutionary movement (according to the Possibilists, the leader of the French Marxists, Jules Guesde behaved like 'Torquemada in pince-nez'⁶⁷), and also to describe revolutionary life (18 March was a 'socialist Easter' to be faithfully celebrated every year⁶⁸). Religious language, in other words, played an extensive role in the revolutionary movement's work on revolution.

⁶³ 'un devoir sacré'. Bergeret, *Le 18 mars*, p.66.

⁶⁴ Blanqui, *L'éternité par les astres*, p.114; É. Reclus, *Évolution et Révolution*, 6th edn (Paris: Imprimerie Habert, 1891. First published, 1880), p.47.

⁶⁵ *L'Ouvrier de l'avenir, organe des chambres syndicales et des associations ouvrières* (Paris), 12 March 1871; H. Brissac, *Quand j'étais au bain: poésies* (Paris: Derveaux, 1887), pp.v-vi.

⁶⁶ 'La contagion cléricale', *L'Intransigeant*, 30 July 1880; H. Rochefort, 'Capitulation', *L'Intransigeant*, 31 July 1880; H. Rochefort, 'Persécuteurs et persécutés', *L'Intransigeant*, 4 August 1880; H. Rochefort, 'Tout pour Belleville', *L'Intransigeant*, 23 April 1881.

⁶⁷ 'Les combles marxistes', *Le Prolétaire*, 7 October 1882. See also 'Pourquoi nous faisons une enquête?', *La Fédération* (London), 21 September 1872; 'Un candidat impossible', *Le Prolétaire*, 10 February 1883; 'Loriquet marxiste', *Le Prolétaire*, 29 December 1883; V. Marouck, 'Révolution – "Rrrrévolution!"', *Le Prolétariat*, 24 January 1885; P.-O. Lissagaray, 'Les Dangers prochains', *La Bataille*, 13 May 1885; Malon, *Le troisième défit du prolétariat français*, p.532; P. Brousse, *Le marxisme dans l'Internationale* (Paris: Imprimerie Nouvelle, 1882), p.8; J. Guesde, *Services publics et socialisme* (Bordeaux: Imprimerie E. Forastie, 1883), p.9.

⁶⁸ B. Malon, *Précis historique, théorique et pratique du socialisme* (Paris : Félix Alcan, 1892), p.iv.

The justification of revolution by faith had been a prominent feature of revolutionary and radical thought for large parts of the nineteenth century. This was the case across Europe, but it perhaps found particularly strong expression in France.⁶⁹ During the 1830s and 1840s French activists enjoyed cordial relations with liberal religious figures such as Félicité de Lamennais and many, as Edward Berenson has demonstrated, sought to present ‘the world in terms of Christian moral principles’ in order to bridge the gap between themselves and the rest of France.⁷⁰ In 1846 Étienne Cabet, for example, claimed that socialism was ‘the true Christianity.’⁷¹ This rhetoric played a central role in the 1848 revolutions, indeed until as late as 1849 many revolutionaries professed themselves ‘full of hope’ about the Catholic Church.⁷² In characterising revolution as a religious rather than an exclusively political or social experience, revolutionaries during this period thus drew upon an established and widely recognised trope of French radical thought.

Revolutionary uses of religion during this period, however, were qualitatively different from those of the 1830s and 1840s. Although revolutionaries in the post-Commune period regularly used religious language and analogies, they gave little thought to their meaning. Various activists likened the proletariat’s suffering to that of Christ. In his 1880 work *Le droit à la paresse*, for example, Paul Lafargue described workers’ struggle for equality as a ‘hard Calvary of pain’.⁷³ Only a year later, however, his colleague Jules Guesde used the same language to criticise Léon Gambetta, terming him ‘Gambetta of

⁶⁹ See C. Clark, ‘From 1848 to Christian democracy’, in I. Katznelson and G. Stedman Jones (eds.), *Religion and the Political Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 190-213; J. Beecher, *Victor Considerant and the Rise and Fall of French Romantic Socialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

⁷⁰ For more on radical and revolutionary uses of religion in the 1830s and 1840s, see E. Berenson, *Populist Religion and Left-Wing Politics in France, 1830-1852* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p.xx.

⁷¹ Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic*, p.399. See É. Cabet, *Le vrai Christianisme suivant Jésus-Christ* (Paris: Au bureau du *Populaire*, 1846). For more on the relationship between socialism and religion, see G. Stedman Jones, ‘Religion and the origins of socialism’, in Katznelson and G. Stedman Jones, *Religion and the Political Imagination*, 171-189.

⁷² Clark, ‘From 1848 to Christian democracy’, at p.191. Other activists such as Proudhon also frequently referred to revolution in moral terms. See K.S. Vincent, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and the Rise of French Republican Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p.6.

⁷³ P. Lafargue, *The Right to be Lazy and Other Studies* (trans.) C.H. Kerr (Chicago: John F. Higgins Press, 1907. Originally published in French, 1880), p.56. See also Bergeret, *Le 18 mars*, p.72. Other authors placed themselves in the role of the devil. See for example A. Rocher, *La vie du Citoyen Jésus-Christ par le Citoyen Satan* (Geneva: Imprimerie V. Blanchard, 1875); Méphisto, *Le diable rouge* (Paris), 23 September-15 November 1879.

Nazareth' and 'the Christ of Cahors'.⁷⁴ Revolutionary uses of religion were qualitatively, if not quantitatively different from those of the earlier nineteenth century. Whereas the *democ-socs* and Christian socialists of earlier decades had worked hard to present their ideas in the form of genuine religious principles, revolutionaries' use of religious language in the 1870s and early 1880s was unsystematic and often openly contradictory. While they made prolific use of religious language, this use – much like their use of 1789 – was not indicative of any principles, convictions, or even clearly defined thought.

This intellectual shift reflected the changed position of organised religion in public life since the early 1850s. During the 1848 revolutions the press restrictions implemented by the July Monarchy were reduced significantly, enabling both revolutionary and stridently pro-Catholic activists to print on a large scale for the first time in years. This in turn facilitated the emergence of a coherent 'clericalism' that, as Christopher Clark has argued, 'did not simply rearticulate Catholic theological and moral positions but defended the church – under papal authority – as a social institution.'⁷⁵ In the late Second Republic and subsequently under the Second Empire, Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte sought to institutionalise this re-emergent clericalism. The passage of legislation such as the 1850-51 *lois Falloux*, which promoted the provision of Catholic primary education, aimed to repair the fractious relationship between Church and State, and significantly increased the Church's power in French public life.⁷⁶ Whereas during the 1830s and 1840s many in the Church in France had experimented with relatively liberal intellectual positions, following 1848 this changed. The Church emerged from the revolutions less flexible, more cohesive, and more powerful.

Unsurprisingly in these circumstances, the relationship between revolutionaries and the Church deteriorated. Faced with a resurgent clericalism, revolutionaries and radicals largely abandoned their previous attachment to religion, and many became heavily involved in the Free Thought Movement. These connections would later be reflected in the secularising legislation passed by the Commune, including the provision of universal secular education and the separation of Church and State.⁷⁷ While the Communards' laws were thrown out following their defeat, however, revolutionaries

⁷⁴ J. Guesde, 'Les sauveurs de la bourgeoisie', *Le Citoyen*, 31 January 1882. See also Lefrançais, *République et Révolution*, p.18; P. Brousse, *Le suffrage universel et le problème de la souveraineté du peuple* (Geneva: Imprimerie Coopérative, 1874), p.11.

⁷⁵ Clark, 'From 1848 to Christian democracy', at p.195.

⁷⁶ For more on the *lois Falloux* and education in France under the Second Empire, see R.D. Anderson, *Education in France, 1848-1870* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

⁷⁷ For more on the importance of secularisation during the Commune, see Tombs, *Paris, bivouac des révolutions*, p.205.

maintained their connections to Free Thought.⁷⁸ Activists including Paul Brousse and Louise Michel continued to attend meetings in Paris well into the 1880s, while *L'Intransigeant* recorded Henri Rochefort performing several 'civil baptisms'.⁷⁹ Revolutionaries' and radicals' attitude towards religion had thus significantly altered between 1848 and 1871. Whereas the religious terminology of the 1840s reflected a widespread willingness among radicals to cooperate with religion and the Church, during the early Third Republic this was not the case.

In fact, revolutionary opposition to religion became increasingly pronounced over the course of this period. In 1881-82, the Opportunist government passed the *lois Ferry* – a series of laws that partially repealed the *lois Falloux* and mandated the provision of universal, secular primary education.⁸⁰ The realisation of this central revolutionary demand had a notable impact upon activists' rhetoric. While some continued to engage in familiar anticlerical battles,⁸¹ during the debate and promulgation of the *lois Ferry* many also began to declare themselves opposed to all religions, faiths, and ritual.⁸² In 1883, for example, Deville criticised the rituals of the Free Thought Movement as simply another form of religion, writing disparagingly of

⁷⁸ See for example Intelligence reports to the Préfecture de Police, March 1877 (London). APP Ba429/2152 and 2156; Advertisement, 'Dr. A. Regnard will deliver a lecture (in French) on "l'athéisme" on Friday March 23, 1877' (London). APP Ba429/2157; P.-O. Lissagaray quoted in an intelligence report to the Préfecture de Police. 1 December 1877 (London). APP Ba429/2494; E. Lebeau, *Périssent dieu et la prêtraille!* (Geneva: Imprimerie coopérative, 1872), p.11; 'Qui nous sommes', *Le Prolétaire*, 23 November 1878; 'De l'instruction religieuse', *Le Prolétaire*, 16 August 1879; Groupe d'études sociales de Bordeaux, 'Matérialisme et libre pensée', *Le Prolétaire*, 12 June 1880; M. Talmeyr, 'L'arbre qu'on n'arrachera pas', *L'Intransigeant*, 12 April 1881; E. Massard, 'La bourgeoisie et le patriotisme', *Le Citoyen*, 25 September 1882; Jousse, 'La construction intellectuelle du socialisme réformiste en France', p.1013.

⁷⁹ For Free Thought meetings, see J. Lalouette, *La Libre Pensée en France 1848-1940* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1997), pp.55-56. For civil baptisms, see 'Fête de la libre-pensée', *L'Intransigeant*, 9 August 1881.

⁸⁰ For more on education provision and the Third Republic, see M. Ozouf, *L'école, l'église et la République 1871-1914* (Paris: Éditions Cana, 1982).

⁸¹ 'La contagion cléricale', *L'Intransigeant*, 30 July 1880; H. Rochefort, 'Capitulation', *L'Intransigeant*, 31 July 1880; H. Rochefort, 'Persécuteurs et persécutés', *L'Intransigeant*, 4 August 1880; 'Un état catholique: la Nouvelle France', *L'Intransigeant*, 26 December 1880; H. Rochefort, 'Tout pour Belleville', *L'Intransigeant*, 23 April 1881; 'Les religieuses et leur employ industriel', *L'Émancipation*, 17 November 1880; P. Brousse, 'L'Église et l'État', *Le Prolétariat*, 29 August 1885; P. Brousse, 'De l'enseignement public', *Le Prolétariat*, 5 September 1885; P. Brousse, 'Sus à l'Église!', *Le Prolétariat*, 13 November 1885. For more on the Nouvelle France fraud, see B. Metcalf, 'Utopian fraud: the Marquis de Rays and La Nouvelle-France', *Utopian Studies* 22 (2011), 104-124.

⁸² H. Rochefort, 'L'enlèvement des crucifix', *L'Intransigeant*, 23 December 1880; A. Crié, 'Conversion inutile', *Le Citoyen & La Bataille*, 6 December 1882.

[o]ur noisy anti-clericals, ridiculous amateurs with civil baptisms and other rites, who imagine that they are detaching civil society from all mystical and mystifying attachment by eating an *andouillette* on Good Friday'.⁸³

While it is possible, even likely that sections of the revolutionary movement (particularly Marxists such as Deville) had always held these views, during this period they began to promote their unqualified opposition to faith and belief more stridently. Their use of religious language to describe revolution, then, did not simply fail to reflect their own beliefs. It was diametrically opposed to them; a state of affairs that became increasingly clear over the course of the period. In *The Man on Devil's Island*, Ruth Harris sensitively delineated a complex picture of *fin-de-siècle* France in which spirituality (if not religiosity) permeated a variety of unexpected social groups and *milieux*.⁸⁴ The revolutionary movement during the 1870s and early 1880s, however, was not one of these places.

Many activists were specifically opposed to the connection of revolution with religion. In 1880 Élisée Reclus, for example, declared that socialists had 'no need of a God' to inspire them to action.⁸⁵ Indeed, even revolutionaries interested in religion expressed concerns about connecting the two. In 1872, for instance, Malon argued that revolutionaries' use of and belief in religion had been one of 1848's greatest failings, noting disdainfully that

'everything was drowned in a dire mysticism; France was imagined as the *Christ Nation*, Jesus himself as the *first representative of the people*. They saw progress in *religious unity*, and association was to be at once communist and *communionist*; fraternal and *Eucharistic*'.⁸⁶

⁸³ 'Nos bruyants anti-cléricaux, ridicules amateurs de baptêmes civils et austres rites, qui s'imaginent dégager la société civile de toute attaché mystique et mystificatrice en mangeant une andouillette le vendredi saint'. G. Deville (ed.), *Le Capital de Karl Marx* (Paris: Henry Oriol, 1883), pp.41-42. See also G. Deville, 'Rien que le Concordat', *Le Citoyen*, 1 December 1881; P. Lafargue, 'Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité', *L'Égalité*, 18 August 1880; G. Deville, 'La question religieuse', *L'Égalité*, 11 December 1881; 'L'ordre révolutionnaire', *L'Égalité*, 22 October 1882.

⁸⁴ R. Harris, *The Man on Devil's Island: Alfred Dreyfus and the Affair that Divided France* (London: Allen Lane, 2010), p.373.

⁸⁵ Reclus, *Évolution and Revolution*, p.7. See also L.-A. Blanqui, 'Le communisme, avenir de la société' (1869-70), in *Critique sociale*, 2 vols. (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1885), 173-220, at pp.187-88.

⁸⁶ 'Le tout était noyé...dans un funeste mysticism; la France était envisagée comme la *nation-christ*, Jésus lui-même comme le *premier représentant du peuple*; on voyait le progrès dans *l'unité religieuse*, l'association devait être à la foi communiste et *communioniste*; fraternelle et *eucharistique*'. Malon, *Exposé des écoles socialistes françaises*, p.230. For examples of Malon's interest in religion, see B.Malon, *L'Almanach du Peuple pour 1873* (Saint Imier: Propagande Socialiste, 1873), p.27; B. Malon, 'Les Morales religieuses', *La Revue socialiste* (1885), 923-31; 986-1006; 1076-99. For another example of activists mocking religious revolutionaries, see 'Révolution – "Rrrrrévolution!"', *Le Proletariat*, 24 January 1885.

Revolutionaries left their readers and listeners in little doubt about their opinions on religion, revolution, and the relationship between them. They were fully aware of the historical connection between the two, and also deeply antipathetic towards it. Previous revolutionaries' commitment to religion, they suggested, had been their Achilles' heel, and it was perhaps for these reasons that their own religious language was relatively imprecise.

While the association of revolution with religion was not an unfamiliar one, it thus nonetheless made little sense within the context of the contemporary revolutionary movement. It is perhaps for these reasons that it has heretofore received relatively little scholarly attention.⁸⁷ Unlike the Christian socialists and *democ-socs* of the 1830s and 1840s, revolutionary activists during the early Third Republic neither had faith of their own nor were willing to work with the Church and other religious figures. Rather, they were actively opposed to religious belief, and specifically to the association of revolution with religion. This opposition was visible in the loose character of their work, which used religious terminology to describe revolution, but simultaneously sought to distance it from any systematic religious ideas. Given this imprecision and opposition, it is tempting to dismiss activists' uses of religion as unimportant.

II

Yet religious comparisons were a central part of activists' rhetoric on revolution. Revolutionaries, as we have seen, had lost significant support as a result of their actions during the Commune, while the subsequent reprisals had further reduced their numbers. More worrying, however, was the realisation that they had never enjoyed the support of much of the population. Despite issuing numerous appeals for solidarity, only a few other cities had briefly risen up in support of the Commune. The majority of the country, meanwhile, regarded the Communards (not without reason, given some of the majority's decisions) as authoritarians bent upon imposing Paris's wishes on an unwilling population. The experiences of 1871, then, had a profound effect upon the ways in which revolutionaries conceived of their place within the French population. The Commune's latent unpopularity forced them – as republicans had been forced after 1848 – to confront the fact that they were not a vanguard acting on behalf of the entire

⁸⁷ Berenson, for example, mentions Opportunist uses of religious language during this period, but not revolutionaries'. See Berenson, *Populist Religion and Left-Wing Politics in France*, p.230. See also D. Ligou, *Histoire du socialisme en France (1871-1961)* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), p.53.

population.⁸⁸ Rather, revolutionaries were a small group acting against the wishes of the majority. As Malon observed in *L'Émancipation* in 1880, '[do] not be deceived...there are not thousands or even hundreds of men resolved to sacrifice their lives for the Revolution'.⁸⁹

Revolutionaries quickly came to regard this as one of the most serious problems they faced. In 1876, Yves Guyot in *Les Droits de l'homme* argued that the success of revolution hinged upon revolutionaries' ability to broaden their appeal, noting that

'the only revolutions that have succeeded in Paris have been those that were organised by everyone, provoked by a feeling of general indignation, and received ratification in the whole of France beforehand.'⁹⁰

Several years later Alphonse Humbert likewise impressed upon readers of *L'Intransigeant* the importance of appealing 'not just [to] our political co-religionists', but to 'the entire country'.⁹¹ Whereas prior to 1871 revolutionary writers and propagandists had been more or less content to cater to the ideas and preferences of their traditional core Parisian support base, the Commune's clear lack of widespread appeal prompted a marked tactical shift. Neither the zeal of convinced revolutionaries, nor the ability to construct a plausible historical genealogy was enough alone. Rather, if revolutionaries aspired to political relevance and success, they had to broaden their geographical focus and win the support of sizeable parts of the French population.

In the years that followed, creating and disseminating a vision of the future appealing to these audiences became a principal concern of the revolutionary movement. In exile in the 1870s, activists directed considerable effort towards smuggling revolutionary literature and propaganda into areas of France outside of Paris, especially

⁸⁸ For more on republicans and 1848, see Jules Ferry quoted in C. Gaboriaux, *La République en quête des citoyens: les républicains français face au bonapartisme rural (1848-1880)* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 2010), p.135. For more republican and liberal attempts to broaden their appeal during the Second Empire, see S. Hazaree Singh, *From Subject to Citizen: The Second Empire and the Emergence of Modern French Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), pp.301-303.

⁸⁹ 'Que nos amis ne s'y trompent pas: dans l'état actuel des choses, ce ne sont pas quelques centaines ou mêmes quelques milliers d'hommes, décidés à sacrifier leur vie pour la Révolution'. B. Malon, 'Une discussion', *L'Émancipation*, 15 November 1880.

⁹⁰ 'les seules révolutions qui aient réussi à Paris ont été celles qui, organisées par tout le monde, provoquées par un sentiment d'indignation générale, avaient reçu d'avance leur ratification dans toute la France.' Y. Guyot, 'La psychologie du 10 août', *Les droits de l'homme*, 12 August 1876.

⁹¹ 'Ce ne sont pas seulement leurs [the orators of the socialist party] coreligionnaires politiques qui les en doivent féliciter...c'est la patrie tout entière.' A. Humbert, 'Avènement du socialisme', *L'Intransigeant*, 11 March 1882. See also 'Réunions socialistes publiques' (London, 1878). APP Ba430/3502.

in the Midi – often, as Alex Dowdall has demonstrated, with considerable success.⁹² Following the 1880 general amnesty, they sought to consolidate these efforts. Activists established a number of regional newspapers, to which many of the most celebrated revolutionary theorists contributed articles.⁹³ The Blanquist Édouard Vaillant returned to his hometown of Vierzon in order to oversee his,⁹⁴ while in 1880 Malon similarly informed Lafargue that ‘you will never see me in Paris, but always in the breach in the provinces’.⁹⁵ Revolutionaries during this period, then, did more than simply recognise the catastrophic effects of the Commune’s (and their own) lack of broad national appeal. They also actively attempted to rectify the situation, implementing a variety of practical measures from smuggling to the foundation of newspapers aimed at unifying, in the words of *Le Prolétaire*, ‘the workers of the towns and those of the countryside’.⁹⁶

Religion was central to these attempts. In 1882, Lucien-Victor Meunier in *Le Citoyen & La Bataille* observed that ‘[t]he country is Catholic – very Catholic.’⁹⁷ In the 1876 French census over 98% of the population remained listed as Catholics and, although a proportion of this percentage were likely lapsed, Meunier was not wrong.⁹⁸ Construction projects such as the Basilique du Sacré-Coeur – begun in 1875 and funded partly by public subscription – indicated the continued strength of public feeling for Catholicism (and indeed the strength of opposition to revolution; the Sacré-Coeur was conceived of partly as expiation for the Commune).⁹⁹ Meanwhile, pro-Catholic legislation such as the *lois Falloux*, which remained in place until 1880, ensured that even

⁹² A. Dowdall, ‘Narrating *la Semaine Sanglante*, 1871-1880’ (unpublished MPhil dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2010), pp.14-20.

⁹³ See for example *Le Forçat* (Lille); *L’Exploité* (Nantes); *L’Émancipation* (Lyons); 91: P. Lafargue to F. Engels, 7 January 1884 (Paris), in Engels, P. and L. Lafargue, *Correspondence*, vol.1, 162-164, at p.163.

⁹⁴ For the Blanquists, see Hutton, *Cult of the Revolutionary Tradition*, p.133.

⁹⁵ ‘Si je rentre en France et si ma santé le permet, je vous promets qu’on ne me verra guère à Paris, mais toujours sur la brèche en province’. 10: Benoît Malon to Paul Lafargue, 18 May 1880 (Zurich), in E. Bottigelli and C. Willard (eds.), *La naissance du Parti ouvrier français: Correspondance inédite de Paul Lafargue, Jules Guesde, José Mesa, Paul Brousse, Benoît Malon, Gabrielle Deville, Victor Jaclard, Léon Camescasse et Friedrich Engels* (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1981), 74-80, at p.76. See also A. Theisz, ‘Le Congrès ouvrier du Havre’, *L’Intransigeant*, 22 November 1880.

⁹⁶ ‘Notre ligne de conduite’, *Le Prolétaire*, 23 November 1878. See also J. Andrieu, ‘The Paris Commune: A chapter towards its theory and history’, in *The Fortnightly Review* vol.X (October 1871), 571-598, at p.581; Arnould, *L’État et la Révolution*, p.105; É. Reclus, *Ouvrier, prends la machine! Prends la terre, paysan!* (Geneva: Édition du Révolté, 1880); ‘Notre ligne de conduite’, *Le Prolétaire*, 23 November 1878; ‘Les paysans et la révolution sociale’, *Le Prolétaire*, 5 February 1881; P. Dervillers, ‘La lutte de classe’, *Le Prolétaire*, 25 December 1880.

⁹⁷ ‘Le pays est catholique, très catholique’. L.-V. Meunier, ‘Beautés du cléricisme’, *Le Citoyen & La Bataille*, 6 December 1882.

⁹⁸ Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic*, p.323.

⁹⁹ For more on the construction of the Sacré-Coeur, see D. Harvey, ‘Monument and myth’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 69 (September 1979), 362-381.

less devout citizens were familiar with the Church's teachings. Despite the increasing acceptance of anticlericalism and the promulgation of the secularising *lois Ferry*, religion, and especially Catholicism, continued to play a central role in French public and cultural life during the early Third Republic – a fact of which revolutionaries were well aware.¹⁰⁰

By describing revolution in terms of religion, activists hoped to appeal to the broad, and previously hostile swathes of the population. Indeed, authors of pamphlets that employed such language often explicitly stated that they were writing for religious audiences.¹⁰¹ More specifically, revolutionaries hoped that this tactic would be especially useful in the countryside and amongst women, where religious feeling was particularly strong, and descriptions of revolution as a form of religion accordingly appeared particularly in literature bound for the provinces.¹⁰² Revolutionary uses of religious language during this period thus had two interlinked aims. Firstly, by drawing upon familiar religious tropes and imagery, activists hoped to increase their national support by reaching out to large sections of the population – especially in rural areas – that in 1871 had been hostile to their actions. Simultaneously, in the process of appropriating religious language in this way, activists also hoped to begin to neutralise what they regarded as a powerful antagonist to revolution and social change; the Catholic Church. They sought, in other words, to replace the power of the priest with the power of revolution.

Despite their own aversion to it, religion was thus central to activists' thought on revolution during this period. Revolutionaries did not simply give up and turn inward upon themselves in the wake of the Commune. Rather, they continued to believe that revolution was a viable concept, responding to their failures in 1871 by considerably adapting both their tactics and their rhetoric on revolution in an effort to broaden their appeal. The use of religious language, they hoped, would demonstrate the scale of their commitment to revolution, the intellectual compromises that they were willing to make for it, and their commitment to representing the views of the entire country. In terms of motivation, then, the revolutionaries of the 1870s and 1880s were in fact remarkably similar to the radicals and revolutionaries of the pre-1848 period. While their approach

¹⁰⁰ *Le Père Duchêne*, 2 June 1878. See also Lebeau, *Périssent dieu et la prêtraille!*, p.1; Malon, *Exposé des écoles socialistes françaises*, p.230; A. Humbert, 'Tous cléricaux!', *L'Intransigeant*, 7 July 1881.

¹⁰¹ Rocher, *La vie du citoyen Jésus-Christ par le citoyen Satan*, p.2.

¹⁰² L.-V. Meunier, 'Beautés du cléricisme', *Le Citoyen & La Bataille*, 6 December 1882. See also 'La contagion cléricale', *L'Intransigeant*, 30 July 1880; G. Deville, 'Religions et socialisme', *Le Citoyen*, 17 October 1881; G. Deville, 'Libre-pensée et socialisme', *Le Citoyen*, 5 April 1882; P.-O. Lissagaray, 'Prêtres filles', *Le Citoyen & La Bataille*, 26 December 1882; L.-V. Meunier, 'Petits papiers religieux', *Le Citoyen & La Bataille*, 4 April 1883.

to and execution of religious characterisations of revolution differed considerably, the principal aim of the *democ-socs* and post-Commune activists – to create a revolution capable of uniting the entire country – was broadly the same.

III

Yet while the aims of these revolutionaries may have been the same, the circumstances were vastly different. Rather than simply a regression into the past, the Catholic revival of the 1850s and 1860s was, as Clark has observed, an extremely modern operation.¹⁰³ In France, it took on a particular character perhaps best exemplified by the phenomenal success of Ernest Renan's 1863 *Vie de Jésus*. Censured by the Church for its suggestion that Jesus was a charismatic mortal rather than the Son of God, it nonetheless proved wildly popular. It quickly ran to eleven editions, and Renan continued to receive rapturous correspondence about it until his death in 1892.¹⁰⁴ As Robert Priest has persuasively argued, occurrences such as the success of Renan's book delineate a complex and multifaceted picture of French Catholicism and religious belief in the second half of the nineteenth-century. While under the Second Empire the Church became increasingly powerful and didactic, at the same time French men and women were also increasingly 'prepared to look outside the traditional religious channels' in order to satisfy their spiritual needs.¹⁰⁵ This is not to say that prior to 1848 religious citizens were slavish devotees of the Church's teachings, but religious belief nonetheless did undergo a pronounced change, and from the 1850s onwards many French men and women appeared more curious and independent in their religious belief, and to possess a more sophisticated understanding of their own faith.

Revolutionary uses of religion during this period were thus based upon a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of religious belief. The success of revolutionaries' efforts to broaden their appeal was consequently extremely limited. Many of the regional newspapers launched during this period failed to attract sustained readerships and closed almost as swiftly as they had opened. Even Malon's Lyons-based *L'Émancipation*, which received substantial backing from Paris, folded after only a month.

¹⁰³ Clark, 'From 1848 to Christian democracy', at p.200.

¹⁰⁴ For the editions, see Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic*, p.371. For the correspondence and continued interest in the *Vie de Jésus*, see R.D. Priest, 'Reading, writing, and religion in nineteenth-century France: the popular reception of Renan's *Life of Jesus*', *Journal of Modern History* 86 (June 2014), 258-294.

¹⁰⁵ Priest, 'Reading, writing, and religion in nineteenth-century France', at p.292.

This failure was further reflected in poor electoral results outside of Paris,¹⁰⁶ indeed some revolutionaries appeared not just unable to accrue support, but to be actively repelling it. Jules Guesde, for example, was advised to abandon a proposed speaking tour of the Midi as he was so unpopular.¹⁰⁷ Activists' not inconsiderable efforts to accrue new support during this period enjoyed little success. Actively and vocally disinterested in religion themselves, revolutionaries were either unable or unwilling to perceive the subtle shifts that had taken place in French religious thought since 1848.¹⁰⁸ As a result, their use of religious language failed to reflect either the interests or the character of those to whom they were attempting to appeal.

This treatment of religion, moreover, was reflective of a broader lack of interest in France outside of Paris. Revolutionaries' regional newspapers, for example, rarely made an effort to engage with local issues, and often simply reprinted pieces prepared for the Parisian press.¹⁰⁹ Articles on the rest of the country in Parisian newspapers, meanwhile, were few and far between, and many devoted more coverage to international issues than to the rest of France.¹¹⁰ While some revolutionaries were simply uninterested in the rest of France, others actively disparaged it [IMG 5]. In *Le 18 mars*, for example, Bergeret complained that

‘the provinces [la province] bleat, wail, and screech; the provinces make the sign of the cross and go to sleep when the sun sets. The provinces have the sickness of potatoes: they are rotten from the roots.’¹¹¹

In 1884, Henri Rochefort joked in *L'Intransigeant* that ‘the French only know geography by reputation’.¹¹² Of the revolutionary movement during the 1870s and 1880s, though,

¹⁰⁶ D. Stafford, *From Anarchism to Reformism: A Study of the Political Activities of Paul Brousse within the First International and the French Socialist Movement 1870-90* (London: Cox & Wyman, 1971), p.204.

See also R. Stuart, *Marxism at Work: Ideology, Class and French Socialism during the Third Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.36.

¹⁰⁷ Stafford, *From Anarchism to Reformism*, pp.166-7. See also 23: Paul Brousse to Paul Lafargue, 24 April 1881 (Paris), in Bottigelli and Willard, *La naissance du Parti ouvrier français*, 111-13, at pp.112-3.

¹⁰⁸ Clark has suggested that this was also the case in the 1850s and 1860s. Clark, ‘From 1848 to Christian democracy’, at p.200.

¹⁰⁹ Hutton, *The Cult of the Revolutionary Tradition*, p.134.

¹¹⁰ For examples, see ‘Correspondances: France’, *Le Travailleur* 2:4 (Geneva) (April-May 1878), p.20; ‘L’esprit républicain dans les campagnes’, *Le Prolétaire*, 18 January 1879; ‘Lettre d’un paysan’, *Le Prolétaire*, 31 May 1879; series entitled ‘Lettres d’un travailleur sur le mouvement ouvrier en province’, *Le Prolétaire*, beginning 31 July 1880.

¹¹¹ ‘la province bêle, miaule et piaille; la province fait le signe de la croix et se couche à la tombée du jour. La province a la maladie des pommes de terre: elle se gâte par la racine.’ Bergeret, *Le 18 mars*, p.4. See also Blanqui, *Critique sociale*, vol.1, p.202.

¹¹² ‘Nous savons que les Français ne connaissent guère la géographie que de réputation’. H. Rochefort, ‘Autre mensonge!’, *L'Intransigeant*, 19 March 1884.

this was largely true. Activists theoretically recognised that broadening their support base (in other words, appealing to the countryside) was vital to the future well being of revolution, and even invested in producing ideas and literature that they hoped would do so. At the same time, however, they remained fundamentally incurious about France outside of Paris, and this was reflected in the literature they produced.

This palpable lack of interest was visible across the entire revolutionary movement. Groups such as the Guesdists and Blanquists had never invested significant time or effort in appealing to the countryside,¹¹³ yet Possibilists and federalists had placed such aims at the centre of their political strategy (Chapter One).¹¹⁴ Even many of these activists, though, displayed little genuine interest in the countryside. Arnould, for example, expressed regret that ‘all of France’s large cities, all of its intelligent and revolutionary centres’, had been ‘obliged to tread water because there are 20 million farmers who have no idea of politics or society’.¹¹⁵ Distaste for the wider French population, and for beliefs that did not align with those of the revolutionary movement was not simply restricted to the work of those vocally uninterested in them, but rather lay at the heart of a broad range of revolutionary publications and ideas.

The relationship between socialism, revolution, and religion in French thought during the nineteenth century is a well-studied one. This scholarly attention, however, has tended to end with the defeat of 1848 and the clerical revival of the 1850s. As this section has demonstrated, though, such language underwent a pronounced revival during the 1870s and early 1880s as revolutionaries sought to redress the mistakes they had made during the Commune and broaden their national support base. From activists’ commitment to accruing new support, we may infer they remained committed to the idea of revolution as a viable political concept. The manner in which they went about it, moreover, demonstrated that revolutionaries were willing to significantly compromise their own beliefs in order to guarantee its survival. While the revolutionary movement

¹¹³ See for example Deville, *Le Capital de Karl Marx*, p.15; ‘Le collectivisme et la production agricole’, *L’Égalité*, 23 December 1877; A. Theisz, ‘Le mouvement social: la grève des mineurs de Denain’, *L’Intransigeant*, 1 November 1880; ‘La situation des communes’, *Le Citoyen*, 20 April 1882; 193; F. Engels to P. Lafargue (30 October 1882, London), in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Marx/Engels Collected Works* (trans.) R. Dixon et al., 50 vols. (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975-2004), vol.46, 351-352, at p.352.

¹¹⁴ See for example P. Brousse, ‘Liberté et égalité’, *L’Émancipation*, 3 November 1880; P. Dervillers, ‘La lutte de classe’, *Le Prolétaire*, 25 December 1880; *Le Prolétaire*, 24 November 1883.

¹¹⁵ ‘C’est l’histoire de toutes les grandes villes de France, de tous les centres intelligents et révolutionnaires, obligés de marquer le pas sur la place, parce qu’il y a vingt millions de paysans qui n’ont encore aucune idée politique ou sociale.’ Arnould, *L’État et la Révolution*, pp.129-130. See also Brousse, *Le Suffrage universel*, p.15; Lefrançais, *L’Idée libertaire dans la Commune de 1871*, p.17; Arnould, *Histoire populaire et parlementaire de la Commune*, vol.3, p.155;

may practically have remained a largely urban phenomenon, this was not for want of trying.

Simultaneously, however, the details of revolutionaries' religious language also exposed the limits of these ventures. They were appealing to a vision of the countryside that was, to quote Robert Stuart, based 'upon hope rather than theoretical or empirical insight'.¹¹⁶ In characterising the countryside as a reactionary, religious monolith revolutionaries exposed their inability to overcome their own prejudices. The language that revolutionaries used acted as a confirmation not of their desire for closer proximity with the countryside, but of their continued lack of interest in it. While activists promoted an inclusive notion of revolution, they were simultaneously unwilling to acknowledge that anybody other than them had anything valuable to contribute.

III: Evolution

History and religion, then, both played a central role in activists' attempts to reshape revolution for post-Commune France. Yet despite their utility and importance, neither of these descriptions of revolution was of particular aid to activists in one crucial area of politics: quotidian politics and the practice of everyday life. While constructing an appropriate historical genealogy could establish the theoretical importance of revolution and religion would hopefully expand its support, both spoke of revolution itself only in hypotheticals: the promise of future action, as opposed to tangible steps that its supporters could take in the present. In order to redress this, activists turned to a third definition of revolution as a natural law.¹¹⁷

I

Like many of the ideas and situations discussed in Sections One and Two, neither the problem of everyday life nor the solution proposed in the early Third Republic was new. In much the same way that the failure of the Commune prompted many revolutionaries to reassess their actions (Chapter One), the defeat of 1848 likewise forced its participants to confront the failure of their own tactics. While the quasi-religious,

¹¹⁶ Stuart, *Marxism at Work*, p.400.

¹¹⁷ For more on the pre-nineteenth-century history of science and revolution, see Koselleck, *Futures Past*, pp.45-46.

romantic fervour that had characterised much revolutionary rhetoric may have effectively led citizens to the barricades, both the problems that plagued the Second Republic and the election of Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte proved, they believed, that its ability to produce meaningful social and political change was limited. 1848, then, not only marked a parting of the ways between revolutionaries and religion, but also a wholesale reassessment of the ways in which radicals and revolutionaries conceived of their own ideas, their place within society, and the way they presented it to others.

In search of alternatives to their failed tactics, defeated radicals across Europe alighted upon science and nature. Natural interpretations of human history and action were eagerly taken up by various prominent revolutionary theorists in France, including the established academic Gustave Flourens (later to die during the Commune). In 1863, Flourens delivered a series of lectures at the Collège de France on the subject of the natural history of man, in which he argued that man was an animal, a product of nature, and his actions were therefore bound by the same laws.¹¹⁸ By placing man and his actions within the context of natural history, Flourens and other activists aimed to redefine revolution entirely. Revolutions, they argued, were not brought about solely by human will, but also by natural processes and as such, it was inevitable that they would rise and fall. Redefining revolution in this way enabled activists to diminish the significance not only of 1848's failure, but also the failure of individual revolutions in general. If it were an inevitable part of a natural process, then failure said nothing about the worth or value of their ideas. Indeed, failure arguably heralded progress rather than obsolescence.

This newfound interest derived from several sources. In 1859, Charles Darwin published his essay on evolution and human understanding, *On the Origin of the Species*,¹¹⁹ which proved an international sensation, censured and discussed in equal measure.¹²⁰ By framing their ideas in terms of natural science, activists thus connected revolution to a

¹¹⁸ G. Flourens, *L'histoire de l'homme: cours d'histoire naturelle des corps organisés au Collège de France* (Paris: Imprimerie de E. Martinet, 1863-1864).

¹¹⁹ C. Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by means of Natural Selection, or the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life* (London: John Murray, 1859).

¹²⁰ The book was translated into French in 1862, and two translations and four editions appeared between then and 1873. C.R. Darwin, *De l'origine des espèces, ou des lois du progrès chez les êtres organisés* (trans.) C.-A. Royer (Paris: Guillaumin & Masson, 1862); C.R. Darwin, *De l'origine des espèces par sélection naturelle, ou des lois de transformation des êtres organisés* 2nd edn (trans.) C.-A. Royer (Paris: Guillaumin & Masson, 1866); C.R. Darwin, *De l'origine des espèces au moyen de la sélection naturelle, ou des lois de transformation des êtres organisés* 3rd edn (trans.) C.-A. Royer (Paris: Guillaumin & Masson, 1870); C.R. Darwin, *De l'origine des espèces au moyen de la sélection naturelle, ou, la lutte pour l'existence dans la nature* (trans.) J.-J. Moulinié (Paris: Reinwald, 1873. First published in English, 1859).

language that was at once pertinent and controversial. Perhaps more importantly, though, revolutionaries' interest in science also arose directly from 1848. Namely, from the relative success of the Positivists. Unlike other activists, the Positivists had not engaged in the mythological and messianic revolutionary promises that characterised much of the revolution's rhetoric. Their new social doctrine based upon the sciences had enabled them to more easily endure the failures of 1848-51, and they were arguably the most active radicals of the 1850s. In gravitating towards a more scientific description of revolution, activists thus aimed to publicly demonstrate that they had learned the lessons of 1848; that they were no longer naïve about revolutions or politics, and that in the future they would be able to make any changes they wrought last.

In France, much of the support for this new definition of revolution came from the student population. Unlike schooling, higher education was left largely untouched by the Second Empire's reforms, and radical students quickly established themselves as some of the imperial government's most vocal opponents. This opposition often manifested itself as support for radical science,¹²¹ and coalesced particularly around two overlapping groups: medical students and the student journalists of the *rive gauche*.¹²² Many of these, such as Georges Clemenceau, Paul Lafargue, and Charles Longuet became leading figures in radical and revolutionary politics during the Third Republic. The revolutionary turn to science in the 1870s and early 1880s was thus not the result of completely novel theorisation, and neither could it be classified as a return to an older idea. Rather, it represented the continuation of a firmly established way of understanding revolution and social change; one that the revolutionaries of the early Third Republic, moreover, had been deeply personally involved in.

The association of revolution with science was widely discussed and took a variety of forms during this period. *Le Citoyen*, for example, considered an understanding of fundamental scientific principles essential to its readers and devoted a long-running weekly column to explanations of them,¹²³ and Blanqui and Louise Michel also wrote

¹²¹ Nord, *The Republican Moment*, pp.31-32.

¹²² For contemporary discussion of student involvement in radical politics, see B. Malon, 'Étudiants et prolétaires', *L'Intransigeant*, 22 February 1885. For further details, see Nord, *The Republican Moment*, pp.34-35; p.44.

¹²³ 'La semaine scientifique', *Le Citoyen*, 9 December 1881; 16 December 1881; 23 December 1881; 6 January 1882; 13 January 1882; 20 January 1882; 27 January 1882; 3 February 1882; 10 February 1882; 17 February 1882; 3 March 1882; 10 March 1882; 24 March 1882; 31 March 1882; 24 May 1882.

extensively on the relationship between revolution and the natural world.¹²⁴ The most widely discussed scientific concept was undoubtedly evolution. Activists from across the revolutionary spectrum rushed to proclaim themselves ‘evolutionist on the one hand, and revolutionary on the other’,¹²⁵ indeed in 1880 Adhémar Lecler noted that

[m]uch has been said recently of *evolution* and *revolution*. There have been few conferences or speeches in which at least one, if not both, of these words has not appeared.¹²⁶

In order to fully understand the ways in which activists during this period conceived of revolution, it is thus necessary to first understand their ideas of and interactions with evolution.

