# The Commune, "Today"

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# The Commune, "Today"

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*Rouge œillet*
. . .
*Aujourd'hui, va fleurir dans l'ombre*
*Des noires et tristes prisons.*
*Va fleurir près du captif sombre*
*Et dis-lui bien*
*. . . que par le temps rapide*
*Tout appartient à l'avenir . . .*
—Louise Michel

*Tout ça n'empêche pas*
*Nicolas*
*Que la Commune n'est pas morte !*
—Eugène Pottier

Let us begin this special issue of *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* with two proclamations from opposite sides of the barricade, contradictory in the fullest sense of the term, and which bookend the events that transpired in Paris in the spring of 1871. The first can be found on the front page of *Le Cri du peuple*, the revolutionary journal founded by Jules Vallès in February of 1871. The second, attributed to an especially reviled figure of political history for the European left, Patrice de MacMahon,[1] is culled from a military proclamation posted up and addressed to the "inhabitants" of Paris at the end of May, as though in a ghoulish kind of retort to the posters proclaiming the Commune's existence which had blossomed on walls throughout the city exactly three months earlier.

Shortly after the *Comité central* announced the creation of the Commune to the citizens of Paris—*Citoyens, Aujourd'hui [ . . . ] Paris saluait, acclamait sa révolution ; Paris ouvrait à une page blanche le livre de l'histoire et y inscrivit son nom puissant . . .*—[2] Vallès would write the following in the headline chronicle of his journal on 28 and 30 March 1871, commemorating the events of the previous four days and looking forward to the new historic day which had appeared to dawn in the revolutionary city:

> Quelle journée! [ . . . ] Ô grand Paris! [ . . . ] Embrasse-moi, camarade, qui as, comme moi, les cheveux gris! Et toi, marmot, qui joues aux billes derrière les barricades, viens que je t'embrasse aussi!
> Le 18 mars te l'a sauvé belle, gamin! Tu pouvais, comme nous, grandir dans le brouillard, patauger dans la boue, rouler dans le sang, crever de faim [ . . . ]. C'est fini! [ . . . ] Fils des désespérés, tu seras un homme libre.
> [ . . . ]
> C'est aujourd'hui la fête nuptiale de l'idée et de la République. La Commune est proclamée.[3]

On 28 March—*. . . par un clair soleil rappelant l'aube du 18 mars . . . pas de discours, un immense cri, un seul, Vive la Commune!*—the newly elected members of the Paris Commune took seat in the Hôtel de Ville de Paris, symbolic site of revolutionary triumph *par excellence* in Paris since the 1830 revolution which finally confided the *ancien régime* to the proverbial dustbin of history, its stately *renaissant* frame now coiffed with *un immense drapeau rouge* as the Commune held its first session.[4] On 28 May, however, one would find the following terse statement, plastered throughout the city in whose streets the Commune came to its infamously vicious close, drowned in its own blood by the forces of "order":

> Habitants de Paris:
> . . .
> Aujourd'hui, la lutte est terminée. L'ordre, le travail, la sécurité vont renaître.[5]

The question that provided the impetus for the present volume marking the 150th anniversary of the Paris Commune was, in appearance, a relatively simple one. It could even be understood as having to do with what we make not only of the deictics in these declarations—that conflicting set of *aujourd'hui*, the one heralding the hope of collective emancipation and the realization of a principle of 'equaliberty' (Balibar), the other appealing to the authority of "law and order" and the brutal "taking back" of cities overrun by a phantasmagoric mob of "ensauvagés" (Macron)—[6] but also what we make of the implicit kinds of futures that they conjure up or, as the case may be, conjure away.

> *Aujourd'hui* le livre de l'histoire est ouvert . . . C'est *aujourd'hui* la fête nuptiale de l'idée et de la République . . . *Aujourd'hui*, la lutte est terminée . . .

