

The Riddle of the Commune: Subjectivity and Style in Karl Marx's *The Civil War in France*

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated *aux morts de Commune* and to those who repeat (with whatever difference) its project in various times and places. It is also dedicated to my parents, teachers and everyone else who has had a hand, large or small, in shaping this project.

Abstract

This project reads Karl Marx's *The Civil War in France*, a speech and pamphlet in which Marx treats the political experience of the Paris Commune. Reading the pamphlet through literature on rhetoric and aesthetics, I argue that Marx's speech performs a political style—a set of tropes which structure thought, political responses, and collective desires—that stands in productive tension with many of the ways his work has been taken up by scholars and activists alike. Over the course of my dissertation I highlight three key concepts in *The Civil War in France*—debt, history, and community—which, I argue, are both central to the speech's address of its own historical context and useful resources for those seeking to make Marx's work productive in the present. First, Marx highlights the degree to which punitive debt policies directed by the French government at France's poor and disenfranchised contributed to the violence of the Commune and its aftermath, while also asserting a “debt of gratitude” to the Commune that he argues should lead a diversity of French political constituencies to support it. Engaging with Andrew King's research on the rhetoric of power maintenance and with contemporary scholarship on the politics of debt, I argue that Marx's address responds to the propaganda leveled against the Commune by the French national government of the period, while also constituting a set of tropes that are useful for analyzing discussions of debt by regulators and activists in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis. Second, reading Marx's eulogy of the Commune's failure alongside his attempt to draw lessons from it for future political practice, I argue that *The Civil War in France* provides a compelling case study for scholars concerned with how “failed” social movements may

become subject to a type of collective memory work that primes them to be rescued as impetuses for future political action. I argue that Marx develops a rhetoric of history that enables a productive rethinking of the current political moment in light of past revolutionary experiences. Finally, engaging with recent debates in rhetorical studies and in the critical humanities on the concept of community, I argue that Marx's speech proleptically critiques the politics of community that goes by the name of neoliberalism, and provides an alternative ethics of community, of which the Commune is a central example. Taken together, I show that these concepts provide a useful set of tools for thinking the economic and political crises attendant on current global capitalism.

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Chapter 1: Style and Historical Materialism

One of the many cultural phenomena to emerge in the wake of the 2008 economic crisis is a marked increase in the invocation, by academic and popular publications alike, of the name and ideas of Karl Marx. From editorials in newspapers around the country to a not-so-ironic image of Lenin gracing the cover of a January 2012 issue of *The Economist*, political and social commentators seem newly curious about whether Marx's thought (or the tradition he inspired) can usefully explain why the crisis happened or suggest solutions. This curiosity, though, has very clear ideological boundaries. Writing about Marx's portrayal in mass culture more generally, Richard Dienst remarks that pieces dealing with Marx's "surprisingly contemporary relevance" usually argue, in a "bemused and condescending tone" that "Marx actually admired capitalism in some ways, which means that he might have been right about a few things; meanwhile, his trenchant criticisms of it will be treated as the quaintly perceptive observations of an awkward crank. The moral of the story is always the same: Marx has a great deal to teach us about capitalism, but only if we remember he was wrong".¹

One way of specifying this observation further is to say that widely circulated popular discussions of Marx adopt a few of his observations about capitalism's implications, but tear them out of the conceptual context of his thought. Instead, Marx's observations are translated into the terms of whatever the debate of the moment is in US or European politics. The most recent round of pieces on Marx and Marxism focus overwhelmingly on the question of the proper scope of government in regulating markets. As the *Economist* story,² which deals with the possibilities and pitfalls of state-subsidized

multinational corporations as a viable model of governance, shows, renewed interest in Marx reflects a perception that he was a thinker who desired large-scale state intervention, more extensive welfare programs, and larger-scale government in general, and seeks to use him to assess this specific issue, leaving his interrogation of the larger workings of capitalism to one side.

This dissertation shares with the recent articles on Marx a desire to prove his continued relevance for political theory and practice, but in terms that significantly exceed debates about the role of government in capitalist economies. While Marx surely has a lot to say about the relationship of state political institutions to markets, as well as to revolutionary forces that seek to seize state power (or destroy it), I will argue that Marx's work may also be productively approached through considering his thoughts on political subjectivity, and the relation that subjects have to their historical moments. There are many places in Marx's work which could serve as such a starting point, too many for a single book. As such, this project will focus on a single text: Marx's 1871 pamphlet *The Civil War in France*.

The Civil War in France is worth returning to, and worth reading in detail, because it represents one of the last things Marx published before he died. This is doubly important: not only does the pamphlet show Marx's last sustained reflections on French history (and on history more generally), its status as a very direct political intervention that targeted as wide a reading public as possible makes it a productive contrast to the more daunting philosophical edifice of *Capital*, frequently upheld as exemplary of Marx's later work. Given as a speech to the General Council of the International Working

Men's Association in early June of 1871, the text that comprises *The Civil War in France* was published in English in *The Beehive* (the International's British newsletter) and later bound (along with two of Marx's other addresses on the Franco-Prussian War) as a pamphlet that was circulated in German and French as well as English. The speeches represent Marx's attempt to come to terms with the bloody suppression of the Paris Commune, an insurrectionary governing body that had ruled Paris for the previous two months, which had happened just weeks earlier. While it existed, the Commune enacted a somewhat hastily assembled but genuinely radical popular democracy, embracing a government based on working class rule, as well as some of the earliest steps toward women's suffrage in France. In the words of historians J.P.T. Bury and Robert Tombs, "the Commune[...]set out to improvise, from an unplanned, patriotic, anti-monarchist uprising, a model People's republic: democratic, secular, egalitarian and mildly socialist" (203). The revolutionary government's existence was ended in late May of 1871 by the massacre of thousands of partisans and Parisian citizens by French national troops. Marx, reeling from this defeat, had to defend the Commune from its detractors on both the political left and the right, ensuring that in the immediate aftermath of the Commune, fewer of those fleeing the soldiers' bullets would be hunted down. It was also his opportunity to have a place in determining the Commune's political legacy, and how it would be remembered by subsequent generations.

Throughout this dissertation, I will argue that this pamphlet, specifically, provides a useful entry point to rethinking Marx's attitude toward political subjectivity. While not explicitly set out as the purpose of the pamphlet, Marx's use of rhetorical tropes to

describe (and construct) social relations, his use of narrative, and his engagement with French history, among other features of the text, perform a process of the collective composition of subjectivity, specifically a subjectivity antagonistic to the social forces and relations characteristic of capitalism. In orienting his audience's views about the significance of the Commune, in other words, Marx bequeaths us a model for describing how individuals' narratives of their own personal history relate to their relations to political and social collectivities, as well as to an ongoing process of historical conflict. This model has both theoretical and practical implications: it provides a descriptive framework, but also (because of Marx's interest in political intervention) contains resources for effecting such compositions in the context of capital's present existence.

To develop the concept of class composition Marx offers, I will place his text in conversation with two bodies of theoretical work. *The Civil War in France* can first of all be productively read in conversation with literature on political style, a concept that articulates individual and collective political subjectivity to the habitual use of specific rhetorical tropes, in both everyday conversation and in political speech more properly. Political style is a useful device for linking several concepts, including habit, subjectivity, and poetic or rhetorical trope among others, and has led to a return to studies of style within rhetorical studies in a more philosophically robust way than previous treatments of the subject. While productive, though, this theory has not been developed as much as it might be. This project will attempt to develop it by placing the concept of political style in conversation with the broad philosophical tradition of historical materialism, as well as some of the many discussions that have taken place within twentieth century Marxism

and critical theory around the concepts of class composition and political subjectivity. Reading Marx's pamphlet through these two traditions allows scholars to productively think through some of the issues with Marx's authorial identity (for example, the relationship between Marx's training in philosophy and his various political and historical writings). Marx, seen through this lens, becomes a political stylist: someone who reflected on the role that all of the above factors play in social composition and who put the various disciplines he studied into practice in a fundamentally rhetorical enterprise—effecting political change at the level of peoples' adherence to particular ways of life and social organization. It also forces rhetoric to confront Marx's thought (rather than just the Marxist tradition) in a more thoroughgoing way, and provides a new perspective on rhetoric's relation to philosophy and to its concept of history.

In the chapter that follows, I will provide some theoretical context for the problem of Marx's political style. The first section of the chapter will begin with Robert Hariman's definition of political style as “a coherent repertoire of rhetorical conventions depending on aesthetic reactions for political effect.”³ Using other literature within rhetoric, I will outline the uses of Hariman's concept as well as some of the problems it has, and argue that, while subsequent rhetorical literature has fine-tuned the concept, issues remain. In particular, here, I will focus on the relationship of style to history—Hariman's model lacks a vocabulary for describing why styles arise when they do, and for describing the transitions or overlappings that occur when multiple styles confront one another. This problem intersects with a refrain running throughout Marxian philosophy and critical theory. Marxism, too, has a problem of transition, and the second

and third parts of the chapter will discuss the ways that this literature complicates and solves some of the problems raised by political style. Finally, though, I argue that one of the most productive ways to deal with a theory of historical transition between styles (and a theory of the production of new styles) is to turn to Marx himself. The third part of the chapter will describe my intervention in debates over Marx's pamphlet on the Commune, and ask what a reading of this pamphlet can do to develop the concept of political style.

Stylistic Habits and Subjective Constitution

Robert Hariman's definition of style is intended to provide a set of key terms for describing the grammar of persuasive tropes prevalent within a given institution, culture, or historical period. Each part of the definition—style as a “coherent repertoire”, as “conventions”, and as partaking of specifically “aesthetic” conventions in order to do political work—suggests some avenues for such description. Taking each of these components in turn, I will discuss how political style thinks about the relationship between aesthetics and politics, and the consequences of the theoretical choices Hariman makes.

The first important consequence of Hariman's theory is its conception of political practice as composed of routines. The “coherent repertoire” of conventions within a given political style are, in more plain language, habits of discourse—routines which structure what is accepted (or disallowed) as effective rhetorical strategies, and make up the “texture of everyday life” of those who employ them.⁴ Political style can also structure individuals' motives—how they will seek to achieve rhetorical success (as well as what constitutes that success) in the future. Also important, and crucial for why these

routines determine not just effectiveness, or what works in a given context, but what people desire, is that style is a repertoire of *aesthetic* conventions. Style provides a way to talk about how our discursive habits structure “sensibility, taste, manners, charisma, charm” and other affective responses to particular rhetorical acts, determining not just what works but what is “*appealing*” and, hence, desirable.⁵ Finally, Hariman hopes to show how style influences both the “compositional” and “performative qualities” of a persuasive act, structuring the wording of rhetorical acts as well as the features (dress, posture, location, etc.) of their enactment.⁶

Hariman illustrates his argument through four historically prevalent grammars, each of which is exemplified in a particular text, and each of which he sees as being a key component of modern politics. All of the styles Hariman discusses—the realist style, exemplified by Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, the courtly style, elucidated through a study of the court of Emperor Hailie Sellasie, the republican style, exemplified by Cicero, and the bureaucratic style whose logic is discussed through a reading of Kafka’s *The Trial*—share three features: grounding in a master figure or object which serves as a standard for a given persuasive trope’s success or failure, a routine set of common tropes which follow from this master figure, and a persona which the successful rhetor is invited to take up within the style. For brevity’s sake, I will illustrate these features through the realist style.