II

The fullest and clearest discussion of the relationship between evolution and revolution from this period is to be found in the work of Élisée Reclus. Reclus was an established geographer, well known and highly respected in international academic circles. His nineteen-volume magnum opus, *La nouvelle géographie universelle* was published simultaneously in French and English between 1876 and 1894, and in 1892 was awarded the gold medal of the Paris Geographical Society.¹²⁷ Also an anarchist and member of the Commune, Reclus was banished from France in 1872. Along with many Communards as well as other revolutionary exiles such as Georgi Plekhanov and Vera Zasulich, Reclus settled in Switzerland, where he remained until returning to France in 1880.

In the international exile community based in Geneva, Reclus found both a host of new collaborators and a large audience for his ideas. He took full advantage of these opportunities, editing along with various other activists the exile periodical *Le Travailleur* (Chapter Four) and delivering frequent public lectures. Reclus had certainly been active and well known in revolutionary circles prior to the Commune. The experience of exile,

¹²⁴ L. Michel, ‘Notes encyclopédiques’, vol.1 (2 vols.), Louise Michel: Fonds Moscou, International Institute of Social History (IISH) 233:5/1, p.95; ‘Les primitifs’, *L’Intransigeant*, 28 October 1885.

¹²⁵ P. Dervillers, ‘La foi s’en va’, *Le Prolétaire*, 7 January 1883. See also J. Guesde, *Le collectivisme au Collège de France* (Paris: Henry Oriol, 1883), p.11; ‘A nos lecteurs’, *L’Égalité*, 18 November 1877; ‘A propos des candidatures ouvrières’, *Le Prolétaire*, 19 July 1879; B. Malon, ‘Le droit de propriété et l’histoire’, *L’Émancipation*, 10 November 1880; ‘Le Parti ouvrier et l’État capitaliste’, *L’Égalité*, 11 August 1880; ‘Le parti socialiste’, *Le Télégraphe*, 24 June 1881. APP Ba199/166.

¹²⁶ A. Lecler, ‘Évolution – Révolution’, *Le Prolétaire*, 28 August 1880.

¹²⁷ É. Reclus, *La nouvelle géographie universelle*, 19 vols. (Paris: Hachette, 1876-1894).

however, significantly enhanced both his visibility and the level of his engagement. Indeed both contemporaries and later historians have suggested that he was the exile community's 'moral leader'.¹²⁸

On 5 March 1880, Reclus delivered a public lecture in Geneva entitled 'Évolution et Révolution'. In it, he drew directly upon his academic work to highlight what he considered to be a contemporary political issue of pressing importance: the widespread misunderstanding and misuse of the concept of evolution. Over the course of the 1870s, Reclus suggested, the politicians, professionals, and industrialists of the *couches nouvelles* had become increasingly aware that neither the Commune's failure nor the establishment of the Third Republic had brought an end to social discontent. While Thiers had authoritatively declared socialism dead and buried in 1871, in fact both its disappearance and the relief it generated 'did not last'.¹²⁹ Fearful of the potential effects of future revolutionary challenges upon both their own livelihoods and the security of the Republic, politicians had alighted, with varying degrees of sincerity, upon evolution – or political reform – as an alternative to revolution. In present political discourse, Reclus noted, the two terms were 'constantly used...as though their meaning were absolutely antagonistic'.¹³⁰

By advocating political evolution, politicians drew self-consciously upon the memory of science's radical associations under the Second Empire, and often their own involvement in it.¹³¹ In utilising the language of science, Reclus argued, politicians aimed to present their ideas as a productive 'third way': an alternative to both revolution and reaction. This, it was hoped, would dissipate workers' anger at the persistent inequality of French social relations and with it, the potential for revolution. Whether their promises of gradual change were genuine or not, the political use of evolution during this period was thus little more than another weapon in the war upon revolution and the well being of the French working class. '[T]he word evolution', Reclus claimed, 'serves but to conceal a lie in the mouths of those who most willingly pronounce it'.¹³²

Yet contemporary revolutionaries, Reclus argued, were equally complicit in this state of affairs. While their social and political intentions were undoubtedly better,

¹²⁸ J.T. Joughin, *The Paris Commune in French Politics, 1871-1880*, 2 vols. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1955), vol.1, p.85. For a similar assertion by a contemporary, see Copy of a report to the Préfecture de Police, 15 February 1876. APP Ba432/1768.

¹²⁹ 'Néanmoins, la joie causée par la disparition du socialisme n'a pas duré.' Reclus, *Évolution et Révolution*, p.6.

¹³⁰ 'ils sont plus d'une fois employés comme s'ils avaient un sens absolument opposé'. *Ibid.*, p.3.

¹³¹ Nord, *The Republican Moment*, pp.31-32.

¹³² Reclus, *Évolution et Révolution*, pp.5-6.

activists in the period after the Commune had also frequently opposed the terms evolution and revolution. Following their break with radical republicans over the Commune, revolutionaries had too often turned their backs on political engagement and spurned the value of gradual change. While activists imagined that in doing so they were preserving the integrity of revolution, in fact they were alienating potential support in the form of workers that did not openly declare in favour of violent revolution. '[I]f all the oppressed have not the temperament of heroes', Reclus reminded his audience, 'they feel their sufferings none the less'.¹³³ Activists had effectively allowed politicians' definition of evolution to pass unchallenged, and had ceded control of science to their former radical and republican allies.

Evolution, in fact, was not an antidote to revolution, but its precursor. As Reclus had argued in his recent academic work, the evolution of the natural environment was not a process of peaceful, imperceptible change, but a cycle of 'destruction and renewal' in which gradual change prepared the way for sudden change, and vice versa.¹³⁴ The same, he suggested, was true of human society. While there had been no violent revolutionary upheavals since 1871, society was radically changing nonetheless:

'does not the great school of the outer world exhibit the prodigies of human industry equally to rich and poor, to those who have called these marvels into existence and those who profit by them? The poverty-stricken outcast can see railways, telegraphs, hydraulic rams, perforators, self-lighting matches, as well as the man of power, and he is no less impressed by them. Privilege has disappeared in the enjoyment of some of these grand conquests of science. When he is conducting his locomotive through space, doubling or slackening speed at his pleasure, does the engine-driver believe himself the inferior of the sovereign shut up behind him in a gilded railway carriage, and trembling with the knowledge that his life depends on a jet of steam, the shifting of a level, or a bomb of dynamite?'¹³⁵

¹³³ 's'ils n'ont pas le tempérament de héros, il n'en réfléchissent pas moins sur leurs intérêts.' Reclus, *Évolution et Révolution*, p.7.

¹³⁴ 'destruction et renouvellement'. É. Reclus, *La terre: description des phénomènes de la vie du globe*, 2 vols. (Paris: Hachette, 1877. First published, 1868-1869), vol.1, p.ii.

¹³⁵ 'Et la grande école du monde extérieur ne montre-t-elle pas également les grands prodigies de l'industrie humaine aux pauvres et aux riches, à ceux qui ont obtenu ces merveilles par leur travail et à ceux qui en profitent? Chemins de fer, télégraphes, beliers hydrauliques, perforatrices, allumettes à combustion spontanée, le malheureux voit toutes ces choses aussi bien que le puissant et son esprit n'en est pas moins frappé. Pour la jouissance de quelques unes de ces grandes conquêtes de la science le privilège a disparu. Menant sa locomotive à travers l'espace, en doublant la vitesse et en arrêtant l'allure à son gré, le mécanicien se croit-il l'inférieur du souverain qui roule derrière lui? Non sans doute.' Reclus, *Évolution et Révolution*, pp.13-14; see also p.18.

While evolution and revolution often took different forms and moved at different speeds, their purpose – to effect change – was a shared one. It was not only the words, but also the concepts that ‘closely resemble[d] one another’.¹³⁶ Indeed, they shared more than a common purpose. Rather, evolution and revolution were inextricably linked in a single cycle of progress: they were ‘fundamentally one and the same thing’.¹³⁷ Evolution, Reclus argued, was thus a profoundly revolutionary concept, and an idea that contemporary activists eager to remain politically relevant must embrace.

III

The reaction to Reclus’s lecture was immense. In the months after it was given, both the lecture and its content were much discussed at meetings and in the revolutionary press.¹³⁸ Reclus’s interest in the relationship between revolution and nature enjoyed a direct German parallel in Friedrich Engels’s 1877 *Anti-Dühring*, and it proved just as popular.¹³⁹ It was swiftly distributed in cheap pamphlet form in 1880 and proved extraordinarily successful, with a second edition appearing less than a year later.¹⁴⁰ An English translation soon followed and enjoyed similar attention, running to seven editions by 1891.¹⁴¹ Indeed, the international popularity of *Évolution et Révolution* was such that in 1898 published a vastly extended and more theoretically detailed version entitled *L’évolution, la révolution et l’idéal anarchique*.¹⁴²

In particular, it had a significant intellectual impact upon the French revolutionary movement in the early 1880s. Lecler in the Possibilist *Prolétaire*, for example, characterised evolution and revolution as alternating parts of the same cycle,¹⁴³

¹³⁶ ‘Ces deux mots: Évolution, Révolution, se ressemblent fort’. *Ibid.*, p.1.

¹³⁷ ‘Au fond, elles ne sont qu’une seule et même chose’. Reclus, *Évolution et Révolution*, p.3. See also V. Marouck, ‘Le socialisme officiel sous la Commune’, in *La revue socialiste* 7 (5 June 1880), 330-336, at p.330.

¹³⁸ A. Lecler, ‘Évolution – Révolution’, *Le Prolétaire*, 28 August 1880.

¹³⁹ F. Engels, *Anti-Dühring: Herr Eugen Dühring’s Revolution in Science* (trans.) E. Burns (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1947. First published in German, 1877).

¹⁴⁰ For the first edition, see above. For the second edition, see É. Reclus, *Évolution et révolution: conférence faite à Genève, le 5 mars 1880*, 2nd edn (Geneva: Imprimerie jurassienne, 1881).

¹⁴¹ É. Reclus, *Evolution and Revolution*, 7th edn (London: W. Reeves, 1891. First published by International Publishing Company, 1885).

¹⁴² É. Reclus, *L’évolution, la révolution, et l’idéal anarchique* (Paris: P.V. Stock, 1898). This version had itself run to at least six editions by 1910. For the sixth edition, see É. Reclus, *L’évolution, la révolution, et l’idéal anarchique* 6th edn (Paris: P.V. Stock, 1906).

¹⁴³ A. Lecler, ‘Évolution – Révolution’, *Le Prolétaire*, 28 August 1880. See also É. Reclus, *Évolution et Révolution*, 6th edn (Paris: Imprimerie Habert, 1891), pp.59-60; *Le Travailleur*, May 1877, p.1; Arnould, *Histoire populaire et parlementaire de la Commune*, vol.1, p.24.

while Casimir Bouis guaranteed readers of the Blanquist *Intransigeant* that society would improve

[f]or the natural, logical, irrefutable reason that the world turns, that everything progresses, and that everything obeys a kind of *fatality*, which is the uninterrupted evolution towards the good; the supreme goal of humanity.¹⁴⁴

The Marxist *Égalité*, meanwhile, paid tribute to the role of railways in revolutionising economic relations, arguing that '[w]e do not live in lethargic times...everything around us is shaking and faltering.'¹⁴⁵ Reclus's lecture was thus more than simply the clearest elaboration of revolutionary interest in evolution; it was arguably the source of wider revolutionary interest in it during this period. Although activists occasionally mentioned other theorists such as Darwin, it was Reclus's definition with which they were most familiar, and which they referred to the most.¹⁴⁶ Where shortly after the lecture *Le Prolétaire* had felt it necessary to provide a definition of evolution for unfamiliar readers,¹⁴⁷ by the mid-1880s it occupied a central position in numerous revolutionary programmes, sitting alongside revolution itself as one of their key beliefs.

Given the extensive criticism meted out to the revolutionary movement in the lecture, it may seem surprising that they adopted its ideas so willingly. In the circumstances that revolutionaries found themselves in, though, its ideas were particularly useful. Reclus's lecture not only redefined evolution, but also revolution, by embedding it in the natural processes he had observed in his capacity as a geographer. In this interpretation, human revolutions were not violent political events or even acts of will, but iterations of a much wider natural process and their occurrence (or lack of), as well as their success or failure was beyond human control. Activists during this period hoped, like the defeated *quarante-buitarde*s in the 1850s and 1860s, to find definitive closure regarding the events of the Commune. By redefining revolution as a force of nature, they sought not to disown or hide their actions, but rather to place them in a wider context and, in doing so, demonstrate that their failure had been neither final nor unnatural. Revolution, in other words, was not dead; it had just been misunderstood.

¹⁴⁴ 'Par cette raison naturelle, logique, irrefutable, que le monde marche, que tout progresse, et que tout obéit à une sorte de *fatalité* qui est l'évolution ininterrompue vers le bien, but suprême de l'humanité'. C. Bouis, 'Les deux républiques', *L'Intransigeant*, 30 August 1880. See also B. Malon, 'La réserve révolutionnaire', *L'Intransigeant*, 1 December 1883.

¹⁴⁵ 'ébranlé, chancelant'. 'Le possibilisme', *L'Égalité*, 5 February 1882.

¹⁴⁶ For references to Darwin, see Reclus, *Évolution et Révolution*, p.22; C. Bouis, 'Les deux républiques', *L'Intransigeant*, 30 August 1880; M. Talmeyr, 'L'athéisme clérical', *L'Intransigeant*, 13 May 1881; G. Deville, 'Darwin', *Le Citoyen*, 23 April 1882;

¹⁴⁷ A. Lecler, 'Évolution – Révolution', *Le Prolétaire*, 28 August 1880.

The value of Reclus's revolution, however, was more than simply retrospective. It also made the practice of being a revolutionary in the post-Commune period considerably easier. For large parts of the nineteenth century, the life of a revolutionary had been characterised as one of sacrifice and ascetic devotion. By the time he died in 1881 Blanqui, for example, had spent over half of life in prison, while other revered revolutionaries such as Giuseppe Mazzini also emphasised the importance sacrifice and individual will.¹⁴⁸ By the 1870s the majority of French activists had publicly distanced themselves from these more traditional models of revolution, yet participation in the revolutionary movement nonetheless continued to involve a substantial degree of dedication.¹⁴⁹ In 1878, for example, *L'Égalité* claimed that

[i]t is deceptive to tell the workers that their enfranchisement will be brought about by revolution without informing them of their duty and need to research the immediate goal of this revolution and the means by which this will be reached.¹⁵⁰

Most commonly, this new dedication manifested itself in revolutionaries' increasing interest in and commitment to party organisation.¹⁵¹ Whether in the form of sacrifice or of political parties, however, the message remained the same: revolution was an exclusive activity that, compared to other political positions, required an unusual level of dedication and commitment.

The characterisation of revolution as a natural event enabled activists to diminish the importance of this commitment. If revolution were a natural, inevitable, and holistic process, then every action constituted a revolutionary act.¹⁵² Indeed, Reclus observed, '[i]n many a town where there is not one organised socialist group, all the workers

¹⁴⁸ For more on Mazzini, see C.A. Bayly and E.F. Biagini (eds.), *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Globalisation of Democratic Nationalism 1830-1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

¹⁴⁹ 'Ce qui nous sépare', *L'Égalité*, 10 November 1882. See also Andrieu, 'The Paris Commune: A chapter towards its theory and history', at p.574; Deville, *Le Capital de Karl Marx*, p.56; B. Malon, 'Les Partis ouvriers en France', in *La revue socialiste* 5 (5 May 1880), 257-269, at p.267; B. Malon, 'Le Droit de propriété et l'histoire', in *L'Émancipation*, 10 November 1880; 'La Révolution', *Le Prolétaire*, 19 February 1881; L. Picard, 'Le spectre maçonnique', *L'Égalité*, 11 November 1884.

¹⁵⁰ 'La politique socialiste', *L'Égalité*, 10 February 1878. Education provision was central to many revolutionary programmes. See for instance 'Réunion socialiste', *Petit Caporal*, 6 June 1880. APP Ba199/394; 'Programme', *Le Travail* (Saint-Ouen: Imprimerie Jules Boyer, 1879), p.2; B. Malon, 'Blanqui socialiste', in *La revue socialiste* 7 (July 1885), 586-597, at p.594. Many revolutionaries blamed the Commune's failure on workers' lack of education. See for example Intelligence report to the Préfecture de Police, March 1877 (London). APP Ba429/2151; Andrieu, 'The Paris Commune: A chapter towards its theory and history', at pp.579-80.

¹⁵¹ 'Manifeste du Comité central électoral', *Le Citoyen*, 10 December 1880. APP Ba199/448; J. Guesde and P. Lafargue, *Le Programme du Parti Ouvrier: son histoire, ses considérations, ses articles* (Paris: Henry Oriol, 1883), pp.2-3; see also pp.46-7;

¹⁵² Reclus, *Évolution et Révolution*, p.18.

without exception are already more or less consciously socialists'.¹⁵³ While determination, education, and organisation were undoubtedly useful, they were by no means necessary requirements for prospective revolutionaries. If by defining revolution in terms of religion, activists sought to assume the absolute moral power of the priest and present revolution as a clearly defined lifestyle, with evolution the opposite was the case.

By presenting revolution as an inevitable force of nature, they removed the constraints that a revolutionary lifestyle had previously imposed upon its adherents. This, activists hoped, would directly address what they believed to be a drain upon their numbers prompted largely by the rise of the Opportunists – an actively republican and reforming, less demanding alternative to revolution. By suggesting that, rather than a demanding life of dedication, being a revolutionary now required little in the way of sacrifice, activists aimed to remove the choice between ease and revolution and consequently render it a more attractive political prospect, both to complete outsiders and to former revolutionaries.

Equally, this new definition of revolution also smoothed activists' own reintegration into French political life. As well as heeding Reclus's advice to take potential 'shy radicals' more seriously, revolutionaries began to reassess their own level of participation in public life. After the fall of the Commune revolutionaries had, as Reclus observed, largely withdrawn from more mainstream politics. While revolutionaries' own hand had to a large extent been forced by exile and deportation, many activists spent the 1870s suggesting that their followers in France also abstain from national politics.¹⁵⁴ Yet while this policy of non-intervention had been justifiable from exiled revolutionaries looking in from the outside as the Moral Order politicians that had repressed the Commune ruled France, following the installation of the Opportunists and especially the general amnesty it began to look increasingly outdated and counterproductive.

Accordingly, towards the end of the 1870s revolutionary ideas on political participation underwent a significant public (if not private¹⁵⁵) shift. As *Le Prolétaire*

¹⁵³ 'dans telle ville où n'existe pas un seul groupe de socialistes organisés, tous les ouvriers sans exception sont déjà des socialistes plus ou moins conscients'. Reclus, *Évolution et Révolution*, p.8; p.13; p.17.

¹⁵⁴ See for example G. Lefrançais, *Un Communard aux électeurs français* (Geneva: publisher not specified, 1875).

¹⁵⁵ Although their circumstances meant that they had few practical avenues for expressing it, revolutionaries had, to a much greater extent than previous historians have allowed, remained interested in politics and political participation after the Commune and throughout the 1870s. See for example B. Malon, *L'Internationale: son histoire et ses principes* (Lyons: Extrait de la République républicaine, 1872), p.25; A. Arnould, *L'État et la Révolution* (Lyons: Éditions Jacques-Marie Laffont et Associés, 1981. First published 1877), p.198; 'Congrès annuel de la Fédération jurassienne',

observed, ‘all or nothing politics’ usually led to ‘nothing at all’, and following their return to France in 1880 revolutionaries became increasingly involved in mainstream politics.¹⁵⁶ Indeed, by 1883 even Marxists such as Deville had thrown their full weight behind political participation and reform, arguing that ‘[t]o grant reforms is to arm us; it is to strengthen us against our adversaries, who become weaker as we become stronger. The appetite grows with eating’.¹⁵⁷ In practical terms, this represented not a change or a compromise, but a complete about turn from their political stance during the 1870s. Reclus’s redefinition of revolution as the practice of everyday life, however, enabled activists’ to argue that, while different, their new stance was no less revolutionary, thereby smoothing both this public theoretical transition and revolutionaries’ return to France.

Despite its vocal criticisms of the revolutionary movement during the 1870s, Reclus’s evolutionary thesis proved popular because it enabled revolutionaries to deal more effectively with the shifting political landscape of the early 1880s. By positioning revolution as an inevitable force of nature rather than an act of will, Reclus and other activists both broadened and generalised its meaning, creating a revolution more attuned to the (relatively) stable political conditions of France during the early 1880s. According to this definition, any action could be a revolutionary action, enabling activists to make

L’Avant-Garde, 12 August 1878. 10: Benoît Malon to Paul Lafargue, 18 May 1880 (Zurich), in E. Bottigelli and C. Willard (eds.), *La naissance du Parti ouvrier français: Correspondance inédite de Paul Lafargue, Jules Guesde, José Mesa, Paul Brousse, Benoît Malon, Gabrielle Deville, Victor Jaclard, Léon Camescasse et Friedrich Engels* (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1981), 74-80, at p.76; ‘Le chaos parlementaire’, *Le Citoyen*, 2 February 1882; ‘Notre politique’, *L’Égalité*, 18 November 1877. See also ‘La question économique et la question politique’, *L’Égalité*, 2 June 1878; ‘Organisez-vous’, *L’Égalité*, 30 June 1878. E. Digeon, *Droits et devoirs dans l’anarchie rationnelle* (Paris: Fayard, 1882), p.33.

¹⁵⁶ ‘Encore l’union socialiste’, *Le Prolétaire*, 19 November 1881. See also Arnould, *L’État et la Révolution*, p.199; F. Borde, *Le collectivisme au congrès de Marseille* (Paris: Delaporte, 1880), pp.19-20; Guesde and Lafargue, *Le Programme du Parti Ouvrier*, p.53; Deville, *Le Capital de Karl Marx*, p.36; 105: Paul Brousse to César de Paepe, 11 February 1884 (Paris), in C. de Paepe, *Entre Marx et Bakounine: Correspondance* (ed. B. Dandois) (Paris: Maspero, 1974), 245-9, at p.246; See also ‘A propos des candidatures ouvrières’, *Le Prolétaire*, 19 July 1879; ‘Peuple, prends garde!’, *Le Prolétaire*, 8 January 1881; ‘Notre programme’, *La Révolution sociale: organe anarchiste* (Saint-Cloud), 12 September 1880; ‘Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité’, *L’Égalité*, 18 August 1880; ‘Réformes et révolution’, *L’Égalité*, 7 November 1882; P. Brousse, ‘Liberté & égalité’, *L’Émancipation*, 3 November 1880.

¹⁵⁷ ‘Accorder des réformes, c’est nous jeter des armes, c’est nous rendre plus forts contre nos adversaires devenant plus faibles à mesure que nous le sommes moins. L’appétit vient en mangeant.’ Deville, *Le Capital de Karl Marx*, p.55. See also E. Digeon, *Droits et devoirs dans l’anarchie rationnelle* (Paris: Fayard, 1882), pp.12-13; ‘La liberté sous la République’, *Le Prolétaire*, 14 June 1879; ‘Une candidature nécessaire’, *Le Prolétaire*, 10 February 1883; ‘Du pouvoir exécutif’, *Le Prolétariat*, 22 August 1885; C. Bouis, ‘Le 14 juillet’, *L’Intransigeant*, 16 July 1880; H. Rochefort, ‘Les plagiaires’, *L’Intransigeant*, 6 October 1880; See also M. Talmeyr, ‘Le vote universel’, *L’Intransigeant*, 12 January 1881; A. Humbert, ‘Flouerie électorale’, *L’Intransigeant*, 26 July 1881; ‘La Cohue nationale: élection du Président de la République’, *La Bataille*, 30 December 1885.

significant alterations to their tactics and to accommodate a variety of different opinions and approaches without compromising either their unity or their status as revolutionaries.

At the same time, however, it must be noted that evolution was not a miracle cure. While this definition of revolution permitted many ideas and actions, it was defined by none of them. In the sense that it broadened revolution's meaning and scope, and rendered it more appealing, this was its great virtue. In doing so, however, it also essentially stripped revolution of any specific meaning, potentially leaving both the French population and revolutionaries themselves unsure of what precisely they stood for. In fact, this trade-off – of rendering revolution at once more palatable and less clearly defined – was, as their historical and religious, as well as their scientific definition suggest, characteristic of activists' thought on revolution as a whole during this period.

In his classic 1978 *Penser la Révolution française*, François Furet urged his readers over the course of a long essay to remember that '[t]he Revolution is over.'¹⁵⁸ With regard to the late nineteenth century, however, historians have remained largely unable or unwilling to escape the Revolution's spell and it has continued 'to serve as a touchstone to which...historians have returned countless times'.¹⁵⁹ Our understanding of French revolutionary thought in the period that immediately followed the fall of the Paris Commune has been circumscribed by this preoccupation. It has led historians to define 'revolution' as a concept bounded by the frameworks of 1789 and its successors, and thus hopelessly anachronistic in the changed circumstances of the Republican State.

As this chapter has demonstrated, this was not case. While the Commune may have heralded 'the defeat of a certain idea of revolution', it certainly did not signal the end of revolution's relevance as a concept.¹⁶⁰ Activists, moreover, did not seek refuge in a 'revolutionary tradition', and their visions of revolutionary unity were based on far more than nostalgia for the recent French past. Rather than a cult to the past, activists continued to conceive of revolution as an active political concept and sought out a variety of ways to redefine it, thus ensuring that it remained relevant, popular, and viable

¹⁵⁸ 'The French Revolution is over', in Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, 1-81.

¹⁵⁹ P.H. Hutton, 'Vico's theory of history and the French revolutionary tradition', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37 (April-June 1976), 241-256, at p.252.

¹⁶⁰ 'Ce fut par conséquent la défaite d'une certaine idée de la révolution'. Tombs, *Paris, bivouac des révolutions*, pp.434-435.

following the fall of the Commune. Activists simultaneously constructed an alternative historical genealogy for revolution, described it as a religion, and redefined it as a force of nature. While 1789 featured in these attempts, it was accorded no special status. Indeed, activists' purpose in defining revolution in such broad terms was precisely to decouple the concept from its recent French iterations.

Activists during the post-Commune period, however, were not the first to attempt to broaden revolution's meaning in this way. Rather, it had been a feature of revolutionary and radical thought since at least the 1850s, when the defeated of 1848 began to search for new ways to define and present revolution in order to demonstrate that their political ambitions were neither naïve nor utopian. While the formulations of the 1870s and early 1880s may have represented a shift from those of 1870-71, the ways in which activists thought about revolution were in fact much the same. The point at which thought on revolution shifted decisively during the nineteenth century, both in France and elsewhere in Europe, was not 1871, but 1848.

Chapter Three:

On your Marx

The vision of a viable revolutionary movement, then, was based on more than just memories. Activists continued to think creatively about revolution following the fall of the Commune, drawing upon a variety of old and new ideas in order to present a rejuvenated revolution that was simultaneously attuned to present circumstances, able to account for their past, and to adapt to possible future eventualities. Yet activists also sought out entirely new ideas and associations during this period, becoming heavily involved in organisations such as the International Workingmen's Association that French revolutionaries had previously displayed little interest in. It is the introduction of these new situations and ideas that historians have often suggested drove an insuperable wedge between the more explicitly socialist sections of the movement and irreparably damaged revolutionary unity.

Rather than attempting to examine the structural and intellectual integrity of French socialism as a whole, this chapter approaches the subject from a familiar but recently overlooked angle: French interactions with Karl Marx and Marxism. It is not my intention to suggest that either Marx or Marxism were unknown in France prior to 1871. This was manifestly not the case, however it was only during this period that French socialists and revolutionaries first began to identify with Marx or self-define as Marxists on a meaningful scale.

On the subject of the Paris Commune, Marx's ideas were resoundingly unpopular in France. Yet the relationship between Marx and the French revolutionary movement extended far further, and was far more complicated than this interaction. From the late nineteenth-century onwards, this relationship has been defined by noisy claims of insurmountable difference. In November 1882, Engels famously noted in a letter to Edouard Bernstein that frustration at the so-called French Marxists had recently led Marx to declare, '[c]e qu'il y a de certain c'est que moi, je ne suis pas Marxiste': 'what is

certain is that I myself am not a Marxist.¹ The message here seemed loud and clear. French Marxism was at once dangerous and banal. It was neither to be trusted nor associated with. In fact, it could not really be called Marxism at all.

The study of Marx and Marxism in France under the early Third Republic has long suffered from remarks such as these. In his 1966 *Marxism in Modern France*, George Lichtheim dismissed the beginning of the 1880s as ‘a dead loss’ in terms of ‘the implantation of socialist theory’ in France: ‘[w]hat passed for Marxism in the 1880s...was at best an approximation and at worst a caricature...a mere parody’.² It was not until the late 1880s and early 1890s, and the rise of better-educated and more cultured theorists such as Jean Jaurès and Georges Sorel, he claimed, that Marx’s ideas began to make an impact in France.³ Contemporary French scholars were somewhat more forgiving of early Third Republican socialists than Lichtheim was. Yet although the likes of Claude Willard and Daniel Ligou credited so-called French Marxists such as Paul Lafargue and Jules Guesde with the introduction of Marxism into France, they also remained faithful to the spirit of Engels’s disdain.⁴ While Guesde and Lafargue may have saved French revolutionary activism and introduced Marxism into France, they had also systematically misunderstood Marx’s thought.

More recent work on French socialism has adopted an alternative focus, but the perception that there were no ‘true’ French Marxists until the late 1880s has remained. Reacting against the characterisation of Guesde and Lafargue as the saviours of French activism,⁵ historians such as BH Moss, David Stafford, and Steven Vincent began in the last quarter of the twentieth century to unearth the contributions of other actors to French socialism. This literature ranged from studies of workers’ associations to biographies of alternative socialist figureheads such as Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, and

¹ 195: F. Engels to E. Bernstein, 2-3 November 1882 (London), in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Marx/Engels Collected Works*, (trans.) R. Dixon et al., vol.46 (50 vols.) (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975-2004), 353, 358, at p.356.

² G. Lichtheim, *Marxism in Modern France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), p.9. See also C. Willard, *Jules Guesde, l'apôtre et la loi* (Paris: Éditions ouvrières, 1991), p.50; M. Agulhon, *Marianne au pouvoir: l'imagerie et la symbolique républicaines de 1880 à 1914* (Paris: Flammarion, 1989), p.292.

³ Lichtheim, *Marxism in Modern France*. For Jaurès, see p.11; for Sorel, see p.9.

⁴ See D. Ligou, *Histoire du socialisme en France (1871-1961)* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), p.25; S. Bernstein, *The Beginnings of Marxian Socialism in France* (New York: Russell & Russell Inc, 1965. First published, 1933), p.148; C. Willard, *Socialisme et communisme français* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1978), p.61; see also p.65; P. Hutton, *The Cult of the Revolutionary Tradition: The Blanquists in French Politics, 1864-1893* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), p.100. By ‘the new socialism’, Hutton means Guesde and Lafargue.

⁵ See for example Willard, *Socialisme et communisme français*, p.56; J. Moreau, *Les socialistes français et le mythe révolutionnaire* (Paris: Hachette, 2003), p.37.

Guesde and Lafargue's political opponents Paul Brousse and Benoît Malon. This work constructed a different genealogy of French socialism, in which Marx was of little importance, and no French revolutionary socialists, even the Guesdists, were 'really' Marxists. The explanation for French socialism's historical trajectory was to be found not in the power of Marxism, but in a combination of its institutions and the continued appeal of a much longer, and distinctly non-Marxist French tradition.⁶ In Vincent's words, 'in the early history of French socialism, the role of Marxism was marginal'.⁷

These bodies of literature are united by two beliefs. Firstly, that there exists an 'authentic' Marxism, and secondly that this true Marxism did not make it to France during the 1870s and early 1880s. As a result of such apparent certainties, none of these historians have devoted space to interrogating contemporary French understandings of Karl Marx himself or the idea of Marxism (related, but not identical subjects). Neither have they fully explored why French activists were apparently so attracted or unattracted to either. Historical actors have simply been rigidly categorised as either Marxists or not. Several historians have hinted at more complex intellectual interactions with Marxism, but they have not developed or expanded upon their observations.⁸ Like Lichtheim's classic study, more nuanced work on French Marxism such as Robert Stuart's *Marxism at Work: Ideology, Class and French Socialism during the Third Republic* has focused almost exclusively upon the period from the late 1880s onwards.⁹

The current chapter addresses itself to this historiographical absence. Rather than trying to discern whether French socialists were 'real' Marxists or not, it attempts to approach Marx and Marxism in the early Third Republic with the historical sensitivity that has so far been reserved for studies of Proudhonism and Possibilist socialism.¹⁰

⁶ B.H. Moss, *The Origins of the French Labor Movement 1830-1914: The Socialism of Skilled Workers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p.xi, p.8, p.18; E. Jousse, 'La construction intellectuelle du socialisme réformiste en France, de la Commune à la Grande Guerre' (unpublished PhD thesis, Sciences-Po, 2013), p.1009; see also pp.1010-1011; J. Plamenatz, *The Revolutionary Movement in France 1815-71* (London: Longmans, Green and Co, 1952), p.177.

⁷ K.S. Vincent, *Between Marxism and Anarchism: Benoît Malon and French Reformist Socialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p.3 and p.74; E. Berenson, *Populist Religion and Left-Wing Politics in France, 1830-1852* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp.237-38; J. Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic: A History of Political Thought in France since the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.405.

⁸ L. Derfler, *Paul Lafargue and the Flowering of French Socialism, 1882-1911* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp.xiii-xiv; Vincent, *Between Marxism and Anarchism*, p.100.

⁹ R. C. Stuart, *Marxism at Work: Ideology, Class and French Socialism during the Third Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

¹⁰ K.S. Vincent, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and the Rise of French Republican Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp.206-7; D. Stafford, *From Anarchism to Reformism: A Study of the Political*

Through the examination and juxtaposition of a variety of published and manuscript sources, it shall become clear that Marxian ideas and language featured more frequently and in more nuanced ways in French socialist thought during this period than has previously been suggested. The ways in which socialists invoked and interacted with Marx and Marxism did not resemble in the slightest the sharply delineated orthodoxy that has conventionally been associated with Marxism, and French Marxism in particular. Rather, French interactions with Marx and Marxism during this period were diffuse and shifting, and had yet to become imbued with the doctrinal significance and rigidity that they would take on in the late 1880s.

This chapter focuses exclusively on collectivist rather than mutualist socialists, that is to say the explicitly revolutionary part of the French socialist movement.¹¹ It draws primarily upon the ideas of six theorists: the Guedists Jules Guesde, Paul Lafargue, and Gabrielle Deville, the Possibilists Paul Brousse and Benoît Malon, and Marx himself. The source material comprises a wide range of socialist and revolutionary books and pamphlets from the period, as well as these theorists' more collective enterprises, namely the Parisian daily newspapers *L'Égalité*, *Le Proletaire*, and *Le Citoyen*. This printed material has been further supplemented by documentation from the First International and the Jura Federation, as well as the private correspondence of a number of individuals including Engels, Laura Lafargue (Paul's wife, Marx's daughter, and a prolific translator of his work), and the Belgian public service socialist César de Paepe. In an attempt to provide further context for these ideas and actions, the chapter also draws to a lesser extent upon the thought of other socialist and revolutionary theorists that were prominent during the period, such as Proudhon, Louis Blanc, Louis-Auguste Blanqui, and Mikhail Bakunin.

The chapter is divided into two parts. Part One examines Marx's involvement in French socialist thought and action. Drawing upon the French translations of his work available during this period and his personal interactions with French activists, it reconstructs a specifically 'French' Marx. This French Marx was subtly but notably different from both the German original and other versions, as well as actively sculpted by Marx himself. Marx was thus not separate or distant from French Marxism, but neither was the increasing visibility of his thought in French workers' circles the result of a top-down or 'foreign' imposition. Rather, the creation of the French Marx was a

Activities of Paul Brousse within the First International and the French Socialist Movement 1870-1890 (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), pp.5-6.

¹¹ This split occurred at the 1879 Marseilles Congress.

constant process of collaboration and circulation between French activists, French circumstances, and Marx himself.

Part Two moves from the French Marx to the internal dynamics of Marxism in French thought. It suggests that Marx's name and ideas performed two functions for French revolutionary socialists during this period, acting as both an internal theoretical tool and an external rhetorical one. Within the revolutionary movement numerous and often opposing groups of socialists relied upon intellectual tools fashioned largely, if not exclusively, from elements of Marx's thought in order to think through and dispute a variety of contemporary social issues. Meanwhile, in French political circles, the same socialists employed the rhetoric of Marx and Marxism in a conscious attempt to marginalise themselves, re-establishing the boundaries between the revolutionary movement and more mainstream politicians even as their ideas became less recognisably 'revolutionary'.

I: Marx

I

In order to understand French Marxism during this period, it is first necessary to determine the precise character of French interactions with Karl Marx. The 1870s and early 1880s was the period in which Marx could be said to have truly arrived. His 1871 work on the Paris Commune, *The Civil War in France*, plus his involvement in the International Workingmen's Association, and the widespread reissuing of *The Communist Manifesto* from 1872 onwards brought a newfound general public awareness to Marx and his ideas. His reputation as the 'Red Terror Doctor' inspired hatred and adulation in equal measure, haunting monarchs and governments and inspiring a wave of new, explicitly 'Marxist' parties across Europe. France was no exception to this. Surprisingly, given Marx's increasing visibility in French circles, his writings have been very little mentioned by historians. A lone 1977 article on the subject, by the radical sociologist Kevin Anderson, has not been followed up by further work.¹²

This has been due in large part, perhaps, to French socialists' own vocal claims about the difficulties of understanding Marx. On receiving the second volume of *Das*

¹² K. Anderson, 'The "unknown" Marx's *Capital*, volume 1: the French edition of 1872-75, 100 years later', *Review of Radical Political Economics* 15 (1983), 71-80.

Kapital in 1885, for example, Paul Lafargue confessed that he, Jules Guesde, and Gabriel Deville were unable to understand it, likening the group to ‘monkeys turning over and over nuts that they cannot crack’.¹³ Lafargue referred not to a failure to comprehend the theory, but something more prosaic: a language barrier. In a later letter Paul’s wife Laura again raised this issue, informing Engels that ‘[t]he book has been reverently *looked at* and handled by our prisoner [Lafargue] and his friends, one and all of whom are unable to *read* German.’¹⁴ Whereas later French readers of Marx such as Jean Jaurès and Georges Sorel were versed in German and therefore able to access Marx’s work in the original, the vast majority of French socialists in the 1870s and early 1880s were not. Given that Marx only produced one text (the 1847 *Misère de la philosophie*, a reply to Proudhon’s 1846 *La philosophie de la misère*) in French, access to his original work during this period was highly limited.

Despite these complaints, though, French socialists showed little commitment to altering their situation. While both Guesde and Lafargue spent a number of years learning German, their inability to comprehend *Das Kapital* suggests that they failed to make any substantive progress.¹⁵ Indeed, this was indicative of many French activists’ attitude towards interacting with foreign socialists on their own terms. Lafargue, for instance, was born and raised in Cuba and spoke fluent Spanish and Italian,¹⁶ yet at an 1866 meeting of the Central Council of the IWA delegates apparently

‘burst out laughing when Marx commented that Lafargue, who wanted to abolish nations and nationalities, had addressed them in French with the result that nine-tenths could not understand.’¹⁷

Both before and after their time in exile, and despite their commitment to universal revolution (Chapter Two), French revolutionaries and socialists appeared both unable and unwilling to engage with foreign socialists on anything but French terms. This lack of linguistic curiosity has perhaps been taken as indicative of intellectual indifference towards foreign thinkers and activists, including Marx, on the part of French socialists.

¹³ 159: P. Lafargue to F. Engels (Sainte-Pélagie, 12 July 1885), in F. Engels, and P. and L. Lafargue, *Correspondence*, 3 vols. (trans.) Y. Kapp (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959-1960), vol.1, 296-299, at p.296.

¹⁴ 160: L. Lafargue to F. Engels (Paris, 18 July 1885), in Engels and Lafargue, *Correspondence*, vol.1, 299-301, at pp.299-300. Emphasis original.

¹⁵ See, for example, 70: F. Engels to L. Lafargue (London, 11 April 1883), in Engels and Lafargue, *Correspondence*, vol.1, 124-125, at p.125.

¹⁶ For Italian, see Derfler, *Paul Lafargue and the Flowering of French Socialism*, p.34.

¹⁷ M. Rubel and M. Manale, *Marx Without Myth: A Chronological Study of His Life and Work* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975), p.217.

Yet although French access to Marx's writing was limited, it was far from non-existent. French translations of Marx underwent something of a boom in the period after 1871. *Capital, Vol.1* appeared in instalments from 1872-75, and an abridged version followed in 1883.¹⁸ The *Communist Manifesto* and the *Civil War in France* also first became available in 1872,¹⁹ and major new translations of each appeared in the 1880s.²⁰ Lafargue's best-selling abridged version of Engels's *Anti-Dübring*, entitled *Socialisme scientifique et socialisme utopique* (which Sorel would later describe as the catechism of French Marxism²¹) was also first published in 1880.²² Serialisations of *Misère de la philosophie* and the *Communist Manifesto* further appeared in the long running and widely read Guesdist newspaper *L'Égalité*, ensuring that Marx's work reached an even broader audience.²³ Whether as a result of his work on the Commune or of increased French contact with him through the IWA, French translations of Marx became progressively more available during this period.