More precisely, the question that has guided this volume from conception to culmination is the following: what kind of ideas, horizons, or caveats does the Commune name for us today, one hundred and fifty years after the events which transpired in Paris in the spring of 1871? Or, to beg the question slightly less shamelessly: *does* the Commune mean anything, does it withhold any kind of lesson for us today? Is it (still) a blank page in the book of history? The materiality of an idea or a desire—namely that of emancipatory projects, or an egalitarian, participatory politics whose experimental form, spirit, and legacy seems to stretch throughout the last century into ours: from October 1917,[7] Shanghai in 1967,[8] Paris in '68,[9] Zuccotti Park and Tahrir Square in 2011,[10] la Place de la République in 2015, the ZAD,[11] or the Gilets jaunes movements of 2018-2019,[12] the uprisings in Hong Kong in 2019 and the massive, transnational mobilizations of the Black Lives Matter movement sparked by the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis in the summer of 2020? Is it, in sum, a shockwave rippling through history, or the end of the line? Less enigma of the future, as Marx might put it, than poetry of the past or epic failure. *Une défaite sans avenir* ("Les Corbeaux"), a disconsolate *réalité rugueuse à étreindre* ("Adieu"), to take two echoes from Arthur Rimbaud (a poet whose own literary destiny found itself entangled in complex but ultimately decisive ways with that of the Commune).[13]

The stakes of this special issue of *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* thus do not solely consist in grappling with the question of what the Paris Commune *was* culturally, politically, and historically. Each contributor to the present volume, while doing invaluable scholarly work to add historiographical, cultural, and theoretical light to this latter question, has also sought in their own methodological manner to engage with the enduring question of what the Commune *is*, today: with reevaluating its pertinence for our own time and the claims it may have not only on the scholarship we produce but, more urgently perhaps, on the kind of worlds we find ourselves in at present. Is our own increasingly out-of-joint *aujourd'hui*,[14] the established "order" of things in the world in which we live and labor as we think through the significance of the Commune, *today*, one of continuity? Or is the very idea outlandishly anachronistic? Unhinged in its own right and way.

Consider, however, just some of the following, somewhat numbing statistics on wealth and inequality today as we consider the ways in which that last question might resonate (or not) with the situation of the Commune in 1871. In 1847, 5% of the population in France controlled 75.8% of all available wealth and by the time of the Commune, 60% of the French population transmitted

zero intergenerational wealth.[15] Today, that latter figure in France is only 10% lower, and by 2017 in the United States, a *literal* 1% of the population had appropriated 40% of all available wealth (along with 97% of all income growth in the aftermath of 2008 global financial crisis), while the top 20% had appropriated a shocking *90%* of available wealth (representing a 5% uptick in the relation between the accumulation of wealth, social power and inequality from 2012 alone).[16] On a broader scale, both in terms of the temporality and spatiality of inequality under modernity, Thomas Piketty's recent study of extreme global inequality from the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries documents in exacting detail how the poorest half of the global population has never had at any point access to more than 5% of all the world's wealth. 50% of all available wealth is effectively currently concentrated in the hands of .07% of the global population. Stated somewhat more starkly: less than 1% of everyone alive in the world has 17 times as much wealth as half of the global population—half of all human beings on earth—*combined*.[17]

What we are talking about when we talk about inequality, in other words, is not merely an intensifying trend. It is of course *also* that, as such statistics bear painfully out. Yet referring to a social-economic crisis of inequality of this magnitude, one currently thrusting democratic polities across the globe into related *political* crises, as a "trend" is unusually cruel in addition to misleading: for what confronts us is no impersonal or natural phenomenon—a kind of economic El Niño, if you will—but poverty so extreme, systemic and deliberately organized that it is doubtful even our neolithic ancestors might envy the state of the world we find ourselves in today, much less those of 1871.[18] The abyss that we plunge our gaze into when contemplating statistics such as these is that of a dangerous chasm separating those who have—as Oscar Wilde once remarked—more money than they either need or know what to do with from everyone else who has been, or is at risk of being, swallowed up by the established, seemingly irresistible order of hopeless things on what Mike Davis called, in a lugubriously apt metaphor, a "planet of slums."[19]

## ON DOING THE (IM)POSSIBLE

One hundred and fifty years later, the legacy of the Paris Commune persists in interpellating us as a model, a horizon, and perhaps an image of hope for an alternative to the on-going emergencies of everyday life in the so-called aftermath of history—in the era of triumphant neoliberalism, lost futures, and *no* alternatives.[20] Just shy of two decades into the dawn of a new millennium, we find ourselves in what it is no exaggeration to call, with Brecht, "truly dark times" (*Wirklich, ich lebe in finsteren Zeiten! . . . Der Lachende / Hat die furchtbare Nachricht / Nur noch nicht empfagen*).[21] What remains of the post-