Each system of tropes described by Hariman is grounded on a figure that describes the stable reality, tradition or framework to which that style appeals. Machiavelli, for example, accomplishes his persuasive goal (at least, as described by

Hariman) by “aligning himself with the signs of a natural world” outside textuality.⁷ This alignment is created by Machiavelli’s rhetoric, but it allows him to appear to eliminate rhetoric altogether, instead conveying to his audience that he is merely calculating a play of natural forces in the real world. The degree to which one’s appeals claim to describe these forces is both a yardstick for success or failure within the style (how “good” a ruler or statesman Machiavelli’s system would judge one to be) and a rhetorical weapon by which other systems, such as the thoroughly textualist norms of Renaissance decorum, can be described as fanciful, inadequate to material reality, and subordinate to the realist rhetor’s objective calculations. Implicit in this dynamic is a slippage between rhetoric’s inside and outside. In other words (and this is true in different ways of all the other styles), Machiavelli claims to merely be reflecting material, extratextual reality in his words, but he must talk about how he is doing so in order to make this claim effectively. The master term of a given style is thus both extra-rhetorical (in that it is discussed as objective, rather than subject to the vicissitudes of different persuasive contexts) and rhetorical, in that it exists solely through the appeals made in its name.

The master trope of a discourse generates a hierarchy of tropes that appeal (in the sense of both aesthetic and rhetorical appeal) back to it, as well as a persona occupied by the person using the tropes. Machiavelli’s conception of the material world generates a “*persona*” of the rhetor as “strategic thinker”⁸ calculating the outcome of each situation in his or her own interest. Speech is a medium of deception, as are emotions: the prince is encouraged to both “act contrary to virtue and be virtuous”⁹ as it serves to give them power. Both speech and action (when where and how one speaks and acts) is judged on

how well it accounts for the objective forces at play in a given situation, and how well it is used to personally empower the rhetor. The appeals in a given style thus describe the way those employing it are disciplined to relate to its master tropes (for example, to relate to material reality as a calculated exploiter or dominating figure versus as a component part of a collective) while also providing strategies for effectively using the style to effect one's desired ends.

A final feature of political style—the way Hariman discusses its historical valence—is that a given style can be picked up out of its original context and cited in others. Each chapter of *Political Style* closes with a discussion of that style's effects on current cultural and political discourse, and Hariman stipulates that he selects the styles he does because he views them as master tropes for modern political thought. Hariman sees Machiavelli's style as both “the dominant style in modern political thought” (p. 49) and as fundamental to specifically realist or conservative theories of politics. Bracketing Machiavelli's involvement with the republican tradition, Hariman argues that *The Prince*'s model of the world as an extratextual play of forces has borne historical fruit in a politics of “raw power”¹⁰ and self-interest, exemplified in someone like Henry Kissinger. Concepts such as civic virtue are derided as idealistic and replaced by calculation—empathy and debate are excluded from politics. Hariman thus sees each style (as a system) migrating to different historical contexts, acquiring different significance (while preserving the same master trope, set of secondary tropes, and the *personae* it reserves for those who use it) in each subsequent historical moment.

The above is a fairly complete outline of Hariman's theory, demonstrating both its uses and the problems it raises. The theory raises a series of important issues for rhetoric (both for its practice and for rhetorical scholarship). The book's discussion of tropes as political devices, though not without precedent in literary criticism and elsewhere, prompted a return to the canon of style in rhetorical studies in a way that focused on style's political uses and implications rather than its contribution to an ideal of eloquent speech. Hariman's version of style also shows (in a way that resonates with the insights of psychoanalysis, as well as political theorists like Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe) how discursive tropes can be constitutive of subjectivity. The "persona" of the rhetor that emerges from each of Hariman's styles show how tropes can work to forge relationships between people, their own senses of themselves as political actors or citizens, and the power relations that render certain senses of self tenable and others untenable. On the other hand, the key terms in the book's definition of style (in particular, what "aesthetic" means in this context) frequently go undertheorized. Hariman's selection of four master grammars, though he says repeatedly that they are the beginning of a much longer list, read like an ideal ensemble or typology of styles, rather than a handful plucked from a theoretically indefinite number. Finally, and in a related vein, while Hariman does work to link each style to contemporary political practice, his framework can seem detached from concrete history. His focus on singular exemplar texts cuts against his project's stated goals, because he arguably chooses to reduce much historical and textual complexity to the coherence of the styles he extracts from them. This is most glaring in the case of Machiavelli; while Hariman defends his choice to read *The Prince*

independently of the other body of Machiavelli's work, and cites relevant literature that does not make this move, he still gives us a version of Machiavelli bereft of any of his republican sympathies, and the text ends up with something closer to the widespread caricature of "Machiavellian" politics than to an engagement with how this style worked in its own historical moment (or more than one of the ways it has worked in the present one).¹¹

Each of these issues with Hariman's text can at least in part be resolved through other treatments of style, either following on Hariman's interpretation or prior to it. Hariman's discussion of political style's aesthetics is expanded on in Barry Brummett's 2008 *A Rhetoric of Style*. Brummett argues that the aesthetic is an important political category because of its relationship to conscious reasoning. On the one hand, aesthetic reactions, for Brummett, precede cognition; they are the "sensory quality" of an experience.¹² On the other hand, certain sensory qualities are available to us because we can recognize, often unconsciously, particular patterns, and are trained to respond to them. Aesthetics are thus "subliminal, associational", and associations can be actively cited by individuals or groups (as with certain visual markers of group identity) while also forming a matrix of legibility whereby certain visual, vocal or other sensory cues are read and associated in particular ways.¹³ Brummett thus helps clarify how linguistic figures or tropes can work to structure experience in a manner analogous to a feedback loop. Tropes are first of all ways of structuring prereflective sensory experience, but that experience is itself structured by tropes—the associations that prompt memories, reactions of pleasure or displeasure, and other emotional experiences—so that one's

tendency in future situations will be to apply the categories of association that one has already internalized.

This framework strongly resembles Kenneth Burke's psychology of form, and a brief discussion of Burke's model will further clarify Brummett's description of aesthetic effects. Burke emphasizes the repetitive, habitual nature of rhetoric and links these habits to political agency. Tropes, in Burke's model, create "an appetite in the mind of the audience" which then predisposes that audience to seek the fulfillment of that appetite, and creates tension or disquiet if this search is left in suspense.¹⁴ When repeated, this pattern generates an ongoing sense of "what properly goes with what"¹⁵ and, eventually, a tendentially unitary master term for describing this propriety. Such a term (like the master tropes in Hariman's model) forms an "altar" at which subjects worship by attempting to fulfill the expectations their symbolic framework imposes upon them.¹⁶ Deviations from this frame are met with, at the very least, guilt on the part of the one who deviates, but can also lead to animosity toward those who are seen to worship at different altars. Stylistic tropes thus structure sensory experience, but in an anticipatory manner that affects the future experiences one will have as well as the desires to have certain experiences and not others.

Subsequent literature on political style has generally tended to extend Hariman's model in the direction of empirical historical analysis. This has primarily come about through a turn from Hariman's focus on typology and on single texts to a focus on style as social practice similar to Burke's work. Bradford Vivian (2002) argues that Hariman's tendency to focus on just a handful of texts leads to a focus on the individual artists who

are said to create particular styles. Despite Hariman's best intentions, the aesthetic, in his work, remains autonomous from (even if it in part determines) political experience. As an alternative to this conception, Vivian argues that style should be discussed as a collective process, "irreducible to the reasoned choices of a single agent."¹⁷ The focus should be on the way the collective nature of particular tropes complicates individual agency, not on how such tropes are taken up from a canon of classic, individual texts. James Aune (2008) extends this impulse; for him, expanding the utility of political style as a tool for criticism means paying attention to "the social roots of political style", adopting a sociological view (which Aune draws from the work of the Frankfurt School) to ask how certain stylistic devices work to "change or stabilize the existing distributions of power."¹⁸

One byproduct of a focus on political style as historically embedded social practice is that a manifest link between theories of political style and theories of the postmodern becomes apparent. Brummett's work is most explicit in this regard. Brummett argues that the resurgence of political style in rhetoric stems from style as a preoccupation of late capitalist society.¹⁹ Adopting the theses of thinkers like Jean Baudrillard, Brummett sees contemporary life as characterized by a "pervasive aestheticization of the everyday."²⁰ Brummett sees the adoption of an aesthetic framework for talking about identity as fundamentally linked to the commodity form, linking style with Guy Debord's concept of spectacle (though without nearly the degree of negative evaluation that Debord intended). When production of "knowledges, images and aesthetic symbols" comes to dominate material production of goods, the world

becomes “inherently malleable and thus rhetorical to its core”.²¹ Rather than being a problem, this, for Brummett signals a potential for newfound freedom and an opportunity for rhetorical studies to expand its purview.

Brummett’s focus is just the most explicit example of a general trend in recent rhetorical studies of style that is likewise present in Hariman. Stewart Ewen, Hariman’s primary theoretical source, defines style as “the production of sumptuous images,” made widespread by mass marketing. Style in contemporary culture is a “chimerical...visible” play of “surface impressions” through which people market themselves and are marketed.²² Ewen links his account of the rise of these surface impressions to the growing pervasiveness of advertising and the increasing portion of the labor force dedicated to producing images rather than products,²³ though this part of his account has not been significantly expanded upon by subsequent scholars. Hariman historicizes his four styles, but reads them all from the perspective of a “cautious” postmodernism—cautious mainly because Hariman is wary that “by weakening modernist discourses” about agency and subjectivity, “one can place some peoples at great risk”²⁴, and his account of the use of different styles focuses on the present without extensively treating how the present ended up the way it is.

Political style’s somewhat confused wrestling with postmodernism as a concept is symptomatic of its larger inability to grapple with history generally. Hariman chooses the styles he does in large part because he sees them taken up and cited in a number of domains (from realist political theory in the case of the realist style to celebrity culture in the case of the courtly style) of current global culture and political discourse. Nowhere,

though, is there any kind of extended treatment of why these particular styles come to prominence at the moment and in the way they do. Other relevant work (especially Vivian and Aune) open the way for such a theory, but do so in a short enough format that they lack the room to develop it. Where historical factors are directly invoked to answer the question of why these styles (and the figure of style more generally) are being talked about now, the answer simply takes the specular, commodified dimension of contemporary everyday life discussed by thinkers like Debord or Fredric Jameson for granted, as a context and a device for showing how the world is made more malleable and rhetorical by the current society of the spectacle. Nowhere is there an intimation that this might be a bad thing—if such a view is expressed (again, Vivian and Aune’s articles excepted) it is from the perspective of “caution” that Hariman advocates, a concern that the Enlightenment model of the citizen-subject contains political resources that academics sacrifice at their peril. Here, too, Hariman stops just short of making a suggestive point—the question of who is encouraged or discouraged from using certain habits of discourse (including those of the Enlightenment subject) is an important factor in how global power relations are structured. But to take a neutral citizen-subject as a starting point from which the postmodern moment is portrayed as a deviation, leaves that subject’s own history out of the picture, as well foreclosing political possibilities that exist outside of that theory of the subject. If we assume any particular model of subjectivity as a neutral starting point, we are unable to explain the conditions of historical emergence of particular types of subject which, crucially even from a scholarly

perspective, leaves us in the deadlock that Aune points out—style becomes an ahistorical typology rather than a vocabulary for describing ongoing social processes.