Marx was thus more than simply a figurehead in late nineteenth-century France. It has frequently been implied that Marx's ideas and his work were largely inaccessible to French socialists before the late 1880s, and are therefore of little relevance to historians.²⁴ Unable to speak German, it is suggested, French socialists during this period had no way of accessing Marx's thought. Marc Angenot, for example, has branded the 'doctrine of Karl Marx' 'apparently inaccessible' to French socialists,²⁵ while Edward Berenson described it as 'an alien and largely inscrutable dogma'.²⁶ In fact these texts have been banished to such dark recesses that historians are rarely even concerned with verifying

¹⁸ K. Marx, *Le capital* (trans.) M.J. Roy (Paris: Maurice Lachatre, 1872-75. First published in German 1867); G. Deville (ed.), *Le Capital de Karl Marx* (Paris: Henry Oriol, 1883).

¹⁹ For *The Civil War in France*, see Vincent, *Between Marxism and Anarchism*, p.71; for the *Communist Manifesto* see Willard, *Le socialisme de la renaissance à nos jours*, p.50.

²⁰ Derfler, *Paul Lafargue and the Flowering of French Socialism*, p.21.

²¹ M. Angenot, *Les grands récits militants des XIXe et XXe siècles: religions de l'humanité et sciences de l'histoire* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000), p.134.

²² 'Socialisme utopique et socialisme scientifique', *La revue socialiste* 3-5, March-May 1880.

²³ 'La misère de la philosophie', *L'Égalité*, 7 April 1880. *The Communist Manifesto* appeared in 1882; see Willard, *Jules Guesde, l'apôtre et la loi*, p.45.

²⁴ For the suggestion that there was a lack of translations, see for example Derfler, *Paul Lafargue and the Flowering of French Socialism*, p.21; Willard, *Le socialisme de la renaissance à nos jours*, p.50.

Indeed, he disagrees with his own position, see C. Willard, *Socialisme et communisme français* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1978. First published 1967), p.62; K.S. Vincent, *Between Marxism and Anarchism: Benoît Malon and French Reformist Socialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p.71; C. Willard, *Jules Guesde, l'apôtre et la loi* (Paris: Éditions ouvrières, 1991), p.46.

²⁵ 'apparemment inaccessible'. M. Angenot, *Le Marxisme dans les grands récits: essai d'analyse du discours* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005), p.18.

²⁶ Berenson, *Populist Religion and Left-Wing Politics in France*, p.237.

simple facts such as when they first appeared in French.²⁷ French socialists during this period, though, were neither unable nor unwilling to read Marx: in fact, quite the opposite. Although their access to the original texts may have been circumscribed, French translations of Marx vastly increased during this period, granting French readers meaningful access to his thought and the chance to engage with him as a philosopher and social critic for the first time. Marx, in other words, was more than simply a figurehead in French socialist circles during this period. He was also an intellectual figure, and his texts were of considerable importance.

II

Importantly, these French translations were not always identical to the originals. This is of course to a certain extent to be expected of any translation, yet in this case the changes were particularly notable. It is to some of these that I shall now turn. In order to provide a sufficiently detailed and comprehensive analysis in the restricted space available, I shall focus upon one translation: that of the first volume of *Das Kapital*. It was this text in which the changes were most prominent. Some were little more than simplifications,²⁸ or clarifications,²⁹ but others significantly altered the tone of some of the text's most well known chapters.³⁰ Although the alterations constituted only a small percentage of the text as a whole, they were thus significant nonetheless. Given the centrality of issues of translation to this section, all relevant quotations will be provided within the text in their original language. These have been drawn from the 1872 German edition of *Das Kapital* and the 1872-75 French *Le Capital*. English translations appear in the footnotes.

Originally published in German in 1867, the first French edition of *Das Kapital* followed five years later. The translation was carried out by Joseph Roy, and the work published by Maurice Lachâtre, a prominent radical editor who had worked with various revolutionaries and socialists including Louis Blanc and the Blanquist journalist Félix

²⁷ See, for example, Derfler, *Paul Lafargue and the Flowering of French Socialism*, p.21; C. Willard, *Le socialisme de la renaissance à nos jours* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971), p.50. Indeed, he disagrees with his own position, see Willard, *Socialisme et communisme français*, p.62. See also Vincent, *Between Marxism and Anarchism*, p.71; Willard, *Jules Guesde, l'apôtre et la loi*, p.46.

²⁸ Compare, for example, Marx, *Le capital*, pp.28-29 and K. Marx, *Capital, Volume 1* (trans.) B. Fowkes (London: Penguin, 1990. First published, 1976), pp.164-65; Marx, *Le capital*, p.29 and Marx, *Capital, Volume 1*, pp.166-67; Marx, *Le capital*, p.342 and Marx, *Capital, Volume 1*, p.929.

²⁹ Compare Marx, *Le capital*, p.341 and Marx, *Capital, Volume 1*, pp.927-28.

³⁰ Anderson, "The "unknown" Marx's *Capital*, volume I", at p.72.

Pyat.³¹ *Le Capital* was originally published between 1872 and 1875 in instalments priced at 10 *centimes* each; a strategy that Lachâtre hoped would ‘enable as many of our friends [the working-class] as possible to get hold of’ copies.³² A complete version of the translated text was also published in 1875 to mark the end of the serialisation.

Chapter 15 Section 4; ‘The Factory’ provides the clearest example of the possible effects of these small changes. This section was central to the text’s narrative of the development of capitalism and addressed a series of pressing contemporary concerns. It was here that Marx tackled the ways in which the modern industrial workplace had transformed the relationship between workers and their tools, delineating also the effects that this had had upon the labourer. Marx was certainly not the first to address this subject matter. The potential effects of industrialisation upon labour had occupied theorists from across the political spectrum, from liberal political economists like Charles Dunoyer to socialists such as Blanc, for much of the nineteenth century.³³ As industrialisation spread, it also became increasingly important within contemporary politics. In Britain, for example, Parliament passed a series of Factory Acts, designed to regulate the working hours and conditions of industrial labour. From the continuous debate and emendation of these acts, we may infer that the subject matter occupied and perplexed successive generations of politicians.³⁴

Marx was pessimistic about the benefits of this type of legislation. Building upon the premises established in other work including the *Communist Manifesto*, he claimed that technological advancements and the invention of machinery capable of performing the tasks of multiple workers had drastically reversed the roles of labour and labourer. Where once the labourer had been the motor of industry, they had now been displaced by the machine. In modern production, ‘the motion of the whole factory proceeds not from the worker but from the machinery’.³⁵ This, Marx argued, had exacerbated existing social distinctions and created a situation of radical inequality. The reversal of

³¹ Lachâtre was also Blanqui’s second choice of publisher for *Éternité par les astres*. See L.-A. Blanqui to Mme. Barrelier, 3 January 1872, in L.-A. Blanqui, *L’éternité par les astres* (ed.) L. Block de Behar (Geneva: Éditions Slatkine, 2009. First published, 1872), 47-50, at p.50.

³² ‘Le mode de publication que nous avons adopté, par livraisons à dix centimes, aura cet avantage, de permettre à un plus grand nombre de nos amis de se procurer votre livre’. Marx, *Le capital*, p.8.

³³ See for example C. Dunoyer, *L’industrie et la morale considérées dans leurs rapports avec la liberté* (Paris: A. Sautet, 1825); L. Blanc, *Organisation du travail*, 5th edn (Paris: Au bureau de la Société de l’industrie fraternelle, 1847. First published, 1839).

³⁴ For more on the Factory Acts, see W.R. Cornish and G. de N. Clark, *Law and Society in England, 1750-1950* (London: Sweet & Maxwell, 1989).

³⁵ Marx, *Capital, Volume 1*, p.546.

momentum initiated by industrialisation meant that labour had become cheap, abundant and, as a result, disposable. The perceived productivity and consequent value of machinery, meanwhile, enabled its owner to accrue status, capital, and as a result power on a scale vastly disproportionate to their personal contribution. The factory brought together all of these elements on a large scale and under one roof. In doing so, it both represented industrial capitalism in its purest form and elevated it to a higher stage of development.

The effects of the factory upon the worker were, according to Marx, twofold. Professionally and economically, it reduced them to a state of dual servitude. Workers were now entirely reliant upon the factory owner and the machine they operated; the former for employment and the latter in order to produce the required amount of product. Whereas '[i]n handicrafts and manufacture', Marx wrote, 'the worker makes use of a tool; in the factory, the machine makes use of him.'³⁶ Naturally, this economic state of affairs also had political implications. Within the walls of their factory the owner exercised absolute power – the power to hire and fire at will without fear of consequences – over their workers, to the extent that they were not just an employer but also a sovereign. The territory of this 'factory Lycurgus' took the form not of the supposedly democratic State outside its walls but of a military dictatorship.³⁷ The social composition of factories thus exposed both the limits and the hypocrisy of the bourgeois State. Inside the factory, the supposedly universal rights won in successive French Revolutions were thrown aside, while outside politicians genuflected to capital and sought only to preserve their own interests. Legislation such as the Factory Acts was thus powerless to stop this exploitation, for it had never been designed with workers' interests in mind.

Factories also affected workers' mental and psychological health. The original version of 'The Factory' emphasised the debilitating effects of industrial conditions at every opportunity. In order to acquire any level of proficiency at their new job as machine assistants, *Das Kapital* argued that the labourer must devote their entire life to familiarising themselves with a single machine:

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.548.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.550.

‘Alle Arbeit an der Maschine erfordert fröheitigen Einbruch des Arbeiters, damit er seine eigene Bewegung der gleichf6rmig kontinuierlichen Bewegung eines Automaten anpassen lerne.’³⁸

Yet this professional dedication yielded no individual benefit for the worker. Although the ghosts of old hierarchies often remained, in the factory all labour was unskilled labour. The routine and repetitive nature of life at machinery (indeed, at one machine) ‘sondern seine Arbeit vom Inhalt’,³⁹ and ‘[d]as Detailgeschick des individuellen, entleerten Maschinenarbeiters verschwindet’.⁴⁰ In the factory, it was impossible for the worker to derive any pleasure or individual benefit from their work. The work itself was meaningless, and all time in the factory was dead time. What’s more, the dehumanising nature of this work also affected all other aspects of workers’ lives. For the labourer, the factory was all consuming, and the extreme state of their dependency had effectively reduced them to a part of the machinery. As such, no other life was possible outside of their work.

Le Capital certainly did not embrace factory labour, but its condemnation was less comprehensive. Here, machinery deprived work of its ‘int6r6t’ rather than of its ‘content’ or its significance.⁴¹ Similarly, the worker’s particular skill did not vanish when confronted with the factory owner’s power, but instead appeared ‘ch6tive’ in comparison.⁴² In *Le Capital*, industrial labour was draining and demeaning, and it was certainly not stimulating or interesting. Yet the French translation stopped short of claiming that it was pointless or deprived of content, and while the worker may have been disempowered, they nonetheless retained some form of skill. Equally, whereas *Das Kapital* asserted that in order to master a single machine children must subject themselves to it from an early age, the French translation observed rather that ‘[t]out enfant apprend tr6s-facilement 6 adapter ses mouvements au mouvement continu et uniforme de l’automate.’⁴³ In outlining the worker’s relationship to machinery, *Le Capital*’s focus was thus significantly different from *Das Kapital*’s. While, for instance, child labour remained

³⁸ ‘The worker must be taught from childhood upwards, in order that he may learn to adapt his own movements to the uniform and unceasing motion of an automaton’. K. Marx, *Das Kapital*, Band 1, 2nd edn (Hamburg: Verlag von Otto Meissner, 1872. First published, 1867), p.442.

³⁹ ‘deprive[d] the work itself of all content’. Marx, *Das Kapital*, p.444.

⁴⁰ ‘[t]he special skill of each individual machine-operator...vanishes’. Marx, *Das Kapital*, p.445.

⁴¹ Marx, *Le capital*, p.183.

⁴² ‘meagre’. *Ibid.*, p.183.

⁴³ ‘Every child learns very easily to adapt their movements to the continuous and uniform movement of the automaton.’ *Ibid.*, p.182.

a terrible form of exploitation, *Le Capital* prioritised the worker's skill rather than their subjection. At the very least, the two were not necessarily mutually exclusive.

A comparison of 'The Factory' and 'La fabrique' thus reveals the potential that these changes had for significantly altering the text. In both languages *Capital* addressed the same questions and made the same broad points, yet the detail was subtly different and this could appreciably change the tone of the text. The relationship between workers, factories, and machinery remained one of subjection and alienation, and in both versions the skilled worker was reduced to a state of dependency. In *Le Capital*, though, this process was both more complicated and less certain. Here, the worker retained skill and individuality, and although both were diminishing, the text gave no indication that either would be completely obliterated by further industrial development. In *Le Capital* the worker remained an entity separate from the machine they operated, raising the possibility that they could both maintain a life outside of work and pursue workers' empowerment within the factory itself. Moreover, in highlighting workers' ability to quickly master machinery, the text even hinted that workers could potentially harness industrialisation for their own benefit. Whether it was indicative of a different attitude towards factory work in general or simply reflective of France's lesser stage of industrial development, *Le Capital's* treatment of the subject was strikingly different. Where *Das Kapital* left very little room for movement or variation, in *Le Capital* the experience of industrial labour was less uniform, less exceptional, and more flexible. Within the factory of 'La fabrique', the worker retained multiple (if decreasing) options and the ability to make decisions.

This more plural, or hesitant approach was also present in other parts of the text. Discussing the development of capitalism in Chapter 26,⁴⁴ 'The Secret of Primitive Accumulation', Marx wrote in *Das Kapital* that it

'nimmt in verschiedenen Ländern verschiedene Färbung an und durchläuft die verschiedenen Phasen in verschiedner Reihenfolge. Nur in England, das wir daher als Beispiel nehmen, besitzt sie *klassische Form*.'⁴⁵

The French translation proceeded in much the same fashion, but for one alteration. While such developments had as yet only occurred in England, *Le Capital* noted that

⁴⁴ In the German original, this is Chapter 24.

⁴⁵ 'assumes different aspects in different countries, and runs through its various phases in different orders of succession, and at different historical epochs. Only in England, which we therefore take as our example, has it *the classic form*' (876). Marx, *Das Kapital*, p.745. Emphasis mine.

‘tous les autres pays de l’Europe occidentale parcourent le même mouvement’.⁴⁶ In both versions of *Capital*, Marx was willing to accept that the form of capital’s development would vary from country to country according to the particularities of its historical development.

The French version, though, was both more restrictive and more permissive. Note the difference in geographical application. Whereas *Das Kapital* attached universal relevance to England’s path of development, *Le Capital* merely stated that ‘tous les autres pays de l’Europe occidentale’ would undertake this path. While on the one hand, this alteration definitively tied France to a particular model of development, on the other it also opened up the possibility of some countries experiencing not just a different pace of development, but a different form of development altogether. As Gareth Stedman Jones has demonstrated, Marx had been privately gravitating towards an appreciation for primitive communes since the late 1860s,⁴⁷ yet he did not publicly come around to the idea until the early 1880s. In French, however, there was no such transition, for the Marx of *Le Capital* had always been open to plural trajectories of historical development. Until the early 1880s, in other words, the French version of Marx was uniquely plural.

The Marx of *Le Capital*, then, was subtly but significantly different from the Marx of *Das Kapital*. While the changes made to the text in translation were rare and often little more than one word, they considerably altered the tone and the meaning of important sections of the text. These changes fashioned a Marx that was more permissive, more cautiously optimistic about the situation of the modern worker, and more overtly plural. Unlike in *Das Kapital*, in *Le Capital* Marx recognised the potential for industrialisation and individual self-worth to coexist, the potentially positive impact of large-scale machinery, and the possibility of different trajectories of historical progress. Thus while they may nominally have been engaging with the same work, Marx’s French audience was in fact reading and interpreting a text that was notably different from the original. Given these discrepancies, in order to properly understand French engagement with Marx’s ideas during this period, a close examination of these translations is essential.

⁴⁶ ‘All other Western European countries will experience the same movement’. Marx, *Le capital*, p.315.

⁴⁷ G. Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx: Grandeur, Greatness and Illusion* (forthcoming, 2016), p.733.

III

The French Marx, though, was not confined to *Le Capital*. Historians of French Marxism eager to justify their lack of attention to these translations have frequently argued that they were neither widely read nor known, and are thus of little relevance.⁴⁸ Let us take *Le Capital* as an example again. It certainly seems to have been the case that *Le Capital* failed to reach its target audience. Indeed, Marx's own postface to the 1873 German edition of *Das Kapital*, which referred only to its reception among positivists such as Émile Littré, suggested as much.⁴⁹ A decade later Marx remarked to Engels that 'it would now seem to be the fashion for French real or would be "advanced" leaders' such as Georges Clemenceau to read *Le Capital*, but again made no reference to workers.⁵⁰ Whether due to the commitment required to keep abreast of its gradual publication (something that Marx had initially voiced concerns about) or the fact that it was published in Paris during the Communards' decade of exile, its audience was limited.

Yet this did not mean that workers were unfamiliar with either the text or its ideas. In the early 1880s, Gabrielle Deville, the young socialist journalist and associate of Guesde and Lafargue obtained permission from Marx to publish a short version of *Le Capital*, which would be more accessible to workers.⁵¹ The resulting book, *Le Capital de Karl Marx* first appeared in 1883. It retained the structure of the original work, but in a heavily abridged form, and was accompanied by a long preface. Written by Deville, this explained the text, situated it within Marx's other work, and outlined possible strategies for its practical implementation.⁵² *Le Capital de Karl Marx* has rarely even been mentioned by historians, let alone discussed.⁵³ At the time, however, it enjoyed a high level of exposure, including large advertisements in prominent workers' newspapers such as Prosper-Olivier Lissagaray's long-running Parisian daily *Le Citoyen & La Bataille*.⁵⁴ In fact, *Le Capital de Karl Marx* was simply one example of a much wider contemporary

⁴⁸ See for example Angenot, *Le Marxisme dans les grands récits*, p.18; Moreau, *Les socialistes français et le mythe révolutionnaire*, p.45.

⁴⁹ K. Marx, 'Postface to the second edition' (1873), in Marx, *Capital, Volume 1*, 94-103, at p.99.

⁵⁰ 187: K. Marx to F. Engels, 30 September 1882 (Paris), *Marx/Engels Collected Works* vol.46, 338-339, at p.339.

⁵¹ 160: L. Lafargue to F. Engels (Paris, 18 July 1885), in Engels and Lafargue, *Correspondence*, vol.1, 299-301, at p.300.

⁵² Deville, *Le Capital de Karl Marx*, 1-63.

⁵³ Brief mentions can be found at Rubel and Manale, *Marx Without Myth*, p.327; Angenot, *Le Marxisme dans les grands récits*, p.5.

⁵⁴ *Le Citoyen & La Bataille*, 25 March 1883.

socialist practice, whereby texts considered important were abridged, summarised, and sold as part of ‘workers’ libraries’.⁵⁵

The majority of changes made to *Le Capital* were also integrated into *Le Capital de Karl Marx*. Deville was vocal about his desire to retain the original text’s meaning and its ‘very original physiognomy’ as far as possible.⁵⁶ In sections such as ‘La fabrique’, the altered passages discussed above were reproduced verbatim.⁵⁷ Sections such as ‘Le secret de l’accumulation primitive’, meanwhile, were rephrased to aid comprehension, but nonetheless remained closer to the tone of *Le Capital* than *Das Kapital*.⁵⁸ The French Marx was thus not only demonstrably but also consistently different.

While it may have been true that few workers read *Le Capital*, it was certainly not the case that the text or Marx’s ideas were unknown. Rather, as part of a concerted effort to democratise what were considered key texts and ideas, French workers had wide access to a simplified version. Indeed, the inclusion of *Le Capital* in this strategy suggests that contemporary French socialist leaders placed great importance upon the dissemination and awareness of Marx’s thought. Equally importantly, *Le Capital de Karl Marx* preserved the unique character of the original French translation. The French Marx was both widely disseminated and widely known. Finally, from the durability of these translational changes, we may infer one final point: that they were intentional. Despite ample opportunity to detect and correct the discrepancies between the publications of the two volumes, *Le Capital de Karl Marx* repeated rather than reversed the alterations made to *Le Capital*. Instead of simply errors of translation, the changes made to the French version of *Das Kapital* were indicative of a concerted effort to construct a different Marx.

IV

Moreover, Marx was heavily involved in this alteration process. Dissatisfied with Roy’s initial translations, Marx took on much of the work himself.⁵⁹ He deemed the French version ‘almost [a] complete rewriting’, and in fact this was the final edition of

⁵⁵ For a reference to this practice, see ‘La Bible moderne’, *Le Citoyen & La Bataille*, 6 November 1882.

⁵⁶ ‘la physionomie si originale de l’ouvrage’. Deville, *Le Capital de Karl Marx*, p.7.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.192-95.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.309-311. See particularly p.309.

⁵⁹ K. Marx, ‘Postface to the French edition’ (1875), in Marx, *Capital, Volume 1*, p.105.

Capital that he personally supervised before his death.⁶⁰ Marx frequently drew attention to the changes he had made. In the 1875 French postface, for example, he suggested that *Le Capital* possessed ‘a scientific value independent of the original and should be consulted even by readers familiar with the German.’⁶¹ Indeed, he even expressed the hope that the French edition, rather than either of the German ones, would serve as the basis for forthcoming translations in England, Italy, and Spain.⁶² These translational changes, then, did not occur without Marx’s permission or involvement. Rather, he personally oversaw the alteration process, implementing the changes himself and subsequently actively drawing attention to them.

Marx had in fact always accepted that such changes would be made. From *Le Capital*’s inception, he had been indifferent to questions of ‘authenticity’, concurring with Lachâtre that the primary aim of the French edition should not be to replicate the original word for word but to reach as many workers as possible.⁶³ Unlike their German counterparts, he noted, French readers were ‘always impatient to come to a conclusion, eager to know the connection between general principles and the immediate questions that have aroused their passions’.⁶⁴ This different audience would, naturally, require a different text, and indeed Marx’s principal criticism of Roy’s work was that it was ‘far too literal’.⁶⁵ Similarly, responding to Engels’s criticisms of *Le Capital de Karl Marx* in 1885, Laura Lafargue reminded him that Deville had been ‘encouraged to undertake the work by Papa himself’.⁶⁶ It has often been posited that Marx was unhappy with the alterations made to *Le Capital*, believing the translation to be ‘inauthentic’ to the spirit of the original.⁶⁷ This, however, was quite clearly not the case. As both his initial letters to Lachâtre and his reaction to the translation indicated, he was neither displeased with the

⁶⁰ 19: K. Marx to F. Sorge, 4 August 1874 (London), *Marx/Engels Collected Works*, vol.45, 28-30, at p.28. See also 11: K. Marx to L. Kugelman, 18 May 1874 (London), *Marx/Engels Collected Works*, vol.45, 17-19, at p.17.

⁶¹ Marx, ‘Postface to the French edition’, in Marx, *Capital, Volume 1*, p.105. For a similar recommendation several years earlier, see Marx, ‘Postface to the second edition’, in Marx, *Capital, Volume 1*, at pp.94-95.

⁶² For Lachâtre’s expression of this hope, see Lachatre to Marx, in Marx, *Le capital*; for Marx’s, see 227: K. Marx to N. Danielson, 28 May 1872 (London), in *Marx/Engels Collected Works*, vol.44, 385-386, at p.385.

⁶³ M. Lachatre to K. Marx (1872), in Marx, *Le capital*.

⁶⁴ K. Marx, ‘Preface to the French edition’ (1872), in Marx, *Capital, Volume 1*, p.104.

⁶⁵ Rubel and Manale, *Marx Without Myth*, pp.273-74.

⁶⁶ 160: L. Lafargue to F. Engels (Paris, 18 July 1885), in Engels and Lafargue, *Correspondence*, vol.1, 299-301, at p.300.

⁶⁷ Rubel and Manale, *Marx Without Myth*, pp.273-74. For a similar assertion, see Angenot, *Les grands récits militants des XIXe et XXe siècles*, p.117.

French texts nor concerned with their ‘authenticity’. Rather, he was alert to the need to alter the text for a French audience and encouraged efforts to do so.

Marx’s attention to France’s circumstances becomes particularly clear when comparing *Le Capital* with some of his other work on France. Chapter One of this thesis explored Marx’s engagement with the Paris Commune, but France’s previous revolutions, especially 1848 also featured prominently in his work. Unlike *The Civil War in France*, though, *The Class Struggles in France 1848-1850* and *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* were not widely known in French circles at the time. The issue was, again, one of translation. Both were originally published in German – *Class Struggles* as a series of articles in *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* in 1850 and *Eighteenth Brumaire* in an American newspaper in 1852 – and somewhat surprisingly had not been translated into French by 1885. There is a small amount of evidence that some French activists had read *Eighteenth Brumaire*, but it is inconclusive, and the text was certainly not widely known, read, or referenced.⁶⁸ These two bodies of work – the French translations and the German texts on France – thus provide an excellent opportunity to directly compare Marx’s treatment of similar subjects in different circumstances and for different audiences.

Let us take the issue of workers’ and peasants’ private property. In *Eighteenth Brumaire*, Marx assigned private property a central role in class development. Discussing the state of the contemporary French countryside, he asserted that ‘[t]he economic development of small-scale landed property has fundamentally turned round the relationship of the peasantry to the other classes of society.’⁶⁹ Attachment to their smallholdings adversely affected the social and personal economic development of the French peasantry, preserving them as ‘a nation of troglodytes’, but at the same time such property was also the motor of national economic development. In facilitating the growth of the bourgeois State through mechanisms such as taxation, it also consequently forced the development of class-consciousness.⁷⁰ Fifteen years later in *Das Kapital*, Marx made a similar argument about property. Here, he defined workers’ private property as ‘the foundation of small-scale industry’,⁷¹ which was in turn ‘a necessary condition for the

⁶⁸ See the reference to tragedy and farce in M. Talmeyr, ‘Pour les Khroumirs’, *L’Intransigeant*, 8 May 1881.

⁶⁹ K. Marx, ‘The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte’ (trans.) T. Carver, in M. Cowling and J. Martin (eds.), *Marx’s Eighteenth Brumaire: (Post)modern Interpretations* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 19-109, at p.103.

⁷⁰ Marx, ‘The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte’, at p.104. See also K. Marx, *The Class Struggles in France 1848-1850* (trans.) H. Kuhn (New York: New York Labor News Company, 1924. First published in German, 1848-1850), p.47.

⁷¹ Marx, *Capital, Volume 1*, p.927.

development of social production and of the free individuality of the worker himself.⁷² In both of these texts, then, the acquisition of small-scale private property by peasants and workers was of central importance. As the basis for the development of both modern means of production and the modern State, it was essential to the progress of capitalism, the entrenchment and visualisation of class difference, and consequently incitement to revolution.

By the beginning of the Third Republic in 1870, though, it was clear that small-scale private property had neither revolutionised social relations nor politicised the masses in France. Historians such as Maurice Agulhon and Chloé Gaboriaux have comprehensively deconstructed the tired dichotomy of radical town and reactionary countryside,⁷³ yet as the previous chapters have demonstrated, it would not be inaccurate to characterise relations between urban revolutionaries and the provinces in this period as strained.⁷⁴ Certainly, revolutionaries were largely unsuccessful at constructing a shared class-consciousness between peasants and urban workers (Chapter Two). Economic conditions also showed little sign of progression along the path that Marx had delineated. As statistics such as the relatively low number of child labourers indicated,⁷⁵ France had undergone nowhere near as dramatic industrial and social transformations as some of its neighbours.⁷⁶ By 1876 only 27.6% of the national working population was in industry.⁷⁷ Revolutionaries and socialists in the early Third Republic, then, were both numerically in the minority and ideologically on the back foot. In this context, pronouncements about the transformative power of private property and the French peasantry would have appeared not only irrelevant, but also untrue.

By the time of *Le Capital*, Marx's thought on workers' private property in France had shifted to fit these circumstances and this readership. Whereas elsewhere such property had been foundational to the historical development of capitalism, the Marx of

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.927.

⁷³ See for example M. Agulhon, *The Republic in the Village: The People of the Var from the French Revolution to the Second Republic*, trans. J. Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982. First published in French, 1970), p.295; C. Gaboriaux, *La République en quête des citoyens: les républicains français face au bonapartisme rural (1848-1880)* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 2010), p.144.

⁷⁴ For more on the hardening of this rhetorical division in the late Second Empire, see Gaboriaux, *La République en quête des citoyens*, p.244.

⁷⁵ Treppe, *La France ouvrière*, p.244; Willard, *Socialisme et communisme français*, p.57; Moss, *The Origins of the French Labor Movement*, pp.9-10; p.18.

⁷⁶ For figures on migration to cities, see R. Treppe in C. Willard (ed.), *La France ouvrière: Histoire de la classe ouvrière et du mouvement ouvrier français*, vol.1 (Paris: Éditions sociales, 1993), p.245.

⁷⁷ Vincent, *Between Marxism and Anarchism*, p.68. See also Moss, *The Origins of the French Labor Movement*, p.18.

Le Capital asserted instead that ‘[l]a propriété privée du travailleur sur les moyens de son activité productive est le corollaire de la petite industrie’.⁷⁸ This change, as Anderson has noted, effectively ‘decentred’ private property, removing it as a necessary factor of capitalist accumulation.⁷⁹ While for the French Marx, private property may often have coexisted with small-scale industry, the former was neither essential nor foundational to the latter’s development. This change catered directly to a French environment in which no widespread urbanisation had taken place, and which remained more divided by geography (in terms of urban-rural antagonism) than by class. It enabled French socialist readers to effectively detach their ‘progress’ from that of the rural population. This comparison of French translations and work on France thus demonstrates that Marx was more than willing to adapt his ideas and texts to suit different temporal and geographical circumstances. The Marx presented in French translation, in other words, was not the same as the German Marx, and nor was he simply a different Marx: rather, he was a specifically *French* Marx.

Although the French example provides a very clear demonstration of this side of Marx, it was in fact indicative of a more general intellectual principle. Discussing the introduction of political economy into Germany, which he argued had no historic background for such ideas, Marx complained that

‘The theoretical expression of an alien reality turned in their hands into a collection of dogmas, interpreted by them in the sense of the petty-bourgeois world surrounding them, and therefore misinterpreted. The feeling of scientific impotence, a feeling which could not entirely be suppressed, and the uneasy awareness that they had to master an area in fact entirely foreign to them, was only imperfectly concealed beneath a parade of literary and historical erudition’.⁸⁰

Many of Marx’s actions during this period, particularly within the General Council of the IWA, belied his inability to act according to such ideas. Yet theoretically at least, he was hostile to ‘metaphysical’ totalities and attempts to indiscriminately transpose ideas from one context to another. While he may have often failed to live up to such principles, it is nonetheless important to keep this parallel intellectual openness in mind.

This comparison should also lay to rest the concept of an ‘authentic’ Marx. As the juxtaposition of his French translations and his writings on France demonstrates, Marx’s thought was not a monolithic, immutable, or ideologically coherent entity. While

⁷⁸ ‘The workers’ private property is...the corollary of small scale industry’. Marx, *Le capital*, p.341. Emphasis mine.

⁷⁹ Anderson, ‘The “unknown” Marx’s *Capital*, volume I’, at p.75.

⁸⁰ Marx, ‘Postface to the second edition’, in Marx, *Capital, Volume 1*, 94-103, at pp.95-96.

diverse texts and translations addressed many of the same issues – property, industrialisation, the development of capitalism – Marx’s analysis and practical recommendations varied from text to text. Furthermore, Marx himself was deeply involved in the process of translating and adapting his work for different audiences; indeed no changes were made without his knowledge or permission. As a result, different versions of Marx abounded during his lifetime, many of which were based directly on his texts. Marx, in other words, could be eminently intellectually (if not often politically) flexible. He cannot be reduced to a codified set of ideas, and there is no ‘authentic’ Marx to be found in his texts.

V

Previous historians of Marx in France have overlooked the significance of his texts, and have therefore failed to perceive this flexibility. It has conventionally been assumed that the French Marx’s character during this period was derived almost entirely from his involvement in the International Workingmen’s Association (IWA).⁸¹ This is not particularly surprising, for many French revolutionaries did come into contact with Marx in these circumstances.⁸² As we saw in Chapter One, following the fall of the Paris Commune the majority of revolutionaries escaping death or arrest fled to either London or Geneva.⁸³ Here they remained until the 1880 general amnesty allowed them to return to France. These two cities were also the IWA’s main operational hubs in Europe: Marx, the head of the General Council resided in London, while Mikhail Bakunin’s core support, the anarchist Jura Federation was based in Switzerland. The French government kept the IWA under close surveillance during the Commune,⁸⁴ and in the recriminations that followed its fall the IWA was widely blamed in the European press for having instigated the revolution.⁸⁵ In fact, though, French interaction with (let alone

⁸¹ See for example Vincent, *Between Marxism and Anarchism*, p.71.

⁸² See for example intelligence report to the Préfecture de Police, 31 December 1878 (London). APP Ba430/3189.

⁸³ For information on the refugees in Geneva, see Vincent, *Between Marxism and Anarchism*, p.39. For numbers of refugees in London, see G. Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx: Grandeur, Greatness, and Illusions* (forthcoming, 2016), p.683.

⁸⁴ Intelligence report to the Ministère de l’Intérieur, 13 May 1871 (Versailles). APP Ba439/5097; see also Ba439/5102-5103; Report to the Préfecture de Police, 28 May 1871 (Vienna). APP Ba439/5104; see also Ba439/5252. For lists of IWA members and their fates after the Commune, see APP Ba439/4860-4862.

⁸⁵ Both the press and the police continued to fear the IWA’s influence after the fall of the Commune. For the press, see for example *Le Pays*, 31 March 1874. APP Ba439/5568; *Le Combat*

membership of) the organisation had been relatively minimal prior to and during the Commune. It was not until the Commune's fall and its participants' flight into exile that membership soared.

What's more, these new members became heavily involved in IWA. The sheer numbers of exiles flooding in from France were immense, and as a result various established factions within the organisation rushed to recruit groups of new French members to their causes.⁸⁶ Marx, for example, enlisted the help of Blanquist exiles to expel Bakunin and the Swiss anarchist James Guillaume at the 1872 Hague Congress.⁸⁷ French exiles were thus not simply passive members of the IWA. Rather, partly as a result of their numbers, and in spite of their relative greenness, they became heavily involved in both the dissemination of propaganda and the organisation's internal politics, including the events at the Hague Congress that effectively brought the First International to an end. As David Stafford has observed, the 'political apprenticeship of all the founders of the French socialist movement was in the First International'.⁸⁸

This experience clearly had a profound effect upon French socialism in the 1870s and early 1880s.⁸⁹ The IWA and French experiences within it continued to feature prominently in revolutionary writings well after organisation's official demise in 1876.⁹⁰ Its structure furnished socialists such as Benoît Malon with new ideas on party organisation and post-revolutionary society,⁹¹ and a variety of groups attempted to claim its legacy as their own.⁹² The experiences and knowledge French socialists gained in this

(Vaucluse), 16 August 1874. APP Ba439/5576. For official documents, see APP Ba439/5457; 5493.

⁸⁶ In London, approximately 1500 exiles and in Switzerland around 750. For figures, see A. Dowdall, 'Narrating *la Semaine Sanglante*, 1871-1880' (unpublished MPhil dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2010), p.12.

⁸⁷ See for example, J. Guillaume, *L'Internationale: documents et souvenirs (1864-1878)* (Paris: Société nouvelle de librairie et d'édition, 1905-1910); *Mémoire présenté par la Fédération jurassienne de l'Association internationale des Travailleurs à toutes les fédérations de l'Internationale* (Sonvillier: Au siège du Comité fédéral jurassien, 1873), p.192; M. Cordillot, *Aux origines du socialisme moderne: La Première Internationale, la Commune de Paris, l'exil* (Paris: Éditions de l'Atelier, 2010).

⁸⁸ Stafford, *From Anarchism to Reformism*, p.6. See also Jousse, 'La construction intellectuelle du socialisme réformiste en France', p.259; Moss, *The Origins of the French Labor Movement*, pp.73-4.

⁸⁹ For more on this, see L. Godineau, *Retour d'exil: Les anciens Communards au début de la Troisième République* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Université de Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2000), p.413.

⁹⁰ See for example É. Reclus, *Évolution et Révolution*, 6th edn (Paris: Imprimerie Habert, 1891. First published, 1882. Speech first given, 1880), p.54. This was also the case with Marx and Engels, see Anderson, 'The "unknown" Marx's *Capital*, volume I', p.78.

⁹¹ See for example B. Malon, *L'Internationale: son histoire et ses principes* (Lyons: Extrait de la *République républicaine*, 1872), pp.12-13.

⁹² For Guesdist attempts, see 'La voix de l'histoire', *Le Citoyen*, 5 August 1882; 'Les deux congrès', *Le Citoyen*, 14 October 1882. For Possibilist attempts, see 'État et anarchie', *Le Prolétariat*, 10 May 1884 and 17 May 1884; 'Les travailleurs de la main et les travailleurs du cerveau devant

organisation were, therefore, extremely important to their later thought. In the wake of the Commune the 1872 *loi Dufaure* had banned the IWA from operating in France, however the exilic trajectories of revolutionaries fleeing reprisals ensured that it nonetheless had a significant and very visible impact upon French socialist thought and French politics through the period in question.⁹³

This approach has inflected the French Marx with a set of very distinct characteristics. In this context, Marx was principally an organiser rather than a philosopher or a social critic. Moreover, he was not a particularly successful organiser. He was instead an egotist; a purist who would rather dissolve a supposedly democratic international association than compromise on his vision for it. He was a shadowy background figure, an intriguer pulling strings from London. The French Marx has thus until now largely remained a *separate* Marx, and French Marxism a phenomenon that occurred without the involvement of, indeed perhaps even in spite of, Marx himself.

An analysis of Marx's texts in French translation significantly complicates this picture. Where in the IWA Marx was a rigid authoritarian, in French translation he was flexible rather than dogmatic. Furthermore, Marx was deeply involved in the creation of this textual French persona. Rather than simply brooding in his study in London and penning disgruntled letters to his correspondents, Marx took an active part in disseminating his own ideas, adjusting his work for different circumstances, and engaging with the historical and economic contexts of various different countries. While Marx was involved in this process, then, the French Marx was also decidedly not a set of ideas imposed from the top down. Rather, it was a process of collaboration between Marx, his French disseminators such as Lachâtre and Deville, and the French *milieu* itself. It is thus only by combining the history of Marx in the IWA and Marx's texts in French translation that we can hope to approach an understanding of the character of the French Marx.

l'Internationale', *Le Proletariat*, 7 June 1884 and 5 July 1884; 'La coalition révolutionnaire', *Le Proletariat*, 26 September 1885; B. Malon, 'L'Internationale', *L'Intransigeant*, 21 February 1884.

⁹³ Some revolutionaries claimed that sections of the IWA continued to operate in France even after 1872, but while this is possible, the claims are unsubstantiated. See for example *Mémoire présenté par la Fédération jurassienne de l'Association internationale des Travailleurs à toutes les fédérations de l'Internationale* (Sonvillier: Au siège du Comité fédéral jurassien, 1873), p.262.

II: Marxism

This French Marx was extremely influential for a variety of French socialists during the 1870s and early 1880s, both as a public figure and as a source of ideas. The second half of this chapter will address the ways in which French socialists interacted with and used the ideas of the French Marx in their own work. It shall focus upon the three most prominent revolutionary and revolutionary socialist groups in France at the beginning of the 1880s: the Guesdists, the Possibilists, and the Blanquists. For the purposes of this chapter, the Guesdists comprised Jules Guesde, Paul Lafargue, and Gabriel Deville. Their principal political opponents, the Possibilists, were headed by Paul Brousse and, at various times, Benoît Malon and Jean Allemane. The Blanquists were somewhat less cohesive, but comprised diverse followers and associates of Louis-Auguste Blanqui including Henri Rochefort and Jules Vallès. Although trained in a number of other professions, the vast majority of these men made a living as journalists. This section shall therefore pay particular attention to the main newspapers that they either owned or regularly wrote for: *L'Égalité*, *Le Citoyen*, *Le Prolétaire*, and *L'Intransigeant*.⁹⁴

I

As the self-proclaimed French Marxists, it is the Guesdists who first spring to mind when considering the relationship between Marx and French theorists during this period. They were certainly eager to reinforce this connection, frequently listing Marx as their intellectual inspiration and broadcasting their knowledge of his work. The group's principal newspaper, *L'Égalité* declared in 1882 that 'our scientific communism emanates from Marx's learned critique',⁹⁵ while a year later Deville questioned the Possibilists' intellectual competence, for 'few of them have read Marx'.⁹⁶ As Section One of this chapter demonstrated, the Guesdists were heavily involved in the construction and dissemination of the French Marx. The Lafargues, for example, secured a French publisher for *Das Kapital* and translated many other texts themselves,⁹⁷ and Deville produced the abridged version of *Capital*. In 1884, Lafargue and Deville continued their

⁹⁴ For the identification of *L'Intransigeant* as the Blanquists' principal newspaper, see Hutton, *Cult*, p.131.

⁹⁵ 'notre communisme scientifique sorti de la savante critique de Marx'. G. Deville, 'Il y a cinq ans'. *L'Égalité*, 19 November 1882. See also P. Lafargue, 'Le déisme de M. Pasteur', *Le Citoyen*, 23 April 1882.

⁹⁶ 'peu parmi leurs dupes ont lu Marx'. Deville, *Le Capital de Karl Marx*, p.6.

⁹⁷ Rubel and Manale, *Marx Without Myth*, p.271.

efforts to broaden Marx's French audience, staging a series of public lectures (later published as cheap pamphlets) to explain what they considered to be key areas of his thought.⁹⁸ The Guesdists, then, were closely linked to the French Marx. He was not only their intellectual inspiration, but they also played a leading role in bringing Marx's ideas to France.