War geopolitical consensus in the West finds itself strained to a breaking point; political institutions and the civil apparatuses of liberal democracies find themselves thrust into crises of legitimacy as they increasingly resemble regimes of oligarchic *governance* accountable only to powerful and entrenched private interests; and collective discourses and sites of identity are increasingly reduced to the crass, zero-sum horrors of ethno-nationalism. Little wonder that the world we find ourselves in today—slumping from one transnational humanitarian and political crisis to another, of ecological catastrophes roiling across the first, third, and first-third worlds, and with that global gap yawning ever more spectacularly between the 1% and *les damnés de la terre* (Pottier, Fanon)— little wonder that *this* world urgently calls on us to imagine and desire a *different* world. Little wonder that the Paris Commune, as critical image of what thinking those other worlds entails, remains untimely in its enduring, unsettling timeliness; a past which, politically and symbolically, refuses to pass. And it was above all out of a desire to sound out further the implications of this enduring refusal to "pass on," the implications of our entanglement with this story's potential meaning(s) *today*, that we have brought together the following essays from fields of inquiry as varied, diverse and intersectional as philosophy,[22] history,[23] cultural studies,[24] visual studies and art history,[25] literary criticism,[26] radical transnational historiographies,[27] contemporary sociology,[28] and art.[29] For at stake in the matter of the Commune—in the question of *why* the Commune continues to matter to people across the globe today—is perhaps a larger question, one that we could frame thus: are we still part of a larger story, one yet to have played out?[30] Does the past still matter to us, or is it a thing with no fundamental claim on anything or anyone, be it political, ethical or, for that matter, historical? History: a mere reminder that a story is just a story, one to be fleetingly trotted out on important anniversaries, but which only serves to remind us that, in the end, all the grand narratives are dead (as a philosopher once defiantly put it).

As a historical episode, the Commune figures as a sort of highly localized political and historical parenthesis, one more or less coherently emerging from the breakdowns of national and local order of the *Année terrible* and lasting all of 73 brief days. But it is possible, as the social historian and theorist Henri Lefebvre once remarked, that events which appear to those of us who benefit from the often-overweening hindsight of posterity as monumental failures can also be those which contain the richest lessons for those living in their aftermath.[31] We can think of such failures in history—these subjugated (counter-)narratives from the past, amongst which one is tempted objectively (albeit not *politically*, as we shall see further on in this volume) to include the Commune—as something like historical splinters in the grain of the story we tell ourselves about the present, or dominant, order of things: shards of a resistant difference sticking out as soon as one rubs that story against the grain. A painful reminder that the stories we

tell ourselves about the systematicity of the present, the irresistible *necessity* of how things shook out or led up to where we are today (the contexts, conditions, or circumstances in which a historical chain of causality putatively played out), is not a smooth one, but rather one that contains a bewildering, aching number of lost worlds and potential futures. If we were to try to tease out a little further the point Lefebvre made *à propos* of the Commune at its centenary, we might state things this way: the meaning (or lesson) of certain failures, defeats, losses or losers may ultimately reside in the way in which, as a kind of root dialectical proposition, they inevitably defy the containment strategies that power or discourse or hegemony or ideology (or what-have-you) seeks to put around them. For to what do they point if not to the fact that *there are alternatives*?[32] Of what do such remnants of "lost futures"[33] remind us if not the historical fact that those same political-historical powers, discourses, forms or practices, however irresistible they may appear to us *today*, can and indeed do break down. Things break down and, however ephemerally, wither away, leaving openings and spaces for new actors and ideas to emerge, for experimental forms of doing and being together, in common. This, doubtless, is one way of understanding what Lefebvre means when he refers to the Commune as the "ébauche" of an experience/experimentation.[34] Which experience, experiment or *ébauche*? That of what he calls, following the philosopher Ernst Bloch, the "concrete utopia" of an event whose reverberations bounce off the twentieth century and into our own present, as numerous contributions to the present volume demonstrate.[35] On the morning of March 18, 1871, the people of Paris take steps into uncharted territory and *begin* to explore new and intensively creative ways of doing politics, new modes of sociability and relations to power, education, work, wealth, and leisure, new forms of infrastructure and solidarities that surpass or circumvented the form of the state — new theories and possibilities of what it could mean to live differently. *Pace* Marx,[36] it is less the heavens than the realm of ideas which they take by storm. In so doing, Lefebvre suggests, they discover the possibilities opened up by the impossible itself. This, perhaps, is one of the richest lessons that the Commune holds in store: namely, the impossible happens.