In many ways, the confusion over political style's theory of history can be linked to its confusion over the term "postmodernism." Given a myriad of definitions, this term has become so generally used as to be analytically useless absent very specific definition. That said, there seem to be two versions of the concept at work here. On the one hand, both Hariman and Vivian seem to mean, by "postmodernism", the attempt to locate agency in a place other than an individual person, whether that be institutions, rhetorical figures, or economic relations, traceable to the "war on totality" (in the sense of static, coherent wholes), which closes Jean François Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition*.²⁵ Brummett's version, by contrast, assumes a mix of definitions advanced by a number of authors, whereby the "postmodern" means the waning of metanarrative also hailed by Lyotard, along with the "historical deafness" and "spasmodic and intermittent, but desperate attempts at recuperation" which form part of the group of features Fredric Jameson groups under the term.²⁶ The political valence of any of these perspectives is dependent on how these features of the present are evaluated and contextualized. Both Lyotard and Jameson arguably hew closer to the first perspective: postmodernism is a historical condition with particular problems and political questions attendant on it. Brummett, on the other hand, seems to adopt these authors' diagnoses, but without their ambivalence. Instead, he seems to embrace the world made rhetorical he describes. While his rhetoric of style may be framed as an attempt to negotiate the problems Lyotard and Jameson pose, his discussion of style as a relatively depoliticized, relatively

individualized process, falls short of these authors, and leaves whatever critical weight the term has to one side. Put succinctly, provided that postmodernism is defined as a characteristic cultural condition of late capitalism and a recognition that individual agency emerges out of a number of collective processes, we are better off emphasizing the “postmodernism” in Hariman’s statement (though not that reflected in Brummett’s), but we could do with a little less caution. “Postmodernism” and the critiques of individual subjectivity attendant on it can perfectly well be deployed in full force without sacrificing an ethical imperative to the dismantling of asymmetrical relations of power and to collective global empowerment. Issues, such as the concerns Hariman raises over the dismantling of the citizen-subject, remain important, but the question becomes whether or not a politics centered on such a subject works to accomplish the ethical goals Hariman offers as reasons to maintain it, and whose interests it serves, a question which Hariman’s framing of the problem brackets.

One critical tradition that can do much to resolve these issues is Marxism.²⁷ The Marxian critical tradition provides the analytical tools for a detailed account of why particular styles (e.g. political realism) might emerge or resurface at a specific time and place. It can also, crucially for any critical rhetorical project, account for whose interests a style is likely to serve when it does resurface and the ways particular discursive habits relate to the empowerment or disempowerment of those subject to them (either because they use the tropes in question or because they affect their daily lives in whatever way). On this model, the descriptions of political style already offered (including Brummett’s account of style under late capitalism) retain their validity as “local laws”²⁸ of rhetorical

efficacy within a given socio-historical context whose development and re-citation in particular contexts makes up one layer of a history of processes of production (of objects, communities, and subjects) and of power relations. Even if questions remain about the concept of political style after a dialogue has been established with this critical tradition, Marxism can still usefully answer these questions, as well as provide a different answer to the basic question of why style is important. In the next sections, I will review the engagement with this tradition in rhetorical studies thus far, and outline its negotiation of questions parallel to those raised by Hariman's framework.

Style, Class Consciousness and Class Composition

Any attempt to reconcile rhetorical studies with Marxism must begin with Kenneth Burke. At the 1935 American Writers' Congress, Burke gave a speech arguing for rhetoric's utility for communist politics. Specifically, Burke argued that the terms communism used to convince those not sympathetic to its political project had to change with time and place in order to be effective. To win more than a few adherents required that communist discourses address themselves to the "conditions of attachment" that linked people to particular political systems and figures in a given context.²⁹ If it did not speak a language that people already identified with, then the bridge between a political consciousness predicated on support for capitalism, and one antagonistic to capitalism, would fail. In the context of the United States, Burke suggested that revolutionary rhetorics substitute "the people" for "the proletariat," a term that Burke saw as less dissonant with the US' conceptions of its own political heritage than discourses of class

struggle,³⁰ a move that prompted widespread protests that Burke was either betraying the Marxian legacy or, at the extreme, indulging in an aestheticism that flirted with fascism.

While Burke's speech was widely criticized by other speakers at the conference³¹ and has since been further taken to task within rhetorical studies,³² Burke's model effectively outlines a potential role for rhetoric in radical politics. As literary critic Frank Lentricchia remarked, Burke's model focuses on "get[ting] political work done" in its immediate context. To this end, Burke anticipates a critique of ideology which is immanent rather than transcendent to its historical conjuncture, attempting to work "at the radical of the history it would remake 'at the root,'" acknowledging that a "way out" of capital must, at least at first, find a "way through" using the textual resources it has available to it.³³ Revolutionary movements ignore these resources on peril of historical stagnation and ineffectiveness.

Rhetoric's engagement with Marxism since 1935 has been substantial, but has largely avoided constructive engagement with Marx himself. The reception of Marx in rhetorical studies has followed two primary paths: the portrayal of Marx as a philosopher who, while ultimately hostile to rhetoric, provides an ethical yardstick by which to judge it, and criticism or historical treatment of activists inspired by Marx. Richard Wilkie's 1976 article, "Karl Marx on Rhetoric" provides a description of Marx's "place in rhetoric."³⁴ Wilkie argues that Marx's (implicit) philosophy of rhetoric centered on three concepts: consciousness, or "an emerging awareness or understanding" of social conditions,³⁵ social use of discourse (rather than abstract definition) as a standard of meaning, and human alienation as a motivating factor in revolutionary politics.³⁶ While

this discussion is accurate for the most part, it detaches Marx the philosopher from any political struggle or concrete conjuncture other than general references to “revolutionary” politics. Wilkie seems more anxious to condemn “hair-splitting socialist-materialist ‘theology’”³⁷ than to use Marx as a resource or engage with the tradition he founded.

James Arnt Aune’s *Rhetoric and Marxism*, the most extensive treatment of the subject by a rhetorician, treats Marx and many of the thinkers inspired by him. Vis-à-vis Marx himself, though, Aune ultimately concludes that Marx “consigned...rhetoric...to the margins of serious discourse,”³⁸ favoring philosophy and poetics over rhetoric. Aune reads the early Marx, including his mention of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* in his letters and his philosophical work from the 1840’s. Marx’s lack of explicit engagement with rhetoric leads Aune to conclude that “Marxism, like liberalism, participated in the Enlightenment project of eliminating mystification from social life,”³⁹ and remained caught in an “unstable mixture of romanticism and the positivist dream of transparent communication.”⁴⁰ This led Marx to neglect “that problem of strategic communication known as rhetoric,” defined here roughly as deliberation with the aim of gaining an audience’s adherence to a claim.⁴¹ Audience, then, becomes a central problem for Marxism, insofar as Marx fails to account for it, a problem that subsequent Marxist thinkers must grapple with. To get a useful theory of rhetoric out of Marxism, Aune argues, scholars must turn to his later readers—Lenin, Lukacs, Kenneth Burke, Gramsci and the theorists of the Frankfurt school, among others—and to a republican tradition that emphasizes the “fragility” of successful polities and the “importance of a historical memory of liberty”⁴² combined with a critique of that memory’s withering under

capitalism. Aune's intervention thus parallels Burke's, with the difference that Burke is more directly concerned with practical adherence to communism (and the Communist Party USA) as a political cause, where Aune is interested in the more theoretical problem of mounting a rhetorical critique of capitalism.

A second approach to Marx within rhetorical studies focuses on the economic processes described by Marx as a foundation of, or yardstick for, politically useful rhetorical practice. This approach is exemplified by Dana Cloud, who uses Marx to ground language on a set of objective material conditions of production, arguing that "a materialist theory of language...suited to a materialist view of history suggests that economic forces...motivate discourses that justify, obscure or mystify the workings of powerful interests."⁴³ For Cloud, critics who would read rhetoric in a way faithful to Marx's philosophy should compare "mythical" textual reality, and "nonmythical" extratextual reality, and demystify the mythologies of the text using critical argument and analysis of economic class.⁴⁴ Cloud does not want to deny that communication is a significant force in political struggle, but would deny it a constitutive role in such struggle. Class, considered as a "real" category emanating from an objective situation of exploitation and suffering perpetuated under capitalism, must form a "rational, reality-based counterpoint" to claims that communication constructs reality, and "fidelity" to objective class interest should be a normative criteria for judging particular rhetorics as revolutionary or reactionary.⁴⁵

Finally, scholars like Ronald Walter Greene and Matthew May have used the Marxist tradition as a resource for exploring discourse itself as a mode of materiality.

Greene and May's projects both focus on "the constitutive power of communication"⁴⁶ as it is co-opted for exploitation and the generation of surplus value as well as forming a potential site for generating revolutionary subjectivities and "conceptualizing the organization of an antagonism to capital."⁴⁷ Greene and May's approaches, insofar as they already provide a concept of class as a composition engendered and composed in significant part by communication, rather than as an empirically pregiven material reality, are the closest to the one taken here.

The above authors all read some part or other of Marx or the Marxist tradition as a theoretical resource. Another productive line of scholarship within rhetoric takes the rhetorical artifacts produced by activists inspired by Marx's life and work as a starting point. Such scholarship has been one of the main sites of exploration, within rhetorical studies, of the tensions that have existed within various Marxist and Communist social movements. The Wilkie essay cited above stands as a liminal case (though not, as we have seen, a sympathetic one) between philosophical readings of Marx and historical or critical readings of those inspired by him, as does May's discussion of communist labor activism. Another useful set of scholarship linking Marx to labor history discusses the Communist Party's (especially the CP-USA's) negotiation of gender, and dialogue with (or suppression of) feminist activism. The consensus which emerges from consideration of both party newspapers, bylaws and other literature, and key female organizers affiliated to one degree or another with communism, from Marry Harris 'Mother' Jones to Emma Goldman, is that communism (more specifically the strictures of the Communist Party as it existed at the time) formed a resource for feminist activists,

especially post-suffrage, even as the hierarchically gendered structures of its leadership frequently frustrated such activism.⁴⁸ Other scholarship within rhetorical studies discusses the tension between internal party rhetorics and (largely failed) attempts to export communism to those in the United States who did not subscribe to it.⁴⁹ All of this scholarship is useful, but it has two common limits that my project helps remedy: all of it is focused on the US, and on the Communist Party rather than more heterodox communist groups, and none of it deals directly with Marx. My project is thus also a valuable addition to the historical literature on communism within rhetorical studies.