While the Guesdists' role in bringing Marx to the attention of French audiences has long been recognised, the nature of their intellectual interactions with his work has not. Even the most recent work on this subject, Angenot's *Le Marxisme dans les grands récits*, dismissed Lafargue as

‘a literary, bohemian spirit, and mediocre orator who was little interested in questions of party organisation. His correspondence with his father-in-law indicates that he had great respect for the author of *Capital* but...was completely out of his depth when it came to Marx's science.’⁹⁹

The idea that the Guesdists systematically misunderstood or misrepresented Marx has been surprisingly durable. Yet this was clearly not the case. As a more detailed exploration of their work shows, the Guesdists both closely engaged with and built upon the ideas of the French Marx.

The clearest example of this can be found in the Guesdists' writings on labour and industrialisation. This, as briefly mentioned in Section One, had been an issue of central concern for French theorists, and in particular French socialists for some time. In his 1839 *Organisation du travail*, Louis Blanc had declared ‘the right to work’ a central principle of socialism,¹⁰⁰ and in 1848 this found physical expression in the national workshop scheme, under which the State guaranteed work for unemployed citizens.¹⁰¹ Various other French radicals and state critics, such as the anarchist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon also placed work at the centre of their philosophy.¹⁰² In the early 1880s, the Guesdists mounted a highly unusual challenge to the significance of work for French

⁹⁸ G. Deville, *L'Évolution du capital* (Paris: Henry Oriol, 1884); P. Lafargue, *Cours d'économie sociale: le matérialisme économique de Karl Marx* (Paris: Henry Oriol, 1884).

⁹⁹ ‘esprit littéraire et bohème, médiocre orateur, s'intéresse-t-il peu aux questions d'organisation du Parti. Sa correspondance avec son beau-père indique qu'il respecte beaucoup l'auteur du *Capital*, mais...qu'il est parfaitement dépassé par sa science.’ Angenot, *Le Marxisme dans les grands récits*, pp.11-12. See also Berenson, *Populist Religion and Left-Wing Politics in France*, p.238.

¹⁰⁰ See Blanc, *Organisation du travail*. For more on Blanc and the right to work see J. Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic: A History of Political Thought in France since the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.401.

¹⁰¹ For Marx on this, see Marx, *The Class Struggles in France 1848-1850*, p.59.

¹⁰² See for example P.-J. Proudhon, *Qu'est-ce que la propriété? Ou, recherches sur le principe du droit et du gouvernement* (Paris: J.F. Brocard, 1840).

socialism. The most familiar iteration of the Guesdists' position was Lafargue's *Le droit à la paresse*, which appeared in 1880 as a series of articles in *L'Égalité*, and as a book three years later.¹⁰³ Variations of the same idea, though, appeared throughout Guesdist writing during the period.¹⁰⁴

For the Guesdists, industrialisation had transformed work from a right that must be defended into one of socialism's greatest problems. The long hours of menial, repetitive labour demanded of modern workers were irreparably damaging for both the individual labourer and society as a whole.¹⁰⁵ Individually, *L'Égalité* observed, work was no longer a potentially fulfilling activity, but a trial to be endured that 'deprive[d] the worker of any joy'.¹⁰⁶ Industrial production also directly contributed to the decomposition of social frameworks. In order to meet its production targets, Lafargue claimed, the factory 'dragged the workmen from their hearths, the better to wring them and press out the labour which they contained'.¹⁰⁷

Workers, then, found themselves no longer in control of their lives. Modern labour was not emancipation, but deception: '[f]or the modern wage labourer, work is no longer liberty, as the bourgeois philosophers assured them that it was, but slavery; the workshop is forced labour'.¹⁰⁸ While the Guesdists devoted as much space to questions of labour as did other French socialists, their conclusions were markedly different. Whereas for the likes of Blanc and Proudhon, work guaranteed freedom, for the Guesdists industrialisation and the consequent changes in working conditions mean that

¹⁰³ See P. Lafargue, *Le droit à la paresse* (Paris: Henry Oriol, 1883. First published, 1880).

¹⁰⁴ 'Un vieux cliché', *L'Égalité*, 14 May 1882. For similar ideas, see also 'Un mal pour le bien', *Le Citoyen*, 2 October 1881; 'Patrons et ouvriers', *Le Citoyen*, 6 December 1881; 'Utopies réactionnaires', *Le Citoyen* 29 April 1882.

¹⁰⁵ For analysis of living standards, see for example P. Lafargue, 'Caractère fatidique des misères prolétariennes', in *L'Émancipation*, 12 November 1880; 'Leur fête', *L'Égalité*, 14 July 1880; 'Le collectivisme et la production agricole', *L'Égalité*, 23 December 1877. For more on French living standards during this period, see Stafford, *From Anarchism to Reformism*, p.203.

¹⁰⁶ 'Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité', *L'Égalité*, 18 August 1880. See also 'Le Creusot', *L'Émancipation*, 1 November 1880.

¹⁰⁷ P. Lafargue, *The Right to be Lazy and Other Studies* (trans.) C.H. Kerr (Chicago: John F. Higgins Press, 1907. Originally published in French, 1880), p.19.

¹⁰⁸ 'Le travail pour les salariés modernes n'est plus la liberté, comme l'assurent encore les philosophes bourgeois, mais l'esclavage; l'atelier est le baignoire.' P. Lafargue, 'Le travail c'est l'esclavage', *Le Citoyen*, 24 July 1882. For further Guesdist comparisons of modern workers to slaves and serfs, see 'La lutte de classes', *L'Égalité*, 2 June 1880; 'Si les électeurs savaient!', *Le Citoyen*, 16 October 1881; J. Guesde, 'L'Église et les radicaux', *Le Citoyen*, 23 November 1881; 'La féodalité commerciale', *Le Citoyen*, 6 January 1882; C. Bouis, 'Leur logique', *Le Citoyen*, 2 February 1882; 'Travail et capital', *Le Citoyen*, 27 February 1882; E. Massard, 'L'instruction bourgeoise', *Le Citoyen*, 24 March 1882; Lafargue, *The Right to be Lazy and Other Studies*, pp.15-16.

rather than a guarantee of liberty, labour was an active impediment to it. Moreover, these impositions would increase along with the growth of industry itself.

Solutions based on a return to communal labour, however, were not the answer to this problem. Although industrialisation had drastically reduced the worker's quality of life, the Guesdists argued, it was impossible to reverse the process. While Lafargue, as we have seen, was concerned that factories were slowly destroying social structures, in Guesde's view this process was already complete. Small and autonomous forms of society such as communes, he argued, had 'died' '[t]he day the steam of a locomotive appeared on the horizon'.¹⁰⁹ Neither were relatively undeveloped economies spared this fate. While less industrialised than its neighbours England and Germany, even the French peasant, Deville wrote,

'cannot content himself with producing for his own personal use: in order to buy the little he needs, to pay his taxes, to pay off his debts, he must produce in order to exchange, that is to say he must enter into competition with other producers.'¹¹⁰

While traditional social forms such as the peasant smallholding may persist for a time, the invention of modern machinery had inalterably changed society. The parallel existence of this new, more efficient means of production had doomed its more traditional counterpart to eventual obsolescence. There could thus be no return, the Guesdists argued, to communal or artisanal labour.¹¹¹ Demanding the right to work was not part of the solution, but part of the problem, and contributed only to workers' continued enslavement.

For the Guesdists, it was through industrialisation rather than through work that labourers could achieve a better quality of life. In industrial Europe, Lafargue noted, the greatest privilege was not work, but leisure time, or 'the right to be lazy'. In an age of joyless work, it was only this that enabled the individual to develop his or her own personality and interests. In previous eras, democratising the right to be lazy had simply not been possible, but the advent of large-scale production had changed this. Where

¹⁰⁹ 'L'autonomie devant la science et devant l'histoire', *Le Citoyen*, 24 November 1881. See also J. Guesde, 'Socialisme et paysan', *L'Émancipation*, 9 November 1880; 'L'Internationale bourgeoise et l'Internationale ouvrière', *Le Citoyen*, 13 March 1882.

¹¹⁰ 'Le paysan ne doit pas se contenter de produire pour son usage personnel; afin d'acheter le peu dont il a besoin, de payer ses impôts, d'acquitter les intérêts de ses dettes, il doit produire pour échanger, c'est-à-dire entrer en concurrence avec les autres producteurs.' Deville, *Le Capital de Karl Marx*, p.14.

¹¹¹ J. Guesde and P. Lafargue, *Le Programme du Parti Ouvrier: son histoire, ses considérations, ses articles* (Paris: Henry Oriol, 1883), p.77.

previously, Deville wrote, the ‘slavery of some’ had been ‘the condition of the wellbeing of the others; with machines, these iron slaves, the wellbeing of all is possible.’¹¹²

Lafargue, meanwhile, fêted machinery as ‘the saviour of humanity, the god who shall redeem man from the *sordidae artes* and from working for hire, the god who shall give him leisure and liberty’.¹¹³

Industrialisation, in other words, was not inherently bad; it was simply badly used. By turning modern machinery to the benefit of all rather than the few, society could simultaneously produce all that it required and universally enjoy leisure time. Industrialisation was thus not a process in need of reversal, but a blessing that could guarantee workers a better life than their predecessors had ever enjoyed. Rather than idealistically and misguidedly demanding a return to pre-industrial labour and the right to work, Guesdists encouraged workers to embrace modernisation and mould it to their own benefit. The worker, *L'Égalité* argued, should endeavour to ‘become his own capitalist’.¹¹⁴ By advancing a theory of industrialisation that did not demand the dismantling of large swathes of the increasingly industrial French economy, the Guesdists were able to position themselves as at once realistic and forward-looking.

At the same time, this position set the Guesdists apart from their opponents in both French politics and in socialist circles. The majority of European socialists, from the Possibilists to English activists such as William Morris, continued to define work as a potentially fulfilling activity and privilege the demand for communal labour as a central principle of socialism.¹¹⁵ Radical republican deputies such as Georges Clemenceau, meanwhile, had repackaged the ability to work as the characteristic of a superior, more

¹¹² ‘L’esclavage des uns a été la condition du bien-être des autres; avec les machines, ces esclaves de fer, le bien-être de tous est possible.’ Deville, *Le Capital de Karl Marx*, p.14. See also G. Deville, ‘L’État de nature’, *Le Citoyen*, 17 September 1882.

¹¹³ Lafargue, *The Right to be Lazy*, p.62. See also ‘Le travail c’est l’esclavage’, *Le Citoyen*, 24 July 1882. For other iterations of this, see ‘Un mal pour le bien’, *Le Citoyen*, 2 October 1881; ‘Patrons et ouvriers’, *Le Citoyen*, 6 December 1881; ‘Un mal pour le bien’, *Le Citoyen*, 2 October 1881; ‘Utopies réactionnaires’, *Le Citoyen* 29 April 1882; ‘Ce qu’est le progrès social’, *Le Citoyen*, 21 August 1882; ‘Un vieux cliché’, *L'Égalité*, 14 May 1882. See also ‘Le Proudhonisme est le passé’, *L'Égalité*, 20 April 1880; ‘Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité’, *L'Égalité*, 18 August 1880.

¹¹⁴ ‘il faudrait que le travailleur fût à lui-même son capitaliste’. ‘Collectivisme et socialisme’, *L'Égalité*, 14 July 1878.

¹¹⁵ For contemporary French socialist endorsements of the right to work, see A. Theisz, ‘Le mouvement social: le programme de l’Alliance républicaine socialiste’, *L’Intransigeant*, 16 November 1880; B. Malon, ‘Le droit au travail’, *L’Intransigeant*, 30 August 1884; P. Brousse, *Le Suffrage universel et le problème de la souveraineté du peuple* (Geneva: Imprimerie Coopérative, 1874), p.48; P. Brousse, *La crise: sa cause, son remède* (Geneva: Édition du Révolté, 1879), pp.25-26. For more on Morris, see R. Kinna, *William Morris: The Art of Socialism* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000).

evolved humanity.¹¹⁶ Labour of course remained important in Guesdist thought, for it was work that ensured the smooth running of society and thus guaranteed the right to be lazy.¹¹⁷ For the Guesdists, though, work was a social obligation rather than a right.¹¹⁸ Its purpose was to create the conditions for social equality and nothing more.

This solution was built explicitly upon foundations derived from the French Marx. As demonstrated in Section One, in *Le Capital* Marx offered an alternative, marginally more optimistic assessment of factory labour than the relentless depiction in *Das Kapital*. In ‘La fabrique’, Marx was more open to the possibility that, under the correct conditions, industrialisation could be harnessed for the benefit of workers. Likewise, the French Marx had left room for workers to sustain interests and a life outside of work. The Guesdists’ solution to the problem of industrial labour built explicitly upon these foundations. Lafargue and Deville both referred directly to *Le Capital* in their own work,¹¹⁹ and used Marx to construct a theory that offered a distinct solution to the problem of social equality without unrealistically requiring the wholesale reversal of significant aspects of the contemporary economy.

II

The Guesdists, though, were not the only French socialists to engage with Marx and his ideas. Largely as a result of the tortured history of the French workers’ movement during this period, it has often been suggested that the Guesdists were the only French admirers of Marx’s work. In 1882, the nascent French workers’ party split, leading to the creation of two new parties: the Guesdists’ *Parti ouvrier français* (POF) and the Possibilists’ *Fédération des travailleurs socialistes français* (FTSF). Although the official rupture occurred at the 1882 annual congress, it followed at least a year of rising tensions over the organisation and doctrinal direction of the party. The friction and recriminations surrounding these events played out very publicly in the French radical

¹¹⁶ ‘Le travail c’est l’esclavage’, *Le Citoyen*, 24 July 1882.

¹¹⁷ J. Guesde, *Collectivisme et révolution* (Paris: Librairie des publications populaires, 1879), pp.15-6. See also J. Guesde, *Le collectivisme au Collège de France* (Paris: Henry Oriol, 1883), pp.14-15; ‘Collectivisme et socialisme’, *L’Égalité*, 14 July 1878.

¹¹⁸ ‘La question économique et la question politique’, *L’Égalité*, 2 June 1878.

¹¹⁹ For Deville, see *Le Capital de Karl Marx*. For Lafargue, see *Le droit à la paresse*, pp.32-33; P. Lafargue, ‘Une page d’histoire’ in *La revue socialiste* 8 (20 June 1880), 365-370, at p.366; P. Lafargue, ‘Recherches sur les origines de l’idée du bien et du juste’, *Revue philosophique* 20 (1885), 253-267, at p.254. For other Guesdist references, see for example ‘Évolution – Révolution’, *L’Égalité*, 18 February 1880.

press.¹²⁰ Indeed, by 1882 these insults had become so common that neutral parties, from other newspapers to ordinary party members, often publicly begged both sides to desist.¹²¹ Eager to win support, both sides often reverted to the Marxist-anarchist language of the IWA split, in which so many French socialists had been involved.¹²² Historians have often taken this language at face value, reading intellectual differences into party political issues and assuming that the Possibilists were either uninterested in or opposed to Marx.¹²³

Certainly, there were aspects of both Marx's thought and conduct that the Possibilists were actively opposed to.¹²⁴ This was especially true when it came to questions of leadership and organisation. What Possibilists perceived as Marx's appetite for authority and his friends' willingness to indulge him attracted widespread ire.¹²⁵ Brousse, for example, criticised Engels's effusive eulogy at Marx's graveside, cautioning that Marx 'was not God'.¹²⁶ Both Brousse and Malon worried that these tendencies had taken root in the French socialist movement. Brousse, for example, criticised Guesdism

¹²⁰ For more on this, see Stuart, *Marxism at Work*, pp.34-5. For Guesdist attacks, see 37: Paul Lafargue to Benoît Malon, November 1881, in Bottigelli and C. Willard (eds.), *La naissance du Parti ouvrier français: Correspondance inédite de Paul Lafargue, Jules Guesde, José Mesa, Paul Brousse, Benoît Malon, Gabrielle Deville, Victor Jaclard, Léon Camescasse et Friedrich Engels* (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1981), 164-5, at p.164; 31: Paul Lafargue to the members of the *Égalité* and *Prolétaire* groups, 21 October 1881 (London), in Bottigelli and Willard, *La naissance du Parti ouvrier français*, 142-45, at pp.143-44; J. Guesde and P. Lafargue, *Le programme du Parti Ouvrier: son histoire, ses considérants, ses articles* (Paris: Henry Oriol, 1883), pp.121-122; 'Les deux congrès', *Le Citoyen*, 14 October 1882; 'L'autonomie', *L'Égalité*, 25 December 1881; 'Prolétariana', *L'Égalité*, 19 February 1882; 26 February 1882; 19 March 1882; 'L'automaniaquisme', *L'Égalité*, 28 May 1882; 'Le taux des salaires et le prix des marchandises', *L'Égalité*, 28 May 1882; 'Le communisme et les services publics', *L'Égalité*, 2 July 1882; 'Un mot d'explication', *L'Égalité*, 20 August 1882. See also 132: F. Engels to L. Lafargue, 23 November 1884 (London), in Engels and Lafargue, *Correspondence*, vol.1, 245-249, at p.247. See also 'Dernier mot', *Le Prolétaire*, 10 March 1883.

¹²¹ 'Correspondance', *Le Prolétaire*, 14 January 1882; 'L'élection de dimanche', *Le Citoyen & La Bataille*, 9 March 1883.

¹²² For use of this language, see P. Brousse, *Le marxisme dans l'Internationale* (Paris: Aux bureaux du journal *Le Prolétaire*, 1882), p.32. See also 'A bas le masque!', *Le Prolétaire*, 16 September 1882; *Le Prolétaire*, 21 October 1882; 'Les dessous de la coterie marxiste', *Le Prolétaire*, 3 March 1883; 'Possibilistes, impossibilistes et anarchistes', *Le Prolétariat*, 3 January 1885; 31: Lafargue to the members of the *Égalité* and *Prolétaire* groups, in Bottigelli and Willard, *La naissance du Parti ouvrier français*, 142-5, at pp.143-4; 105: Paul Brousse to César de Paepe, 11 February 1884 (Paris), in C. de Paepe, *Entre Marx et Bakounine: Correspondance* (ed. B. Dandois) (Paris: Maspero, 1974), 245-9, at pp.247-9.

¹²³ Angenot, *Les grands récits militants des XIXe et XXe siècles*, p.108; Jousse, 'La construction intellectuelle du socialisme réformiste en France', p.1009; see also pp.1010-1011; Derfler, *Paul Lafargue and the Flowering of French Socialism*, p.26.

¹²⁴ Vincent, *Between Marxism and Anarchism*, p.94.

¹²⁵ See for example Brousse, *Le marxisme dans l'Internationale*, p.4; 'La coterie marxiste et l'élection du vingtième', *Le Prolétaire*, 24 February 1883; 'Loriquet marxiste', *Le Prolétaire*, 29 December 1883. For a similar observation, see Moss, *The Origins of the French Labor Movement*, p.110.

¹²⁶ 'Karl Marx', *Le Prolétaire*, 24 March 1883.

as ‘not a system that disseminates its ideas, but one that imposes them’.¹²⁷ Similarly, in his obituary Malon hinted at his unease with Marx’s attitude to organisation and activism, specifying that, not wishing to speak ill of a dead man, he would ‘concentrate exclusively on him [Marx] as a *savant* and a thinker’.¹²⁸ It was certainly true, then, that the Possibilists disliked large swathes of Marx’s activity in the last years of his life, and that these largely corresponded to the issues that had led to both the 1872 split of the IWA and the division of the French workers’ party a decade later.

The Possibilists, though, did not reject Marx completely. Marx made regular appearances in Possibilist publications including *Le Prolétaire*, their principal newspaper, and was also regularly quoted by Brousse and Malon.¹²⁹ More importantly, the Possibilists’ praise of Marx did not end with the 1882 split. Following Marx’s death a year later, Brousse praised him as ‘a powerful thinker, and in the area of economic analysis and criticism...unparalleled’.¹³⁰ Likewise, while Malon disputed Marx’s interpretation of the Commune,¹³¹ simultaneously he lauded Marx as ‘the most eminent of contemporary socialists’,¹³² and ‘the abundant source from which most of [modern workers’ socialism] is drawn’.¹³³ The Possibilists’ relationship with Marx, then, was not simply one of distance and disapproval. While they certainly rejected aspects of his thought and behaviour, equally Possibilist writers praised Marx as an important and original thinker. That they continued to do so even as tensions within the French

¹²⁷ Un ‘système qui tend non à répandre la doctrine marxiste, mais à l’imposer’. Brousse, *Le marxisme dans l’Internationale*, p.7; see also p.31. See also ‘Der Social-Demokrat’, *Le Prolétaire*, 14 April 1883.

¹²⁸ ‘nous nous en tiendrons...pour ne nous occuper exclusivement que de savant et du penseur’. B. Malon, ‘Le socialisme de Karl Marx’, *L’Intransigeant*, 23 March 1883.

¹²⁹ B. Malon, *La question sociale: histoire critique de l’économie politique* (Lugano: J. Favre, 1876), p.216; B. Malon, *Le nouveau parti* (Paris: Derveaux, 1882), vol.1, p.43; ‘De l’action sociale’, *Le Prolétaire*, 18 January 1879; ‘La grève’, *Le Prolétaire*, 3 January 1880; ‘Comédie parlementaire’, *Le Prolétaire*, 7 February 1880; B. Malon, ‘Évolution et ploutocratie’, *L’Intransigeant*, 29 November 1881; B. Malon, ‘La dépression’, *L’Intransigeant*, 20 June 1884. For a Possibilist reference to Engels, see P. Dervillers, ‘Un drôle d’historien’, *Le Prolétaire*, 18 September 1880.

¹³⁰ ‘Karl Marx’, *Le Prolétaire*, 24 March 1883. See also Brousse, *Le marxisme dans l’Internationale*, p.3 and pp.13-14; P. Brousse, *La crise: sa cause, son remède* (Geneva: Édition du Révolté, 1879), pp.6-7.

¹³¹ See Chapter One.

¹³² Le ‘plus célèbre des socialistes contemporains’. B. Malon, ‘Karl Marx’, *L’Intransigeant*, 17 March 1883.

¹³³ ‘Elle n’est pas le *Credo* du socialisme ouvrier moderne; mais elle en est la source abondante où il a le plus puisé’. B. Malon, ‘Le socialisme de Karl Marx’, *L’Intransigeant*, 23 March 1883. See also B. Malon, ‘Les Partis ouvriers en France’, in *La revue socialiste* 5 (5 May 1880), 257-269, at p.260; B. Malon, ‘Réponse à une question’, *L’Émancipation*, 11 November 1880; B. Malon, *La question sociale: histoire critique de l’économie politique* (Lugano: J. Favre, 1876), p.216; B. Malon, *Le nouveau parti* (Paris: Derveaux, 1882), vol.1, p.43. For a similar sentiment from another thinker, see E. Halpérine, ‘Karl Marx’, in *La revue socialiste* 3 (March 1885), 238-245, at p.240; E. Fournière, ‘Essai sur l’évolution socialiste’, in *La revue socialiste* 5 (May 1885), 427-437, at p.428.

socialist movement were at their highest attested both to the strength of their affinity for Marx and to how widespread these sentiments were.

Although the Possibilists effusively praised Marx's thought in general, he was less visible in their own work. Unlike the Guesdists, Possibilists rarely explicitly mentioned Marx, and an extended comparison between the two groups is therefore not possible. There were nonetheless several areas in which the Possibilists ideas intersected with Marx's. Their belief in the social value of intermediary bodies such as communes,¹³⁴ for example, was similar to Marx's late acceptance of the revolutionary potential of the commune, yet there remained significant points of difference on where this model could be applied and what should be its precise role. Furthermore, in these areas the Possibilists continued to draw heavily upon other thinkers, most notably Proudhon.¹³⁵ My intention, though, is not so much to argue that the Possibilists embraced Marx with open arms, but simply to show that they could not accurately be termed *anti-Marx*. Rather, the Possibilists took a selective and non-committal approach to Marx, praising aspects of his thought while criticising others. If anything, these varied uses of Marx serve to demonstrate precisely how popular he was within French socialism at the time.

In fact, a selective approach to Marx was widespread in French revolutionary circles at the time. The Blanquists, for example, had long praised Marx. In 1869, Lafargue informed Marx that Blanqui 'has the greatest esteem for you', and that he owned a copy of *Misère de la philosophie* (Marx's only text in French at the time), which he frequently lent to associates.¹³⁶ They continued to associate themselves with Marx throughout the period, quoting from *Le Capital* and repurposing some of his more evocative language for their own circumstances.¹³⁷ This regard was further evidenced in the Blanquists' political arrangements. Blanquist exiles in the IWA, for example, allied themselves with Marx and the General Council in 1872, and in the mid-1880s Jules

¹³⁴ See for example A. Arnould, *L'État et la Révolution* (Lyons: Éditions Jacques-Marie Laffont et Associés, 1981. First published 1877), p.96; P. Brousse, 'Congrès annuel de la Fédération jurassienne', *L'Avant-Garde*, 12 August 1878; P. Brousse, 'Liberté et égalité', *L'Émancipation*, 3 November 1880; *Le Prolétaire*, 15 April 1882.

¹³⁵ P.-J. Proudhon, *Du principe fédératif et de la nécessité de reconstituer le parti de la révolution* (Paris: Éditions Bossard, 1921. First published, 1863). For mentions of Proudhon, see 'Une faute', *Le Prolétaire*, 4 August 1883; 'Le "pays légal"', *Le Prolétaire*, 1 April 1885; A. Theisz, 'Le mouvement social: le programme de l'Alliance républicaine socialiste', *L'Intransigeant*, 16 November 1880; B. Malon, 'La révolution qui vient', *L'Intransigeant*, 12 August 1884. See also G. Lefrançais, *Un Communard aux électeurs français* (Geneva: publisher unknown, 1875), p.4

¹³⁶ Rubel and Manale, *Marx Without Myth*, p.243.

¹³⁷ For quotes from *Capital*, see A. Theisz, 'Le mouvement social: de la raison d'être du parti socialiste', *L'Intransigeant*, 12 October 1880; 27 October 1880. For language, see M. Talmeyr, 'Pour les Khroumirs', *L'Intransigeant*, 8 May 1881.

Vallès publicly aligned himself and his followers with the Guesdists. Indeed, in the 1885 elections, the two groups (plus candidates associated with Lissagaray and *La Bataille*) ran on a joint ‘revolutionary’ platform.¹³⁸

At the same time, though, many of the same Blanquists rejected Marx’s more contemporary ideas. In 1880, for example, *L’Intransigeant* declared ‘[w]e can heartily reaffirm that we have remained true to the principles that we fought for, and which can be found in the *formules* of the International’.¹³⁹ The principles *L’Intransigeant* referred to was the original programme of the IWA, which had been written by Marx in 1864. Subsequently, though, these had been removed and replaced by another Marx-authored manifesto. In declaring its allegiance to the 1864 principles, *L’Intransigeant* thus simultaneously endorsed and rejected Marx’s ideas. Like the Possibilists, the Blanquists had a complicated relationship with Marx and his ideas, accepting aspects, rejecting others, and entering into political alliance with him, at times all at once. These Blanquist interactions with Marx additionally act as reminder that the Guesdists and the Possibilists were not the only activists to engage with Marx during this period. French uses of Marx were not only not restricted to one group; they were also not restricted to the explicitly ‘socialist’ sections of the revolutionary movement. As Blanquist interactions with his ideas show, the scope of French interactions with Marx was wider, more inclusive, and more complex than has previously been allowed for.

Indeed, not even the Guesdists were interested in parroting Marx’s changing thought point by point. While over time Marx had become increasingly amenable to the revolutionary potential of communes, for instance, the Guesdists continued to deny that any form of commune could serve as a site for social change.¹⁴⁰ Even in non-industrialised areas such as rural parts of contemporary India, the Guesdists argued,

¹³⁸ ‘Liste homogène’, *Le Proletariat*, 19 September 1885. See also ‘Touchante fraternité’, *Le Proletaire*, 28 April 1883; ‘La Bataille’, *Le Proletariat*, 16 May 1885; ‘Les candidats de la coalition révolutionnaire’, *Le Proletariat*, 3 October 1885.

¹³⁹ ‘Nous pouvons hardiment affirmer que nous sommes resté fidèle aux principes pour lesquels nous avons combattu, et qui se resument dans les formules de l’Association internationale des travailleurs.’ A. Theisz, ‘Le mouvement social: conciliation’, *L’Intransigeant*, 2 August 1880. For unfavourable Blanquist views of Marx, see ‘Pourquoi nous faisons une enquête?’, *La Fédération* (London), 21 September 1872; ‘Karl Marx’, *La Fédération* (London), 24 and 31 August 1872.

¹⁴⁰ Guesde and Lafargue, *Le Programme du Parti Ouvrier*, pp.75-6; J. Guesde, *Collectivisme et révolution* (Paris: Librairie des publications populaires, 1879), p.14; J. Guesde, *Services publics et socialisme* (Bordeaux: Imprimerie E. Forastie, 1883), p.7; ‘L’industrie individualiste’, *L’Égalité*, 31 March 1880; ‘Le Proudhonisme est le passé’, *L’Égalité*, 20 April 1880; ‘Protection et libre échange’, *L’Égalité*, 11 February 1880; ‘Victoire!’, *L’Égalité*, 30 April 1882; ‘Le communisme et les services publics’, *L’Égalité*, 2 July 1882; ‘La question des loyers’, *Le Citoyen*, 16 June 1882.

communal living was conducive neither to social harmony nor to progress.¹⁴¹ Indeed, it was not only powerless to bring about social equality, but actively injurious to the pursuit of it.¹⁴² Much like their Possibilist and Blanquist counterparts, then, the Guesdists were also relatively flexible when it came to using Marx's thought. While they may have drawn upon the French Marx more extensively and more visibly than other groups, their general approach to Marx's thought was the same. The Guesdists were not doctrinaires, and much like both the Possibilists and the Blanquists, they selected the elements of Marx that suited their own situation and thought, and ignored or rejected others.

The use of Marx and his ideas by French revolutionaries and socialists during this period, then, was both widespread and reflexive. Rather than the intellectual property of one group, various groups used Marx in a variety of different ways, highlighting particular aspects of his thought and ignoring others. While mentions of Marx and Marxism were ever-present in French socialist thought during this period, 'Marxism' as a doctrine was nowhere to be seen. Instead, Marxism is perhaps better characterised as a language, or a lexicon, which various French socialists drew upon in different ways in order to communicate with each other and to articulate possible responses to a series of pressing social problems.

III

This approach to Marx was not confined to France. In the 1870s, various European socialist parties began to employ a language of Marxism in a manner similar to French socialists.¹⁴³ Marx was thus useful as more than simply a source of ideas for thinking through social problems. As a language to which all European socialists could subscribe, Marxism also played a central role in reaffirming 'the links that must unite socialists all over the globe and all workers in the goal of social emancipation, solidarity, and concord.'¹⁴⁴ For French socialists specifically, the language of Marxism acted as a way of maintaining their connection to an international revolutionary socialist movement following their return to France – something that their wide coverage of international affairs and increasing use of foreign references suggested that they were keenly interested

¹⁴¹ 'L'autonomie', *L'Égalité*, 25 December 1881; 8 January 1882.

¹⁴² For a similar iteration of this view from Lafargue, see Lafargue, *Cours d'économie sociale*, pp.10-11. See also Deville, *L'Évolution du capital*, p.11.

¹⁴³ Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx*, p.707.

¹⁴⁴ 'Fête internationale', *Le Prolétaire*, 23 September 1882. See also 'Les trades unions et le Parti ouvrier', *Le Prolétaire*, 25 November 1882.

in both preserving and publicising.¹⁴⁵ At the same time, this new, shared language of Marxism played a crucial role in sustaining a sense of international socialist unity and sense of purpose after the collapse of the IWA.

Yet French uses of Marx cannot be explained solely in terms of the European socialist movement. Although they had spent much of the 1870s in exile in Europe, by the end of 1880 the majority of French socialists and revolutionaries had returned to France. At the same time, the relaxation of press restrictions (codified in the 1881 *loi sur la liberté de la presse*) enabled revolutionaries to publish freely (or at least with fewer impediments) for the first time since 1872. By the early 1880s the majority of French socialists were both resident and publishing in France once again, and their primary audience was also French. Socialists did not operate in a vacuum, and in order to understand their uses of Marx during this period, it is therefore crucial to situate these within French, as well as European, contexts.

The French general public during this period was perhaps uniquely ill disposed towards Marx. As we have seen, his work on the Paris Commune and actions in the IWA had attracted widespread condemnation, but as a Prussian of Jewish descent his personal background also marked him out as an unpopular figure. As Ruth Harris sensitively delineated in *The Man on Devil's Island*, anti-Semitism both latent and active was widespread in a variety of French circles during this period.¹⁴⁶ This would boil over several years later in Dreyfus Affair, but perhaps more immediately pertinent during this period were the pervasive French anti-German sentiments. These had been brought to the fore by France's definitive loss in the 1870-71 Franco Prussian War and the humiliating terms of surrender imposed by Bismarck, which included a victory parade through Paris. Resentment remained long after the parade and the Prussians had left

¹⁴⁵ 'L'autonomie', *L'Égalité*, 25 December 1881. See also P. Lafargue, 'Les cités ouvrières', *L'Égalité*, 23 July 1882. For parallel attempts to link themselves to foreign theorists, see Galérie socialiste', *L'Égalité*, 16 June-13 August 1880; 'La révolution en Europe', *Le Prolétaire*, 9 October 1880; B. Malon, 'Le socialisme en Angleterre', *L'Intransigeant*, 21 October 1884; 'Le socialisme devant le Reichstag: extraits du discours du citoyen Liebknecht', *Le Prolétaire*, 29 March 1879; F. Borde, *Le collectivisme au congrès de Marseille* (Paris: Delaporte, 1880), p.12; J. Delaporte, 'Le renversement de la loi des salaires', in *La revue socialiste* 9 (5 July 1880), 392-99, at p.397; Jousse, 'La construction intellectuelle du socialisme réformiste en France', p.279; M. Dommangeat, *Auguste Blanqui au début du IIIe République (1871-1880): dernière prison et ultimes combats* (Paris: Mouton, 1971), p.133.

¹⁴⁶ R. Harris, *The Man on Devil's Island: Alfred Dreyfus and the Affair that Divided France* (London: Allen Lane, 2010). This was also the case in the revolutionary movement; see for example G. Tridon, *Du molochisme juif: études critiques et philosophiques* (Brussels: Édouard Maheu, 1884); N.L. Green, 'Socialist anti-Semitism, defense of a bourgeois Jew and discovery of the Jewish proletariat: changing attitudes of French socialists before 1914', *International Review of Social History* 30 (1985), 374-399.

Paris,¹⁴⁷ and found political expression in the persistent, cross-party demands for the recovery of Alsace and Lorraine, which France had ceded to the newly formed Germany in defeat in 1871.¹⁴⁸ Marx, then, aggrieved both dormant French prejudices and overt political sensibilities. Without even reading a word of his work, the French general public was disinclined to approve of him.

To reference Marx in France was therefore to take a definitive political (or anti-political) stance. Certainly, as many historians have noted, socialist uses of Marx did very little for their public appeal.¹⁴⁹ Writing to Engels in 1882, Lafargue reported that *L'Égalité's* circulation in Paris hovered around 5000 copies, while in its heyday Prosper-Olivier Lissagaray's *La Bataille* had sold between 2000 and 3000.¹⁵⁰ Even accounting for the likely optimism of Lafargue's estimates, these figures were far higher than anything achieved by the ephemeral revolutionary newspapers of the early 1870s; indeed, *L'Égalité's* and *Le Prolétaire's* sheer durability evidenced a sustained core of support. In a Parisian population of several million, though, these numbers were still not particularly impressive. While of course their use of Marx was not directly responsible for this, it nonetheless suggests that socialists during this period did not gain widespread support. As a German of Jewish descent Marx was certainly not the obvious choice with which to re-launch a political career in early Third Republic France. While French socialists may have used him in much the same way as their European counterparts, the national social, political, and cultural context significantly altered the import of such associations. In France during this period, Marx could not act as a 'middle road' in the way that he could

¹⁴⁷ See for example P. Darrulat, *Les patriotes: la gauche républicaine et la nation 1830-1870* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2001), p.274. This was present in some revolutionary circles also. See for example H. Rochefort, 'Des preuves', *L'Intransigeant*, 28 July 1883. They also mocked Pierre Waldeck-Rousseau for his 'Teutonic' last name. See for example, 'Iterum crispinus', *L'Intransigeant*, 28 June 1883; H. Rochefort, 'La République en Espagne', *L'Intransigeant*, 4 January 1884.

¹⁴⁸ For a revolutionary example of this, see V. D'Esboeufs, *La république telle que nous la voulons: programme révolutionnaire, politique, économique et social* (Geneva: Imprimerie J. Benoit et Ce, 1874), p.45.

¹⁴⁹ Moss, *The Origins of the French Labor Movement*, p.8; p.18; Stafford, *From Anarchism to Reformism*, p.167; Vincent, *Between Marxism and Anarchism*, p.100; Vincent, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and the Rise of French Republican Socialism*, p.231; Willard, *Jules Guesde, l'apôtre et la loi*, p.40; Bernstein, *The Beginnings of Marxian Socialism in France*, p.93. For a contemporary iteration of this, see 33: Friedrich Engels to Edouard Bernstein, 25 October 1881 (London), in Bottigelli and Willard, *La naissance du Parti ouvrier français*, 148-55, at p.150.

¹⁵⁰ 63: P. Lafargue to F. Engels (Paris, 24 November 1882), in Engels and Lafargue, *Correspondence*, vol.1, 110-115, at p.113. Engels would later claim that *Le Citoyen* sold 25,000 copies over a summer. See 195: F. Engels to E. Bernstein, 2-3 November 1882 (London), *Marx/Engels Collected Works* vol.46, 353-358, at p.356.

for, for instance, German socialists. While such connections many not have been unique to French socialists, their determination to advertise them was nevertheless remarkable.

In fact, this antipathy seems to have been precisely the point. Rather than attempting to combat or ignore Marx's marginality, French socialists embraced it. They made much of the symbolic and intellectual links between Marx and contemporary French revolutionaries such as Proudhon and Blanqui.¹⁵¹ In *Le Capital de Karl Marx*, for example, Deville claimed that

‘The great revolutionary Auguste Blanqui in France and Marx in Germany are the first to have affirmed that an *entente* is not possible and that social renovation will be accomplished not with or by the bourgeoisie, but against the bourgeoisie.’¹⁵²

Marx was further located within wider traditions of radicalism, both geographical and temporal. Guesde, for example, likened Marx and the Guesdists to historic communist predecessors including Plato, Tommaso Campanella, and Thomas More,¹⁵³ while Malon found class struggle in texts as diverse as the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* and the *Manava Dharma Sastra*.¹⁵⁴ Socialists, then, were perfectly aware of Marx's unloved position in French public discourse. Rather than attempting to ignore it or overcome it, however, they embraced it, emphasising through these connections the many ways in which Marx (and by association they themselves) were unacceptable to contemporary French society.

In particular, French socialists emphasised their connections to Germany. In 1882 in *L'Égalité*, for instance, Guesde explicitly linked French and German socialism,

¹⁵¹ For Proudhon, see for example P. Brousse, ‘La grève comme moyen de propagande et de groupement’, in *La Bataille*, 17 May 1882. For Blanqui, see ‘Blanqui socialiste’, *L'Égalité*, 26 May 1878; B. Malon, ‘Blanqui socialiste’, *L'Intransigeant*, 8, 9, and 11 June 1885; B. Malon, ‘Blanqui socialiste’, in *La revue socialiste* 7 (July 1885), 586-597, at p.597, p.589. Marx also equated Blanqui with communism. See Marx, *The Class Struggles in France*, p.174. See also P. Rosanvallon, *The Society of Equals* (trans.) A. Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013. First published in French, 2011), pp.79-80. The relationships between Marx and other theorists has often been seen as one of opposition. See for example Bernstein, *The Beginnings of Marxian Socialism in France*, pp.46-47; see also p.93; Lichtheim, *Marxism in Modern France*, p.11; P. Thomas, *Karl Marx and the Anarchists*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2010. First published, 1980); R. Soltan, *French Political Thought in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Ernest Benn Limited, 1931), p.287; L. Derfler, *Paul Lafargue and the Founding of French Marxism 1842-1882* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp.175-6; see also p.184.

¹⁵² ‘Le grand révolutionnaire Auguste Blanqui, en France, et Marx, en Allemagne, sont les premiers à avoir affirmé qu'une entente n'était pas possible, et que la rénovation sociale se fera, non avec ou par la bourgeoisie, mais contre la bourgeoisie.’ Deville, *Le Capital de Karl Marx*, p.55.

¹⁵³ ‘La Commune’, *L'Égalité*, 26 March 1882. See also ‘Galérie socialiste’, *L'Égalité*, 16 June-13 August 1880; *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne*, 8 October 1876.

¹⁵⁴ Malon, *Le nouveau parti*, vol.2, p.15. See also A. Blanqui, *Critique sociale, tome 1: Capital et travail* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1885), p.48.

arguing that ‘collectivism and communism are six of one and half a dozen of the other’.¹⁵⁵ An 1884 letter from Lafargue to Engels provides a further indication of the Guesdists’ attempts to capitalise on their German associations. Recounting a meeting in the northern industrial town of Roubaix (one of the Guesdists’ main strongholds), Lafargue noted that the factory owners present

‘were infuriated by the enthusiasm which greeted the reading of the address from the Germans; they called us Prussians, told us to go and hold our congress in Berlin: it is a great pity that Liebknecht or Bebel was not present; they would have been cheered by the workers, who shouted the more loudly “Long live Germany! Long live the German Socialists!” the more the employers yelled “Down with Germany!” from the bourgeois section present.’¹⁵⁶

French socialists were thus acutely aware of the pervasive anti-German sentiments in France. Rather than avoiding these associations, though, they emphasised them, using German unpopularity to reinforce their own position as radical, anti-Establishment figures.