> L'important, c'est qu'à cette heure, la vie quotidienne est brisée. Quelque chose de neuf surgit ; l'effervescence, la création populaire. Quelques heures plus tard, ce n'est pas seulement l'armée et la police qui sont désintégrées, c'est l'État entier. Il n'y a plus d'État. L'appareil d'État est décomposé. [ . . . ] En 1871, le gouvernement a été chassé de Paris, il a fui, et l'appareil d'État s'est décomposé. [ . . . ] Et pendant ce temps-là, le peuple cherche les modalités d'une vie différente, d'une pratique sociale autre, échappant aux contraintes, produisant librement – dans la liberté découverte – ses formes. *C'est l'exploration d'une façon de vivre qui commence dans les*

*semaines de la Commune*. C'est une utopie, mais une utopie concrète, qui découvre le possible et l'impossible, qui s'efforce d'atteindre l'impossible et qui, dans cet effort, *réalise certains [impossibles]*. C'est seulement au cours du processus révolutionnaire qu'on voit ce qui est impossible et ce qui est possible.[37]

It is only in the process of collectively trying out the impossible and the unimaginable, that we discern what is or isn't possible. Ultimately, Lefebvre's analysis throughout this essay of what he refers to as the Commune's "spontaneity" is not without calling to mind the conceptual contours of something that the philosopher Alain Badiou puts under the register of the "event". An event, for the latter, is that which, exceeding its own account or recountability (it cannot be reduced, as Lefebvre too suggests, to a calculus of probabilities based on contexts, causalities or social-historical and political conditions), manages to create, in "des circonstances exceptionnelles [ . . . ] à grande échelle pour les peuples des *possibilités inédites*."[38] An event brings into existence an "inexistent,"[39] that is to say, a dynamic or potentiality which both is and is not deducible from the logic of a given situation, and whose consequence is to irreducibly change that situation, and haunts the logic of that *world* qua possibility, from that point on: *c'est une apparition qui change les normes de l'apparaitre: l'apparition du peuple, de l'égalité, de l'émancipation politique, de la vraie vie*. In short, an event creates the possible, even as it may invariably fail to fulfill its potential promise.[40] It opens up the possibility of something like an *à-venir pour les défaites, pour les vaincus* (to return obliquely to Rimbaud).

As an Event, the Paris Commune leaves in its wake an indelible image of history as unfinished struggle, of political action as the real, immanent, unpredictable possibility of an *autrement* contained within the contours of the given: other ways of being, other forms of community; the possibility of other relations to nature and daily life; other modes of agency and political practices. Other ways of thinking human history. *La Commune est morte*, they say? *Aujourd'hui la lutte est terminée*? Well, as Louise Michel or Eugène Pottier might have replied, that remains to be seen: *N'empêche, la Commune n'est pas morte. Tout appartient à l'avenir.*

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NOTES

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version of this text, as well as to the Department of French and Italian and the Leslie Center for the Humanities at Dartmouth College for institutional support in the autumn of 2019 which proved invaluable in helping bring this project to fruition.

1. MacMahon was the monarchist general who oversaw many of the grisly atrocities—the wholesale *massacre*, to conjure up the title of John Merriman's excellent study of the Commune—which marked the repression of the Commune. In 1875, he would succeed Adolphe Thiers as President of the extremely reactionary *République des Ducs* which issued forth from the carnage of the *Semaine sanglante*. As Alberto Toscano rightly reminds us (private correspondence), this was far from the only instance of military violence directed against political uprisings as well as civilian populations that MacMahon oversaw, for he had served as Governor General of Algeria up until the end of the Second Empire. The Arab and Berber uprising led by Mohammed El-Mokri in the Kabyle region would predate the events in Montmarte by four days, yet upon hearing news of the proclamation of the Commune, the *Association Républicaine de l'Algérie* would send a delegation to Paris in the name of the *Commune de l'Algérie* (which would meet much the same fate, and at the hands of nearly the same soldiers, as its Parisian counterpart once Thiers and MacMahon had crushed the Commune). See Mohammed Brahim Salhi, "L'Insurrection de 1871," in *Histoire de l'Algérie à la période coloniale*, A. Bouchène et al., eds. (Paris: La Découverte, 2014), 103-109.