This exploration of the tensions within historical communism recommends further study of Marx, even as it prompts a final complication of the trajectory I have just charted. As my citation of Lenin at the beginning of this essay suggests (and perhaps also perpetuates), there is a broad tendency from a variety of political perspectives to equate Marx with historical Marxism, in all of its manifestations, though particularly with Soviet communism. I hope the review above complicates that perspective to some extent, but there are a few more factors to consider. For one thing, it is clear that Marx (though he certainly pursued position and political influence in the organizations he worked with) never desired the creation of a systemic doctrine bearing his name. This point is borne out by both anecdote (Marx's supposed avowal on his deathbed that he was "not a Marxist") and the larger point that "Marxist" and "Marxism" only become terms of art after Marx's death, and are first originated and propagated by his opponents who had a political interest in constructing a monolithic system to attack.⁵⁰ Moreover, as even my cursory sketch makes clear, communism, even if we just speak of that indebted to Marx, is as

diverse and sprawling a collection of movements as it is possible to conceive of, both geographically and in its thinking and strategy.

This historical point has its academic counterpart in the work of authors from Louis Althusser⁵¹ to Charles Barbour,⁵² who have argued that Marx underwent at least one, but probably several, major conceptual and political shifts over the course of his life. Indeed, these authors suggest that Marx's work is defined by its breaks—the degree to which it attempts to keep up with always-moving historical tendencies, breaking with itself as it does so. As Barbour writes, “it is as though ‘Karl Marx’ signifies not a unified body of work, as the traditional hermeneutic metaphor has it, but something more like a massive array of components and parts that can be taken apart and put back together again in any different number of configurations and for any different number of purposes.” Far from reflecting a more recent deconstructive rereading of Marx, Barbour argues, this constant disassembly and reassembly was first of all practiced by Marx himself, as he continually wrote and rewrote the multiplicity of concepts he worked with to adapt to each historical development he encountered.⁵³ At the same time as all of this, though, Marx cannot be severed from Marxism either: if there is one fundamental rhetorical observation to be made about Marxism, it is that the effects of Marx's texts have had their own type of agency that has arguably outpaced their author. Rather, in a moment where Marx is being turned to in the hope of unearthing new political resources for the present, it makes sense to start with Marx's texts, carefully unpacking his work from within, before going on to see how different facets of that work are taken up and

struggled over, pitted against or paired with other voices and currents of thought, by different movements and authors in the years since his death.

Class: Process and Product

The receptional history of Marx and his interpreters within rhetorical studies shows several places at which a further conversation between the two bodies of thought would be productive. First, the questions Burke raises have not gone away – just the opposite. At a time when overt rhetorics of class struggle are even more anathema, in the US and elsewhere, than they were during the Great Depression and “communism” as a term is firmly associated with the worst excesses of the Soviet Union, the problem of how to articulate communism’s emancipatory potential in a way that will increase its following is more urgent than ever. Second, the debate over different conceptions of Marxism within rhetorical studies is fundamentally a debate over how rhetoric relates to politics, and what its role is in either representing reality for political subjects, or constituting it. In what follows, I will trace the question of the role of rhetoric in communist politics through a divide, within the Marxist tradition, between a concept of class as discovered, or brought to consciousness, and a concept of class as composed. With the exception of Burke, Greene and May, I want to argue, rhetorical scholars who have engaged with Marxism have pursued a conception of class derived from classical Marxism which sees the formation of classes as a process of apprehension of an objective reality of exploitation. By contrast, Greene and May, as well as Burke in a more tangential way, embrace a concept of class as *composed*, rather than pre-given. This alteration of the concept changes the theory of class from an epistemological project

which asks how people come to know their class position into an ethical or political one, which asks how subjects and social relations can be reworked so as to form antagonisms to capitalist exploitation.

Georg Lukacs' *History and Class Consciousness* is a landmark in Marxist thought. Lukacs is the most prominent representative of the epistemologically oriented, objectivist Marxism that has dominated rhetorical receptions of Marx. In the essay "Class Consciousness," one of the core pieces in the book, Lukacs argues that the philosophical revolution engendered by Marx's work consists of a renewed interest in history and human historical agency, coupled by a self-reflexivity as to one's historical position. Marx's theory is a "theory of theory" and a "consciousness of consciousness" which consists, "above all" in a "historical criticism".⁵⁴ This theory can be phrased in terms very like those of political style—instead of seeking the impetus behind historical change in the sum of the individual motives of those involved, Lukacs wants to ask "*What are the driving forces behind these motives? What are the historical causes which transform themselves into these motives in the brains of the actors?*"⁵⁵

So far, so good: but what does such an inventory of historical causes look like? Lukacs frames the problem as one of knowledge. False consciousness of history is first of all characterized by a failure (which may or may not, for Lukacs, be constitutive of human subjectivity generally) to grasp the total array of historical forces that are responsible for one's situation. On the one hand, people's conception of historical causes "appears[...]as something which is *subjectively* justified in the historical situation, i.e. as 'right'. At the same time, *objectively*, it bypasses the existence of the evolution of society

and fails to pinpoint it and express it adequately”.⁵⁶ In the context of the essay considered here, two factors appear as preliminary tools for overcoming this short-circuit. First, we can contextualize individual subject positions in terms of “*society as a concrete totality, the system of production at a given point in history and the resulting division of society into classes*”.⁵⁷ By “relating consciousness” to this totality, “it becomes possible to infer the thoughts and feelings which men would have in a particular situation if they were *able* to access both it and the interests arriving in it in their impact on immediate action and on the whole structure of society. That is to say, it would be possible to infer the thoughts and feelings appropriate to the objective situation.”⁵⁸ This is not a simple positivistic knowledge, but, for Lukacs, comes about through struggles, which produce ever “increasingly radical and conscious”⁵⁹ manifestations of class, which in turn more closely approximate the “authentic class consciousness of the proletariat.”⁶⁰ This authentic consciousness, in turn, will only come about through the annihilation and transcendence of the proletariat as a class, in which process the seizure of the bourgeois institutions of state power “is merely a phase.”⁶¹

Lukacs thus employs a dialectical conception of subject and object to position class as a topic of knowledge. Marx’s critical revolution, according to this view, was to provide an explanatory framework that allows the total system of production to be grasped in its historical movement and applied to specific social positions in order to figure out where these positions came from and what their meaning is in terms of relations of production. This is the second move that allows Lukacs to hold the concept of class he does. For him, the inversion of relations between people and relations between

things described at the beginning of *Capital*, vol. 1 must be progressively reversed in order to find a way through capitalism. Human society, in this view, is the “Self-objectification” of the social relations that hold in a society “at a particular stage of development.”⁶² Critics and political actors can not only map the totality of relations of production at a given time, and position historical events as products of those relations, but that totality is a fundamentally human affair; in order to grasp the totality, we must return to relations between people. Finally, although this process of knowledge acquisition must be ongoing, it oscillates around an objective point. Every class consciousness “implies a class-conditioned *unconsciousness*,”⁶³ but the proletariat (as figured in Marx’s early work) is without property in the dual sense of being stripped of the products of its labor and in the sense of gradually ceasing to possess the trappings of geographical, cultural and other identity, becoming instead an ever-closer approximation of an abstract humanity, possessed of an authentic consciousness of its situation. This dual movement—the constitution of class as a dialectical negation of the identities articulated to that class—is the heart of Lukacs’ argument.

Lukacs’ theory deserves a more nuanced reading than is possible here. The salient features of his theory, though, have migrated into rhetorical studies as the dominant version of what rhetorical Marxism looks like. For Cloud, the most vocal proponent of a Marxist-influenced rhetorical studies, the central aspect of Lukacs’ thought is its insistence on history as an objective phenomena that critics can apprehend. Dialectics is positioned as “a method of observing social changes from the local and limited to the global and momentous” and of “discovering the totality of interrelationships in which

ideas and economics coexist.”⁶⁴ Based on this perspective, the process of revolution is an ever-increasing enlightenment or consciousness of one’s place in a totality. Writing about the class consciousness of striking union activists, Cloud tells a linear story of a passage from ignorance to knowledge. After “decades of intensifying exploitation,” exposure to the ideas of unions in a way that fostered “the dialectical interplay of experience and ideas” has led workers to “understand themselves as a self-conscious class” and to adopt leadership roles to “foster class consciousness” among “divided groups of workers.”⁶⁵ Class position is objectively graspable, and one’s ability to grasp it determines the role one should play in an inevitably hierarchical class struggle.

Antonio Negri refigures class struggle in a way that provides an alternative to the above conception, while also allowing a return to political style. For Negri, an effective class politics still requires that subjects apprehend their historical position, but the marker of the fully developed form of such a politics is not recognition of totality, but rather recognition of exploitation and the necessity of antagonism as political factors. The ongoing terrain of class struggle for Negri is, on the one hand, “the fabric of command” and on the other, “material tendencies constituting themselves as the negation of command and therefore as objects of liberation.”⁶⁶ This struggle between two tendencies appears in three moments. First comes a negative moment of a “return to the human search for material wealth and intellectual perfectibility that renders negative labor a labor of self-valorization.”⁶⁷ The striving of subjects for a better life makes them realize that capitalist command, and the economic logic that pertains to it, impedes their ability to have such a life; in developing themselves, they run counter to capitalism. Second,

these isolated moments of valorization coalesce, over time, until they reach a “threshold of transformation” into a collective subject. At this level, negation becomes systematized and grasped as a systematic effort, not only to fulfill one’s material needs and demand emancipation, but to create new social relationships and to combat the capitalist partitions of time (into “work” and “leisure”) and space, and an effort to use these relationships to point beyond capitalism.⁶⁸ Finally, these collective actions produce institutions and the ongoing “experience of communism.”⁶⁹ For Negri, this means a new “rationality”, new “narratives of legitimation” which both justify the break from the old routines of capital, and generate new routines against it.⁷⁰ Taken together, Negri sees these steps as a “phenomenology of collective practice.”⁷¹ In other words, this perspective already contains the idea that politics begins at the level of the everyday habits one has, and one’s relations to other people. Any revolutionary institution worth the name will emerge from these factors rather than imposing them from above. Against a measure of greater or lesser consciousness, then, Negri offers a framework of composition that asks how collective practice works in politics.

Negri’s framework bears comparison to Lukacs’ at several points. First, as is already apparent, Negri’s project takes place in a different philosophical register entirely. Whether or not one harbors antagonisms to capital, which subsequently inspire one to organize institutions that try to destroy capital, is based very concretely (in a way that comes through clearly even given Negri’s dense philosophical vocabulary) on the fact that capital destroys lives, leaves people unable to meet material needs, and imposes changes on bodily and mental routines that, over time, disempower and depotentiate

people and nonhuman actors alike. The perspective of history that Lukacs' reading of Marx gives us perhaps provides a tool for mapping out how this works, but is less immediately tied to the necessity for struggle. Second, at least if we are comparing Negri to Cloud's version of Lukacs, the model of class composition is much less overtly hierarchical than one of consciousness. For Cloud, the test of action is knowledge—the workers who are qualified to be leaders are qualified to be so because they know, to one degree or another, how things really work. Negri can be said to reverse this model—the test of knowledge, as a heuristic framework for engaging with the world, is action, or the emancipatory work it does. Organizations of workers are effective when the collective possession of this knowledge allows the group (not just a few people) to take empowered political action and to recognize the need for an anticapitalist politics. Knowledge is secondary to political effect.