In this quest Marx, the most visible and widely known of German socialists, was extremely useful. In this particular context, then, for French socialists Marx was not particularly special or unique, and their intent when publicising to their connections to him was not to proselytise or advertise his ideas in any sustained or distinctive fashion: Marx was simply one theorist in a long line of radicals. Rather, these particular uses of Marx were dictated primarily by the French context. In the contemporary French political, social, and cultural climate, Marx – the German Jewish socialist – represented the zenith of prejudice and marginality, and this was why he was so useful.

French socialists’ aim in publicising their associations with Marx was not to appeal to the French general public, but to preserve their traditional support base. As discussed in Chapter Two, preserving revolutionary support was becoming increasingly difficult for French socialists during this period. The repressive legislation that immediately followed the Commune and the subsequent foundation of a moderate, reforming Republic rendered revolutionary action neither possible nor desirable. In this climate, many revolutionaries had significantly altered their definition of revolution and shed the deep engagement with modern French revolutionary history that they had

¹⁵⁵ ‘collectivisme et communisme c’est bonnet blanc et blanc bonnet’. J. Guesde, ‘Collectivisme et communisme’, *L’Égalité*, 5 February 1882. See also B. Malon, ‘Étudiants et prolétaires’, *L’Intransigeant*, 22 February 1885.

¹⁵⁶ 104: P. Lafargue to F. Engels, 10 April 1884 (Paris), in Engels and Lafargue, *Correspondence*, vol.1, 191-194, at pp.191-192. See also 172: P. Lafargue to F. Engels, Paris (13 November 1885), in Engels and Lafargue, *Correspondence*, vol.1, 318-19, at p.318.

pursued during the *année terrible*. The decision of French socialists to enter electoral politics further changed their policies and ideas, with candidates now demanding not the overthrow of contemporary society, but seats on municipal councils and the reduction of working hours. Indeed, in 1880 *L'Égalité* claimed that this was '[t]he sole aim of the proletarian revolution'.¹⁵⁷ While these changes were theoretically covered by the redefinition of revolution explored in Chapter Two, they nonetheless represented a significant shift from revolutionaries' previous positions. Meanwhile, the parallel rise of nihilist anarchism towards the end of this period saw more traditional revolutionaries and socialists lose their monopoly on violent anti-Statist action. French revolutionary socialists during this period, then, needed as much if not more help with maintaining their traditional support base as with appealing to the general public.

It was this French audience that socialists hoped their use of Marx would appeal to. Their embrace of Marx did not constitute a failure to understand the country. In fact, French socialists' decision to publicise their affinity with him was based on a deep understanding of the contemporary French context. Likewise, their use of Marx did not signal a withdrawal from French public life in favour of pan-European socialism, but a concerted effort to claim a marginal position within it. By utilising the language of Marxism in such a way, revolutionary socialists hoped to regain some of the marginal or anti-establishment status that was simultaneously so crucial to the ways in which they saw themselves and being progressively eroded as both circumstances and their own *modus operandi* changed. In a sense, then, Marx did serve as a way to delineate boundaries in French socialism, but not, however, in the ways that have been previously suggested. Marx was not the source of intellectual or political divisions within the revolutionary socialist movement. Rather, the language of Marx helped to preserve socialists' revolutionary credentials, demarcating the boundaries of the revolutionary socialist movement *as a whole*, and separating them from other actors in French politics.

IV

The history of French Marxism during this period was thus far more complex and interconnected than has previously been suggested. While French activists toyed

¹⁵⁷ 'Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité', *L'Égalité*, 18 August 1880. See also 'Le Proudhonisme est le passé', *L'Égalité*, 20 April 1880; 'Un vieux cliché', *L'Égalité*, 14 May 1882; 'Ce qu'est le progrès social', *Le Citoyen*, 21 August 1882; Lafargue, *Le droit à la paresse*, p.49.

with labels such as ‘Marxist’ and ‘anarchist’,¹⁵⁸ these terms did not denote any meaningful intellectual identification or content. As Brousse observed, ‘*Marxism* is not about being a partisan of Marx’s ideas’.¹⁵⁹ In an 1882 letter to Engels, Lafargue similarly explained that

‘in Paris the word anarchist is understood in a very different sense from that of 1871, and...even the anarchists themselves do not agree on the meaning of the term. Many think like us. But it’s a feather they like to wear in their hat. If it gives them pleasure, so much the better.’¹⁶⁰

The history of French Marxism thus cannot be folded neatly into the social, political, or organisational history of the workers’ movement or the various groupings such as the POF and the FTSF.¹⁶¹ The language of Marx and Marxism showed no regard for party political boundaries, and was to be found in the work of a wide variety of French socialists and revolutionaries during this period. The structure of parties and organisations cannot explain how this language of Marxism moved and spread.

While various different groups all drew upon the language of Marx and Marxism, they did not do so identically. For the Guesdists, Marx was useful primarily as a theorist of industrial capitalism, while his later ideas on communal organisation were deeply unwelcome. The Possibilists, meanwhile, praised Marx’s general contribution to the intellectual development of modern workers’ socialism while criticising his attitude to organisation and authority. Finally, the Blanquists by contrast were eager to politically associate themselves with Marx and self-professed Marxists, but fulsomely praised Marx’s work of the 1860s, and by implication rejected almost all of his later ideas.

¹⁵⁸ For use of this language, see P. Brousse, *Le marxisme dans l’Internationale* (Paris: Aux bureaux du journal *Le Prolétaire*, 1882), p.32. See also ‘A bas le masque!’, *Le Prolétaire*, 16 September 1882; *Le Prolétaire*, 21 October 1882; ‘Les dessous de la coterie marxiste’, *Le Prolétaire*, 3 March 1883; ‘Possibilistes, impossibilistes et anarchistes’, *Le Prolétariat*, 3 January 1885; 31: Lafargue to the members of the *Égalité* and *Prolétaire* groups, in Bottigelli and Willard, *La naissance du Parti ouvrier français*, 142-5, at pp.143-4; 105: Paul Brousse to César de Paepe, 11 February 1884 (Paris), in C. de Paepe, *Entre Marx et Bakounine: Correspondence* (ed. B. Dandois) (Paris: Maspero, 1974), 245-9, at pp.247-9.

¹⁵⁹ ‘Le marxisme ne consiste donc pas à être partisan des idées de Marx.’ Brousse, *Le marxisme dans l’Internationale*, p.7. Emphasis original.

¹⁶⁰ 53: P. Lafargue to F. Engels (Paris, 19 June 1882), in Engels and Lafargue, *Correspondence*, vol.1, 85-87, at p.86. For more on the flexible nature of anarchism, see E. Digeon, *Droits et devoirs dans l’anarchie rationnelle* (Paris: Fayard, 1882), p.32; G. Lefrançais, ‘A propos de “l’anarchie”’, *Le Travailleur* (February-March 1878), p.16; Copy of a report to the Préfecture de Police, 18 December 1873 (Geneva). APP Ba431/923; Intelligence report to the Préfecture de Police, 3 April 1875 (Geneva). APP Ba432/1468.

¹⁶¹ For suggestions that this was the case, see P. Gratton, *Les luttes des classes dans les campagnes* (Paris: Éditions Anthropos, 1971), p.34; Ligou, *Histoire du socialisme en France*, p.25 and p.98; Bernstein, *The Beginnings of Marxian Socialism in France*, p.148; Vincent, *Between Marxism and Anarchism*, p.74; Willard, *Socialisme et communisme français*, p.61; see also p.65.

Indeed on subjects such as the revolutionary potential of communes, various French socialists were able to violently disagree with each other while all drawing upon Marx's work. In using Marx's ideas, then, no group was attempting to faithfully recreate an 'authentic' Marx.

Marx and Marxism in late nineteenth-century France signified many things to many different historical actors at the same time. Approaching this subject matter in any way as the search for a defined French Marxism fails to capture not only its complexity, but the basic character of the ways in which French activists during this period interacted with Marx. Previous historians have been correct in their assertions that there was no Marxism in France or French thought at this time. French socialists were indeed uninterested in propagating a doctrine of Marxism. They have been mistaken, however, in their reasoning as to why this was the case. Marxism was not non-existent because French socialists were incapable of understanding or uninterested in Marx and his ideas. In fact, as we have seen, French socialist and revolutionary interest in Marx was widespread. Rather, there was no Marxism in France because at this point 'Marxism' as a distinct doctrine or a defined set of ideas simply did not exist.

The years towards the end of this period would see the construction of precisely the kind of rigid Marxist orthodoxy that had not been prevalent in France during the 1870s and early 1880s. Following Marx's death in March 1883, the collection and dissemination of his work fell to close family and friends, many of whom took a different approach. In 1884, for example, Engels wrote to Laura Lafargue:

[h]erewith the preface to the *Misère* by – Mohr [Marx] himself! Bernstein has rediscovered this old article which I have at once translated. Please, you and Paul, to turn my translation into proper French and return it along with the original which belongs to the "Partei-Archiv" at Zurich. There will only be a few more words required. But what will the French Public say to the rather unceremonious manner in which Mohr speaks of them? And will it be wise to give this true and impartial judgement at the risk that the Brousses say: *voilà le Prussien*? Anyhow, I

should be very loth to soften the article down to suit *le goût parisien* but it is worth considering.¹⁶²

This letter acts as both a physical and an intellectual demonstration of the ways in which the idea of Marxism changed and hardened towards the end of the period. For Engels, it was a science: a clearly defined and universally applicable set of ideas to be faithfully disseminated. This Marxism was altogether more systematic, less flexible, and more proximate to its common twentieth-century incarnation than that of the 1870s and early 1880s.

Many of the French socialists discussed in this chapter were also involved in this later disavowal of flexible approaches to Marx. Reflecting on the state of French socialism over the previous twenty years in 1897, Paul Lafargue for example disparagingly observed that after reading *The Civil War in France*, many Commune exiles ‘took themselves quite seriously as representing a socialism of which they did not know a single letter.’¹⁶³ Deville likewise would later apologise for his earlier work, remarking that ‘[w]e were learning socialism while we were teaching it to our readers, and it is unquestionable but that we were at times mistaken.’¹⁶⁴ The distance that Deville and Lafargue – the principal theoretical disseminators of Marx in France during this period – sought to place between themselves and French interactions with and interpretations of Marx from the 1870s and early 1880s has doubtless contributed to the perception of Lichtheim and others that Marx’s ideas did not truly ‘arrive’ in France until later on.

In France, this more uniform, clearly defined, and polished Marxism also reflected the significantly changed political circumstances of the late 1880s. After the tumultuous 1870s, the early part of the 1880s had been years of relative political stability, exemplified by the enactment of a succession of progressive, republican legislation. At the same time, revolutionary socialists had only just begun to dip their toes in the waters of electoral participation, and many still regarded electoral campaigns primarily as wide political platforms upon which to test their ideas rather than in terms of contests to be won or seats to be defended. In this environment, socialists were relatively free to experiment with different ideas. In the latter half of the decade, however, both the rise

¹⁶² 99: F. Engels to L. Lafargue, London (21 February 1884), in Engels and Lafargue, *Correspondence*, vol.1, 180-82, at pp.180-81.

¹⁶³ P. Lafargue, ‘Socialism in France from 1876 to 1896’, in *Fortnightly Review* (September 1897), cited in C. Tsuzuki, *The Life of Eleanor Marx, 1855-1898: A Socialist Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), pp.33-34. See also P. Lafargue, ‘Recherches sur les origines de l’idée du bien et du juste’, *Revue philosophique* 20 (1885), 253-267, at p.254.

¹⁶⁴ Vincent, *Between Marxism and Anarchism*, p.72.

General Boulanger and revolutionary socialists' increasing electoral success encouraged them to define their ideas and clarify their positions more strongly. As the examples above suggest, the Guesdists became increasingly territorial about their supposed guardianship of Marx's thought in France, while many Blanquists allied themselves with Boulanger, and the Possibilists embraced public service socialism.¹⁶⁵

As a result of these factors, the relationship between Marx, Marxism, and French socialism in the early Third Republic has received very little sustained academic attention. Viewed through the lens of the later French Marxism, the thought of this period appears diffuse and confused. French socialists' relationship with Marx in the 1870s and early 1880s has been characterised as one of distance, disdain, and accidental misinterpretation.¹⁶⁶ It is certainly true that Marx, like Engels, frequently found French revolutionaries infuriating. In September 1882, he complained to Engels that 'the "*Marxistes*" and the "*Anti-Marxistes*" had '*both* done their damndest to ruin my stay in France',¹⁶⁷ and several months later remarked with frustration:

'Difficult to say who is the greater – Lafargue, who pours out his oracular inspiration upon the bosoms of Malon and Brousse, or these two heroes, heavenly twins who not only tell deliberate lies, but deceive themselves into thinking that the outside world has nothing better to do than "intrigue" against them and, indeed, that everyone has the same cranial structure as the magnanimous twain.'¹⁶⁸

As this chapter has demonstrated, however, the relationship between Marx and French socialism was much more than these trivial facts and teleological assumptions suggest. French socialists during this period did not simply drift towards an orthodox and clearly defined party political Marxism, which they subsequently sought and failed to reproduce. Rather, the relationship was characterised by intellectual reflexivity, experimentation, and exchange. While Marx may have been frustrated by his French sons-in-law and their colleagues, he did not withdraw or keep his distance from French

¹⁶⁵ For the classic iteration of public service socialism, see C. de Paepe, *Les services publics, précédés de deux essais sur le collectivisme* (Brussels: J. Milot, 1895. First published, 1874).

¹⁶⁶ See for example Treppe in *La France ouvrière*, pp.301-302; Willard, *Socialisme et communisme français*; Moreau, *Les socialistes français et le mythe révolutionnaire*, p.55; R.P. Tombs, *Paris, bivouac des révolutions: la Commune de 1871* (Paris: Éditions Libertalia, 2014. First published in English, 1999), p.365.

¹⁶⁷ 187: K. Marx to F. Engels (30 September 1882, Paris), *Marx/Engels Collected Works*, vol.46, 338-339, at p.339.

¹⁶⁸ 204: K. Marx to F. Engels (11 November 1882, Ventnor), *Marx/Engels Collected Works*, vol.46, 374-376, at p.374.

politics. He was both attuned to the specific socio-economic circumstances of the early Third Republic and sensitive to the need to tailor his own work for French audiences. Marx, moreover, was deeply involved in this process, creating, through the translation of his work, an alternative ‘French Marx’.

French socialists in turn drew heavily upon this French Marx. A variety of different revolutionary groups, from the Guesdists to the Possibilists, and even the Blanquists used aspects of Marx’s thought as building blocks with which to create their own solutions to numerous contemporary social problems. Marx’s ideas functioned not as orthodoxy to be faithfully replicated, but a language for discussing and working through their own ideas. At the same time, they also turned the language of Marxism outwards, using it to simultaneously connect with other European socialists and to maintain their marginal, revolutionary identity in France. The relationship between Marx, Marxism, and French socialism during this period was multi-layered and constantly changing; a process of collaboration between Marx, French activists, and the circumstances in which they found themselves.

This more intricate relationship was also reflective of the complex structure of the revolutionary movement as a whole. In 1879, *Le Proletaire* observed the damage done to past political movements when they divided ‘into distinct groups, each carrying a special name’. If the same were to happen to socialism, the paper warned, it could be ‘fatal’.¹⁶⁹ It has often been assumed that cautious and conciliatory attitudes such as these were thrown to the wind in 1882 when the workers’ party split at the St. Étienne Congress, bringing to a head years of tension, ideological differences, and factional infighting. As this chapter has demonstrated, this was not the case. Despite the presence of clear intellectual differences and personal disagreements, the revolutionary movement was not hopelessly divided, either by the Paris Commune (Chapter One) or by the newer ideas that many activists gravitated towards in the 1870s. Rather, at the same time activists – whether they called themselves Marxists, anarchists, Possibilists, or Blanquists – recognised these differences and noticeably struggled to ensure that the revolutionary movement – in thought, if not in practice – was neither defined nor consumed by them.

¹⁶⁹ ‘Du danger des écoles’, *Le Proletaire*, 29 January 1879.

Chapter Four:

The empire strikes back

In making use of this international language of Marxism and promoting the conception of revolution as a process embedded in natural phenomena, activists hoped to present a revised version of the revolutionary movement that was both intellectually unified and politically viable in local, national, and continental contexts. Yet these ideas and values were not limited by the borders of Europe. Flourens's *Histoire de l'homme*, for example, was greatly concerned with comparing the development of Europe and other parts of the world,¹ while Marx assiduously studied South Asia and North Africa during the 1870s and 1880s.² Historians of political thought and intellectual historians have traditionally been reticent to incorporate the non-West into their academic concerns, however French revolutionaries had since 1789 at least always seen themselves as operating within global contexts and conceived of their values as universally applicable.³ Those during the post-Commune period were no different.⁴ This chapter explores the role of colonialism, empire, and international questions in their thought.

In an article of June 1883, the radical journalist and politician Tony Révillon expressed his desire that 'our sailors in Madagascar force respect for our flag through

¹ G. Flourens, *L'histoire de l'homme: cours d'histoire naturelle des corps organisés au Collège de France* (Paris: Imprimerie de E. Martinet, 1863-64).

² 52: P. Lafargue to F. Engels, 16 June 1882 (London), in F. Engels, P. and L. Lafargue, *Correspondence*, 3 vols. (trans.) Y. Kapp (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959), vol.1, 82-84, at p.83.

³ For a discussion of this, see C. Goto-Jones, 'Comparative political thought: beyond the non-Western', in D. Bell (ed.), *Ethics and World Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 219-236. Recent work has begun to change this. See for example U. Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); J. Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Liberal Imperialism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); K. Mantena, *Alibis of Empire: Henry Maine and the Ends of Liberal Imperialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); E. Rothschild, *The Inner Life of Empires: An Eighteenth-Century History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); S. Muthu (ed.), *Empire and Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); C.A. Bayly, *Recovering Liberties: Indian Thought in the Age of Liberalism and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

⁴ P.H. Hutton, 'The role of the Blanquist party in left-wing politics in France, 1879-90', *Journal of Modern History* 46 (June 1974), 277-295, at pp.287-88.

cannon fire. Let our explorers create *comptoirs* in the Congo. Nothing could be more legitimate.⁵ Révillon's article captured the spirit of many republicans' recently acquired imperial fervour. Although France had been a power abroad for well over 100 years, and had recently claimed large parts of Algeria as its own, the beginning of the Third Republic marked a new phase in its imperial expansion. Whereas previous exploits, whether in India or in Russia, had often been defined by failure, the Third Republic approached imperialism with a renewed vigour and sense of purpose. It looked to rescue empire from its Bonapartist connotations and invest it with a new meaning by conquering new territories, bringing glory to France and civilisation to far-flung countries. For politicians such as Jules Ferry and writers like Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, the establishment of an extensive empire and the dissemination of French ideas was not just a right, but a moral duty.⁶ France's own well-being was thus intimately tied to this mission, and imperialism represented a sign of faith in republican government.⁷

Yet despite this conjuncture of republicanism and imperial fervour, one group of republicans has been overlooked in the literature on French empire.⁸ Revolutionaries have been notable largely for their absence from studies of imperialism in the early Third Republic.⁹ Raoul Girardet's *L'Idée coloniale en France de 1871 à 1962* does not touch upon

⁵ 'Ce qui se passe', *Le Citoyen* (Paris), 10 June 1883.

⁶ See P. Leroy-Beaulieu, *De la colonisation chez les peuples modernes* (Paris: Guillaumin et Compagnie, 1882. First published, 1874). For Ferry, see J.P. Daughton, *An Empire Divided: Religion, Republicanism, and the Making of French Colonialism, 1880-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.3.

⁷ A.L. Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), p.2.

⁸ For examples of revolutionaries identifying as republicans, see F. Pyat, *Lettre au peuple de Lyon* (London, 10 December 1875), p.7. Archives de la Préfecture de Police (APP) Ba429/1811/bis; Intelligence report to the Préfecture de Police, 22 February 1875 (Geneva). APP Ba432/1384; Intelligence report to the Préfecture de Police. 14 October 1877 (London). APP Ba429/2427; 'Le droit de respirer', *Le Citoyen & La Bataille* (Paris), 7 April 1883; H. Maret, 'De la lumière!', *Les droits de l'homme* (Paris), 8 March 1876; 'Aux républicains', *L'Égalité* (Paris), 26 November 1882; J. Guesde, 'Les étonnements de M. Clemenceau', *L'Émancipation* (Lyons), 2 November 1880; H. Rochefort, 'Le choix d'un adjectif', *L'Intransigeant* (Paris), 16 August 1880; 'Meeting du Cirque d'Hiver', *L'Intransigeant*, 31 August 1885; 'Les vœux du Prolétaire', *Le Prolétaire* (Paris), 3 January 1880; Appel aux travailleurs', *Le Prolétaire*, 18 September 1880; 'Aux électeurs de M. Clemenceau', *Le Prolétaire*, 28 October 1882; 'Debout, l'atelier!', *Le Prolétariat*, 12 September 1885; V. Marouck, 'Les socialistes en France', in *La revue socialiste* (Paris) 2 (20 February 1880), 108-112, at pp.110-111; B. Malon, *Le troisième défilé du prolétariat français* (Neuchâtel: G. Guillaume Fils, 1871), p.522; G. Lefrançais, *République et Révolution: de l'attitude à prendre par le prolétariat en présence des partis politiques* (Geneva: Imprimerie Ve Blanchard, 1873), p.8; A. Regnard, *Études de politique scientifique: la révolution sociale, ses origines, son développement et son but* (London: No publisher given, 1876), p.50.

⁹ R. Aldrich, *Greater France: A History of French Overseas Expansion* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996); Conklin, *A Mission to Civilize*; A.L. Conklin, S. Fishman, R. Zaretsky, *France and its Empire since 1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). For exceptions to this rule, see M.K. Matsuda, *Empire of Love: Histories of France and the Pacific* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); S.A. Toth,

revolutionary socialists at all,¹⁰ while works that do such as Charles-Robert Ageron's *L'Anticolonialisme en France de 1871 à 1914* have tended to focus upon the period '[a]fter the anticolonial explosion of 1885'.¹¹

Similarly, despite the increasing importance of empire in political rhetoric and metropolitan culture, scholars of the revolutionary movement have rarely engaged with imperialism. The experiences of individual revolutionaries in the colonies have received only passing mentions in the work of historians such as Bernard Moss and James Lehning.¹² As previous chapters have demonstrated, the likes of Robert Stuart, Steven Vincent, Emmanuel Jousse, and Michel Cordillot have readily situated late nineteenth-century French revolution within an international context. Yet studies have rarely looked beyond the West or the institutional boundaries of organisations such as the First International.¹³ While for historians of the twentieth century, anticolonialism and socialism have often seemed natural bedfellows, for those of the nineteenth, revolutionary socialism and ideas of empire rarely collide. This lack of extant literature may give the impression that in fact there was no substantive link between the two.

What little work has been done on the relationship between revolutionaries and imperialism during this period has focused almost exclusively upon the mass deportations that followed the fall of the Commune. While this is of course both a fruitful and illuminating avenue of study, the specific focus upon ex-Communards in New Caledonia rather than their relationship to more general ideas of imperialism and colonialism has done little to dispel the idea that no such relationship existed. The emphasis of this body of work upon social history and reconstructing the quotidian life of Communards in New Caledonia has inadvertently further separated this experience

Beyond Papillon: The French Overseas Penal Colonies, 1854-1952 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006); C.J. Eichner, 'La citoyenne in the world: Hubertine Auclert and feminist imperialism', *French Historical Studies* 32:1 (2009), 63-84.

¹⁰ The closest Girardet comes are several mentions of Henri Rochefort. See R. Girardet, *L'Idée coloniale en France de 1871 à 1962* (Paris: Éditions de la Table Ronde, 1972), p.54; p.61.

¹¹ The first socialist text presented by Ageron dates from 1885. C.-R. Ageron, *L'anticolonialisme en France de 1871 à 1914* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1973), p.38; pp.70-71.

¹² B.H. Moss, *The Origins of the French Labor Movement 1830-1914: The Socialism of Skilled Workers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p.131; J.R. Lehning, *To Be A Citizen: The Political Culture of the Early French Third Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), p.94.

¹³ M. Cordillot, *Aux origines du socialisme moderne: la Première Internationale, la Commune de Paris, l'exil: recherches et travaux* (Paris: Éditions de l'Atelier/Éditions ouvrières, 2010); R.C. Stuart, *Marxism at work: Ideology, class and French Socialism during the Third Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); E. Jousse, 'La construction intellectuelle du socialisme réformiste en France, de la Commune à la Grande Guerre' (unpublished PhD thesis, Sciences-Po, 2013), pp.53-4.

from revolutionaries' intellectual activities, and thus left their ideas on imperialism unexamined.

Contrary to what this historiographical lacuna may suggest, though, French revolutionary thought in this area ranged far beyond the topic of deportation. This chapter demonstrates that ideas of empire and internationalism were both more prevalent and more prominent in revolutionary thought at the beginning of the Third Republic than has previously been suggested. Far from being confined to New Caledonia and the deportees' experiences there, they were in fact both prominent in certain circles of revolutionaries that remained in Europe, and closely intertwined with other areas of their thought, most notably the nature of the relationship between the community, the State, and the world at large.

The chapter is divided into three sections. Section One is concerned with deportation. Contrary to what has been suggested in the secondary literature, this section establishes that the deportees in fact remained largely ambivalent to imperialism, and focused instead upon using their experiences in New Caledonia to reconstruct a community that was at once revolutionary and politically viable. Section Two looks at empire and internationalism in the thought of revolutionaries who remained in Europe following the fall of the Commune. It demonstrates that it is here that we need to look for more clearly elaborated ideas on empire, delineating through two newspaper case studies two very different approaches to international questions. Section Three assesses the intellectual impact of these differing stances on imperialism. It shows that such themes were not extrinsic to the main body of revolutionary thought, but often closely imbricated with other ideas. As such, they frequently served to demarcate the limits and possibilities of some of the supposedly universal concepts examined in earlier chapters.

The first part of this chapter draws upon the work of the deportees. This includes material produced by revolutionaries while in the South Pacific, including deportee newspapers and a wide selection of private correspondence between New Caledonia and Europe. It also incorporates memoirs of deportation written after the 1880 amnesty, both by well-known activists like Henri Rochefort, Louise Michel, and Jean Allemane, and by lesser-known Communards.¹⁴ The second part of the chapter is

¹⁴ P. Grousset and F. Jourde, *Les condamnés politiques en Nouvelle-Calédonie: récit de deux évadés* (Geneva: Imprimerie Ziegler, 1876); O. Pain, *Henri Rochefort (Paris – Nouméa – Genève)* (Paris: Périmet, 1879); J. Allemane, *Mémoires d'un Communard, des barricades au bague* (Paris: Librairie socialiste J. Allemane, 1880); A. Ballière, *La déportation de 1871: souvenirs d'un évadé de Nouméa* (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1889); H. Messenger, *239 lettres d'un Communard déporté: Ile d'Oléron – Ile de Ré – Ile*

based upon a wide cross-section of newspapers published by French revolutionaries both in France and in exile. It focuses primarily on *La Bataille* and *Le Travailleur*, the latter of which has not previously been examined.¹⁵ These sources have been further supplemented by contemporary French work on imperialism, and by newspapers from the various locations that Communards visited in the years after 1871 including Australia and the United States.¹⁶

This chapter aims to explore French revolutionary ideas on empire and internationalism, and begin in turn to resituate these ideas within their wider patterns of thought. With these findings in mind, it also reflects upon a more methodological question: the use of empire as a category of historical analysis. In *By Sword and Plow*, Jennifer Sessions noted that domestic and imperial politics were often so ‘intimately intertwined’ in post-Revolutionary France that they ‘became one’.¹⁷ In the case of French revolutionary socialist thought at the beginning of the Third Republic, however, this intimate braiding of concerns did not end and the frontiers of the French overseas empire.¹⁸ Revolutionary thought concerning the wider world was markedly not confined to meditations on or interactions with empire. Rather, it frequently transcended and disregarded imperial frameworks. This is both historically and historiographically striking. This nuanced interaction with such ideas serves to visualise the considerable ambiguities surrounding ideas on empire and the morality of conquest in a period of ‘high imperialism’. Meanwhile, the frequency with which revolutionary socialists looked beyond the boundaries of empire raises questions about the utility of ‘empire’ and ‘the colonial’ as categories for analysing the multifarious ways in which Europeans interacted with the wider world during this period.

des Pins (ed.) J. Maitron (Paris: Le Sycomore, 1979); L. Michel, *Je vous écris de ma nuit: correspondance générale – 1850-1904* (Paris: Les Éditions de Paris, 1999).

¹⁵ The only reference to it comes in one footnote in D. Stafford, *From Anarchism to Reformism: A Study of the Political Activities of Paul Brousse within the First International and the French Socialist Movement 1870-1890* (London: Cox & Wyman, 1971), p.302, footnote 68.

¹⁶ *New York Herald* (New York), January-June 1874; *San Francisco Chronicle* (San Francisco), January-June 1874.

¹⁷ J.E. Sessions, *By Sword and Plow: France and the Conquest of Algeria* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), pp.324-25.

¹⁸ For ‘braided concerns’, see U.S. Mehta, ‘Edmund Burke on empire, self-understanding, and sympathy’, in Muthu (ed.), *Empire and Modern Political Thought*, 155-183, at p.166.

I: Deportation

I

It is perhaps unsurprising that deportation should form the basis for studies of the relationship between revolutionary thought and French overseas expansion during this period. Of the citizens arrested and tried by military courts following the fall of the Commune, around 4500 were sentenced to deportation. Between 1872 and 1876 they were shipped to New Caledonia, a constellation of islands in the South Pacific that had been colonised by the French in 1853 [IMG 6].¹⁹ The average age of the deportees was 33, with the youngest aged 16 and the oldest 65.²⁰ Just 20 were women.²¹ Once in the New Caledonia, the deportees were settled in one of three locations according to the severity of their crimes. The few convicted of criminal offences in addition to their political crimes and consequently sentenced to forced labour were taken to the labour camp on Île Nou. The vast majority, having only been convicted of political crimes, were technically 'free' upon their arrival in New Caledonia, and were deposited on either the Ducos Peninsula or the Île des Pins according to perceived the gravity of their actions during the Commune.

These deportations were an international sensation.²² Newspapers competed for exclusive interviews with Henri Rochefort following his sensational escape from New Caledonia with five other deportees in 1874, and the *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne* likened his subsequent arrival in Europe to 'the coming of a Messiah'.²³ The late nineteenth century saw the publication of a raft of memoirs, from both celebrated political activists and less well-known deportees, while in 1881 Rochefort's escape was immortalised in paint by Édouard Manet.²⁴ Deportation also carried significant political weight. The campaign for a Communard amnesty, which drew upon the deportees' situation in New Caledonia for much of its emotive power, haunted French politics both

¹⁹ A. Bullard, 'Self-representation in the arms of defeat: fatal nostalgia and surviving comrades in French New Caledonia, 1871-1880', *Cultural Anthropology* 12 (May 1997), 179-212, at p.179.

²⁰ J. Baronnet and J. Chalou, *Communards en Nouvelle-Calédonie: Histoire de la déportation* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1987), p.155.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.93.

²² See for example *L'Égalité*, 18 November 1877; E. Roche, 'Les légendes canaques par Louise Michel', *L'Intransigeant*, 31 December 1884. 'Louise Michel', *Le Prolétaire*, 29 November 1879; 'L'arrivée de Louise Michel et les exploits de la police', *Le Prolétaire*, 13 November 1880.

²³ 'comme la venue d'un Messie'. *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne* (Geneva), 20 June 1874.

²⁴ D. Armogathe, 'Le testament de Louise Michel', in L. Michel, *Souvenirs et aventures de ma vie* (ed.) D. Armogathe (Paris: La Découverte/Maspero, 1983), 11-20, at p.11.

in the press and the Chamber during the 1870s. The Opportunist government had been slowly dispensing individual pardons since 1879, but it was not until 1880 that a full amnesty was eventually – and grudgingly – granted shortly before an election campaign that it had been forecast to dominate.²⁵

Deportation placed the Communards on the frontline of colonial encounter. The French government were keen to transform them Communards into colonial settlers, and the deportees' families were even encouraged to join them in New Caledonia.²⁶ They also made a number of foreign acquaintances, for New Caledonia at this time was home to at least four distinct communities. Alongside the Communard deportees, it was also home to the indigenous Kanak population, as well as a large number of imported labourers from Asia and other parts of Oceania, and a variety of Algerian political prisoners, the largest group of which had been deported as a result of the 1871-72 Kabyle Rebellion.²⁷ This cultural and geographical diversity marked something of a change for the Communard deportees, whose world prior to 1871 had been largely confined to Paris. Abruptly, they found themselves thrown into contact with a wide variety of different cultures.

Perhaps as a result of these associations, many scholars who have researched deportation have attempted to divine a stance on overseas expansion in the deportees' thought. Germaine Mailhé in *Déportations en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, for instance, and Jean Baronnet and Jean Chalou in *Communards en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, expressed disbelief at the collaboration between certain Communard deportees and the French colonial administration during the 1878 Kanak rebellion.²⁸ From this, we may infer a tacit expectation that the deportees forgo national ties in favour of a putative anticolonial or revolutionary solidarity. Alice Bullard, meanwhile, has argued that initial interest in

²⁵ For more on opposition to the amnesty see, for example, S. Hazareesingh, *Intellectual Founders of the Republic: Five Studies in Nineteenth-Century French Republican Political Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. First published, 2001), p.155.

²⁶ A. Bullard, *Exile to Paradise: Savagery and Civilization in Paris and the South Pacific, 1790-1900* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p.130.

²⁷ For more on Algerian political prisoners in New Caledonia, see M. Ouennoughi, *Algériens et Maghrébins en Nouvelle-Calédonie: Anthropologie historique de la communauté arabo-berbère de 1864 à nos jours* (Algiers: Casbah Editions, 2008). For an example of Communards meeting the Algerian prisoners, see 120: *Messager – Mère, Oléron*, 17 June 1872, in *Messager, 239 lettres d'un Communard déporté*, 163-164, at pp.163-164.

²⁸ Baronnet & Chalou, *Communards en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, p.333; G. Mailhé, *Déportations en Nouvelle-Calédonie des communards et des révoltés de la grande Kabylie (1872-1876)* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1994), p.359. See also 'Débat: "La Commune: utopie ou modernité?"', in G. Languier and J. Quaretti (eds.), *La Commune de 1871: utopie ou modernité?* (Perpignan: Presses universitaires de Perpignan, 2000), 407-424, at p.422.

cross-cultural interaction quickly faded, with the deportees ultimately coming to define themselves as ‘French’ through the affirmation of evolutionary hierarchies and insurmountable racial difference.²⁹ Despite the differences in their approach, then, all these authors agree that a strongly held view on empire was characteristic of deportee thought.

It is certainly true that the deportees mentioned colonialism frequently, however their relationship to it was more complicated than these previous approaches have suggested. In his *Mémoires d'un Communard*, Jean Allemane criticised not only indigenous colonial collaborators,³⁰ but also rebels against colonialism,³¹ as well as colonialism itself.³² Even Louise Michel, who has frequently been cited as the most sympathetic of the deportees to the Kanaks’ plight, fluctuated between rage at the injustice of colonial settlement and a belief that the Kanaks were child-like and in need of education.³³ As Ann Laura Stoler has persuasively argued in *Along the Archival Grain*, far from conforming to paradigms of either ‘ignorance’ or ‘acceptance’ of imperial realities, European agents of and ancillaries to colonialism made their lives in a ‘more complex psychic space’ of ‘tacit ambivalences and implicit ambiguities’.³⁴ Thus it would be entirely possible for a deportee to decry, for example, colonial settlement and the Kanak rebellion. Rather than a consistent and strongly held view, deportees often expressed many apparently conflicted thoughts on empire.

Indeed, it is not immediately clear that the deportees gave extensive thought to the subject at all. Their references to colonialism notably contained frequent factual inaccuracies. In the case of the Algerian Kabyle deportees, Rochefort’s collaborator Olivier Pain suggested that ‘there are sincere republicans among them’,³⁵ whilst in fact motivation for the Kabyle rebellion had been largely aristocratic and sprung partly from their refusal to submit to republican (as opposed to royal or imperial) authority.³⁶ Given that such mistakes were easily rectifiable and the deportees were elsewhere extremely

²⁹ Bullard, ‘Self-representation in the arms of defeat’, at p.205; see also at p.188.

³⁰ Allemane, *Mémoires d'un Communard*, p.239.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.426

³² *Ibid.*, p.419.

³³ Contrast, for example, the ‘egalitarian’ attitude in Fonds Louise Michel Moscou, International Institute of Social History (IISH), 233, 5-2, p.4; p.17; with Michel, *Souvenirs et aventures de ma vie*, p.75.

³⁴ A.L. Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), pp.248-249.

³⁵ Mailhé, *Déportations en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, p.403.

³⁶ See Ouennoughi, *Algériens et Maghrébins*, pp.55-121; Mailhé, *Déportations en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, p.77.

concerned with accuracy,³⁷ they seem rather to indicate a lack of sustained intellectual interest in empire and colonial questions. While deportation may have introduced the deportees to a variety of other cultures, such a widening of geographic and cultural horizons did not necessarily prompt an increased interest in ideas of empire. Although they were of course aware of and even engaged in colonialism in their role as ‘colonial agents’, it seems that it was not as central to their experience or thought as has previously been suggested.

II

It was rather to the French Republic that the deportees’ thought often turned.³⁸ Deportees frequently used their experiences in New Caledonia as evidence of the government’s unfitness to rule. Rochefort’s newspaper *L’Intransigeant*, for example, wrote disparagingly that French colonial government ‘is practically military dictatorship...It considers settlers to be its subjects and treats them accordingly’,³⁹ while in an open letter seventeen deportees described at length ‘the colonies, where the soldier reigns as absolute master, without serious control, and without real responsibility’.⁴⁰ While such vocabulary and references were certainly colonial, the target of the criticisms was clearly not colonialism itself, but the French government. For the deportees and *L’Intransigeant*, French colonialism, with its culture of militarism and apparent suppression of liberty, was problematic because of its lack of accountability or popular involvement. In other words, it was a contravention of the values and virtue that they associated with republicanism, and exposed the Third Republic as a government of ethical compromise.

The deportees’ evaluations of colonial economy and production were similarly designed to highlight the failings of metropolitan government. Paschal Grousset and Francis Jourde complained that ‘[c]ommerce and industry...are subject to all the

³⁷ See, for example, ‘Rochefort! Found At Last’, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 23 May 1874.

³⁸ See for example 269: Louise Michel to Georges Clemenceau, 15 October 1879, in L. Michel, *Je vous écris de ma nuit: correspondance générale – 1850-1904* (Paris: Les Éditions de Paris, 1999), p.254; H. Brissac, *Quand j’étais au bagne: poésies* (Paris: Derveaux, 1887), p.vi.

³⁹ ‘nos colonies d’outre-mer, livrées presque toutes à la dictature militaire. Là, règne sans conteste un fonctionnariat brutal...qui considère les colons comme ses sujets et les traite en conséquence’. ‘Ce qui se passe en Nouvelle-Calédonie’, *L’Intransigeant*, 1 September 1880. For a similar criticism, see Ballière, *La Déportation de 1871*, pp.256-257.

⁴⁰ ‘la colonie, où un soldat règne en maître absolu, sans contrôle sérieuse, sans responsabilité réelle’. Fonds Lucien Descaves (IISH), 135, p.5. See also H. Rochefort, ‘Situation coloniale’, *L’Intransigeant*, 8 July 1885.

restrictions that the French military administration is so good at augmenting', suggesting that the New Caledonia's status as a penal colony took precedence over its economic development.⁴¹ By contrast, many deportees looked favourably upon British colonialism.⁴² In his memoirs, for example, Achille Ballière contrasted Australia favourably with Senegal.⁴³ In identifying the cause of this colonial economic stagnation as a combination of authoritarian power and neglect, deportees were able to use these seemingly remote problems to criticise the performance of the metropolitan government. Contrasting their own experiences with official claims about the profitability of imperialism, they called into question the current government's fitness to lead the country and its claims to have France's best interest at heart, casting doubt upon not only its loyalties but more importantly its capability.

This approach proved potent largely because of metropolitan France's own ambivalent attitude towards imperialism during this period. Despite the high visibility of the colonial lobby and the presence of imperial enthusiasts such as Jules Ferry in the heart of government, both the general public and many French politicians remained unconvinced of its value. Deputies from the right, the left, and the extreme left all dismissed imperial expansion as an unnecessary distraction from problems closer to home, whether the social question or the recent loss of Alsace and Lorraine to Germany.⁴⁴ The public, as well, remained largely unmoved and unwilling to leave the metropole to settle France's colonial acquisitions.⁴⁵ Although imperialism had a high

⁴¹ 'Le commerce et l'industrie y sont soumis à toutes les entraves que savent si bien multiplier les administrations militaires françaises.' Grousset and Jourde, *Les condamnés politiques en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, p.41. For similar criticisms, see *Lettres de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, Fonds Louise Michel (IISH), 930; H. Rochefort, *L'Évadé: Roman canaque*, 2nd edn (Paris: Charpentier, 1880), p.3; J. Allemane, 'Braves gens!', *Le Prolétariat*, 1 November 1884. See also 'Nouvelle colonie', *Le Prolétariat*, 20 June 1885; Anon, *Les déportés civils de Gomen. Nouvelle Calédonie* (Paris: Imprimerie Nouvelle Association Ouvrière, 1871).