2. Cited in Henri Lefebvre, *La Proclamation de la Commune* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), 363.

3. Jules Vallès, "Le 26 mars," *Le Cri du peuple*, 28/03/1871; *ibid*., "La Fête," *Le Cri du peuple* 30/03/1871.

4. Louise Michel, *La Commune* (Paris: La Découverte, 2015), 199-200.

5. In Lefebvre, *op. cit*., 388.

6. I thank Katie Hornstein for drawing attention to just how uncannily, if not disquietingly, both of these refrains resonate with the current political situation in France and the United States (to name but two sites) in the autumn of 2020, some short months after the unprecedented wave of mass urban mobilizations against inequality (*Les gilets jaunes*) and police violence (Black Lives Matter). On the intermedial role played by the rhetoric of dehumanization and appeals to "law and order" in the repression of the Commune during the *Semaine sanglante*, see Paul Lidsky, *Les Écrivains contre la Commune* (Paris: La Découverte, 1999).

7. See infra, Deluermoz, Ruda, Toscano, Coghlan, Hornstein.

8. See *infra*, Feilla.

9. See *infra*, Bantigny.

10. See *infra*, Rancière.

11. See *infra*, Ross; and Kristin Ross and *Mauvaise troupe collective*, *The ZAD and NoTAV* (London: Verso, 2018).

12. See *infra*, Saint-Amand; as well as *Le fond de l'air est jaune: comprendre une révolte inédite* (Paris: Seuil, 2019); and Étienne Balibar, "Les *Gilets jaunes*: le sens du face à face,"

*Mediapart*, 13/12/2018, https://blogs.mediapart.fr/etienne-balibar/blog/131218/gilets-jaunes-le-sens-du-face-face, consulted 10/01/2020.

13. See Kristin Ross, *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1988); Steve Murphy, *Rimbaud et la Commune: microlectures et perspectives* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2010).

14. It was Raymond Williams who once noted that the timing of all revolutionary breaks is also always that of tragedy: one of time unhinging, of futures that seem at once to open up and to have been foreclosed upon. See Raymond Williams, *Modern Tragedy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966).

15. David Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), 227,

16. https://inequality.org/facts/wealth-inequality, consulted 09/04/2020. See also: https://www.oxfam.org/en/5-shocking-facts-about-extreme-global-inequality-and-how-even-it; https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2019/09/26/income-inequality-america-highest-its-been-since-census-started-tracking-it-data-show; https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/02/11/income-inequality-un-destabilizing, consulted 09/04/2020. For more stark statistics culled in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, see also the United Nation's Human Development Report, at http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2019.pdf, consulted 10/10/2020.

17. Thomas Piketty, *Capital and Ideology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020), 415-485, 648-718.

18. This, as Alain Badiou and Jean-Luc Nancy have recently remarked, is one way of understanding Marx's quip that, as a species, we have yet to leave the social forms of "pre-history" behind us (e.g., forms of social organization predicated on extremes of inequality, the accumulation and preservation of territory and property, more often than not by force, etc.). See Jean-Luc Nancy, *Politique et au-delà: entretien avec Philip Armstrong et Jason E. Smith* (Paris: Galilée, 2011), 31-36; Alain Badiou, *Éloge de la politique. Entretien avec Aude Lancelin* (Paris: Flammarion, 2017), 50-54.

19. Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (London: Verso, 2017).

20. *Aujourd'hui, la lutte est terminée* rings, to our ears at least, as a proposition uncannily resonant with that acronym so frequently evinced to justify the present order of things, the very motto of the Capitalocene *today*: TINA, there is no alternative.

21. "Truly, I live in dark times! [ . . . ] The one who laughs/ Has simply not yet received / The news." Bertolt Brecht, "An die Nachgeboren" ("To the Unborn/Those who will come after"), *Gesammelte Werke* vol. 4 (Frankfurt: Suhrkam,1967), 722.

22. See, *infra*, Rancière, Ross, Ruda, Toscano, Bernadet, Bantigny.

23. See, *infra*, Roberts, Miqueu, Shafer, Deluermoz, Godineau, Bantigny, Plaetzer, DeNino, Coghlan, Feilla.

24. See, *infra*, Dubois, Cropper and Lee, Hiner, Brevik-Zender.

25. See, *infra*, Rexer, Smith, Alsdorf, Hornstein.

26. See, *infra*, Foss, Bernadet, C. White, N. White.

27. See, *infra*, Coghlan, DeNino, Feilla, Plaetzer.

28. See, *infra*, Saint-Amand.

29. See, *infra*, Tardi.

30. In the domain of literary studies, this same question is one that Fredric Jameson refers to as "the essential mystery of the cultural past," which concerns matters that can only "recover their original urgency for us" if they figure in a larger collective story, that of "wrest[ing] a realm of Freedom from a realm of Necessity." Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 19.