These first two points lead to a third: Negri seems much closer than Lukacs or Cloud to an acknowledgement of rhetoric and tropological style as potentially useful tools of class struggle. The fact that Negri's politics is framed as a "phenomenology" composed of collectively held desire and habit means that the narratives of political style already mentioned form one potential relay between individual phenomenological experience and the modification of that experience through participation in political struggles with other. Negri's insistence that the "subject" must serve as the politically interested "foundation of knowledge," embedded in history, yet equipped, presumably by an ongoing political practice, to "discern the tendency of the real" in a given moment and act on it.⁷² A communist style would provide a series of rhetorical tools for prompting

recognition of capitalism's patterns of exploitation (the level Burke is attempting to work at in his Writer's Congress speech) as well as for generating new forms of relation and new political institutions. Negri's general political theory (along with other, similar projects that take similar concepts as their starting point) seems to me a productive path for future work in rhetorical studies that engages with Marx or Marxism in general. The goal of this project, however, will be to develop the concept of a communist style as one resource for the type of collective composition Negri describes.

Besides the general philosophical tack it has taken, one more thing is striking about rhetorical literature on Marxism: the absence of Marx. Across the board, authors who do not discount Marx himself as a resource for rhetoric (as Aune and, in another way, Wilkie do) deal with Marx mainly through those he inspired. Cloud makes reference to Marx's early work throughout her own, focusing on *The German Ideology* most extensively, by way of linking rhetoric to ideological critique. Greene and May, while their perspective on Marxism is not confined to this early phase in Marx's thought, have not written in a sustained way about him as a political activist or philosopher. Before looking at Marx, and the historical events that inspired *The Civil War in France*, two other topics are necessary to close this chapter. Now that a preliminary connection has been drawn between political style's concern with periods of political crisis and transition and analogous concerns in Marxism, the problem of crisis and the new can be usefully revisited. Following this, I will close by discussing how both of these problems relate to the problem of the Paris Commune's legacy and political significance.

Collective Style and the Problem of the New

Negri provides a beautifully written and philosophically nuanced theory of how individual experience is conditioned by a collective phenomenology and how that collective phenomenology may be made to do work in order to create emancipatory political projects. The problem of the transition to communism in its actuality, though, has plagued Marxism in all of its forms, from the Commune and the Soviet Union to, more recently, the radical movements that took place across the US and Europe in the 1960s and 70s. While it will obviously not be possible to solve this problem over the course of my project, this is precisely a first place where Marx's writing on the Commune is helpful. Marx's address on the legacy of this revolutionary body marks it as a point of unfinished transition between capitalism and communism; he is thus prompted, throughout the text, to reflect on the nature of this transition as part of a larger historical (and rhetorical) process. The bodies of literature discussed so far also give a few useful ways of framing the problem of transition.

One of the most pressing questions to emerge from Negri's work is that of how individual experience can be made to merge with collective experience. Negri describes revolutionary experience as a "phenomenology," a term usually applied more to individuals than collectivities. How does this phenomenology work, and what is its relationship to collective political expression? One answer may be found in classical literature on style. Longinus' *On the Sublime*, one of the most philosophically interesting of the early rhetorical treatises on style, is an effusive, almost hyperbolic discussion of the "grand," as opposed to the plain or middle style in classical rhetoric.⁷³ Describing the "genius" characteristic of this style, Longinus writes that its "effect is not to persuade the

audience, but rather to transport them out of themselves.”⁷⁴ The sublime fills its hearers “with joy and pride, as if we ourselves had produced the very thing we had heard.”⁷⁵ A “well-timed flash of sublimity shatters everything like a flash of lightning and reveals the full power of the speaker at a single stroke.”⁷⁶

Despite his focus on the “high style” of speaking, Longinus’ concept of the sublime may be extended to cover political style more generally. The sublime produces effects, specifically those of joy and pride; it predisposes us to a particular relationship to the speaker. Most notably, though, the sublime both transports those exposed to it out of themselves and returns them to the security of phenomenological consciousness. But they return with something added—the ideas of the speaker, newly sutured to their own train of thought as if they had thought of the speakers’ words themselves. Transposed into a much more contemporary philosophical idiom, the sublime (or indeed any political style which seeks, paraphrasing Aune, to destabilize rather than cement existing relations of power) works as a point of enfolding of new practices and habits from outside the subject into its inside.⁷⁷ Political styles seeking change (either because they are revolutionary or merely incipient, and have not yet caught on) must produce this feeling of having produced the style’s staple tropes and mentalities from within. The machine-like process of subjective habit continues as usual after such an experience, but with a difference; these new tropes and styles of thought, this new desire and sense of what properly goes with what appears as one’s own. More specifically, a communist style would affect this enfolding in the way Negri describes. The enfolding in this case would be that of recognition of exploitation (in a perhaps traumatic way at first), but in the long term, it

would also involve moments of collective realization that constitute the “collective corporeality”⁷⁸ or experience of communism, and inculcate a desire for more in the future.

Longinus allows an outline of how collective tropes affect, and become part of, those who are subject to them. This is one level at which the transition to, or emergence of, new styles takes place. What does this transition look like from the perspective of habits, though? Without wishing to draw too close a parallel between their respective vocabularies, political style can draw one possible solution from psychoanalysis. In “The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis,” Jacques Lacan writes of a successful interpretation (on the part of the analyst) as a kind of punctuation or, to employ Bruce Fink’s⁷⁹ terminology, a scansion, as in the metrical progression of a poem. The poem upon which interpretation works is history; more specifically the analysand’s idea of historical events as they inform who he or she is, and what his or her motives are. Analysis helps the analysand “complete the current historicization of the facts that have already determined a certain number of the historical ‘turning points’ in his existence.”⁸⁰ This fundamentally means that the facts of one’s experience—which have no inherent meaning or ethical valence in themselves—will nonetheless have meaning for particular subjects. Lacan’s tellingly non-clinical example of this is a riot, remembered by some as “a victory or defeat for the Parliament or the Court” and “at another moment as a victory or defeat for the proletariat or bourgeoisie,” depending on who is doing the remembering and what symbolic (tropological) resources they have at their disposal.⁸¹ This gives the other side of the problem Longinus outlines; discourses can take us outside of

themselves, but they do not interact with a tabula rasa. Instead, they work with the ensemble of things which have happened to those who experience the style, allowing those subjects to “assume” their history in a new way,⁸² to craft a different version of the person they will have been given the events they experienced, and to see the “emergence of truth into reality”⁸³; a new ensemble of motives and perspectives on events. Political style is a transitional tool in that it serves as a similar, less situationally specific vocabulary of punctuation. The habits of a style work to change the habits of those who experience it, the discursive phrases they are more or less likely to use. They also work at the level of narrative, in Burke’s phrase, of “attitudes toward history,” and hence at the level of what motivates us and what we desire. This means that a particular set of tropes, while potentially existing on paper in a grammar or speaking manual, acquire new life when they are attached to, and acquire significance for, the personal (and collective) histories and memories of those who hear them, and become something much more than particular arrangements of language.

Scaling up one final time: political style effects individual narratives of history (which will always be composed of collective resources anyway)—at a geopolitical level, though, styles can also effect world history. Kenneth Burke describes human attitudes toward history as a series of overlapping “collective poems” which determine a historical moment’s “frames of acceptance and rejection,” the symbolic paths available to either acquiesce to the current state of things or protest it.⁸⁴ Burke, like Lacan and Hariman, sees stylistic tropes as constitutive of subjectivity, providing “a rationale of imaginative and conceptual imagery that ‘locates’ the various aspects of experience” and provides a

set of tools for articulating one's motives and personal history.⁸⁵ Burke adds to these authors a sense of crisis—though style structures motives, and hence relations of production, “as the productive order changes,” styles must “adjust themselves accordingly.”⁸⁶ Both those who insist on clinging to old frameworks for their motives and those possessed of new frameworks feel their distance from the comfortable center of the historical moment as ““alienation”” and “impoverishment,” both literal and metaphorical, as “traditional style becomes an insignia of privilege” and a way of performatively enacting such privilege.⁸⁷ Burke draws on examples from immigrants to a new culture who are disciplined into adapting the gestures of the dominant culture to fit in⁸⁸ to the simple “trained incapacities” of speech and gesture occasioned by Fordist factory work and repeated exposure to the clichés of capitalist media culture. Burke thus also makes the interaction between tropes and specifically bodily habit clear; styles do not just determine habits of speech, but patterns of thought, gesture, and, over time, our capacities and sense of “what a body can do.”⁸⁹

Put another way: what is the relationship between particular formal organizations and the content of a given text? This question has been answered in a myriad of ways by different authors in the Marxist tradition, from Lukacs' discussion of literary realism as a process of mapping the “types” of character which make up the “center” of a given historical moment.⁹⁰ Conversely, political thinkers writing in the wake of poststructuralism, such as Jacques Ranciere, have explored the political potentials of the malleability of the form/content distinction. Ranciere writes that a distinction between an implicitly higher-level form and a more or less passive content is, put simply, a power

relation. Attacking the distinction allows the practice of an “aesthetic free play” that calls into question the distinction between people “of coarse senses and those of refined senses” and, hence, the political equality inherent in judgments of taste and distinctions between high and low culture. The problem raised in the wake of this move is one of precision—if we grant Ranciere’s point, what concepts are left with which to think and talk about art, beyond judging its ability to shatter distinctions?⁹¹

Fredric Jameson provides one useful answer, synthesizing both of these general trends of thought by pairing form and content off as parts of a dialectical process of encoding. On the one hand, per the critical gesture of formalism, literary genres, technical idioms and other formal “codes” translate the content they treat according to the idiom in question, in a way that makes the form an “explanatory code” for the material assembled. A form can thus be held to structure its content, politically and otherwise. On the other, though, the “content” of a text (its phrases, words, and other “raw material”) are not inert. Instead, texts are composed of the “very components of our concrete social life itself,”⁹² the idioms, words, historical references, people, and places that make up a concrete historical milieu, and that are already structured by their history. The distinction between form and content is, in practice, blurry, but it forms a useful heuristic for describing power relations (who or what is coded and who or what is doing the coding) and a device for intervening in them. In a sense, Jameson clarifies Burke’s point, adding the caveat that there is no “natural” material (whether that be bodies adapting to new gestures or texts cut up for citation); everything is produced by its context. Jameson writes about literary criticism here, but his words equally describe the ways that less self-consciously

aesthetic styles coalesce and interact. Styles are “coherent” repertoires, because they take the components of our communicative and aesthetic lives, already shaped by a diversity of historical forces, and overcode them, seeking to order them into a set of stable relationships. In so doing, though, they become one of the historical forces ordering different milieu, linguistic and otherwise; in turn, they generate raw material for further future citation and use.