⁴² Others such as Tocqueville and Leroy-Beaulieu also made comparisons with British colonialism. For Tocqueville, see Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*, pp.219-26; for Leroy-Beaulieu, see D. Todd, 'A French imperial meridian, 1814-1870', in *Past & Present* 210 (2011), 155-186, at p.183.

⁴³ Ballière, *La Déportation de 1871*, p.177.

⁴⁴ For revolutionary iterations of this see M. Talmeyr, 'Leur guerre', *L'Intransigeant*, 23 July 1881; 'Discours de M. Clemenceau', *L'Intransigeant*, 1 August 1885; 'Les naufrageurs', *Le Citoyen*, 12 November 1881; 'Gaspillage partout', *Le Citoyen*, 19 December 1881; 'La guerre!', *Le Citoyen*, 17 January 1882; 'La guerre d'Afrique', *Le Prolétaire*, 23 April 1881; 'Nouveaux exploits', *Le Prolétaire*, 12 May 1883; P. Brousse, 'La politique coloniale', *Le Prolétariat*, 18 July 1885; P. Brousse, 'Liquidation', *Le Prolétariat*, 28 November 1885. For more, see Conklin, Fishman, and Zaretsky, *France and its Empire since 1870*, pp.67-68; Lehning, *To Be A Citizen*, p.136.

⁴⁵ J. Pitts, 'Liberalism and empire in a nineteenth-century Algerian mirror', *Modern Intellectual History* 6 (2009), 287-313, at p.312.

profile and France was accumulating possessions at an increasing rate during this period, few within France even had any opinions on empire, let alone first-hand knowledge of it.

This left France's hold on many of its colonies precarious at best. With many citizens unwilling to relocate to the colonies, French *colons* were often forced to rely heavily upon others to maintain their fragile supremacy. In New Caledonia, for example, the French administration relied almost entirely upon unstable treaties with various Kanak tribes to maintain their physical presence. Imported labour from East Asia, India, and elsewhere in Oceania, it hoped, would boost the colony's economic capacity.⁴⁶ Indeed so small was the free French presence on the islands that imported labour formed, as Dorothy Shineberg has noted, 'the backbone of the labour force available to both civil Administration and to private settlers up to almost the end of the nineteenth century'.⁴⁷ Unlike their British counterparts, many French citizens during this period had little interest in empire, and were largely unwilling to leave the metropole. The consequent shortage of manpower in turn often put the country's possession of its colonies at severe risk.

This *status quo* inadvertently gifted the returning deportees a unique position in French politics. Few politicians or members of the public in France had any real experience of empire. By contrast many of the deportees had spent the best part of a decade in a colony, expressly acting as agents 'in the service of France's larger colonial project'.⁴⁸ This apparent knowledge placed them in a position to influence what Matt Matsuda has called 'the "tides" of ideology and imagination that are so much parts of empire'.⁴⁹ The colonial lobby, desperate to increase its support, was eager to deflect criticism and present empire in the best possible light. The power that this position of supposedly unique knowledge and experience gave the deportees can be glimpsed, for example, in the government's willingness to accede to an inquiry into torture in New Caledonia's penal colony,⁵⁰ and in letters from deportees to politicians. Reporting his

⁴⁶ R. Aldrich, *The French Presence in the South Pacific, 1842-1940* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), p.162.

⁴⁷ D. Shineberg, "'Noumea no good. Noumea no pay": "New Hebridean" indentured labour in New Caledonia, 1865-1925', *Journal of Pacific History* 26 (1991), 187-205, at p.187.

⁴⁸ S. Toth, *Beyond Papillon: The French Overseas Penal Colonies, 1854-1952* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), p.37. The torture inquiry, or Perin Inquest, ran from 1880-81 and collected over forty depositions from Communard deportees. For more, see Bullard, *Exile to Paradise*, pp.244-245.

⁴⁹ Matsuda, *Empire of Love*, p.16. For later instances of socialists using anticolonialism as a form of political opposition, see Ageron, *L'anticolonialisme en France de 1871 à 1914*, pp.21-22.

⁵⁰ For demands, see Grousset and Jourde, *Les condamnés politiques en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, pp.57-58.

own torture on Île Nou Jean Allemane, for example, clearly felt in possession of enough power to threaten the Minister for Colonies, warning:

‘if by some miracle, I see my complaint ignored, my moderation will transform into a tireless protest against all those who have let these acts – which every man of heart would declare cowardly and repugnant – go unpunished’.⁵¹

In fact, rather than shying away from their situation, the deportees arguably forced deportation into metropolitan politics following their return. Following their escape, Grousset and Jourde wrote that ‘[m]iraculously, we escaped from this hell, and are now bringing attention to what we saw there’.⁵² For the deportees, colonialism and empire were intellectual and political bargaining chips. They provided the easiest and most effective way for the deportees to regain prominence in French public life, simultaneously rendering their time in ‘the wilderness’ relevant and offering another way in which to criticise the Third Republic. It was not so much the Kanaks that the deportees sought to define themselves in opposition to, but the authorities.

III

This focus was not surprising, given the government’s own motivations for deportation. Deportation had been central to the government’s handling of the aftermath of the Commune. Whilst the Semaine Sanglante had been effective at ridding the streets of revolutionaries, its apparently arbitrary nature had alarmed even some of Commune’s staunchest opponents including, as Marx observed, ‘the not over-sensitive London *Times*’.⁵³ Deportation provided the solution to this problem, enabling the government to deal with revolutionaries both comprehensively and legally. It enabled it to semi-permanently empty Paris of revolutionaries whilst simultaneously emphasising the importance of the law and its own status as the law’s responsible custodians.

Yet deportation was not merely a convenient middle ground between death and liberty. The government also used it to ideologically isolate the Communards from the

⁵¹ ‘si par impossible, je me voyais débouter, ma modération se transformerait en une énergique et incessante protestation contre tous ceux qui auraient laissé des faits qui tout homme de coeur doit déclarer lâches et infâmes.’ Allemane, *Mémoires d’un Communard*, p.501.

⁵² ‘Échappés comme par miracle de cet enfer, nous venons porter témoignage de ce que nous avons vu’. Grousset and Jourde, *Les condamnés politiques en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, p.6.

⁵³ K. Marx, *The Civil War in France: Address of the General Council of the International Working-Men’s Association* (London: Edward Truelove, 1871), p.15. See also Stafford, *From Anarchism to Reformism*, p.26.

new Republican State. Although it had been enshrined in the French penal code since 1791, the physical deportation of prisoners from France – especially on such a large scale – was rare. Prior to the late nineteenth century, sentences of deportation had been largely nominal and even repeat offenders such as Blanqui had remained ‘déporté sur place’, or held for the duration of their sentence in prisons in France.⁵⁴ Henri Messager’s letters from prison, peppered with expectations of a commutation or amnesty, indicated how unusual such a sentence was.⁵⁵ While deportation remained in French law until 1960, it was rarely used again after the amnesty and deployed only in cases of particular gravity such as treason and colonial rebellion. The decision to physically banish the prisoners from France thus communicated to even casual observers that the Communards’ crimes were of exceptional gravity.

The details of their deportation further marginalised the Communards. The decision to shift the site of internment to New Caledonia (at the time France’s principal penal colony) brought the deportees into contact with transportees.⁵⁶ Whereas deportation had historically been a relatively respectable sentence, transportees were common criminals and as such widely perceived as social outcasts;⁵⁷ a fact that the deportees were fully aware of.⁵⁸ In much the same way that the government seized upon the image of the lawless *pétroleuse* and the Commune’s connections with the First International in an effort to deny revolutionary legitimacy, by linking deportees with common criminals, the government aimed to eradicate sympathy for the Communards through the exploitation of widespread fears of the ‘criminal’ working classes.⁵⁹ In sentencing them to deportation, the government hoped not only to ensure that the

⁵⁴ M. Winock, ‘Communard et forçat’, in Allemane, *Mémoires d’un Communard*, 7-21, at p.16. It is true that prior to the 1870s deportees often remained in France for want of a place to send them to, but neither increased colonisation in this period nor the sheer volume of Communards is satisfactory as a justification for their deportation. Although it remained in French law until 1960, deportation was rarely used again after the amnesty and then largely only for traitors and colonial rebels.

⁵⁵ See for example 30: Messager – Blanche, Ile d’Oléron, 28 July 1871, 48-49; 168: Messager – Mère, 20 March 1873, 232; 173: Messager – Mère, Saint-Martin de Ré, 1 April 1873, 238-240, at p.239, all in Messager, *239 lettres d’un Communard déporté*.

⁵⁶ New Caledonia functioned as a penal colony from 1863-1897. During this period over 22,315 convicts were transported there. I. Merle, ‘The trials and tribulations of the emancipists: the consequences of penal colonisation in New Caledonia, 1864-1920’, in R. Aldrich (ed.), *France, Oceania and Australia: Past and Present* (Sydney: University of Sydney/Department of Economic History, 1991), 39-55, at p.39.

⁵⁷ Winock, ‘Communard et forçat’, at pp.8-9.

⁵⁸ ‘Rochefort! Found At Last’, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 23 May 1874. Emphasis original.

⁵⁹ Toth, *Beyond Papillon*, p.3; Bullard, *Exile to Paradise*, p.29.

Communards were deprived of political legitimacy and isolated from the State, but also to cut them off from French society altogether.

The Republican State was therefore very much at the centre of the government's motivations for deportation. The legal exclusion of the convicted Communards from France was an effective means of eliminating vocal opponents to the new State and diverting attention from the Republic's own highly illegal activities during the last week of the Commune. The government's employment of deportation, though, was not merely fortuitous, but rather a visual demonstration and reaffirmation of official authority. Although nominally inclusive and egalitarian, the early Third Republic was very much a State, in the words of Giorgio Agamben, 'not founded on a social bond of which it would be the expression', but on the power of exclusion.⁶⁰ In a circular letter of 6 June 1871, for example, Jules Favre, the Minister for Foreign Affairs stated that

'To detest [the events of the Commune]...and to punish them is not enough. It is necessary to seek out the germ of them and to extirpate it. The greater the evil, the more essential it is to take account of it...To introduce into laws the severities which social necessity demands and to apply these laws without weakness are novelties to which France must resign herself. For her, it is a matter of safety.'⁶¹

Deportation was, as we have seen, by no means the only way in which the Third Republic asserted such power (Chapter One; Chapter Two). Nonetheless it was perhaps the most dramatic demonstration of both official authority and the lengths to which the government during the 1870s was willing to go to preserve order.

Communards were well aware that this was the primary purpose of their deportation. Louise Michel, for instance observed that '[t]hey sent us to New Caledonia so that the enormity of the[ir] crime would be lost in the enormity of the distance',⁶² while many others observed that such associations continued to follow revolutionaries even after their return to France and entry into more moderate politics. Rochefort, for example, claimed

⁶⁰ G. Agamben, *The Coming Community*, (trans.) M. Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p.86.

⁶¹ J Favre, in *Journal officiel de la République française* (Paris), 8 June 1871, 1259:1. Quoted in J.T. Joughin, *The Paris Commune in French Politics, 1871-1880*, 2 vols. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1955), vol.1, p.67. See also M.P. Johnson, *The Paradise of Association: Political Culture and Popular Organisations in the Paris Commune of 1871* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996), p.284.

⁶² 'Ils nous ont envoyé en Nouvelle-Calédonie afin que l'énormité de leur crime disparaisse dans l'énormité de la distance'. *Lettres de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, Fonds Louise Michel (IISH), 930.

'It is agreed that we only came into the world in order to set it on fire and make it bleed. Up until now, it is we who they assassinated, slit the throats of, shot, and machine-gunned from St Bartholomew's Day to the Commune, from Admiral Coligny to Millière. Trinquet was on Ile Nou for eight years and in double chains for thirty-four months. It doesn't matter. He was the persecutor. The moderates who tortured him in the *bagnes* have the right to speak of indulgences and pardons but he, who has been subjected to, suffered, and endured everything is forbidden from doing anything other than manning the barricades, from going for a walk unless he is holding an open petrol can in his hand...he is not allowed to be either an honest man or a citizen who lives off his labour. His duty is to carry a perpetual hatred in his heart. He should be walking around Belleville with a revolver in his hand, shooting an inoffensive passer-by every ten steps'.⁶³

Deportation was thus inextricably bound to the ways in which the government hoped to define their new Republican State. It reflected yet another attempt to symbolically bring the French Revolution to a close. By sending Communards *en masse* to New Caledonia the State was not simply punishing individuals, but attempting to discredit all revolutionaries. Through deportation the Third Republic cast its revolutionary opponents as wholly alien to what France should aim to be, comparing them to colonial subjects and criminals, and legally divesting them of both social and political agency. In contrast to this, the Third Republic depicted itself as France's protector, the sole arbiter of French values, and the true heir to the last century of French history. Indeed, it is perhaps for these reasons that many Republicans fought the granting of an amnesty for so long.

IV

The deportees, though, did not merely use their experiences of deportation to criticise the Third Republic. They also put details of their own lives in New Caledonia to theoretical use. Much attention has been given to both 'the enormity of the punishment',

⁶³ 'Il est convenu que nous ne sommes venus au monde que pour le mettre à feu et à sang. Jusqu'ici, c'est nous qu'on a assassinés, égorgés, arquebusés, mitraillés, depuis la Saint-Barthélemy jusqu'à la Commune, depuis l'amiral Coligny jusqu'à Millière; Trinquet est resté huit ans à l'île Nou; il a porté trente-quatre mois la double chaîne. N'importe! Le persécuteur, c'est lui. Les modérés qui l'ont torturé dans les bagnes ont le droit, eux, de parler d'indulgence et de pardon; mais lui, qui a tout subi, tout souffert, tout enduré, il lui est interdit de faire autre chose que des barricades, et de se promener sans tenir à la main une bouteille de pétrole toute débouchée...il ne lui est permis d'être ni honnête homme, ni un citoyen vivant laborieusement de son travail. Son devoir est d'avoir au coeur une haine perpétuelle. Qu'il se promène dans Belleville un revolver au poing, et que tous les dix pas il le décharge sur un passant inoffensif'. H. Rochefort, 'Le vrai Trinquet', *L'Intransigeant*, 14 January 1881. See also 174: P. Lafargue to F. Engels, 19 November 1885 (Paris), in Engels and Lafargue, *Correspondence*, vol.1, 319-321, at pp.320-321.

and the negative aspects of life in New Caledonia.⁶⁴ The deportees' professions of despair have been interpreted as evidence that their time in the South Pacific was profoundly traumatic; a 'void', to quote Bullard, in which 'the present appeared only as absence, as a tormenting reminder of what was missing.'⁶⁵ Despite its vocal denunciation of 'the brutal administration',⁶⁶ though, deportee thought on New Caledonia was not wholly negative. Grousset and Jourde, for example, claimed while they experienced despondency in New Caledonia, they had nonetheless remained 'buoyed by that hope that never leaves a man'.⁶⁷ Allemane similarly recalled living in a communal house on the Ducos peninsula as 'one of my fondest memories'.⁶⁸ Indeed, some deportees even continued to maintain associations with New Caledonia after they had returned to France.⁶⁹ Whilst negativity and even trauma were indeed prominent in the Communards' portrayals of deportation, they were by no means the sole or even the primary focus.

Alongside their indictments of the penal and colonial administration, deportees highlighted their own attempts to build a community. Deportees on the Île des Pins – the most free of the three locations – established theatre groups and several newspapers as well as embarking upon construction projects, the remains of which can still be seen today [IMG 6].⁷⁰ These projects not only occupied the unemployed deportees,⁷¹ but also, they suggested, helped to create new fraternal bonds. Recalling his arrival on the Ducos peninsula from the prison on Ile Nou, Allemane wrote that 'there were hands clasping

⁶⁴ L. Godineau, 'Retour d'exil: Les anciens Communards au début de la Troisième République' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Université de Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2000), p.513.

⁶⁵ Bullard, 'Self-representation in the arms of defeat', at p.193.

⁶⁶ Fonds Lucien Descaves, 135, pp.3-4. For contemporary examples of this, see 'Bulletin', *Le Travailleur* 1:4 (August 1877), p.4; 'Discours des citoyens Paschal Grousset et Francis Jourde, ex-membres de la Commune de Paris, prononcés au banquet qui leur a été offert par des Républicains de San Francisco le 24 mai 1874', Fonds Lucien Descaves, 205, pp.6-7.

⁶⁷ 'on était soutenu par l'espérance qui ne déserte jamais de l'homme'. 'Discours des citoyens Paschal Grousset et Francis Jourde, ex-membres de la Commune de Paris, prononcés au banquet qui leur a été offert par des Républicains de San Francisco le 24 mai 1874', Fonds Lucien Descaves, 205, p.6.

⁶⁸ 'ce n'est pas là un de mes souvenirs les moins précieux'. Allemane, *Mémoires d'un Communard*, p.473.

⁶⁹ See for example 235: Messenger – Mère, Ile des Pins, 18 December 1875, in Messenger, *239 lettres d'un Communard déporté*, 356-357, at p.357.

⁷⁰ For an example of a play, see A. Péliissier, *Le Coq Gaulois* (Île des Pins, 1877), Fonds Louise Michel (IISH), 929. For newspapers, see *Le Raseur calédonien* (Île des Pins, 1877), Fonds Louise Michel (IISH), 937; *Le Parisien* (Île des Pins, 1878), Fonds Louise Michel (IISH), 934.

⁷¹ Accounts differ on whether the Communards refused to work when it was offered (the government's and the administration's position), or whether they were eager to work but the opportunity was withdrawn in 1873 (the Communard position). Michel, *Souvenirs et aventures de ma vie*, p.44; Grousset and Jourde, *Les condamnés politiques en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, p.18.

ours, hugging us, even people that we didn't know. We were all one family',⁷² and Michel emphasised that 'despite the divisions introduced among us by complete strangers...the deportees had in no way forgotten their solidarity'.⁷³ By stressing this success in building communities, especially in what they had elsewhere described as such inhospitable conditions and under such punitive authorities, the deportees were attempting to turn their backs on the infighting that had very publicly plagued the revolutionary movement both before and during the Commune (Chapter One).⁷⁴ Deportation, then, was not only a negative experience, but also functioned as an important site of reconciliation for the deported Communards.

This reconstructed community did not merely exist in isolation, though, and deportees frequently attempted to embed it within French culture. The Caledonian deportee newspaper *Le Parisien* made several references to Victor Hugo and Voltaire, as well as Diderot and D'Alembert,⁷⁵ while Ballière wrote that on the voyage to New Caledonia, the deportees discussed Alphonse de Lamartine, Alfred de Musset, and of course Hugo.⁷⁶ He was also eager to demonstrate that the deportees remained familiar with and engaged in contemporary French politics, noting that 'to pass time we discuss the political acts of Gambetta'.⁷⁷ As Bullard has noted, in late nineteenth-century France, notions of societal order carried immense weight, and revolution was widely associated with the 'threat of a meaningless void'.⁷⁸ This focus on culture and self-improvement should be seen as an attempt to allay such fears. By demonstrating their familiarity with French culture and political life and thus their similarity to 'ordinary' French citizens, the deportees aimed to show that they were not only cohesive as a movement, but also remained fully immersed in and attuned to the issues that concerned contemporary France. In contrast to the government's assertions that they were 'political savages', the

⁷² 'Puis les mains s'étreignent; on s'embrasse, qu'on se soit ou non connu. N'est-on pas de la même famille: celle des vaincus?' Allemane, *Mémoires d'un Communard*, p.472.

⁷³ 'malgré les divisions introduites parmi nous, par des gens complètement étrangers...les déportés n'ont point oublié la solidarité'. 220: Louise Michel, published in the *Revue australienne*, in Michel, *Je vous écris de ma nuit*, 219-221, at p.220.

⁷⁴ See, for example, J. Allemane, *Mémoires d'un Communard*, p.237; 'Rochefort: His Lecture at the Academy of Music', *New York Herald*, 6 June 1874.

⁷⁵ *Le Parisien*, 29 September 1878. Fonds Louise Michel (IISH), 934.

⁷⁶ Ballière, *La Déportation de 1871*, p.61. For further cultural references from deportees, see also H. Brissac, *Quand j'étais au bagne*, p.53.

⁷⁷ 'Entre temps, les jeux n'étant pas permis, on discute les actes politiques de Gambetta.' Ballière, *La Déportation de 1871*, p.19. For other examples of deportees engaging with the outside world, see *Le Raseur calédonien*, 11 February 1877; 22 April 1877. Fonds Louise Michel (IISH), 937; *Le Parisien*, 14 September 1878; 29 September 1878. Fonds Louise Michel (IISH), 934.

⁷⁸ Bullard, *Exile to Paradise*, p.271.

deportees argued, they were as natural and credible a part of public life as the structures and personalities of the Third Republic.

The deportees were also eager to reassert their own republicanism, in fact using their expulsion from France to emphasise their commitment to republican values. Deportees often likened themselves to now celebrated former political prisoners including ‘Ledru Rollin, Louis Blanc, de Gent and many others...who are at the present moment the most honourable leaders of French democracy’.⁷⁹ Some even elevated their commitment to quasi-religious heights. Grousset and Jourde, for example, described republican deportees as ritual sacrifices made in order to ‘appease the insatiable monster of monarchism’.⁸⁰ Despite the distance from metropolitan France and the treatment they had received in New Caledonia, the deportees implied, they had managed to retain (even develop) their republican values. By contrast, the government was incapable of maintaining a satisfactory republic even in France. Whereas distance, they suggested, had only augmented their values, it had exposed the government’s ethics and republicanism as deeply flawed. Dwelling upon deportation thus functioned as a way for the deportees to reaffirm their ideological proximity to the French nation, whilst simultaneously imbuing their years in exile with value. It enabled them to cast themselves as guardians of republican values and argue that, while they may have been outside the State, they remained the keepers of the republic and thus an essential part of French metropolitan life.

Indeed, the harmony created by deportation extended far beyond those in New Caledonia. Jean Joughin, for example, has noted the symbolic power of deportation and the propensity of other exiles to appropriate the deportees’ experiences in New Caledonia or conflate them with their own.⁸¹ The deportees themselves clearly recognised the symbolic, creative power of their experience, with Rochefort continuing to refer to other revolutionaries deported to New Caledonia as his ‘*co-déportés*’ for years

⁷⁹ ‘Rochefort’, *New York Herald*, 30 May 1874, p.3. For further comparisons, see 65: *Messenger – Blanche*, Château d’Oléron, 17 October 1871, in *Messenger*, *239 lettres d’un Communard déporté*, 92–93, at p.93. For more on these earlier exiles, see T.C. Jones, ‘French republican exiles in Britain, 1848–1870’ (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 2010).

⁸⁰ ‘Ces clairvoyants hommes d’Etat faisaient partir tous les trois mois pour les antipodes un convoi d’otages républicains, et croyaient apaiser par ces sacrifices périodiques l’insatiable minotaure monarchique’. Grousset and Jourde, *Les condamnés politiques en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, pp.54–55.

⁸¹ Joughin, *The Paris Commune in French Politics*, vol.1, p.88. For an example, see *Le Travailleur* (Geneva) 1:5 (September 1877), p.32.

after his escape.⁸² The cause of deportation further served to reunite revolutionaries with radical republicans who had taken no part in the Commune. Rochefort's escape was funded by Victor Hugo, the writer and *salonnière* Juliette Adam, and her husband the Republican senator Edmond Adam.⁸³ Parliamentary radicals such as Alfred Naquet, Georges Perin, and Camille Pelletan also coordinated large parts of the amnesty campaign.⁸⁴ Deportation, then, functioned as an important site of reconciliation and unification not only for the deported Communards, but also for their comrades in exile and sympathisers in France. Although of course intellectual differences remained and this unity proved ultimately fragile and temporary, deportation nevertheless provided a much-needed rallying point for disparate and dissatisfied French revolutionaries and radicals in the years after the Commune.

V

In projecting such an image of newfound responsibility, it could be assumed that the deportees unconsciously carried out the government's professed aims for deportation. As Bullard has noted, moral regeneration lay at the heart of the government's rhetoric on deportation,⁸⁵ and indeed, the idea of the deportees as responsible communitarians operating in adversity may certainly have appealed to the contemporary French mainstream.

Yet it also resonated with significant aspects of nineteenth-century radical thought. The scale of the deportation may have been unprecedented, but the idea of utopian settler communities certainly was not. From Saint-Simon's desired Algerian settlements to Fourier's *phalanstères* and the Owenite communities of New Lanark and New Harmony, the idea of creating new communities based on revolutionary ideals was

⁸² 'L'Expulsion d'un français', *L'Intransigeant*, 17 November 1880; 'Le 18 mars', *L'Intransigeant*, 19 March 1884; H. Rochefort, 'Les assassins & la police', *L'Intransigeant*, 21 April 1885. For other instances of this, see 'La torture au bagne', *L'Intransigeant*, 10 December 1880. See also Alphonse Humbert's long-running series 'Les républicains au bagne', *L'Intransigeant*, 27 December 1880 onwards.

⁸³ 'European Life', *New York Herald*, 26 April 1874, p.8. For confirmation, see Matsuda, *Empire of Love*, p.121. For Rochefort's opinion on Juliette Adam, see H. Rochefort, 'La patrie hongroise', *L'Intransigeant*, 30 September 1884.

⁸⁴ This campaign attracted significant support, both popular and political. For more, see Bullard, *Exile to Paradise*, p.244.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.93.

well established.⁸⁶ It was also popular, and revolutionary newspapers often carried reports on contemporary utopian settlements, such as Étienne Cabet's Iowa Icariens and the Oneida Community in New York.⁸⁷ The community created and lauded by the deportees in New Caledonia was thus not only designed to establish their suitability for public life, but was also a practical reinforcement of some revolutionary ideas on the government of the republic. By emphasising the apparent success of this self-governing, self-regulating society, the deportees directly challenged the form of government established by the Third Republic and offered a practical demonstration of the federalist contention that meaningful change was effected not at a national level by an increasingly centralised government, but from within the community. If society were correctly attuned, then centralised government would be at best an unnecessary imposition and at worst, little more than dictatorship. At the very least, they indicated to other revolutionaries the potential for communal organisation to be a thorn in the government's side.

The idea of the deportees as saviours of the republic also seems to have enjoyed considerable popularity in France. *Messageur*, for example, recalled that departing boats of deportees were bade farewell dockside with cries of 'Vive la Commune! Vive la République', and state officials also seem to have perceived a latent conviction amongst the population that the exiles, rather than the government, represented the republic.⁸⁸ Police accounts of the repatriation of deportees, for example, recorded high public attendance and crowds crying 'Vive la République!' as returning Communards disembarked from trains in Paris.⁸⁹ Such sentiments were also undoubtedly given traction by the government's own poor constitutional track record during the 1870s. For many of these dissatisfied with the constitutional vacillations of the Moral Order government, the exiled Communards represented an alternative republic. The deportees were the most striking example of this, able to use their extreme isolation from France during the 1870s to reinforce revolutionaries' republican claims in general.

⁸⁶ For the Saint-Simonians and Algeria, see O.W. Abi-Mershed, *Apostles of Modernity: Saint-Simonians and the Civilizing Mission in Algeria* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010); Ouennoughi, *Algériens et Maghrébins*, pp.63-67.

⁸⁷ For the Icariens, see *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne*, 20 May 1877, pp.3-4.; 'Le collectivisme internationale'; 'Ma commune', *Le Prolétaire*, 24 January 1880; É. Péron, 'Les communautés américaines', in *La revue socialiste* 12 (20 August 1880), 493-501. For Oneida see 'Visite au perfectionnistes d'Oneida', *Le Travailleur* 1:6 (October 1877), pp.16-20. For more on this, see Girardet, *L'Idée coloniale en France de 1871 à 1962*, p.17.

⁸⁸ 140: *Messageur – Mère*, Saint-Martin de Ré, 7 October 1872, in *Messageur, 239 lettres d'un Communard déporté*, 189-190, at p.190.

⁸⁹ Godineau, 'Retour d'exil', pp.238-40.

The focus on community as the basis for the republic, then, acted not only as a vindication of the Communards, but also as a vindication of the right to revolution. The deportees' juxtaposition of the penal authorities that 'far from attempting to moralise' only degraded,⁹⁰ and the community of revolutionaries supplied a direct parallel with the contemporary French State and its adversaries. By emphasising their own ability to overcome such treatment and construct a successful community, the deportees offered a practical demonstration of the contention that meaningful change and progress were effected not at a national level by an increasingly centralised government, but first from within the community, inspired by shared values and aims. Where the Commune had failed, New Caledonia demonstrated not only that revolution was viable, but also that in order for the Republic to remain true to its professed values, it must preserve this element of society.

VI

Rather than a sustained interest in imperial expansion or settler colonialism, then deportees' ideas on France and the structure of the State were demonstrative of the on-going battle to define the French republic in the late nineteenth century. Instead of simply attempting to reinsert themselves back into the Third Republic upon their return, the deportees also used their experiences to contest what 'the republic' was. Whereas the government increasingly conceived of 'the Republic' as a constitutional, legal, and territorially defined structure, the deportees used their writings on New Caledonia to contend that 'the republic' was a state of mind rather than a State. In an open letter to the citizens of France, for example, seventeen deportees addressed their appeal 'to your *republican sentiments*; your personal opinions on recent events; your conscience; your good faith', implying that it was faith rather than law that made a true republican.⁹¹ A republic was not a specific form of government, it was the organic harmony of society correctly functioning – a set of ideals centred on virtue, sacrifice, and harmonious community life.⁹² The deportees' reflections on their experiences thus acted simultaneously to cement their own place in the republic and as an affirmation of the persistent validity of

⁹⁰ 'loin de chercher à moraliser'. Fonds Lucien Descaves, 135, pp.3-4.

⁹¹ 'C'est à vos sentiments républicains, c'est à vos opinions personnelles sur les événements récents; c'est à vos consciences, à votre bonne foi, que nous adressons un suprême appel.' Fonds Lucien Descaves, 135, p.5. Emphasis mine.

⁹² For more on republicanism as the good life, see S. Hazareesingh, *Political Traditions in Modern France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp.65-97.

the concept of revolution: if the republic were truly a set of values, its defenders must retain the right to protect it from any State including the Republic itself.

Finally, it is also worth pointing out that the deportees' ideas on the republic were strikingly similar to many of those expressed by the Communards who remained in Europe. In particular, Communard exiles often made similar claims that those outside of France constituted the 'real' republic. The 'true Paris', Guesde claimed, 'was no longer in Paris but abroad, in exile'.⁹³ While the deportees used their plight to condemn the government for what they deemed 'crimes of *lèse-humanité*'⁹⁴ (itself a throwback to liberal critics of colonialism in the first half of the nineteenth century⁹⁵) and deemed it a 'Republican government without republicans',⁹⁶ Communard exiles in Europe scorned the National Assembly as an 'Assemblée des ruraux' that was 'driving the Republic to certain death'.⁹⁷ In studies of New Caledonia, scholars have tended to emphasise the isolation of the deportees from the political events of Europe and their separation from their comrades. While the deportees were extremely isolated, it is nonetheless worth bearing in mind that in some notable areas, there was – despite the distance – nonetheless a remarkable unity of thought.

For the deportees, then, colonialism and imperialism did not represent independent or fully realised avenues of thought. Rather, they were intimately tied to ideas on the condition of France and their own position in French politics. Colonialism and empire were intellectual bargaining chips, providing an easy and effective means for the deportees to regain prominence in French public life, simultaneously rendering their time in the South Pacific relevant and justifying their continued political opposition to what was now at least nominally a republican government. Rather than assimilating into the Third Republic, deportees responded creatively to official efforts to use deportation

⁹³ 'Notre oeuvre', *L'Égalité*, 16 June 1878. For a similar claim about republican exiles during the Second Empire, see M. Talmeyr, 'Nos anciens', *L'Intransigeant*, 18 May 1883. See also 'Blanqui', *Le Prolétaire*, 9 August 1879; H. Rochefort, 'Vengeance!', *L'Intransigeant*, 19 August 1885. See also the widespread claims that revolutionaries were 'the true France': 'A Monsieur Grévy, Président de la République', *Le Prolétaire*, 1 March 1879; 'Nommez Blanqui', *Le Prolétaire*, 29 March 1879; 'La guerre!', *Le Prolétaire*, 1 September 1883; G. Deville, 'Bourgeois & prolétaires', *Le Citoyen*, 4 November 1881; 'Un à compte', *L'Égalité*, 18 June 1882; B. Malon, 'La réserve révolutionnaire', *L'Intransigeant*, 1 December 1883.

⁹⁴ *Lettres de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*, Fonds Louise Michel (IISH), 930.

⁹⁵ J. Pitts, 'Republicanism, liberalism, and empire in post-revolutionary France', in Muthu (ed.), *Empire and Modern Political Thought*, 261-291, at p.274.

⁹⁶ 'le gouvernement de la République sans républicains'. H. Rochefort, *Les Aventures de ma vie*, vol. 3, 5 vols. (Paris: Paul Dupont, 1896-97), p.262.

⁹⁷ 'L'Assemblée des ruraux...qui conduit la République à une mort certaine'. 'Tribune libre', *Le Travailleur* 1:1 (May 1877), p.29.

to exclude them from the nation. Turning both their geographical isolation from France and their quotidian experiences in New Caledonia to their advantage, they used such experiences to construct an alternative republic that was both theoretically distinct from the Third Republic and politically viable. In this formulation, the deportees and France became ‘the republic’, while the government was transformed into an outsider. Empire was thus not so much peripheral to the deportees’ thought, but rather part of a broader debate that was much more important to them: that on the nature of the State and the French republic.

II: Exile

I

While the deportees experienced colonialism firsthand in New Caledonia, it is to revolutionaries in Europe that one must look for more clearly elaborated thought on empire and internationalism. The deportees’ predicament likely helped widen awareness of the subjects. News from New Caledonia (usually in the form of letters from deportees) was regularly published in papers such as the *London Times* and the *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne*,⁹⁸ and exiles launched several highly coordinated efforts to aid their deported comrades. Those in London, for example, began a permanent subscription for the aid of the deportees in 1874.⁹⁹ The venture was supported by the organisation of a tombola that was both nationally and internationally publicised,¹⁰⁰ and with the help of exiles in Belgium, Switzerland, and America, by April 1877 the London committee had

⁹⁸ For the *Times*, see letter reprinted in *Le Courrier de l'Europe*, 30 March 1872. Fonds Louise Michel, 939. *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne*, 15 March 1874; 5 April 1874; 18 October 1874; 21 March 1875; 28 March 1875; 27 June 1875; 31 October 1875; 28 November 1875; 11 November 1877. See also ‘Lettre d’un forçat’, *Le Prolétaire*, 1 January 1879; ‘Correspondance’, *Le Prolétaire*, 12 April 1879.

⁹⁹ ‘Souscription permanente, ouverte à Londres, pour les condamnés politiques à la Nouvelle Calédonie’, Archives de la Préfecture de Police (APP), Ba427/93; Intelligence report to the Préfecture de Police (London, 16 February 1877), APP Ba429/2128; 2314. For instances of its international advertisement, see for example *Le Travailleur* 1:1 (May 1877); *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne*, 9 December 1877.

¹⁰⁰ For international publicity, see ‘Tombola organisée à Londres au profit des condamnés politiques à la Nouvelle-Calédonie’, *Le Travailleur* 1:5 (September 1877), p.32; *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne*, 28 January 1878; 23 September 1877. See also APP Ba429/2160; 2182; 2197; 2210; 2287; 2382; 2481; Ba430/3428. For its presence in the national news, see *Le Rappel* (Paris), 5 May 1877; *Le Radical* (Paris), 17 May 1877; *Le Figaro* (Paris), 18 October 1877; *La Patrie* (Paris), 22 October 1877; *Le Pays* (Paris), 24 October 1877; *La Lanterne* (Paris) 10 December 1877; *L'Égalité*, 12 May 1878.

raised 6000 francs.¹⁰¹ Indeed, an agent from the Préfecture de Police in Paris claimed that the New Caledonia aid committee was the ‘one organised group among the exiles in London’.¹⁰² Clearly, then, New Caledonia and the plight of the deportees featured prominently in the actions and news sources of revolutionaries during this period, which served to place them in close intellectual proximity with empire.

Revolutionary interest in international affairs, however, was not confined solely to events in New Caledonia. Benoît Malon displayed an interest in world religions, exploring various ‘religious moralities’ including Buddhism and Confucianism the *Revue socialiste*,¹⁰³ while the *Bulletin* published updates on South American socialists in Mexico and Uruguay,¹⁰⁴ and explored their links with Berne.¹⁰⁵ Intelligence reports on exiles in Geneva and Belgium also contained details of links to New York and places as far afield as China.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, *Le Prolétaire* was even sold in Algeria.¹⁰⁷ Communards, moreover, were fully aware of the importance and all-encompassing nature of imperialism. During the 1877-78 Anglo-Russian Crisis, the Swiss exile periodical *Le Travailleur* claimed:

‘In the presence of this great battle, all States feel the earth tremble beneath their feet: for them, it is about survival, and whether...they take part or not, their destiny is no less in play on that immense battlefield.’¹⁰⁸

¹⁰¹ ‘Tribune libre’, *Le Travailleur* 1:1 (May 1877), p.30.

¹⁰² Intelligence report to the Préfecture de Police (5 December 1878), APP, Ba430, 3170.

¹⁰³ B. Malon, ‘Les Morales religieuses’, *La Revue socialiste* (1885), 923-31; 986-1006; 1076-99. For Buddhism, see B. Malon, ‘Les Morales religieuses’, *La Revue socialiste* (1885), 923-31; 986-1006; 1076-99, at p.929. For Confucianism, see B. Malon, ‘Les Morales religieuses’, *La Revue socialiste* (1885), 923-31; 986-1006; 1076-99, at p.997. For an early manifestation of these interests, see *L’Almanach du Peuple pour 1873* (Saint Imier: Propagande Socialiste, 1873), p.27

¹⁰⁴ *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne*, 24 December 1876. See also ‘Un Saint-Barthélemy au Mexique’, *Le Prolétaire*, 11 December 1878; ‘Bulletin politique’, *Le Citoyen & La Bataille*, 7 May 1883; ‘Les Chiliens fusilleurs’, *L’Égalité*, 7 November 1882.

¹⁰⁵ *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne*, for similarities with the International, see 26 December 1875; for links to Berne, see 10 December 1876. For further references to non-Western issues, see ‘Mouvement social’, *L’Égalité*, 20 January 1878; E. Fournière, ‘La question tunisienne’, *Le Prolétaire*, 2 April 1881; ‘Lettre d’Alger’, *Le Prolétaire*, 7 May 1881; ‘La Chine et les chinois’, *Le Prolétariat*, 30 August 1884; ‘Le Japon’, *Le Prolétariat*, 13 September 1884; C. Bouis, ‘Battez, tambours!’, *Le Citoyen*, 21 July 1882. See also ‘Le théâtre de la guerre’, *Le Citoyen*, 29 July 1882; ‘La Chine actuelle’, *L’Intransigeant*, 14 January 1885.

¹⁰⁶ Intelligence report to the Préfecture de Police (Belgium, 28 May 1876), APP Ba427/385; Intelligence report (Geneva, 16 January 1874), Ba432/953. For mention of Cluseret’s visit to China, see Intelligence report to the Préfecture de Police (Geneva, 12 March 1873), APP Ba431/580.

¹⁰⁷ ‘Correspondance algérienne’, *Le Prolétaire*, 20 November 1880.

¹⁰⁸ ‘En présence de la grande lutte, tous les États sentent la terre trembler sous eux: pour tous, il s’agit de l’existence, et que...ils prennent ou non part à la guerre, leur destinée ne s’en joue pas moins sur l’immense champ de Bataille.’ ‘La guerre d’Orient’, *Le Travailleur* 1:1 (May 1877), p.12. See also E. Vauquelin, ‘Rule Britannia!’, *L’Intransigeant*, 2 April 1883; B. Malon, ‘La colonisation’,

Indeed, by 1886 the Parisian daily *La Bataille* was arguing that '[i]n these times of industrial development, he who lives by the colony will die by the colony.'¹⁰⁹ While concerned with their compatriots in New Caledonia, French revolutionary interests ranged far wider than the South Pacific. Communard exiles and their European comrades were both embedded within international intellectual networks and cognisant of the importance of empire and imperialism in a broader sense.

The second part of this chapter explores the presence of empire and internationalism in the thought of the French revolutionaries who managed to evade capture and deportation following the fall of the Commune. Imperialism will be interpreted as encompassing both past and contemporary European territorial empires in Asia, Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, as well as the Balkan Crisis that enveloped Eastern Europe, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire during the 1870s. Imperial and international questions and connections peppered a wide variety of publications, but I shall focus primarily upon the two journals in which ideas on them were most systematically developed: *Le Travailleur* and *La Bataille*. Although published second of the two newspapers, *La Bataille's* ideas on empire and internationalism were considerably more conventional than *Le Travailleur's*, and in the interest of clarity, it is this paper that shall be discussed first.

II

La Bataille was published daily in Paris under the editorship of Prosper-Olivier Lissagaray, a former Communard and author of the wildly popular *Histoire de la Commune* (Chapter One). Lissagaray was something of an intellectual hybrid (Chapter One); perhaps closer to the Guesdists than the Possibilists, but a member of neither, and his newspaper adopted a similarly independent stance. The first series of the paper ran from 1882-1886, and it was aimed primarily at socialist revolutionary members of the city's working class.¹¹⁰ As discussed in Chapter Three, Paul Lafargue estimated *La Bataille's*

L'Intransigeant, 3 October 1884; P. Lafargue, *Le droit à la paresse* (Paris: Henry Oriol, 1883. First published, 1880), pp.36-7.