31. Henri Lefebvre, "La Commune: dernière fête populaire," in *Images of the Commune/ Images de la Commune* James Leith, ed. (Montréal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978), 33.

32. I take this broader point from Jack Halberstam's remarkable cultural archeology of neoliberalism and the strategies for critique, resistance and insubmission afforded by what he theorizes under the names and conceptual guises of unbeing, unmastery, and failure in *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), esp. 1-26.

33. Avery Gordon, "Some Thoughts on Haunting and Futurity," *borderlands* 10:2 (2011), 1-19.

34. Lefebvre, *art. cit.*, 35

35. See *infra*, Ross, Ruda, Deluermoz, Bantigny, Hornstein, Saint-Amand, Quintane.

36. "This [i.e., 'smashing the bureaucratic-military machine' of the state] is what our heroic Party comrades in Paris are attempting. What elasticity, what historical initiative, what a capacity for sacrifice in these Parisians! [ . . . ] History has no example of like greatness! If they are defeated, only their 'good nature' will be to blame. [ . . . ] However that may be, the present rising in Paris – even if it be crushed by the wolves, swine, and vile cur of the old society – is the most glorious deed of our Party since the June insurrection in Paris. Compare these Parisians, storming heaven, with the slaves to heaven of the German-Prussian Holy Roman Empire . . ." "Letter to Ludwig Kugelmann, April 12, 1871, in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *On the Paris Commune* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971), 284.

37. Lefebvre, *art. cit.*, 42-43. The idea is not so far removed, after all, from Marx's assertion at the outset of his essay on the rise to political power of Napoléon III in the tumultuous political aftermath of the failed 1848 social revolution: though human beings make history, we do not do so in circumstances of our choosing. Far from espousing the kind of the mechanical historical determinism with which Marxism become associated in the course of the 20th century, which would hold out the prospect of emancipation as a kind of law of historical fate linked to the core, insurmountable contradictions of capitalism (its inevitable tendency towards uneven distribution of power and wealth, and thus towards greater immiseration of the majority of the population on the planet, its related tendency towards depletion and devastation of natural resources, its impossible necessity of infinitely compounded expansion in order to stave off social-economic crisis, etc.), what Lefebvre—ever the renegade Marxist and keen observer of the social effervescence of the

1960s—is drawing attention to in this passage is just how acutely aware Marx himself was that nothing occurs 'naturally' (i.e., without human action, which is by definition limited and whose outcomes are unpredictable) in the course of human history. See Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (New York: International Publishers, 2004), 18.

38. Badiou *Éloge. . . , op. cit*., 20-21. See also, *infra*, Ruda.

To formalize the shift in a collective relation to ideas (say, about freedom, equality, justice, the value and mattering of lives that do not count as equal or grievable [Butler] lives) that occurs with the irruption of an event such as the Commune, we could affirm that what the event does is introduce a quarter, political turn of coordinates into the following, loosely Greimasian schema (as a reminder, the horizontal axes corresponds to relations of opposition, the vertical to an axis of implication, and the diagonal to an axis of contradiction, of sheer incompatibility):

| Logic of the Given | | | Logic of the Event | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The Necessary | — | The Contingent | The Impossible | — | The Necessary |
| | | → | | | |
| The Impossible | — | The Possible | The Possible | — | The Contingent |

In other words, where the logic of the given structures our relationship to the possible as one of necessity and our relationship to contingency (i.e., the possibility of changing the given) as implicitly one of *impossibility* and structurally one of incompatibility (the diagonal axis here can be summed up as: There is no alternative ), what a political event manages to accomplish is a realigning of this structure. The impossible (or, the alternative to the present order of things) comes into implicit alignment with what is possible, and the contingent, or the possibility of transforming the real or dominant order of things, comes to be seen as implied in/ as a necessity in the order of the given.

39. Alain Badiou, *L'Hypothèse communiste* (Paris: Nouvelles éditions Lignes, 2009), 172.

40. "La Commune ne réalise pas un possible, elle l'a créé." *Idem*., 175. Both Badiou and Lefebvre are ultimately not so far from Marx in this respect, who in an early draft of his essay on the Commune would write the following: "Whatever its fate might end up being in Paris, the fate of the idea is already sealed. It will make *le tour du monde* [ . . . ] like the magic word of/ for deliverance". "Drafts of *The Civil War in France*," "The Character of the Commune," https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/civil-war-france/drafts/ch01.htm, consulted, 09/04/2020.