Longinus, Lacan, Burke and Jameson allow the problem of change from one style to another to be more fully explored. The first point these authors contribute is a sense of how styles interface or engage with the habits that their subjects are already subject to—how styles engage with previous styles. New habits must work over old habits, as well as the particular events that make up the person’s life who is folded into the style. Burke’s work makes clear the tension that can manifest, whether as alienation, guilt, or, in more positive terms, simple surprise at the new as one’s habits change, to a greater or lesser degree in or out of step with the habits of those around one. This leads to a second point—the transition to a new style will appear, to the one who undergoes it, as a moment of crisis. This crisis may be empowering, it may be productive. All the same, one is taken outside of oneself, in some ways literally becoming a new subject, with new motives, desires, and sense of one’s own history and what one can do. Finally, this model scales up. One can use political style as a vocabulary for describing a drastic change in an individual subjectivity. The changes that work or do not work in a given context, though, are imbricated in a larger web of production processes, some semantic, some not. Political style thus takes place in the context of a larger historical moment, as well as a

symbolic ensemble that offers certain styles up as “insignia of privilege” and represses others, or forecloses them entirely. In order to give this historical framework more concretion, to set it to work, it is now time to turn to Marx and the Commune.

The Importance of the Paris Commune

Studying the Commune, and Marx’s intervention regarding it is important for two main reasons. First of all, though it failed to radically alter the French political system, the Commune was a catalytic moment for twentieth century radical politics. As one of the last events in which the International Working Men’s Association (hereafter the First International) had a direct role, the defeat of the Commune and Marx’s reaction to it set up debates over state power, revolution versus reform, and the question of nationalism that dominated much of the next several decades of debate within the international communist community. Moreover, subsequent political organizations inspired by Marxism have frequently taken the Commune as a key point in revolutionary history. Marx’s legacy, from 1871 to the present, contains the Commune as a key moment of context and a pivotal event.

Studying the Commune is also important because of its impact on Marx’s own life and thought. Etienne Balibar characterizes this impact by arguing that it was one of a handful of true crises for Marx’s thought, a point where he encountered the “bad side of history,”⁹³ a defeat as well as evidence that class-based social movements’ attempts to spur along the movement of history have produced, not progress, but only blood and more blood, “have served not to liberate the exploited but only to establish law and order.”⁹⁴ As Balibar figures it, the only avenue out if one accepts this view is the

messianic hope for a “caesura or unforeseeable interruption of time”.⁹⁵ This experience was a crisis for Marx, which sent him into a deep depression. Consonantly, though, the speech’s figuration of the Commune as a “Sphinx” in its opening pages signals that Marx views the Commune as a problem of history, not a nihilistic solution to it. My reading of the speech will be a reading of how Marx diagrams this problem and how his own crisis can help those working with the same problem today think through structurally analogous crises of the political left.

The following five chapters of my dissertation will each take a different aspect of Marx’s intervention as a starting point for thinking about how a communist style functioned in Marx’s time and might usefully function in the present. Chapter 2 will provide a brief account of what happened in Paris between March and May of 1871, providing background to Marx’s speech for readers unfamiliar with the events of the Paris Commune. It will also situate my reading of Marx’s speech in relation to subsequent interpretations of the Commune, by both scholars and militants, which work in conversation or tension with Marx’s project. Finally, through a discussion of the shifts in tone and style from Marx’s drafts to the final version of *The Civil War in France*, I will offer some initial thoughts on the relationship between Marx the philosopher and Marx the political writer. Chapter 3 will show how the concept of class composition outlined so far works in Marx’s text, focusing on Marx’s intervention in the immediate political question of the Commune. I will argue that the primary tool Marx uses to compose class in *The Civil War in France* is that of debt. On the one hand, he instructs his audiences in the ways debt has been used as a tool of exploitation. On the other,

through the idea that those affected by the Commune owe it a “debt of gratitude” for pointing the way out of this exploitation, Marx articulates debt as a tool for linking different political experiences together around a common cause. Marx’s use of debt will also find purchase in the present, as it helps work through some of the political questions about debt raised in the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis.

In Chapters 4 and 5 of the text, I will tackle the temporal tension between Marx’s moment and our own head on. By many conventional political standards, the Paris Commune was an utter failure; indeed, many authors have argued that it was not even all that communist. In Chapter 4, I will argue that Marx, writing just days after the Commune ends, realizes this. Rather than settling the factual question of whether the Commune “worked” or not, he attempts to secure its political legacy, priming it, through his speech to be picked up and rescued over and over again by future political movements. In so doing, I argue that Marx develops a rhetorical strategy that in many ways does the work of much of the philosophy of history that has sprung up in his wake. Chapter 5 shows that Marx’s rhetoric of history has a counterpart in his rhetoric of community. In this chapter, I attempt to show that his concept of community provides a way of negotiating current discourses of the crisis of community, further expanding the implications for contemporary politics of the philosophy of history discussed in Chapter 4. Finally, I conclude by taking these three concepts—debt, history, community—as facets of a single style, and sum up some of the salient features of Marx’s style as it manifests in *The Civil War in France*.

Chapter 2: Marx and the Legacy of the Commune

What was the Commune? This question has been answered in many different ways in the nearly 150 years since its rise and fall. The best answer was perhaps provided by Leon Trotsky, who wrote in 1921 that “each time we study the history of the Commune, we see it from a different aspect,” our perspective unavoidably informed by what followed it—all the global revolutions of the twentieth, as well as the twenty-first centuries,¹ from Russia to China and Algiers, many of whom took the Commune as an explicit historical point of departure. Even before the sound of the shots had faded, though, a chorus of voices had begun to offer their interpretation of the Commune’s significance. Marx’s speech, as he himself describes it, already joined a “multiplicity of interpretations” offered by sympathetic and hostile observers alike.²

Before turning to the significance of Marx’s interpretation of the Commune, then, it will be helpful to outline the events of March-May 1871, as well as provide a sketch of the ways the Commune has been read since. In the first part of this chapter, I will attempt to fill in those aspects of the background of Marx’s speech that are necessary to understand it. In the second part, I will, through reading Marx’s drafts for *The Civil War in France*, try to establish some central questions for discussing Marx’s style.

The Paris Commune of 1871

The series of great events which is known under the above name is a remarkable instance of the tendency of history to pass into fable. When it happened, it produced the most profound impression on the civilized world: it is but fifteen years since it happened, and yet in the time in which we are writing, it has become to most people a mere myth, at best a symbol or token of thing which some fear most, others hate most, and from which some hope most.

-E. Belfort Bax, Victor Dave and William Morris, *A Short Account of the Paris Commune of 1871*³

This quote, from the introduction to an 1886 pamphlet by English utopian thinker William Morris, exemplifies the Commune's hold on subsequent generations of historians and political thinkers, as well as the degree to which accounts of the Commune, even soon after its end, are unavoidably partisan. In part, this is a simple issue of historical record. Almost all the primary sources in existence on the Commune are either memoirs or histories by Communards (most of whom lost friends and their own livelihoods fighting for it), interpretations by subsequent partisans who consider the Commune significant, or stories produced by the newspapers and propagandists of those at Versailles who crushed the Commune⁴. It is also a matter of something else: Morris' quote attests to the fact that commentators of whatever stripe did not know what to do with the Commune when it appeared; it became a "token," "symbol," or "fable" for those who encountered it. In Marx, who is at least as aware as Morris of this tendency, even in the Commune's immediate aftermath, it is a "sphinx."⁵ However he may have been aware of this tendency, though, Marx could not avoid it. His speech forms a part of the imaginal cacophony that followed the Commune; thus, as a background for the speech, it makes sense to provide the reader with a basic idea of the Commune's rise and fall, and of its day-to-day existence.

Any historical account of the causes of the Commune risks becoming rapidly unmanageable. Many layers of history inhere in it, from the medieval Communes which contain the first substantial precedent for the type of local, direct popular government the Commune enacted, to the hopes and fears that surrounded the French revolution of 1789,

to the dynastic squabbles that dominated much of seventeenth and nineteenth century French politics. While I will explain other aspects of the Commune's history as needed throughout the course of the project, here I will briefly treat two of the most immediate sources of the Commune's emergence: the politics and culture of the French Second Empire (with its mixture of Napoleonic dictatorship and parliamentary republic) and the Franco-Prussian War and attendant siege on Paris, which led to both the Commune and the installation into power of those who crushed it.

Elaborate and lavish, the "extraordinary panoramic babel" of the Paris Exhibition of 1867 stands as a useful metonymy for the Second Empire.⁶ One in a line of several global festivals designed to showcase Paris and France as capitals of world culture, art, and technical prowess, and to host the achievements of others, the celebration featured operatic and dramatic premieres, new military technology (including, ominously, a new model of cannon brought from Germany that would make an impression in France in an entirely different way in a few years) produced in France or brought by dignitaries from the other countries in attendance to show their own national splendor. All this pomp had its darker side. The lavishness concealed abject poverty in much of the city. The larger prosperity that flowed into Paris during the late 1860's came accompanied by an ideology of "*enriches-vous*" focused on self-reliance and personal economic advancement, and a series of urban reforms orchestrated by city planner Georges Haussmann demolished buildings to make for straighter, newly paved streets and open areas. The reforms were explicitly designed to facilitate easy consumption in one of the increasing number of department stores in the city, and to make Paris easier to navigate, but they were also,

crucially, designed to forestall revolt, such as that which had occurred in 1848, and make controlling riots easier.⁷ One major economic consequence of these developments was that (in a city-wide wave of gentrification) “rents roughly doubled” during the 1860’s; by 1870, they consumed one-third of the average worker’s annual income.⁸ An influx of luxury goods likewise raised food prices, so that few could afford to eat well. Another major consequence was a destruction of community. Whereas in the old days, different streets coexisted in an intimacy “reminiscent of village life,” community at the end of the Second Empire had collapsed into a “kind of resentful apartheid” between the city’s poorer districts and its affluent ones.⁹

At the center of this mass of tensions stood Louis Bonaparte, also called Napoleon III. Napoleon’s nephew, this moderately intelligent but in general thoroughly unremarkable figure had been elected by vote of universal (male) suffrage following the uprisings of 1848, and had promptly, through a new constitution, moved almost all power to the executive and set about attempting to recapture his uncle’s glory. France still possessed a parliament during this time, but all power to propose legislation (as well as final veto power) was Louis’. In addition to enjoying the excesses available to the Emperor of a powerful country, Louis also focused on measures (including urban restructuring in Paris) to improve France’s place in the international market, and embarked on a number of military adventures. In 1870, with power waning due to popular discontent and suffering from a kidney stone, Louis embarked upon the Franco-Prussian war, his most costly military undertaking and his undoing as a ruler.