¹⁰⁹ 'Par ce temps de développement industriel des peuples, quiconque se servira des colonies périra par les colonies.' 'Les anglais en Birmanie', *La Bataille* (Paris), 4 January 1886.

¹¹⁰ From October 1882-May 1883 it became *Le Citoyen & La Bataille*, but retained *La Bataille's* staff and style rather than *Le Citoyen's*.

circulation figures to have been between 2000 and 3000,¹¹¹ and while it is impossible to verify this, a degree of popularity may be inferred from the length of its print run alone. Furthermore, its physical layout – predominantly broadsheet with a wide variety of articles in each edition – and its broad subject matter both indicated that Lissagaray was able to employ a considerable staff. *La Bataille*, then, was a far cry from the many ephemeral revolutionary newspapers of the early 1870s. While, again, it is impossible to precisely determine the views of its readers, nevertheless thoughts on colonialism and empire featured regularly in *La Bataille*'s pages, thus exposing many Parisian workers to such concerns.

At first glance, *La Bataille* seems to have adopted a critical attitude towards imperialism. Lucien-Victor Meunier, for example, praised the Algerian scholar and military leader Abd al-Qadir, asking readers to 'consider him...not as an enemy, but a patriot!'¹¹² The paper also participated in the widespread condemnation of Jules Ferry and the Tonkin affair,¹¹³ dubbing him 'a true student of Pyrrhus',¹¹⁴ and publishing several caricatures concerning his handling of imperial matters. In an article addressed to the French troops in Tonkin, Lissagaray offered a more in depth analysis of imperialism:

'You are in Tonkin to defend our Cochinchinese border. If you manage to maintain that, they will send you to China to defend our Tonkinese border, for in this time of fraternity one colony leads to another. If you conquer China, they will send you to Russia in order to defend our Chinese border, and then nothing will stop you being sent to Germany to ensure the safety of our possession of Russia.'¹¹⁵

For Lissagaray and *La Bataille*, contemporary French imperialism was a process of permanent and ever increasing acquisition with no discernible benefit. Moreover,

¹¹¹ 63: P. Lafargue to F. Engels (Paris, 24 November 1882), in Engels and Lafargue, *Correspondence*, vol.1, 110-115, at p.113.

¹¹² 'considérons-le, non comme un emmeni, mais comme un patriote'. 'Abdelkader', *La Bataille*, 29 May 1883. Abd al-Qadir is better known in nineteenth-century European sources as Abdelkader or, as in the case of this article, Abd-el-Kader.

¹¹³ For more on the widespread criticism of Ferry's colonial ventures, see T. Zeldin, *France 1848-1945: Politics and Anger* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p.267.

¹¹⁴ 'élève en droite ligne de Pyrrhus'. 'Aux troupiers du Tonkin', *La Bataille*, 12 December 1883.

¹¹⁵ 'Vous êtes au Tonkin pour defender notre frontière Cochinchinoise: si vous arrivez à vous y maintenir, on vous expédiera en Chine pour mainteir notre frontière du Tonkin: car, par ce temps de fraternité, une colonie amène l'autre. Si vous conquérez la Chine, on vous enverra en Russie pour préserver notre frontière chinoise, et rien ne s'oppose à ce qu'on vous mène en Allemane pour nous assurer la possession de la Russie.' 'Aux troupiers du Tonkin', *La Bataille*, 12 December 1883. For a similar opinion, see H. Rochefort, 'Un vol sur la planche', *L'Intransigeant*, 15 March 1885.

imperialism echoed modern industrial exploitation, proving relatively safe for the capitalist but extremely dangerous for the worker – in the case of this article, the army private.¹¹⁶ Not only, then, were Ferry's and the colonial lobby's immediate political decisions regarding imperial expansion regrettable, but for *La Bataille*, imperialism was apparently theoretically unacceptable from a socialist standpoint.¹¹⁷

French imperialism, however, was not only ineffective, but also actively detrimental to citizens' rights in the metropole. On the first Franco-Hova War (for *La Bataille*, 'the coup in Madagascar'), which marked the beginning of the French colonisation of Madagascar, Lissagaray asked the government:

'Why did [the Chamber] spend a month studying the pros and cons in your name just to change everything? What is the point of deliberations if they are not taken into account? Your parliamentary regime is nothing...if you cannot submit to the rulings that you yourselves pronounced. We were absolutely right to say that there can be no working with you. During the Empire public deliberations on matters of peace and war were nothing but a farce, and you are now showing us that the same can be said for the Republic.'¹¹⁸

For *La Bataille*, imperialism and domestic politics were inextricably linked, and the government's bad decisions abroad therefore affected both the colonies and France.¹¹⁹ French imperialism was unacceptable as it involved political and ethical compromises that were not only ineffective, but more importantly actively corrupted the political process and the French republic by infringing upon French citizens' democratic rights. Their opposition derived from the fear that imperial expansion gave reign to authoritarian tendencies incompatible with a French republic.

Alongside these criticisms of the French colonial lobby, though, *La Bataille* also displayed a theoretical enthusiasm for imperialism. In August 1883, it claimed that '[t]he importance of colonisation in Africa is, happily, today understood by all intelligent

¹¹⁶ For revolutionary views on industrialisation, see Chapter Three.

¹¹⁷ See also 'Colonies et travailleurs', *Le Citoyen & La Bataille*, 18 May 1883; 'L'Honneur du drapeau', *La Bataille*, 27 October 1884.

¹¹⁸ 'Pourquoi donc a-t-elle pendant un grand mois étudié en votre nom le pour et le contre si c'est pour tout remettre en l'état? A quoi servent ses délibérations si vous ne devez pas en tenir compte? Votre régime parlementaire n'est donc qu'un jeu d'enfants, si vous ne savez pas vous soumettre aux règlements que vous avez vous-mêmes édictés.' 'Le coup de Madagascar', *La Bataille*, 24 December 1885.

¹¹⁹ Highlighting the disconnect between French colonial practices and republican values was fairly common at the time. See for instance the criticism of missionaries in *La Bataille*, 5 January 1886; *L'Intransigeant*, 12 October 1882, Fonds Louise Michel (IISH), 939. See also Daughton, *An Empire Divided*.

citizens',¹²⁰ and elsewhere it displayed no qualms about the European expropriation of African natural resources.¹²¹ This colonial enthusiasm was also evident in *La Bataille*'s views on the British Empire. While an article on India, for example, suggested that the British were sowing the seeds of their own downfall, it also praised them for having 'always known how to apply exactly the correct laws to suit the temperament, customs, religion, and indigenous civilisation of each of their individual colonies', adding that regretfully that the French did not possess this skill.¹²² It is therefore necessary to distinguish between theoretical and practical opposition to imperialism. For Lissagaray, the problem with French imperialism was that it was neither effective nor democratically sanctioned. Although *La Bataille* heavily criticised the practice of French imperialism, this did not correlate to a corresponding theoretical opposition. Rather, as its articles on Britain suggested, *La Bataille* supported the right of Europeans to colonise, merely disagreeing with the French colonial lobby's ways of exercising this right.¹²³ French imperialism, in other words, was bad not because imperialism itself was bad, but because its current incarnation was damaging to France.

Indeed, *La Bataille*'s support for imperialism extended further than abstract belief in its hypothetical possibilities. It argued that effective imperialism was not only desirable, but also vital to the maintenance of France's well being. Discussing the colonial economy in December 1883, Lissagaray admitted that colonisation did not make for ideal economic markets, suggesting '[t]here is a simpler way to sell our products than at the point of a bayonet, and that is to produce better.' However, he continued:

'If our domestic economy were better, if French industry could take up its tools and get itself once more to the level of other nations, if our taxes were better distributed, if our industry and commerce were not dependent upon the caprices of the railway bosses and their tariffs, *our deputies would not need to send you to Tonkin or anywhere else.*'¹²⁴

¹²⁰ 'L'importance de la colonisation en Afrique est, heureusement, aujourd'hui comprise par tous les citoyens intelligents.' 'La mer intérieure en Afrique', *La Bataille*, 8 August 1883.

¹²¹ 'Les richesses de l'Afrique', *La Bataille*, 4 January 1886.

¹²² 'Les Anglais, avec un tact que malheureusement nous n'avons pas en France, ont toujours su appliquer à chacune de leurs colonies le régime qui convenait le mieux au tempérament, aux moeurs, à la religion, à la civilisation des indigènes.' 'Anglais et Indous', *La Bataille*, 12 May 1885.

¹²³ For a similar historical view, see Eichner, '*La citoyenne* in the world', pp.71-72; p.75.

¹²⁴ 'Si notre économie intérieure était meilleure, si l'industrie française savait renouveler à temps son outillage et le mettre au niveau des autres nations, si nos impôts étaient mieux répartis, si notre industrie et notre commerce n'étaient pas livrés au caprice des chemins de fer maîtres de fixer les tarifs, nos députés n'auraient pas besoin de vous expédier au Tonkin ou ailleurs'. 'Aux troupiers du Tonkin', *La Bataille*, 12 December 1883. Emphasis mine.

While Lissagaray accepted that colonisation in order to force the sale of French products was an unsatisfactory state of affairs, he did not suggest a termination of the practice. Rather, he argued that such action was necessary in order to protect French jobs and the French economy and called for a reform of colonial practices to increase their profitability.

Lissagaray and his staff, then, were certainly critical of the form that the colonial lobby's (and in particular Ferry's) imperial policies took. Unlike the deportees, however, who employed imperial metaphors simply as a method of commenting upon domestic French affairs, *La Bataille* endorsed the theory and fact of imperial expansion as not only beneficial, but necessary to the continued prosperity and international standing of France. Furthermore, while its journalists praised, for example, Abd al-Qadir's patriotism, their 'positive' assessments of other cultures were not accompanied by a belief in the right to self-rule.¹²⁵ In this respect, *La Bataille*'s position was proximate to that of the radical feminist socialist Hubertine Auclert's *La Citoyenne* (founded in Paris in 1881), which endorsed expansive French republicanism as an agent capable of bringing about universal female enfranchisement.¹²⁶ For *La Bataille*, European superiority was never in doubt. It remained the only means by which to rule effectively and, combined with their concern for French workers, thus rendered imperial expansion (as for the colonial lobby) both a right and a moral duty.¹²⁷

III

Le Travailleur took an altogether different view of European imperial expansion. Published in Geneva from May 1877 to May 1878, it was the product of collaboration between exiled anarchist and federalist revolutionaries of several nationalities, primarily French and Russian. At the time, Geneva was one of Europe's most prominent anarchist centres, home to an international array of exiles and located firmly within the anarchist Jura Federation's sphere of influence. *Le Travailleur* appeared only once a month or bimonthly, but maintained links with the weekly *Bulletin de la Fédération*

¹²⁵ 'Anglais et Indous', *La Bataille*, 12 May 1885.

¹²⁶ Eichner, 'La citoyenne in the world', pp.71-72.

¹²⁷ See for example 'Raïatea', *Le Citoyen & La Bataille*, 25 October 1882. See also 'Question coloniale', *Le Citoyen & La Bataille*, 5 November 1882; see for example 'Le Tong-kin', *Le Citoyen & La Bataille*, 21 November 1882; 'Madagascar', *Le Citoyen & La Bataille*, 6 December 1882; 'Tong-king', *Le Citoyen & La Bataille*, 19 December 1882.

jurassienne.¹²⁸ It dealt extensively with imperial and transnational subjects and, although the majority of these articles were written by either Élisée Reclus or the Russian anarchist geographer Lev Mechnikov, all of the most prominent Communard exiles in Geneva including Arthur Arnould and Gustave Lefrançais provided articles, sat on the editorial board,¹²⁹ and were supportive of the views expressed in Reclus's and Mechnikov's articles.¹³⁰

Although it appeared some four to five years before *La Bataille, Le Travailleur* nevertheless expressed some of the same suspicions about the French empire. Addressing the problem of the limits of colonisation, the first issue worried that 'the dream of Universal Empire constantly plays on the minds of heads of State. The more they possess already, the greater fury of acquisition they have'.¹³¹ A year later an editorial highlighted the elite's exploitation of workers in the name of imperial wars, mockingly asking with reference to the Tsar in an article on the Russo-Turkish War:

'Aren't all the millions spent, all the men killed worth it for his glory? ...of the three million humans born every year in his territories, he will always be able to find enough...cannon-fodder to sacrifice in his wars.'¹³²

It is thus possible to discern a certain degree of unity on empire amongst the deportees, *La Bataille*, and *Le Travailleur*. All three shared many of the same concerns, such as the exploitation of the worker and the effects of imperialism upon Western governments. In particular, all three were united in their opposition to the current form of French imperialism.

Unusually, though, *Le Travailleur* also raised a number of ethical objections to imperialism. Reporting on a communist revolt in Mexico, the periodical highlighted the hypocrisy of colonial possession, asserting that the rebels 'wanted to reclaim the land that

¹²⁸ The *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne* collapsed in April 1878, at which point *Le Travailleur* merged with Paul Brousse and Peter Kropotkin's *L'Avant-Garde* (Geneva). See Stafford, *From Anarchism to Reformism*, p.107.

¹²⁹ *Le Travailleur*, 1:7 (November 1877), p.1.

¹³⁰ *Le Travailleur*, 1:1 (May 1877), p.28; A. Arnould, *L'État et la Révolution* (Lyons: Éditions Jacques-Marie Laffont et Associés, 1981. First published 1877), pp.187-8.

¹³¹ 'le rêve de l'Empire universel hante toujours les chefs d'Etat; plus ils possèdent déjà, plus ils ont la fureur d'acquérir'. 'La guerre d'Orient', *Le Travailleur* 1:1 (May 1877), p.12.

¹³² 'Combien a coûté cette guerre? Question naïve. Qu'importe à notre "petit père" le tsar? Tous les millions dépensés, tous les hommes tués, ne l'ont pas été pour sa gloire? ...sur les trois millions d'êtres humains qui naissent chaque année dans ses domaines, il pourra toujours prélever...assez de chair à canon pour les faire mitrailler dans ses batailles.' 'Bulletin', *Le Travailleur* 2:2 (February-March 1878), p.2.

the whites had *stolen* during the conquest'.¹³³ The classification of land accumulation during the Spanish colonisation of the Americas as 'theft' suggested that for *Le Travailleur*, conquest was not a legitimate mode of acquisition, but a crime. Indeed, in the September 1877 issue, one of *Le Travailleur's* journalists stated categorically, 'I do not believe that conquest can ever be justified.'¹³⁴ Given the centrality of the moral right to conquest to justifications of late nineteenth-century imperialism, *Le Travailleur's* opposition to it implied an opposition to the idea of empire, rather than simply to its current French iteration. *La Bataille's* and *Le Travailleur's* criticisms of French colonialism, then, were at once similar and fundamentally different. While many of their issues with the practical realisation of imperialism were the same, the basis for these criticisms was not. *Le Travailleur* recognised the problems with France's practical implementation of imperial ideas, yet it also called the legality of colonisation in general into question. Its disavowal of French imperialism, in other words, was based also on a rejection of its theoretical foundation.

It was not only the right to conquest that *Le Travailleur* attacked, but also the credence of notions of Western superiority. For *Le Travailleur*, a variety of different cultures were just as advanced as those of Europe. Reclus suggested that '[t]he political organisation of the Kabyles' was 'the ideal of democracy',¹³⁵ and in an article on China, Mechnikov wrote that '[w]hile in western Europe, labour associations remain the exception, they have been the rule for centuries in the far East.'¹³⁶ These other cultures were not merely equal to Europe's, though, *Le Travailleur* suggested, but often superior. Reclus, for example, claimed that 'utopia is already a reality south of the Mediterranean' in Algeria, 'the promised land of association'.¹³⁷ While it was not particularly unusual for European theorists such as Ernest Renan to discuss non-Western societies and even sometimes praise them, *Le Travailleur's* approach was subtly, but significantly, different. As Karuna Mantena has demonstrated, non-Western cultures were typically praised as

¹³³ 'Ils voulaient reprendre les terres que les blancs leur ont enlevées du temps de la conquête.' 'Dernières nouvelles', *Le Travailleur* 1:6 (October 1877), p.9. Emphasis mine. See also 'La guerre d'Orient', *Le Travailleur* 1:1 (May 1877), p.14.

¹³⁴ 'Je ne crois pas que la conquête puisse jamais être justifiée'. 'La solidarité chez les Berbères', *Le Travailleur* 1:5 (September 1877), p.17.

¹³⁵ 'L'organisation politique des Kabyles est l'idéal de la démocratie.' 'La solidarité chez les Berbères', *Le Travailleur* 1:5 (September 1877), p.19.

¹³⁶ 'Tandis que dans nos contrées de l'Europe occidentale les associations ouvrières sont encore l'exception, elles sont depuis des siècles la règle uniforme dans l'extrême Orient.' 'L'Internationale et les Chinois', *Le Travailleur* 2:3 (March-April 1878), p.24.

¹³⁷ 'l'utopie... [est] la réalité au-delà de la Méditerranée'; 'L'Algérie... la terre promise de l'association'. 'La solidarité chez les Berbères', *Le Travailleur* 1:6 (October 1877), p.15.

once mighty civilisations that had long since atrophied or decayed, and were thus in need of European protection.¹³⁸ *Le Travailleur* specifically refuted these suggestions, arguing by contrast that non-Western civilisations such as China and Kabylia had retained their greatness.¹³⁹ For *Le Travailleur*, the future ideal society was not merely an expansion of European modernity; elements of it were to be found everywhere.

Notably, *Le Travailleur* went further than acknowledging parity between Western and non-Western cultures. It also recognised connections and similarities. As one editorial argued:

‘Questions of production and consumption are the same everywhere; mountains and oceans may delimit regions and determine the character and activity of the producers, but mountains and oceans do nothing more to change the situation of workers than artificial frontiers do. They are exploited everywhere.’¹⁴⁰

The universal power of the worker to determine their own destiny, then, superseded both national borders and the power of international markets. *Le Travailleur*'s journalists returned frequently to this theme, often implying that such similarities were not merely superficial, but deeply ingrained in a kind of universal workingman's consciousness. Describing a raid on a Chinese immigrant association in Southeast Asia, for example, the paper claimed that:

‘the British police got their hands on the statutes of an extremely influential popular society. To their astonishment they recognised in them, in exactly the same terms, the language of our European labourers.’¹⁴¹

Highlighting the deep similarities between Chinese and European labourers who had never met enabled *Le Travailleur* to imply that socialism and its goals were both natural and universal. European and non-Western civilisations and cultures were not only equal, but more importantly they were fundamentally alike.

¹³⁸ K. Mantena, *Alibis of Empire: Henry Maine and the Ends of Liberal Imperialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

¹³⁹ *Le Travailleur* 1:5 (September 1877), p.21.

¹⁴⁰ ‘Les questions de production et de consommation sont les memes partout; montagnes et océans peuvent délimiter les régions et déterminer le caractère et l'activité des producteurs, mais pas plus que les frontières factices, montagnes et océans ne changent rien à la situation des travailleurs. Ceux-ci sont exploités partout.’ ‘Notre programme’, *Le Travailleur* 1:1, (Geneva, May 1877), p.2

¹⁴¹ ‘la police britannique mit la main sur les statuts d'une société populaire très-influente, et c'est avec stupeur qu'on y reconnut, et Presque dans les mêmes termes, le langage de nos ouvriers d'Europe.’ ‘L'Internationale et les Chinois’, *Le Travailleur* 2:3 (March-April 1878), p.28. See also ‘La solidarité chez les Berbères’, *Le Travailleur* 1:5 (September 1877), p.22.

For *Le Travailleur*, solidarity was thus primarily based not upon nationality or civilisational superiority, but upon class and profession. In this matter, it positioned itself against the kind of interracial hostilities that had already broken out in cities such as San Francisco, declaring, for instance, that '[t]his terrible *yellow question* is a corner into which the bourgeois regime has pushed civilisation.'¹⁴² As Reclus argued, universal workers' solidarity was not merely beneficial, but natural and inescapable:

*'Solidarity is no mere sentiment; it is a law of nature. We have been mistaken in not considering the barbarians of Algeria as our brothers, and we have been victims of our own prejudices and egotism. It is against the Algerians that the men who would slit our throats did their apprenticeship in murder and arson.'*¹⁴³

Universal proletarian solidarity, *Le Travailleur* argued, was thus the natural state of the worker, whereas the regional solidarities and protectionism of publications such as *La Bataille* were products of, rather than solutions to, exploitative industrial modernity.

In order to combat such manipulation, according to *Le Travailleur*, it was necessary for the worker to realise that 'the misery of one proletariat and another are the same' and unite:¹⁴⁴

'Up until now, prejudiced labourers have taken out their anger on other unfortunate people. They have fought like gladiators in the arena *while the masters watch the massacre*. Labourer fights labourer. One trade fights another trade. Nations and races gut themselves over common boundaries. And now Chinese, Americans, and Europeans are meeting each other on the same battlefield. Will they massacre each other, snatching the bread from each other's mouths...or will

¹⁴² 'Cette terrible *question jaune* est une impasse dans laquelle le régime bourgeois accule le civilisation'. 'Quelques mots sur les associations chinoises', *Le Travailleur* 2:4 (April-May 1878), p.17. Emphasis original. See also 'L'Internationale et les Chinois', *Le Travailleur* 2:3 (March-April 1878), p.29; 'La théorie des races', *L'Égalité*, 14 May 1882.

¹⁴³ 'La solidarité n'est pas un simple sentiment, c'est une loi de nature. Nous l'avons méconnue en ne considérant pas les barbares d'Algérie comme des frères et nous avons été victimes de nos préjugés et de notre égoïsme. C'est contre les Algériens que nos égoïstes ont fait leur apprentissage de meurtre et d'incendie.' 'La solidarité chez les Berbères', *Le Travailleur* 1:5 (September 1877), p.22. Emphasis mine. For similar expressions of solidarity, see L. Dramard, 'En Afrique', *L'Émancipation*, 22 November 1880; 'Les affaires d'Égypte et le Parti ouvrier', *Le Citoyen*, 31 July 1882; 'La défaite', *Le Citoyen*, 17 September 1882; 'Nos proconsuls en Afrique', *Le Prolétaire*, 22 July 1882; 'La férocité arabe!', *Le Prolétaire*, 9 September 1882; 'L'Angleterre, la France, et l'Égypte', *Le Prolétaire*, 1 March 1884.

¹⁴⁴ 'les misères de l'un et de l'autre prolétariat ont pu se reconnaître'. 'L'Internationale et les Chinois', *Le Travailleur* 2:3 (March-April 1878), pp.28-9. See also *Bulletin de la Fédération jurassienne*, 16 July 1876.

they, believing in the same ideas, unite and demand in common the integral product of their labour?’¹⁴⁵

If solidarity were a law of nature defined along professional or class lines, then logically the international bourgeoisie were also united. Indeed, Reclus referred to this universal bourgeoisie in the same edition, demanding that the worker ‘[a]sk the conservative if he does not shout “Death! Death to the *communeux* of all countries!”’¹⁴⁶ Given that both socialism and capitalism were universal phenomena, interracial hostilities and disputes between labourers were detrimental to the workers’ cause everywhere. For Western workers to damage the interests of their non-Western counterparts was thus to be trapped in the masters’ arena, too busy fighting each other to notice the true, common enemy – to strengthen the hand of their foe and perpetuate their own oppression by failing to elaborate a viable alternative to the current system. Although imperial expansion may have superficially benefited the European worker by providing a captive market for their products and thus temporarily securing their jobs, social revolution could ultimately not be realised within such parochial boundaries.

It should be noted, though, that there remained limits to this proto-anticolonialism. While *Le Travailleur* opposed the exploitation of other cultures and nationalities, it nonetheless supported for what it called ‘true colonisation’ – a quasi-Lockean appeal for the proper use of land. Describing the cultivation of industry around esparto grass and the economic development this prompted in Oran province in Algeria, Reclus argued ‘[t]rue colonisation is not a useless and costly displacement of population.

¹⁴⁵ ‘Jusqu’à maintenant, les travailleurs lésés ont assouvi leur colère sur d’autres malheureux: ils ont combattu comme des gladiateurs dans une arène, tandis que les maîtres regardaient le massacre. L’ouvrier combat des ouvriers; un corps de métier lutte contre d’autres corps de métier; nations et races s’entrégorgent sur les frontières communes. Et maintenant, Chinois, Américains et Européens, se rencontrant sur le même champ de bataille, vont-ils se massacrer les uns les autres, s’arracher le pain dans la bouche...ou bien, comprenant les mêmes idées, s’unissant dans une même volonté, sauront-ils s’associer pour revendiquer en commun le produit intégral de leur travail?’ ‘L’Internationale et les Chinois’, *Le Travailleur* 2:3 (March-April 1878), p.31. Emphasis mine.

¹⁴⁶ ‘Demandez au conservateur s’il ne criera pas: A mort! A mort! pour les communeux de tous les pays?’ ‘L’Internationale et les Chinois’, *Le Travailleur* 2:3 (March-April 1878), p.30. This was a widely-held opinion. See for example Congrès général de l’Association internationale des Travailleurs, *Manifeste adressé à toutes les Associations ouvrières et à tous les Travailleurs, par le Congrès général de l’Association internationale des Travailleurs tenu à Bruxelles du 7 au 13 Septembre 1874*, pp.5-6; J. Guesde, *Textes choisis* (ed.) C. Willard (Paris: Éditions Sociales, 1959), p.144; ‘Les syndicats professionnels’. *L’Égalité*, 9 July 1882; P. Lafargue, ‘Blagues bourgeoises: la patrie’, *L’Égalité*, 18 November 1884; M. Talmeyr, ‘Rien pour la France’, *L’Intransigeant*, 10 July 1881; J. Guesde, ‘Nations et classes’, *Le Citoyen*, 3 April 1882; P. Lafargue, ‘Socialisme et patriotisme’, *Le Citoyen*, 7 August 1882; J. Guesde and P. Lafargue, *Le programme du Parti Ouvrier: son histoire, ses considérants, ses articles* (Paris: Henry Oriol, 1883), p.90.

It must bring new tools to a country, facilitating the exploitation of previously neglected products.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, despite its pleas for unity, *Le Travailleur* simultaneously retained a belief in the hierarchy of races, implying the Chinese were more ‘productive’ than Southeast Asians,¹⁴⁸ and asserting that ‘[o]ne should not compare [Algeria] to the virgin lands whose inhabitants are in an infant state. The Berbers have conserved the tradition of an old civilisation’.¹⁴⁹ It is also worth pointing out that, unlike other publications, *Le Travailleur* never provided column inches for colonial subjects to advance their own ideas.¹⁵⁰ While *Le Travailleur* may not have been ‘imperialist’ in the sense of advocating a concerted system of domination,¹⁵¹ it must nevertheless be remembered that it was neither opposed to all forms of colonisation nor convinced of the equality of all races.

Le Travailleur was also by no means the first French publication to express ethical objections to empire. Its views had historical precedent, from Robespierre’s preference for principles over colonies, to Constant’s *De l’esprit de conquête* and the Algerian liberal Hamdan Khodja’s pamphlet, *Le Miroir*, which was the first publication to make an ethical case for complete French withdrawal from Algeria.¹⁵² In many ways, *Le Travailleur* could be said to represent a return to earlier criticisms of conquest by the likes of Diderot and Constant.¹⁵³ Where *Le Travailleur* departed from this tradition was its belief that progress must be brought about by unity and universal solidarity, rather than merely equality. Whilst for Constant and others, the good of the nation remained the principal concern, *Le Travailleur* advocated greater transnational affinity rather than national protectionism or isolation. For *Le Travailleur*, European imperialism represented a violation of natural

¹⁴⁷ ‘La vraie colonisation n’est pas un inutile et coûteux déplacement de population. Elle doit apporter à un pays un outillage nouveau permettant l’exploitation de produits jusqu’alors négligés.’ ‘La solidarité chez les Berbères’, *Le Travailleur* 1:5 (September 1877), p.24. This was a fairly regular criticism, for example see also ‘Tong-king’, *Le Citoyen & La Bataille*, 11 December 1882. On Locke and colonialism, see D. Armitage, ‘John Locke: theorist of empire?’, in *Foundations of Modern International Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 114-131.

¹⁴⁸ ‘L’Internationale et les Chinois’, *Le Travailleur* 2:3 (March-April 1878), p.27.

¹⁴⁹ ‘Il ne faudrait pas comparer ce pays aux terres vierges dont les habitants sont à l’état d’enfance. Les Berbères ont conservé la tradition d’une vieille civilisation.’ ‘La solidarité chez les Berbères’, *Le Travailleur* 1:6 (October 1877), p.16. See also ‘Correspondances: Paris’, *Le Travailleur*, 1:2 (June 1877), p.22.

¹⁵⁰ For examples of this elsewhere, see ‘Déclaration du Parti national égyptien’ and ‘La presse égyptienne’, *Le Citoyen*, 17 August 1882; ‘Manifeste en faveur d’Arabi’, *Le Citoyen*, 23 August 1882; G.D. al-Afghan, ‘Le Mahdi’, *L’Intransigeant*, 8 December 1883; ‘La Chine d’après un chinois’, *Le Prolétariat*, 26 December 1885.

¹⁵¹ For this differentiation, see Armitage, ‘John Locke: theorist of empire?’, *Foundations*, 114-131, at p.115.

¹⁵² On Khodja, see Pitts, ‘Liberalism and empire in a nineteenth-century Algerian mirror’.

¹⁵³ D. Diderot, *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville*, (ed.) P. Jimack (London: Grant & Cutler, 1988. First published, 1772).

law, and both the colonial stage and colonial actors were vital rather than ancillary to revolution. The rights of the worker and the rights of the nation were to be realised not through protectionism, but through truly international solidarity, and an anticolonial stance was thus both politically and ethically necessary.

III: Imbrication

Although they represented wildly different intellectual positions, at the heart of *Le Travailleur*'s, *La Bataille*'s, and the deportees' thought on contemporary imperialism lay a critique of industrial modernity. For those in power, they claimed, competition led only to insecurity and consequently further acquisition, while capitalists' determination to acquire workers' bodies and labour at the lowest possible price prompted interracial strife amongst the workers themselves.¹⁵⁴ Indeed, this critique of industrial society was extremely widespread in contemporary French work on empire. In an article in the *Revue socialiste*, for example, the Blanquist Albert Regnard claimed:

“The civilised world is nothing but a great theatre of ills, filling the air with its ugly wailing...Journey from country to country and ask from door to door: “Does contentment reside here? Are you satisfied and happy?” Everywhere, people will reply: “Carry on looking! We don't have what you speak of!”¹⁵⁵

Contrary to the government's claims, modernity and 'progress' as exemplified by the endless process of acquisition that was imperial expansion, revolutionaries suggested, brought neither happiness nor social harmony. Even those who endorsed the supremacy of Western civilisation, such as *La Bataille*, were wholly unsatisfied with its current state. Although, as we have seen, French revolutionary thought during this period encompassed a variety of positions on empire, their basis was largely the same. All were concerned with how to improve the worker's lot, and all approached imperialism as a close relation or by-product of industrial modernity.

¹⁵⁴ ‘Quelques mots sur les associations chinoises’, *Le Travailleur* 2:4 (April-May 1878), p.19.

¹⁵⁵ ‘Le monde civilisé n'est qu'une immense salle de malades qui remplissent l'air de leurs gémissements navrants et se tordent en proie à tous les genres de souffrances. Allez de pays en pays et demandez de porte en porte: “Le contentement habite-t-il ici? Etes-vous tranquilles et heureux?” Partout on vous répondra: “Cherche plus loin! nous n'avons pas ce dont tu parles!”’ A. Regnard, ‘Les Mensonges conventionnels de notre civilisation’, *La Revue socialiste* (1886), 697-706, at p.697. See also, for example, *L'Intransigeant*, 12 October 1882, Fonds Louise Michel (IISH), 939.

This engagement with imperialism was more successful for some than others. *La Bataille*'s criticisms of the colonial lobby's policies were both strident and visible, however the paper's protectionist stance dulled the impact of its criticism. As opposed to *Le Travailleur*'s, *La Bataille*'s issues with French imperialism sprung ultimately from nationalist concern not for 'the worker', but exclusively for the *French* (or at a push, European) worker.¹⁵⁶ The visibly different circumstances in which the two papers appeared undoubtedly influenced these stances. While *Le Travailleur* published prior to the amnesty and in a likeminded community of international exiles, *La Bataille* was targeted primarily at French (or Parisian) workers, and competing for readers in a crowded market of revolutionary socialist newspapers.¹⁵⁷

Although this context goes some way towards illuminating the reasons for *La Bataille*'s position on imperialism, such a stance nonetheless highlighted the limits of its supposedly universal values. The paper preached solidarity and universal equality, but in reality this solidarity ceased at the borders of the West. It considered the rising 'moral level' of Hindus brought about by English culture in India 'a danger'.¹⁵⁸ Likewise, it deemed British bankers' plans to finance Chinese industrialisation 'treason', recommending that in retaliation British proletarians should 'string up the English financiers who gave the Chinese this loan from the doors of their banks' and pull the plug on Chinese production in order to protect the European worker.¹⁵⁹ *La Bataille*'s engagement with empire and international questions effectively confined them to a national framework for social change and visibly demarcated the practical limits to their professions of universal solidarity and fraternity.

This position with regard to the rest of the world was in fact extremely proximate to the colonial lobby's own. As we have seen, *La Bataille*'s (and indeed many other revolutionaries'¹⁶⁰) opposition to contemporary French imperialism sprang from the conviction that the Third Republic was not doing imperialism properly. As Jennifer Pitts has argued in relation to liberal critics of French expansion under the July Monarchy,

¹⁵⁶ 'Colonies et travailleurs', *Le Citoyen & La Bataille*, 18 May 1883.

¹⁵⁷ For a discussion of the popularity of protectionism during this period, see P. Rosanvallon, *The Society of Equals* (trans.) A. Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013. First published in French, 2011), p.141.

¹⁵⁸ 'Anglais et Indous', *La Bataille*, 12 May 1885.

¹⁵⁹ 'pendre aux portes de leur banque les financiers anglais qui émettront l'emprunt chinois'. 'Le milliard chinois', *La Bataille*, 5 January 1886.

¹⁶⁰ See, for example, 'Les naufrageurs', *Le Citoyen*, 12 November 1881; 'Gaspillage partout', *Le Citoyen*, 19 December 1881; 'L'alliance avec Arabi', *Le Citoyen*, 26 July 1882; Anon, *Les déportés civils de Gomen. Nouvelle Calédonie* (Paris: Imprimerie Nouvelle Association Ouvrière, 1871), pp.15-16.

intellectual positions based wholly upon the well being of France were neither effective nor sustainable, for they were ultimately derivative and could be easily undermined by changes in the government's colonial fortunes.¹⁶¹ *La Bataille's* international thought, which focused solely on empire and its possible benefits for the metropole effectively conformed to modern social standards, undermining claims that they offered a fresh alternative to the current order. Speaking from within the bounds of contemporary society, they were unable to offer an alternative to the binary colony-metropole paradigm established by the government's own ideas on imperialism. Rather, *La Bataille's* imperial and international thought represented a typical manifestation of Alice Conklin's assertion that faith in empire and the civilising mission was 'part of what it meant to be French and republican in this period'.¹⁶²

Le Travailleur's interest in international affairs, by contrast, was truly transnational. For *Le Travailleur*, as for Albert Regnard, imperial exploits were nothing but the 'preoccupations of a decadent patriotism'.¹⁶³ The periodical warned its readers to beware of imperialism's apparent perks, urging them (as it urged the French government) to consider the less fortunate. Discussing the future, Reclus stated:

'The world has been made small by the network of railways and steamboats that cross it. Different peoples are more and more becoming neighbours, multiplying their points of contact... From their diverse and even opposing elements, they will gradually form a new race *in which all races will be united*.'¹⁶⁴

Unlike for *La Bataille*, for *Le Travailleur* the world was defined not by borders, but by the increasing mobility and unity brought about by travel and technological innovation. The establishment of connections between a wide variety of national proletariats was encouraged, and their own connections were often discussed in the periodical. In Oran, for example, the paper numbered a wide variety of nationalities amongst its associates including 'Spanish youths... the sons of the French *proscrits* of 48', and 'young Kabyles

¹⁶¹ Pitts, 'Republicanism, liberalism, and empire in post-revolutionary France', at p.264.

¹⁶² Conklin, *A Mission to Civilise*, p.2. This position was similar to that of radical republicans as well as the colonial lobby. See for instance 'La guerre', *Le Citoyen*, 29 August 1883. See also Eichner, 'La citoyenne in the world', at p.75.

¹⁶³ 'Ces préoccupations d'un patriotisme de décadence'. Regnard, 'Les Mensonges conventionnels de notre civilisation', at p.697.

¹⁶⁴ 'La terre se fait petite sous le réseau de chemins de fer et de bateaux à vapeur qui l'entoure; les peuples de plus en plus voisins les uns des autres, multiplient leurs points de contact; ils se rapprochent et se mêlent; de leurs éléments divers et même opposés, ils se préparent à former graduellement une race nouvelle où toutes les races se trouveront unies.' 'L'Internationale et les Chinois', *Le Travailleur* 2:3 (March-April 1878), p.30. Emphasis mine.

who have remained in the towns and who know the European workers well.¹⁶⁵ In promoting the establishment of transnational networks and overlooking national borders, *Le Travailleur* both enlarged and shrunk the scope of politics and revolutionary action, reducing it to the figure of the individual worker. *Le Travailleur's* worker was defined not by their country, but by their profession, forcing readers to identify common ground between themselves and others and reflect upon the possibility of a universal common good.

In the sense that their interest in world affairs was more transnational than imperial, *Le Travailleur* was in fact similar to the deportees. Although they gave little sustained thought to imperialism and spent much of their time abroad in the South Pacific, the deportees' associations were not restricted to the territorial confines of New Caledonia. On their voyages to and from the penal colony, they also briefly experienced an array of other countries such as Senegal (colonised by the French in the 1850s¹⁶⁶) and Australia, prompting Ballière to note that he had almost 'made a world tour'.¹⁶⁷ The 1874 *évadés* in particular encountered a wide variety of likeminded people. Paschal Grousset and Francis Jourde gave an address in San Francisco following their escape,¹⁶⁸ while Olivier Pain and Rochefort met and discussed politics with a number of foreign radicals in New York, including the prominent American socialist John Swinton and the exiled Fenian leader O'Donovan Rossa, as well as journalists from the *New York Herald*.¹⁶⁹ While the deportees spent the majority of their time in New Caledonia, then, it was not only in the South Pacific that cross-cultural encounters took place. For a number of them, especially of those who would later publish about their experiences, deportation proved to be a truly transnational affair.

This broadening of the deportees' geographical horizons also translated into a broadening of intellectual and cultural horizons. In letters to his brother, for example,

¹⁶⁵ 'les jeunes espagnols...Les fils des proscrits français de 48...ainsi que les jeunes Kabyles qui sont restés dans les villes, et qui ont fréquenté les travailleurs européens.' 'La solidarité chez les Berbères', *Le Travailleur* 1:6 (October 1877), pp.15-6.

¹⁶⁶ French territorial expansion into the mainland primarily occurred in the 1850s, although parts had been colonised prior to this period.

¹⁶⁷ 'fait le tour du monde'. Ballière, *La Déportation de 1871*, p.125.

¹⁶⁸ 'Discours des citoyens Paschal Grousset et Francis Jourde, ex-membres de la Commune de Paris, prononcés au banquet qui leur a été offert par des Républicains de San Francisco le 24 mai 1874', Fonds Lucien Descaves, 205.

¹⁶⁹ Pain, *Henri Rochefort (Paris – Nouméa – Genève)*, pp.614-615. For the *New York Herald*, see, for example 'The Rochefort Manifesto', *New York Herald*, 2 June 1874; 'Rochefort's Manifesto', *New York Herald*, 3 June 1874.

Raoul Urbain addressed him by the Kanak word ‘taio’ (brother),¹⁷⁰ while Michel included traditional Kanak poems and stories in her correspondence with Victor Hugo.¹⁷¹ These encounters had a still greater intellectual impact upon many deportees. Pain, for example, expressed a kind of solidarity of the vanquished with the Kabyle deportees, describing them as ‘pariahs that a merciless hand has thrown there in defiance of all legality’.¹⁷² Similarly, Allemane declared of the Kabyles, ‘I understood that these...were, like me, the vanquished, and that they had been treated in the same way’.¹⁷³ Deportation, then, prompted a shift in how the deportees located themselves and their political actions in the world. The encounters that took place as a direct result of deportation encouraged them to reach across cultural divides and identify similarities and solidarities between themselves and ostensibly very different peoples.

Furthermore, these new transnational revolutionary solidarities were increasingly reflected in their political thought and action. Following their return to Paris, many of the deportees began a campaign for the amnesty of Algerian political prisoners. In August 1880, Pain addressed a 1500-strong meeting in Paris calling for a general amnesty,¹⁷⁴ and *L’Intransigeant* quickly took up the case of ‘les Arabes’, republishing open letters and articles on the Paris meeting from the republican French Algerian newspaper *L’Echo d’Oran*.¹⁷⁵ The deportees’ lack of interest in colonialism or empire, then, was not reflective of xenophobia or unwillingness to work with foreigners. Although their primary focus remained France and alliances continued to be made and broken largely on the basis of political benefit,¹⁷⁶ similarly to *Le Travailleur*, deportees increasingly situated themselves within a wider, more transnational context.¹⁷⁷ Crucially, while both the deportees and revolutionaries such as those at *Le Travailleur* involved themselves extensively with international actors and affairs, these engagements were not defined or bounded by the concept of ‘empire’.

¹⁷⁰ Letter from R. Urbain to E. Urbain, 12 November 1880, Fonds Lucien Descaves (IISH), 1050, p.15.

¹⁷¹ Louise Michel Papers, IISH, 21. For more use of Kanak culture by Michel, see Fonds Louise Michel Moscou 233, 5-2, p.4; p.10; p.17.

¹⁷² ‘des parias qu’une main impitoyable détient au mépris de toute légalité’. Olivier Pain quoted in Mailhé, *Déportations en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, p.403.

¹⁷³ ‘J’ai appris que les arrivants [the Algerians] étaient, comme moi, des vaincus, et qu’ils étaient traités de la même façon’. Allemane, *Mémoires d’un Communard*, p.190. See also ‘Rochefort: His Lecture at the Academy of Music’, *New York Herald*, 6 June 1874.

¹⁷⁴ Mailhé, *Déportations en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, p.403. See also *La Bataille*, 17 January 1886.

¹⁷⁵ ‘L’Amnistie pour les Arabes’, *L’Intransigeant*, 8 August 1880.

¹⁷⁶ ‘Rochefort’, *New York Herald*, 30 May 1874, p.3; Pain, *Henri Rochefort (Paris – Nouméa – Genève)*, p.617.

¹⁷⁷ ‘Rochefort’, *New York Herald*, 30 May 1874, p.3.; O. Pain, *Henri Rochefort*, p.617.

It is of course possible, even likely, that revolutionary thought on empire and transnationalism ultimately often served to reinforce colonial hierarchies and the popularity of imperialism.¹⁷⁸ This, however, was often demonstrably not their objective. By expressing their admiration for other cultures and establishing connections with a wide variety of other nationalities, both *Le Travailleur* and the deportees radically undermined the theoretical basis of imperialism in the Third Republic. As Greg Dening has observed, '[b]eing different challenges definitions of what being civilised might be.'¹⁷⁹ The deportees' affinities with strangers – in particular colonial strangers – presented a direct theoretical challenge to the imperial system of hierarchies and assimilation. In highlighting these attributes, *Le Travailleur* provided hope to its readers that progress was possible outside of the paradigm of contemporary European nation-States, and turned the notion of the civilising mission on its head. If, as *Le Travailleur's* examples suggested, European civilisation was not superior to all others, then far from civilising savages, European colonial expansion was retarding world progress and the dissemination of worthwhile ideas.¹⁸⁰ To define oneself and one's actions as transnational was thus to subvert the boundaries set by modern industrial society, whereas to be an imperialist was not.

Le Travailleur's interest in international affairs thus reflected and enhanced their demands for a radical reordering of society. Japanese ownership and Kabyle democracy provided ideals on which European society could hope to remodel itself, and the unusual opposition to imperialism reinforced the decentralised society proposed by many of the Swiss exiles as an antidote to industrial modernity and centralised political power (Chapter One; Chapter Two). Whereas *La Bataille* remained tied to national political questions, *Le Travailleur's* transnational solidarity and the radical possibilities it engendered enabled them not just to bypass contemporary political debates, but also to

¹⁷⁸ At times they did so explicitly. See for example P. Lafargue, 'La politique de la bourgeoisie', *L'Égalité*, 18 December 1881; 'La femme en Égypte', *Le Citoyen*, 16 August 1882; 'Où commence l'anthropophagie? Où finit-elle?', *Le Prolétariat*, 24 October 1885. Perhaps the clearest examples are to be found in revolutionary discussions of Chinese workers. See for example 'La liberté du commerce et le système protectionniste, jugés au pont [sic] de vue ouvrier', in *L'Avant-garde*, 2 December 1878; 'Chinoiseries capitalistes', *Le Citoyen*, 4 October 1882; H. Brissac, 'Les chinois aux États-Unis', *Le Citoyen*, 11 April 1882; 'Encore les chinois', *Le Citoyen*, 12 April 1882.

¹⁷⁹ G. Dening, *Readings/Writings* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1998), p.158.

¹⁸⁰ See also H. Brissac, 'N'oublions pas le but', *Le Citoyen*, 7 October 1881; 'L'Internationale bourgeoise et l'internationale ouvrière', *Le Citoyen*, 13 March 1882; M. Talmeyr, 'Pour les Khroumirs', *L'Intransigeant*, 8 May 1881; *Le Prolétaire*, 14 May 1881; 'La moralité bourgeoise et le commerce d'opium', *L'Égalité*, 16 June 1880; C. Bouis, 'Marchands d'hommes', *L'Égalité*, 6 November 1882; P. Lafargue, 'Le Congo', *L'Égalité*, 25 November 1882; J. Allemane, 'Ce qui se passe', *Le Prolétariat*, 30 August 1884.

make a virtue of this marginality. Suggesting precisely this in one of the final issues of *Le Travailleur*, Reclus asked:

‘And we socialist combatants, what are we in the face of these great States, these enormous machines of war and destruction? Puny insects, crushing ourselves beneath the wheels of the wagon as we try to stop it! How the great victors must despise us, and laugh from time to time at our efforts! We know, though, that they are not always calm. What’s more, one has already been pushed to cries of terror. This is because all of their force can have no other possible result than suppression and destruction...*All free thought, all true sentiment, all spontaneous effort are enemies of the State.*’¹⁸¹

At the same time, this approach also contributed to Reclus’s attempts to render revolution more universally accessible (Chapter Two). By highlighting political and social systems currently in operation in other parts of the world as potential political models for a viable alternative society, revolutionaries directly contradicted the belief that all societies must pass through a unilinear model of historical development (whether in the form of French revolutionary history, the civilising mission, or historical materialism). Rather, the revolution should take the form of a ‘hydra of socialism’, manifesting itself in different guises according to circumstance, and its work could therefore be begun everywhere immediately.¹⁸² A transnational approach thus empowered small, marginal groups (such as revolutionaries during this period), enabling them to challenge the bases of government and society whilst not logically compromising other aspects of their thought.

¹⁸¹ ‘Et nous socialistes lutteurs, que sommes-nous en face de ces grands Etats, de ces énormes machines de guerre et de destruction? Pauvres insectes qui nous pressons sous la roué du char, comme pour en arrêter la marche en nous faisant écraser! Que les hauts triomphateurs doivent nous mépriser parfois et se rire de nos efforts! Et pourtant, nous le savons, ils ne sont pas toujours rassurés et plus d’un a déjà poussé des cris d’effroi. C’est que toute leur force n’a d’autre résultat possible que de supprimer et de détruire...*Toute pensée libre, tout sentiment vrai, tout effort spontané sont autant d’ennemis de l’Etat.*’ ‘Bulletin’, *Le Travailleur* 2:2 (February-March 1878), p.6. Emphasis mine.

¹⁸² ‘l’hydre du socialisme’. ‘L’Internationale et les Chinois’, *Le Travailleur* 2:3 (March-April 1878), p.30.

In *Readings/Writings*, Greg Dening observed of the twentieth-century academic:

‘We make ourselves open to discoveries that are global as well as regional. Our ears become open to many conversations around the world. We have had our imaginations empowered by what Frantz Fanon wrote in *The Wretched of the Earth*, or EP Thompson in *The Making of the English Working Class*, or Oscar Lewis in *The Children of Sanchez*. We have had our imaginations empowered by Subaltern Studies, by Gender Studies, by Edward Said’s *Orientalism*. We know that when we hear these voices, we don’t clone them. We don’t impose their understandings on our own like some template. No, we use them to enlarge our way of seeing. It is not our point to be faithful to them. We are in conversation with them. That makes our history global, if not in topic, then in discourse.’¹⁸³

While they may not have had access to Fanon, Thompson, or Said, historical actors in the nineteenth century operated in a global context in much the same ways as their twentieth-century successors. European imperial exploits and technological advances ensured not only that people traversed the globe on a scale never seen before, but also that those who did not were increasingly connected to the world outside of their own country.

Imperial and international concerns featured prominently in the thought of French revolutionaries at the beginning of the Third Republic. Although scholars have previously approached these themes almost exclusively through the writings of Communards deported to New Caledonia, they featured as much, if not more, in the thought of revolutionaries who remained in Europe. Whereas deportees overwhelmingly used their experiences in New Caledonia to comment on the state of the French republic and to reintegrate themselves into metropolitan political life, revolutionaries such as those at *La Bataille* and *Le Travailleur* offered more clearly elaborated ideas on empire and internationalism.

The divergent focus of these theories had radically different implications for revolutionary socialists’ wider bodies of thought. Whereas *La Bataille*’s adoption of a conventionally republican imperialism highlighted the limits of their universalist discourse, *Le Travailleur*’s advocacy of transnational affinities rather than imperial expansion logically cohered with and reinforced their ideas on social organisation and

¹⁸³ Dening, *Readings/Writings*, p.216. See also G. Pandey, *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.92.

international solidarity, indicating that they were committed to finding a solution beneficial to workers not only in Europe but the world over. Situating revolutionary thought (indeed all thought) within these contexts is thus crucial to attaining a proper understanding of it in all its complexities. Firstly because revolutionaries saw themselves as operating within contexts considerably broader than the borders of the West, but second and more importantly because their interactions with the wider world served to highlight the limits and possibilities of crucial ideas such as solidarity and fraternity that from within a purely Western context appeared universal.

It is possible to locate revolutionaries during this period within wider traditions of thought on empire. *La Bataille*, with its concern for the French State and its eagerness to bring what it perceived to be French values to the rest of the world, could be easily situated with the tradition of nineteenth-century liberal imperialist thought identified by the likes of Uday Mehta and Jennifer Pitts.¹⁸⁴ *Le Travailleur* and to an extent the deportees, on the other hand, could be seen as an early example of Leela Gandhi's 'politics of friendship', in which select European citizens abnegated the privileges accorded to them by their nationality in favour of a radical solidarity with colonised subjects, and in doing so opened up a space for anticolonialism in metropolitan intellectual and political life.¹⁸⁵

Yet we must also be careful with such associations. Whilst revolutionaries engaged extensively with the imperial experience, whether through deportation or through coverage of international issues, the concept of 'imperialism' itself remained vague in their thought. Certainly, as Stoler has suggested, the idea that historical actors either did not think about colonies or should have opposed them is a false antithesis.¹⁸⁶ In fact, this chapter casts doubt upon the supposed European 'certainty' regarding empire in the period of high imperialism. None of the revolutionaries examined here had a clearly defined or delineated theory of empire. For the deportees, colonial examples provided a way to reflect on the republic, *La Bataille* remained primarily concerned with the fate of the French worker, and even in *Le Travailleur*, imperialism was subsumed by the larger issue of transnational solidarity – which was not necessarily anticolonial.

¹⁸⁴ U.S. Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Pitts, *A Turn to Empire*; Mantena, *Alibis of Empire*.

¹⁸⁵ L. Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

¹⁸⁶ Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, pp.248-249. See also A.L. Stoler and F. Cooper, 'Between metropole and colony: rethinking a research agenda', in F. Cooper and A.L. Stoler (eds.), *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 1-56, at p.36.

Indeed, this tendency can be glimpsed in many socialist movements well into the twentieth century. Perhaps most notably Leninism, in which colonialism was approached exclusively through the concept of economic imperialism, in other words as a form of monopoly. For revolutionaries, 'empire' was not a discrete category of thought. While empire was ever-present in their thought, it was rarely the sole object of it. Rather, it was inseparable from other concerns, both domestic and global.

The study of empire and internationalism, then, is both more and less than it has often been depicted as. Empire was at once intertwined with and absent from revolutionary ideas during the 1870s and early 1880s. Awareness of the ways in which Europeans in this period approached and interacted with the wider world is surely essential for understanding both the historical development and the limits and possibilities of such thought, and this has long been realised by historians working on empire. At the same time, however, the very ambiguity and imbrication of ideas on empire highlights limitations to the utility of 'empire' and 'the colonial' as categories of analysis, and of their ability to capture the complexities of international and transnational thought. In the case of French revolutionaries in the early Third Republic, attempts to locate imperialism as either a central or a peripheral concern fail to elaborate the breadth of their engagement with questions concerning the wider world. International and transnational thought during this period transcended imperial frameworks. Though imperialism pervaded every area of revolutionary socialist thought, it cannot be isolated from broader concerns as they attempted to locate the limits of their struggle within local, national, and global contexts.

Conclusion

In late September 1873, an agent by the name of Laurentin filed a report to the Parisian Préfecture de Police. Based on his observance and infiltration of revolutionary circles, he provided a wide-ranging account of the movement, activities, and state of mind of the French exiles that had evaded arrest and settled in Britain following the fall of the Commune. The police, he concluded, had little cause for concern:

‘time and exile have already done their work...conflicts of interest, the dispersion of individuals, and the need to secure daily bread have all contributed to the break up of the group. All that remains are a few isolated individuals and extremely small groups, who are consumed by gossip and theories.’¹

This observation is characteristic of attitudes towards the French revolutionary movement since the fall of the Commune in May 1871. Historians and political actors alike have overwhelmingly depicted the Commune as a definitive turning point in modern history that ripped apart decades-old political alliances, gave birth to modern socialism, and finally brought the French Revolution to a close.

Its participants and their ideas, meanwhile, have been relegated to the sidelines. Those fortunate enough to escape immediate death or arrest during the *Semaine Sanglante* found themselves depleted, defeated, and scattered to the corners of the globe. Their thought is assumed to have followed a similar trajectory. Revolutionaries hoping to remain politically relevant, historians have suggested, abandoned their previous ideas wholesale and gravitated towards a series of powerful prefabricated orthodoxies such as Marxian international socialism or more moderate French republicanism in the form of the radicals or the Opportunists. Yet even these revolutionaries, historians claim, enjoyed little success. Intellectually, they were derivative and often actively incapable;

¹ ‘le temps et l’exil ont déjà fait leur oeuvre...l’opposition des intérêts, la dispersion des individus, la nécessité de pourvoir au pain quotidien, tout cela a concouru à rompre le faisceau; il ne reste guère que des individualités isolées ou de très-petits groupes, qui épuisent leur conversations dans des commérages ou dans des théories.’ Intelligence report to the Préfecture de Police, 24 September 1873 (Paris). APP Ba428/1184. See also Intelligence report to the Préfecture de Police, 25 July 1873 (Geneva). APP Ba431/743; Intelligence report to the Préfecture de Police, 3 August 1877 (London). APP Ba429/2363; General report to the Préfecture de Police, 13 October 1877 (London). APP Ba429/2466; Intelligence report to the Préfecture de Police, 4 October 1878 (Paris). APP Ba430/3133.

misinterpreting the ideas of more sophisticated theorists such as Marx and Blanqui, while politically they were consumed by damaging factional infighting that alienated both current and potential supporters. These were years of stagnation and disarray, suspended between and dominated by the events of 1870-71 and 1889.

As this thesis has demonstrated, this was not the case. The Paris Commune did not represent a significant break, and the French revolutionary movement did not collapse in the wake of its defeat. Rather than being overwhelmed by the new situations that they found themselves in, revolutionaries accepted and even embraced them. Whether exile and poverty in Europe and North America or imprisonment and deportation to New Caledonia, revolutionaries attempted to turn their circumstances to their advantage, establishing new relationships and unexpected alliances with a variety of international revolutionaries and radicals. In making these new connections, revolutionaries did not abandon their old ideas or submit to new orthodoxies as has been assumed. Rather, through a creative use of new ideas and the intensive redefinition of familiar concepts, they aimed to reconstruct a French revolutionary movement that was at once unified, autonomous, and politically viable. It was intellectual flexibility rather than orthodoxy or tradition that ensured the continued relevance of French revolutionaries and revolution in the years that immediately followed the fall of the Commune.

These ideas and this approach to revolutionary thought were reflective of the time in which they were expressed, and must remain situated within this context. By the late 1880s the flexible, collaborative approach that characterised revolutionary ideas and associations in the immediate post-Commune years had all but disappeared. This was the result not of a single large event, but of a constellation of more minor occurrences in the mid-1880s. Following Marx's death in 1883, Engels's promotion of a more systematic, doctrinaire Marxism encouraged French socialists to approach Marx's ideas as an orthodoxy to be owned or disowned rather than a language to be adopted and adapted. Events such as Olivier Pain's death (possibly at the hands of British agents) in Sudan in 1885 led many revolutionaries to adopt a more bellicose, nationalistic approach towards the wider world and international relations, while revolutionary candidates' poor showing in the 1885 elections sent many in the direction of more populist (and often prejudiced) philosophies. Boulanger, Dreyfus, and the establishment of the Second International encouraged revolutionaries to further solidify these intellectual shifts, yet the shifts themselves had been put in motion several years before 1889.

The fact that many of the ideas of this period were quickly replaced does not, however, mean that they were entirely unsuccessful or that these years were historically unimportant. Indeed, far from it. It was in the 1870s and early 1880s, of course, that many of the most influential actors in *fin-de-siècle* French left circles such as Paul Lafargue and Jean Allemane did their political apprenticeship. Additionally and more importantly, as Marx's commitment to properly engaging with French socialists, the abundant police reports cataloguing their every move, and the Opportunists' efforts to marginalise them suggest, these revolutionaries were also taken seriously in the post-Commune period itself. In terms of French revolutionary thought these years were more than simply a stepping-stone or a holding period. Both nationally and internationally, revolutionaries continued to operate at the centre of political events, and in order to understand this period we must have a proper understanding of their thought. Indeed, the fact that this flexible intellectual approach faded should also be seen a sign of its success: a sign that by 1885 activists had managed to re-establish an acceptable position for themselves in both French public life and international revolutionary circles.

The Commune's surviving participants and its supporters were not disillusioned or crushed by the events of 1871. The majority were not surprised that the Commune was defeated, and as such they did consider its defeat a significant blow to their ideas. Far from attempting to forget about the Commune, revolutionaries embraced it, publishing abundant memoirs and commemorative pieces that interpreted 1871 in a variety of ways. In terms of French politics, revolutionaries' constant references to the events of 1871 put both Moral Order and many republican politicians in the hot seat and in doing so, sought to discredit the widespread portrayal of both the Communards and revolution as forces external to modern civilisation. Revolutionaries' emphasis upon the importance of eyewitness testimony, meanwhile, acted as a direct challenge to Marx's attempts to coopt the Commune. Improbably, revolutionaries managed to transform their defeat into an opportunity, simultaneously using its memory to navigate the new circumstances in which they found themselves and to establish a foundation upon which to rebuild the idea a unified French revolutionary movement.

Activists' attempts to reestablish the legitimacy of such an idea, however, were built upon more than simply the memory of revolutions past. Using a variety of different languages and temporalities, activists from across the revolutionary movement attempted to separate revolution the concept from the history of the French Revolution and redefine it in broad, expansive terms. In an effort to prove its continued relevance,

they created an alternative French historical genealogy for revolution and sought (unsuccessfully) to expand its national support by recasting it in religious terms. Finally, using Reclus's definition of evolution, they returned to older definitions of revolution as an unstoppable force of nature in an effort to create a unified revolutionary identity prepared for the practice of everyday life and politics.

While in practice the revolutionary movement may have remained a small, largely urban phenomenon, these ideas demonstrate that revolutionaries during this period did not simply fade into anachronism. They were not content to sit upon their laurels, and they did not jealously guard the epithet of revolutionary. Rather, they continued to conceive of revolution as an active and viable political concept, and went to great measures to ensure that it remained so in the changed political, social, and cultural circumstances of early Third Republic France.

Neither, despite the clear presence of factions bearing names such as 'Marxist', were revolutionaries irreparably divided along ideological lines. French activists did not simply adopt a pet theorist – whether Marx, Bakunin, or Proudhon – and draw exclusively and relentlessly upon their ideas. Rather, socialists across the revolutionary movement in this period utilised a broad array of theorists and ideas in order to create effective solutions to the pressing social problems they considered contemporary France to be facing. Neither Marx nor his thought, for example, was or was even considered to be the exclusive intellectual property of French Marxists like Guesde and Lafargue.

This was not, however, a case of simple importation. In using and promoting their connections to Marx, French socialists did not introduce a complete and universally applicable 'Marxist doctrine' into France. As the French translation and subsequent abridgement of the first volume of *Das Kapital* suggest, Marx himself went to considerable efforts to create a specific 'French Marx' and adjust his ideas and language to what he thought a French audience might like to hear. French revolutionaries were thus not divided along hard ideological lines, for no intellectual orthodoxies existed.

Despite their heavy attention to national politics and organisations such as the IWA, French revolutionaries and their ideas demonstrably did not remain confined to Europe and the West. This period was marked by the highly publicised deportation of 4500 ex-Communards to New Caledonia as well as the rise of a new kind of imperialism, and the effects of both were visible in revolutionary thought. In fact imperial, colonial, and international concerns assumed a position of great importance in their thought during the the 1870s and early 1880s, becoming one of the principal channels through

which revolutionaries criticised both the French State, and towards the end of the period, the Opportunist government.

The success of these efforts was mixed. Reclus's and the deportees' uses of empire and internationalism were largely consistent with their wider bodies of thought, and it thus served to expand the reach and legitimacy of their declarations in favour of central revolutionary concepts such as solidarity and universal equality. For the likes of Lissagaray and *La Bataille*, on the other hand, the preoccupation with imperialism and the European worker exposed limits to their supposedly universal thought that had not been visible in purely French, European, and Western contexts.

This study, however, reveals more than simply the internal mechanics of French revolutionary thought. Through the elaboration and exploration of their flexible intellectual approach, it becomes clear that the 1870s and early 1880s were in fact a creative period for left politics more generally. As our explorations of revolution and Marxism made clear, intellectual flexibility was not restricted to revolutionaries in the early stages of their career. In the last years of their lives, both Blanqui and Marx continued to seek out new ideas and new ways to adapt their own thought in the wake of the Commune.

Neither was it only the French revolutionary movement that thought in this way. Rather, Marx's flexible approach towards the translation of his work and socialists' use of his ideas as an international language suggest that the structure of the international socialist movement as a whole was more collaborative and less clearly defined than has previously been thought. Historians must in turn broaden their own approach to these questions. In order to fully understand why ideas such as Marxism spread, we must supplement the social and organisational histories of international socialism with attentive studies of its ideas, its texts, and their dissemination.

If the story of French revolutionaries within the international socialist movement was one of flexibility and collaboration, the same could also be said of French politics. The period after the fall of the Commune has often been seen as one in which defeated revolutionaries either integrated into more mainstream republican parties or separated themselves entirely from the Republic.² This, however, was not the case. As we have

² B.H. Moss, *The Origins of the French Labor Movement 1830-1914: The Socialism of Skilled Workers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p.70; D. Stafford, *From Anarchism to Reformism: A Study of the Political Activities of Paul Brousse within the First International and the French Socialist Movement 1870-90* (London: Cox & Wyman, 1971), p.251; M.P. Johnson, *The Paradise of Association: Political Culture and Popular Organisations in the Paris Commune of 1871* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996), p.284; A. Dowdall, 'Narrating *la Semaine Sanglante*, 1871-1880'

seen, under the Second Empire radicals, republicans, and revolutionaries often worked closely together, and these ties did not dissolve with the Commune.³ Many revolutionaries including Arnould and Michel retained close ties with radicals such as Clemenceau.⁴ Michel furthermore corresponded prolifically with Victor Hugo who also, along with Edmond and Juliette Adam, financed Rochefort's sensational escape from New Caledonia in 1874.⁵

These physical connections were reflected in their ideas. Revolutionaries, as has been demonstrated throughout this thesis, did not simply abandon their old ideas with the fall of the Commune. In theory, if not in practice, this meant that revolutionaries often continued to advocate many of the same ideals and policies (for instance secular education and republican government) as the radicals and the Opportunists. Although revolutionaries may have been excluded from the Republic for much of this this period, they were not entirely cut off from it, either physically or intellectually. In fact, while they certainly mistrusted French republican politicians and made this abundantly clear, on many issues they did not disagree with them. This period, then, was a more complicated story than one of increasingly confident and secure moderate republicanism, however complex that was. Revolutionary politics and positions did not disappear in 1871 and reappear only in 1889. Rather, both revolution and revolutionaries continued to occupy a role in French public life through the 1870s and 1880s as well.

It is perhaps this that explains revolutionaries' lack of theoretical engagement with republicanism during this period. Despite their desire to preserve both their historical identity and a place for revolutionary opposition in French public and political life, activists during this period did not wish to bring down the Third Republic or even to offer a theoretical alternative to it. The advent of a real republic based on universal

(unpublished MPhil dissertation, University of Cambridge, 2010), p.64. Hutton and Vincent similarly suggest that revolutionaries only began to take the Republic and French politics seriously again in the late 1880. See P.H. Hutton, 'The role of the Blanquist party in left-wing politics in France, 1879-90', *Journal of Modern History* 46 (June 1974), 277-295, at p.278; K.S. Vincent, *Between Marxism and Anarchism: Benoît Malon and French Reformist Socialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p.136.

³ P. Nord, *The Republican Moment: Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), p.247. For a delineation of the more complicated political landscape during the Commune itself, see R. Tombs, *Paris, bivouac des révolutions: la Commune de 1871* (trans.) J. Chatroussat (Paris: Éditions Libertalia, 2014. First published in English, 1999), p.296.

⁴ Intelligence report to the Préfecture de Police, 5 December 1879 (Geneva). APP Ba430/3263-64. Exiles also associated with more mainstream British radicals in London. See for example 'Les réfugiés à Londres' (1876). APP Ba429/1354.

⁵ For Michel's correspondence with Hugo, see L. Michel, *Je vous écris de ma nuit: correspondance générale – 1850-1904* (Paris: Les Éditions de Paris, 1999).

suffrage, secular education, and the marginalisation of the power of the Church without a domineering executive was a real achievement, and revolutionaries recognised it as such.

Their frequent criticisms of the Opportunists derived not from total opposition, but from revolutionaries' belief that they often failed to live up to their promises and ideals. Revolutionaries, in other words, were not angry with more mainstream republicans, but merely disappointed, and likewise they did not want to distance themselves from the Republic; they wanted to be a part of it.⁶ Indeed, as we have seen, major theoretical disagreements, such as those over the significance of 1789 and deportation, arose only when revolutionaries felt that they were being excluded. Revolutionaries to a large extent saw themselves as a pressure group operating from within the theoretical boundaries of the Third Republic, rather than a direct practical or intellectual alternative to it.

In an effort to recover the Communards from the shadow of the modern revolutionary tradition and reconstitute them as historical actors with agency and ideas, this study has focused primarily on the years that immediately followed the Commune's fall. It has demonstrated that the production and dissemination of French revolutionary thought during this period was a complex process in which grandes like Marx and Blanqui collaborated equally with anonymous pamphleteers, experimenting with new ideas and approaches, and attempted (with varied success) to alter their arguments to fit a variety of circumstances, rather than imposing or insisting upon intellectual orthodoxies. The French revolutionaries that supposedly solidified the revolutionary tradition, in other words, were not interested in tradition. This study's findings thus also have broader implications for our understanding of the revolutionary tradition itself. They highlight potentially fruitful avenues for further study regarding the nature of its other supposed adherents' commitment to it, and indeed whether it is productive to term it a 'political tradition' at all.

As this study has demonstrated, for French revolutionaries the decade that followed the fall of the Commune was a period of particular intellectual creativity. This was generated in large part by the new connections and associations that they made in exile. Ex-Communards in London have received fairly sustained attention, and this study has sought to elaborate the connections that deportees made in New Caledonia

⁶ See for example M. Talmeyr, 'L'extrême gauche', *L'Intransigeant* (Paris), 4 November 1881.

and the various ideas that resulted from them.⁷ A comprehensive treatment of the ideas and interactions of the exile community in Geneva – particularly the collaborations between French and Russian revolutionaries – would thus be especially useful.

Several years after the spy Laurentin filed his report on the dissolution of the London exiles, another missive to the Préfecture noted that Prosper-Olivier Lissagaray had recently addressed a similar subject. Lissagaray noted the intellectual differences within the revolutionary movement, but considered an open, experimental approach to ideas to be a benefit, rather than a disadvantage:

‘we do not represent a particular school or theory. We hope for the development of all theories and all schools, for we are convinced that it is from diverse investigations [différentes recherches] that everyone may discern the most rational principles for attaining...Human Equality.’⁸

The 1870s and 1880s were not years of introversion, stagnation, or defeatism in French revolutionary thinking, but of creativity and flexibility. This intellectual flexibility, moreover, was not a weakness, but revolutionaries’ great strength. The period that immediately followed the defeat of France’s last nineteenth-century revolution was one of deparochialisation in which revolutionaries’ vision (if not always their reach) expanded increasingly outwards. This took in the French countryside, European revolutionary organisations, and far-flung parts of the world in search of new ideas with which to reformulate their historical identity and reconstitute a French revolutionary movement that was at once able to accept its past, function in the present, and prepare for the future.

⁷ See for example, P.K. Martinez, ‘Paris Commune refugees in Britain, 1871-1880’ (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Sussex, 1981); T.C. Jones and R. Tombs, ‘The French left in exile: Quarante-huitards and Communards in London, 1848-80’, in D. Kelly and M. Cornick (eds.), *A History of the French in London: Liberty, Equality, Opportunity* (London: Institute of Historical Research, 2013).

⁸ ‘Groupés au hasard, nous ne représentons pas une école, une théorie particulière. Nous désirons le développement de toutes les théories, de toutes les écoles, persuadés que, dans les différentes recherches, chacun pourra discerner les principes les plus rationnels pour atteindre le but tracé à la Société: l’Égalité humaine.’ ‘Aux socialistes!’, April 1877 (London). APP Ba429/2203. See also B. Malon, *Le nouveau parti*, 2 vols., 4th edn (Paris: Derveaux, 1882), vol.2, p.79; P. Lafargue, ‘Le but du Parti ouvrier’, *L’Égalité* (Paris), 18 June 1882.

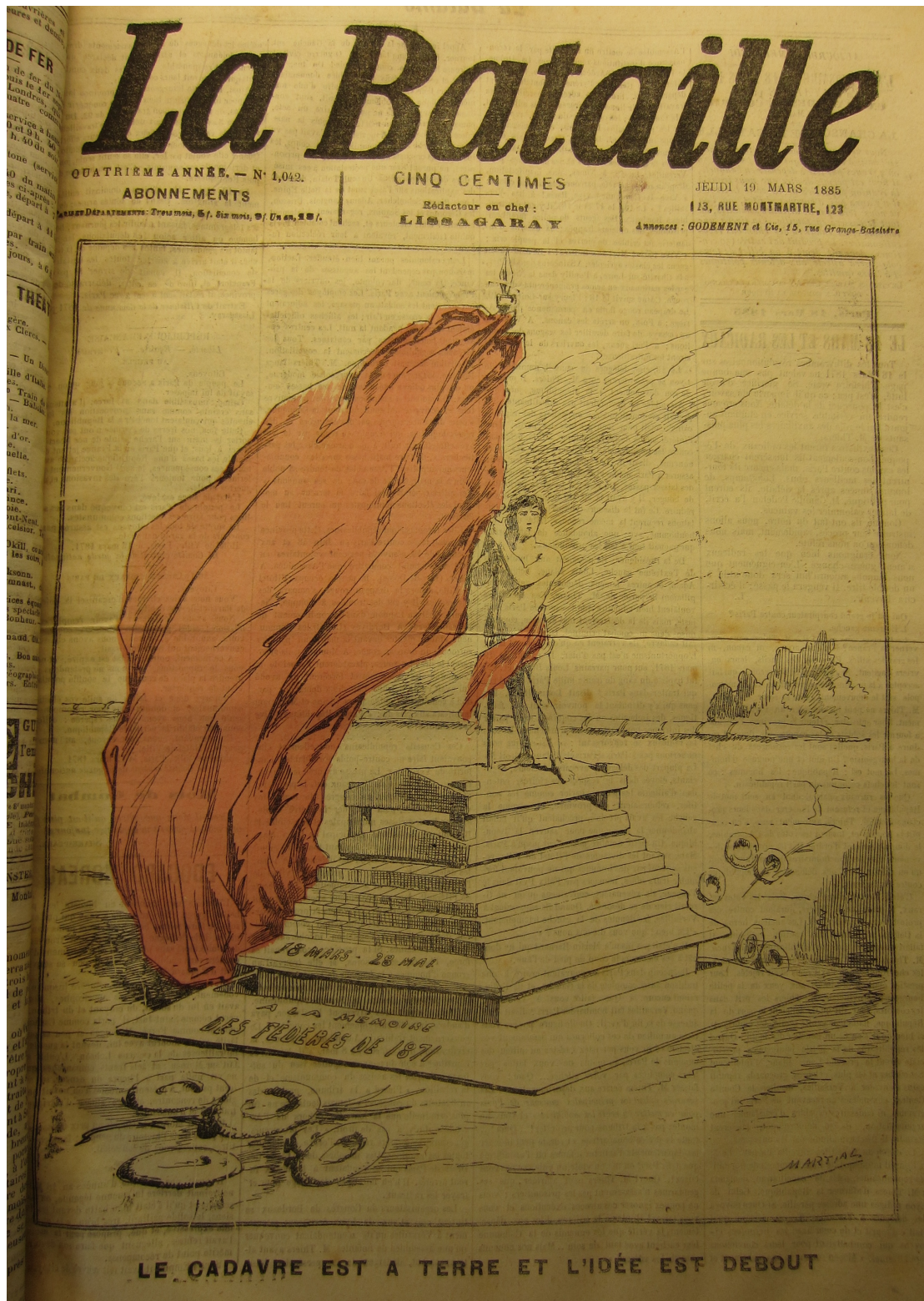


Image 1: Front page of *La Bataille* (Paris), 19 March 1885.

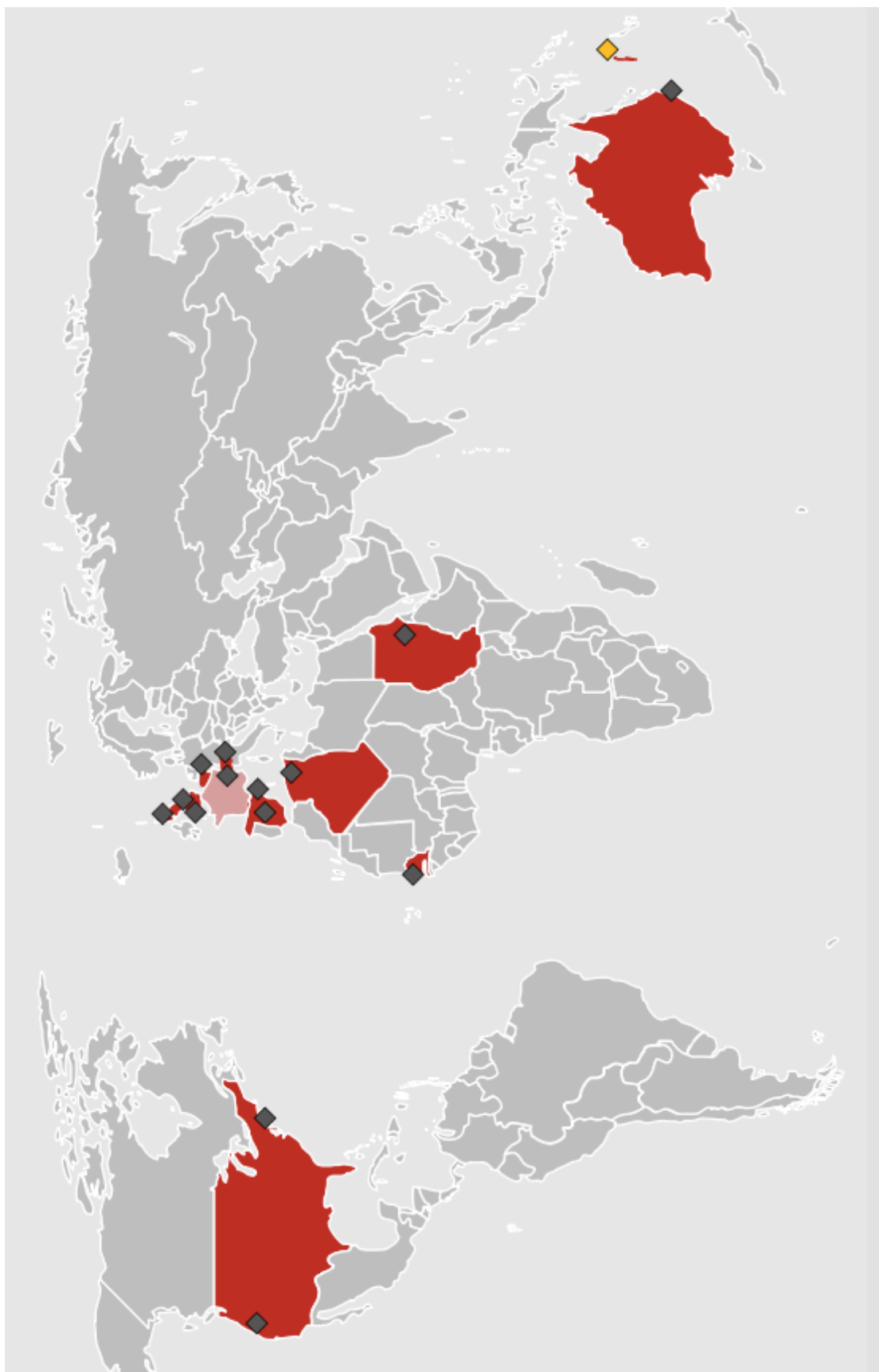


Image 2: Selected locations of exiled and deported Communards, 1871-1885.



LES INCENDIAIRES. — Les pétroleuses et leurs complices. — (Dessin de M. LIX.)

Image 3: *Pétroleuses* depicted in *Le Monde illustré* (Paris), 3 June 1871.

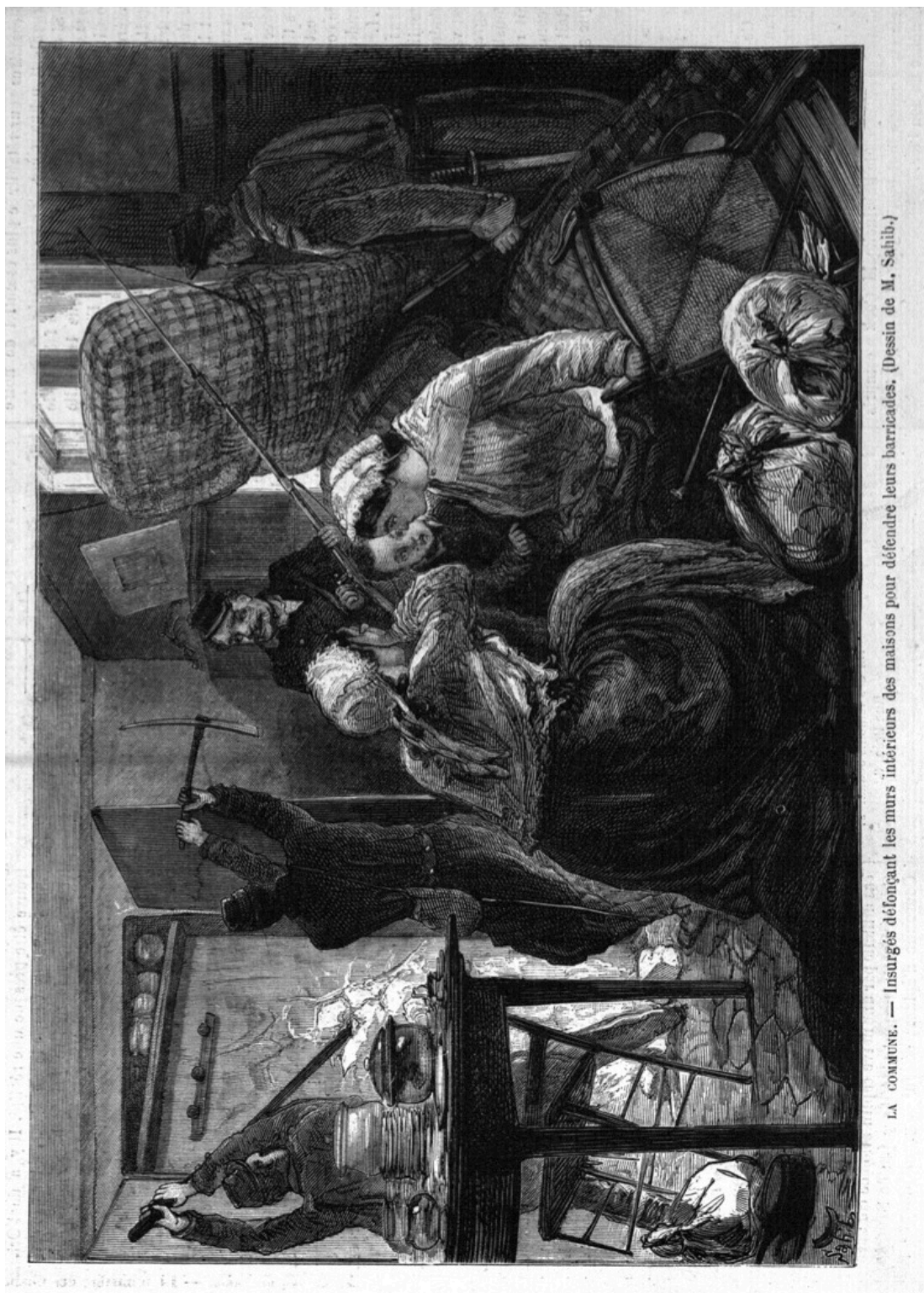


Image 4: Communards depicted destroying the fabric of the city. *Le Monde illustré*, 24 June 1871.

L'INSTRUCTION GRATUITE ET OBLIGATRUIE, par A. HUMBERT



Image 5: 'Pétition des naturels de Purgerot', *Le Sifflet* (Paris), 11 February 1872.



Image 6: Water tower constructed by Communard deportees on Île des Pins, New Caledonia. Photograph courtesy of Robert Tombs.

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