The war helped the Second Empire to speedy ruin. Incensed over a diplomatic dispute regarding the candidates for the Spanish throne, Louis impulsively and bombastically declared war against Prussia, then the most professionally trained and organized (and one of the best funded) military forces on the planet, headed up by an executive—Otto von Bismarck—who was an ardent career soldier.¹⁰ Outmatched by technologically superior armament and hamstrung by an inefficient and highly centralized system of communication, the French suffered a series of crushing defeats, culminating in Louis' capture at Sedan in early September of 1870 (barely six weeks into the war). In the aftermath of the Emperor's surrender, and in significant part as a response to pressure from the Parisian left, the remnants of the Imperial government proclaimed a Republic from the Hotel de Ville, Paris' city hall. A hodgepodge of former ministers and parliamentarians scrambled to fill the new government, and what remained of France's military infrastructure continued an increasingly futile fight with Prussia. Adolphe Theiers, a historian and center-left Republican member of the lower house of Parliament (then called the Chamber of Deputies) became President; Jules Favre, a lawyer and another member of the Chamber of Deputies became foreign minister and vice president. Dubbed the Government of National Defense, the newly minted regime had the mandate of negotiating peace with Prussia, followed by new elections. Over the next several months, as the Prussians continued to lay siege to Paris, a truce was negotiated to France's massive detriment: France would cede most of what is now Alsace and Lorraine, and reimburse Prussia for costs incurred during the war. By late winter of 1871, the war had ended.

During the months of siege, France's primary military force was the Parisian National Guard. Originally a volunteer force, and expanded by compulsory conscription following the inception of the new government, the Guard had grown from 24,000 members to around 90,000¹¹ and had been outfitted with cannons and materials to fortify the city. By the war's end, its members had endured months of starvation, cold and general privation. Paris grew violently divided, as the far left, suspicious of the new government, predicted that a capitulation to Prussia would be orchestrated that would allow those currently occupying executive posts to maintain them and to profit, insofar as they could, from the war. Following the truce (ratified on January 24th), the rioting and tensions that had plagued Paris during the last days of the war began to settle as, gradually, food began to reach the capital once more. All that changed with the elections on February 8th—the Parisian left was dealt a defeat “only less terrible than that of the occupation, and henceforth the peace-seeking, conservative country squires would become paired with the Prussian conquerors.”¹² The ignominy for the left was only worsened by the fact that the election had been carried, overwhelmingly, by small landholders and peasants, many of whom had helped Louis Napoleon into power two decades earlier. Not only did the government of National Defense remain in power (thus ensuring that the terms of the surrender stood), but political power in France shifted from Paris to the provinces and from republicans (radical or not) to a mixture of Bonapartists and royalists, who continued to purpose republican rhetoric to their own ends.

Tensions in Paris came to a head in early March. As part of the truce, the Parisian National Guard were to be disarmed, handing their rifles and cannon over to the national

government (and hence to the Prussians). While some members of the Guard were amenable to the truce (and while much of the rest of the country supported the newly elected national government), many, especially in Paris, were not. Thinking that even the most reticent districts would give their guns up without a fight, Thiers sent a minimal number of troops through the city to reclaim them. On the morning of March 16th, the uprising began at Montmartre, when a crowd of protesters blocked the removal of the guns. Initially, the force sent by the government had been sufficient to control the guns, but, in a “piece of unbelievable incompetence[...]had come without the teams of horses needed to tow the guns away.”¹³ As a larger crowd gathered, those loyal to the government were overwhelmed. By midmorning, many of them had defected, and the protests turned violent. Dragged from his horse, General Lecomte, who had headed the initial force, was taken up by the mob and dragged through the streets to another, larger national guard post. Along the way, the crowd grew, picking up a second captive—General Clément Thomas. Thomas was responsible for some of the worst military excesses of the uprising of 1848, and had several times ordered Parisian citizens to be fired upon to crush strikes or insurrections. Upon their arrival at the guard post in Rue de Rosiers, both generals were beaten, forced into the courtyard of the post, and clumsily shot.¹⁴ Realizing they were overwhelmed, Thiers, Favre, and the rest of the national government fled to Versailles, leaving the city to the insurrection, which proclaimed itself the Paris Commune after one of the phases of the revolutionary government of the 1790s. The battle for Paris had begun.

Occupying the Hotel de Ville, and picking up the shards of the administrative apparatus left by Thiers and Co., the Communards set out to put together their new municipal government,¹⁵ headed by an elected Central Committee composed of delegates from the various Parisian neighborhoods. The first days of the Commune were taken up with debating violence, both that of the previous several days, and that to come. On the one hand, debate raged over the killing of the two generals—“neither the Comité Central nor any individual Red leader bore responsibility for the spontaneous act of mob frenzy—but could they repudiate it?”¹⁶ On the other, a bundle of questions arose regarding Thiers and the rest of the national government, now at Versailles, though still in disarray. Should the Commune storm Versailles right away, and capture or kill those they found? Should they attempt to negotiate? Moderates among the deputies pointed out that Paris had no legal right to secede, and campaigned for the Hotel de Ville to be handed over to the mayors of the various Parisian *arrondissements*, in exchange for hoped-for concessions, on the part of the Assembly, of increased Parisian autonomy, and new municipal elections. In the end, the Hotel de Ville was occupied until March 26th, when Paris voted the Commune into power as municipal authority. With great circumstance and so much joy that “all Paris seemed to be cheering wildly,”¹⁷ the Commune installed itself, and set about the business of learning how to run the city.

The indecision that occurred as a result of the negotiations in these initial days would be the Communards’ undoing. After the initial reluctance to go to war, the *Versillais* regrouped and Theirs petitioned the Prussians for money, weapons and amnesty for enough imprisoned French soldiers to crush the revolt. Bismarck obliged,

allowing the French to delay the first installment of their payment of the war debt until Paris fell, and providing a modicum of military support. While the Communards, once they realized that any semblance of good faith on the part of the national government would not be forthcoming, began an offensive in early April, winning a few victories in skirmishes in the Parisian suburbs, their military efforts were too little, too late.¹⁸ By April 12, a sizeable yet ragtag army of National Guards loyal to the Assembly and army regulars had begun a second siege on Paris, which would culminate at the end of the month in what would become known as the *semaine sanglante*, or bloody week. Its violence would make much of the war pale in comparison. The ruthlessness of the *Versillais* army was compounded by a number of factors: A carefully orchestrated propaganda campaign on the part of much of the French national press depicted the Communards as traitors to French identity and as criminals, looting, pillaging and burning Paris. The fighters were already traumatized by the previous several months of war; many had either undergone personal horrors as battles raged throughout France, or, as part of the regular French army, had spent several months as prisoners of war.

Radical historian and Commune Olivier Prosper Lissagaray, describing the Commune a few days before the battle reached the center of Paris, puts readers in the mind of a hypothetical Parisian, out for a walk around the city. He takes us from the Bastille and the “deafening” shouts of the paper-sellers clustered around it¹⁹ to Père Lachaise cemetery, surrounded at the four corners by the red flag of the Commune, where widows and members of the Central Committee alike look on as funeral processions, paid for by the Commune, carry its dead to be buried.²⁰ As Lissagaray’s narrator proceeds

farther toward the outskirts of the city, the sounds of battle draw nearer. Skeletons loll stacked in front of churches, Parisians loiter in front of cafés for want of food to eat, and buildings stand draped in red (for the Commune) or black (for mourning). Finally, we tour the battle-zone: walls knocked down to make new passages through the city, and streets piled with turf and debris to create an ever-shifting landscape of barricades.²¹ Every step towards the barricades “is a challenge to the death,”²² but one accompanied by comrades in arms—Parisians and foreign supporters of the Commune remaining to die, though “all the rooms are perforated by shells.”²³ In view of the Seine, at the edge of the city, “a clear sky, a bright sun, peaceful silence envelop this stream, this wreck, these scattered shells. Death appears more cruel against the serenity of nature.”²⁴ In the evenings, the theatres open for a last few nights of revelry, and the Marseillaise can be heard accompanied by organ notes and “ecstatic declamations” of preachers and speechmakers.²⁵ Over the next week, pressing toward the center of the city “the army wreaked on Paris revenge for its defeats,” lined up the citizens of Paris against walls and shot them, and then desecrated their corpses, stabbing them with bayonets and broken bottles, and cutting “‘assassin,’ ‘thief,’ ‘drunkard’” into their flesh.²⁶ By May 24th, most of the city (at least, that which had not burned in the battles) had fallen, and the last vestiges of authority of the Central Committee had slipped away.²⁷ In an act of desperation, some of the Communards still in control of portions of the city began to execute hostages, culminating in the death of the Archbishop of Paris. After the Communards surrendered, and in retaliation for the deaths of Lecomte, Thomas, and Archbishop, as well as the perceived destruction of the city by the Commune, most were

taken to Père Lachaise or one of the city's other cemeteries, put against walls and "mowed down."²⁸

Conservative estimates of the carnage during the Commune put the death toll at between 20,000 and 25,000,²⁹ far greater than either that of the siege on Paris during the war (around 6,000) or the Terror that had gripped France at the close of the previous century. Only around 790 of those deaths occurred on the side of the National troops; the rest were Parisian citizens and guardsmen. The ferocity of the National army's response was in part, as Robert Tombs has discussed, a product of a propaganda campaign that deployed French values of liberty, the sacredness of private property, and nationalist sentiment to demonize the Communards; the deaths were conceived of as just retaliation.³⁰ It was also meant to be an example to the extraparliamentary French left. In the words of Thiers just after the Commune fell, the ground "strewn with[...]corpses" served as a warning to subsequent generations contemplating revolt. The ensuing decades would see the erection of the Sacre-Coeur, a religious tribute to the dead, and (along with the reminders left by blasted masonry and bullet-holes) a few more poignant reminders of the spring of 1871: the many graves, tombs of the Commune's leaders, and a simple plaque on the wall of Père Lachaise, dedicated "*Aux Morts de Commune*" [to the dead of the Commune], now surrounded by the remains of "rusty iron prongs" at one time used to hold commemorative wreaths.³¹

Accessing the full rhetorical force of Marx's speech requires that all this be fresh in the minds of its readers: the layers of rust flecked away, the dusty, burnt smell of gunpowder not yet entombed into the stones of the walls, the blood only just dry. Marx

gave his speech only a few days after the Commune fell, and in a climate of ferocious urgency. The trope of foreign conspiracy (with the International at its center) had been a core part of the *Versillais* propaganda, and its members in other countries stood to stand or fall with their Parisian comrades. On June 6, a few days after Marx's speech, Jules Favre, France's Foreign Minister, "issued a circular to all European Powers, calling them to hunt down the International Working Men's Association"³² along with the Commune's other defenders. Those throughout Europe who were ambivalent about the Commune, or those who had supported it but did not directly take part in the battle, were waiting for this larger debate to play out, for history to pronounce its judgment. Pronounce, it has, in both subsequent revolutionary debates and in a number of academic disciplines. Understanding the place of Marx's speech in this judgment requires a turn to this literature before beginning to discuss the speech itself.

Space, Class, Movement

Academic literature on the Commune has largely focused on its nature as an occupation of space; first and foremost, Parisians took over their city, and held it for the better part of two months. This debate over space intersects with discussions about the Commune's causes, specifically whether class played a role in it at all. Sociologist Roger Gould, in his study of the differences between the 1848 revolutions in France and the Commune, argues that whereas 1848 had its ideological center in "the industrial centers of eastern Paris", and those involved in it were primarily recruited on the basis of their identity as workers or their membership in workers' societies that formed the precursors to unions in France,³³ 1871 took its cue more from a desire for Parisian autonomy and

self-determination than any avowed socialist agenda. Citing the decline in membership in workers' societies in the intervening years (punctuated by intermittent legal restrictions on assembly and organized labor), sociological data that showed "cross-class inclusiveness" and a lack of homogeneity in the neighborhoods most involved in the Commune, and the absence of socialist or communist rhetoric in many neighborhoods of Paris at the time,³⁴ Gould argues that the Commune was a "multidimensional world of crossed purposes and digressions."³⁵ The crux of these purposes is "the collective identity of an urban community defined in opposition to the state"³⁶ rather than the class analyses represented by Marxian thinkers of urban space, more generally, and of the Commune more specifically.

The stakes of Gould's position are significant. If the Commune is not about class, then the claims of Marx, and his subsequent readers, that it represents a precedent for revolutionary government, are moot because they are simply wrong. A few intuitive objections present themselves, however. First, Gould equates class with an avowed conscious discourse. For him, the stated intentions of, and empirical data available about, those who participated in the Commune are self-evident enough for commentators to say what the revolution is "about." This brings us back to the more traditionally Marxist position I outlined in my first chapter and adds a further complication to it: if class is a self-evident reality, then subsequent readers of the situation, be they scholars attempting to assign significance to a given event or rhetors attempting to intervene in its historical reception or use it to incite political action, are unable to intervene to say what an event will have meant in the future. History becomes an empirical dead letter, not even citable

(as in Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire*) as a rhetorical raiment for future historical events, let alone readable (as Trotsky asks us to do) in light of its subsequent political legacy. In disavowing class in the Commune, Gould disavows rhetoric; he also negates history's political utility for future readers. Even granting that empirical data is enough to tip this argument one way or another (which the arguments about class as composition from Chapter 1 would dispute), future readers of the Commune have made it about class, specifying its political significance for the present in those terms. Moreover, Gould adopts an uncritical perspective on what "class" means, focusing only on then-normal structures of industrial working-class life. Recalling Marx's definitional sketch of class, cited in Chapter 1, as a condition of exploitation combined with a "mode of life and culture" conducive to resisting exploitation, it is clear that Gould is at best myopic—even if he proves that the Commune was not uniformly dominated by workers, as Bakunin³⁷ among other contemporary commentators also noted, he has not proved that resistance to the National Assembly does not also constitute a resistance to exploitation, whether it is framed in terms of working-class subjectivity or not.

Literature on the Commune and space standing in tension to Gould's account allows an expansion of these concerns. In providing a complex picture of the space of the Commune (with a focus on artistic production) Kristin Ross' *The Emergence of Social Space* allows us to complicate readings of rhetoric produced during the Commune. Though she does not extensively interact with Marx's work, Ross sees the Commune as an "apocalyptic" protest against the authoritarian administration of political life in all its forms, ranging from the careful urban planning of Haussmanization, to the rampant

consumerism in Paris, to the incipiently dominant political form of the nation-state.³⁸ Focusing on the art and scholarly production produced in and around the Commune, in particular the work of Arthur Rimbaud, Ross sees the Commune (whether its published political documents attest to it or not) as a machine for generating a new type of subjectivity, opposed to “commerce, family, work and other principles of egoistic conservation.”³⁹ Put differently, in words from another of Ross’ books, the Commune represented a demand for “equality[...]as something that emerges in the course of the struggle and is verified subjectively, declared and experienced in the here and now, as what it is and not as what it should be.”⁴⁰ As something that fundamentally called the vocabularies we have for talking about politics into question (reliant as they are on hierarchy and stable positionality), the Commune is not reducible to them; rather it solicits the creation of vocabularies we do not have, for a politics that does not yet exist, notes continually revised as circumstances demand. “Sociology” (and, more specifically, Gould), installing itself as the agency that “[brings]the Commune to trial after the fact, to be measured, categorized and contained”⁴¹ lacks even an epistemological leg to stand on insofar as class is an emergent and processual creature rather than an empirically verifiable and static one.

If Ross takes us from an empirical reading of the Commune to a poetic one, David Harvey helps rearticulate Gould’s reading of the Commune as an assertion of urban identity in the context of class analysis. Harvey is one of Gould’s targets in *Insurgent Identities*; his early work on urban development and modernity is taken to task as attempting to uncritically re-read appeals to community made during the Commune as

“merely an artifact of the way that capitalism had transformed the urban environment,”⁴² in contrast to a perspective which sees class and urban development as separate, competing frameworks. In his later work, though, Harvey provides a productive rejoinder. The inhabitants of Paris, socialist or not, were “reclaiming the right to the city they had collectively helped produce.”⁴³ Harvey focuses in particular on the participation of artisans (especially the stonemasons enlisted to implement Hausmann’s reorganization of the city) in the later revolutionary effort⁴⁴ and on Paris as a “space of transformational politics” that allows experimentation with new political forms and ways of relating to one another.⁴⁵ The larger argument is that distinctions such as Gould’s, once again, rely on an undertheorized concept of class. Parisians’ demand to the “right to the city”, to collective control over, organization of, and democratic administration within their urban environment, does not rely on a rhetorical appeal to the proletariat construed in the narrowest sense; it includes artisans, the unemployed, and others who defy this category, and are readily categorizeable in terms of Parisian identity as Gould does.⁴⁶ It is still class-based, however, in the expansive sense of being a collectively organized project, on the part of those exploited as part of social production and reproduction (the “caregivers and teachers, the subway and sewer repairmen, the plumbers and electricians”, etc.) to level political hierarchies, disrupt established social formations, and establish collective control over urban space.⁴⁷

The Commune and the Problem of the State

Among those who settle the question of whether the Commune was a class-based or a purely urban revolt in favor of the former, the insurrection (and Marx’s reading of it)

have been discussed primarily in terms of the valence of the nation-state for revolutionary politics. Debate over the valence of state politics in the Commune has at least as many implications for its meaning as debates over class: whether state power and revolutionary politics go together determines whether the slow, popularly-driven debates of the Commune's early days were a mistake, whether the Commune would have been better off seizing more of France's financial and bureaucratic apparatus, and what attitudes could have been taken to reaching out to foreign aid, among other issues. Moreover, it determines whether the terrain of state politics is the most viable (or the only) terrain for inquiring into the Commune's political significance.

Perhaps the most famous of these interpreters of the Commune is Lenin. Lenin spends several chapters of *The State and Revolution*, one of his most widely read works, on the Commune, Marx's interpretation of it, and Engels' subsequent statements about state politics, which Lenin reads as "supplementary clarifications" of Marx and the experience of the Commune, whether they are explicitly so or not.⁴⁸ Lenin's reading of the Commune is inseparable from Marx's interpretation of it, particularly the maxim that "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and deploy it for its own purposes."⁴⁹ In a polemic against bids for conventional political power whose principal target is Karl Kautsky, Lenin argues that Marx's main lesson is that in any successful revolution, "the working class must *break up, smash* the 'ready-made state apparatus'"⁵⁰ rather than attempting to seize it whole. What emerges from the pieces is unclear—Lenin remarks that Marx expected the "experience" of future workers' movements⁵¹ to solve the problems of political organization he outlined. However, he

also takes Marx's description of the financial and political measures enacted during the Commune as an index of its successes and failures. Lenin highlights the reduction in civil servants' salaries, and the implementation of universal suffrage and the Commune system, but also remarks that "it did not react with enough decisiveness,"⁵² either politically (to suppress bourgeois elements in the Central Committee) or economically (the Commune's decision not to seize the Bank of Paris and its reluctance to expropriate land and resources). In the Commune, Marx discovered the "future" of politics, but he (and the Communards) failed to institutionalize or fully realize this future.

Lenin's account is a useful discussion of the problem of state institutions in the transition to communism. A focus on the state, though, falls prey once again to the pitfalls of empiricism. If one takes the military success or failure of the Commune, the degree to which most of its members were avowed Communists, or even some of the social policies it implemented, as indicators of success, the Commune was a failure. Even Marx ended his life endorsing this diagnosis, remarking in a letter to Ferdinand Neiwenhuis in 1881 that the Commune "was merely a revolt of a city under exceptional conditions, the majority of the Commune was in no way socialistic, and could not be. Nevertheless, with a minimum quantity of *common sense*, it could have achieved a compromise with the Versailles government useful for the whole mass of people."⁵³ A focus on the Commune's alteration of state institutions, its sociology, or any other part of its empirical existence has strategic merits to be sure, but it fails to account for what the Marx of *The Civil War in France* so exuberantly seized upon as its novelty in a letter written while the Commune still ruled Paris: the "good nature" of the Communards⁵⁴

which, success or failure in the moment aside, constituted one of the true political innovations of the moment. In other words, whatever Marx said about the Commune institutionally, he also (consonant with Ross' account over a century later) felt the effect of participation in the Commune, moment to moment, to be generative of and for communism, in the specific sense that it produced a new type of political subjectivity.

Alain Badiou has been the most influential contemporary thinker to pursue this line of inquiry. In his 2003 paper "The Paris Commune: A Political Declaration on Politics," Badiou argues that the utility of the Commune for current social movements has to do with its creation of a new "political capacity,"⁵⁵ specifically the capacity to be both a worker and a political subject, constituted in the overlap between two occurrences—the failed seizure of arms on the part of the troops loyal to Versailles on March 18th, and the declaration which inaugurated the Commune's existence on the 19th. Badiou describes the Commune in terms of his own philosophical vocabulary, arguing that the Commune (and, specifically, the political takeover signaled by the March 18 declaration) constitutes an event—an element of the then-current global political situation "whose value was nil" in terms of the accountable elements of that situation, but which "takes on a positive value" of existence, indeed so much so that the situation is forced to reconfigure itself around this new element.⁵⁶ This shift from no value to intense value takes place as a result of an intervention into the point where the situation meets its own in-existent or "void," a part unaccounted for within the situation that must remain unaccounted in order for the situation to remain as it is.⁵⁷ Badiou sees this element as unknowable in advance (it cannot be described within the current "encyclopedia," the

sum total of knowledge then available about a situation), but if seized upon at the right moment, it has the capacity to change the situation completely. Translated into more general terms, the declaration of the Communards, by accounting for a type of subjectivity excluded from the historical situation at the time (the working-class political subject) performed an introduction of that subject as a term in the situation in such a way as to constitute an historical precedent.

Within the framework of Badiou's philosophy, such a precedent provides a potential point of orientation for subjects in their motives and actions. For this to be the case, a subject (which, here, could mean a collective entity as much as a single person) make a decision that an event has occurred and structure their lives as "faithful"⁵⁸ to it, seeking to produce, for themselves and others, the truth contained in the new element of the situation. Badiou uses this as a jumping-off point for a philosophy of history and subjectivity writ large, citing occurrences ranging from Christ's crucifixion to the French Revolution to the development of novel sets of chord progressions or scientific formulae to falling in love as events that have prompted such fidelity. These events have also induced subjects (and still induce subjects) to work out their consequences via what Badiou calls "truth procedures," operations designed to ascertain the consequences and effects of an event for a situation (whether that situation is global politics, one's own life, the field of knowledge of a given science, or the practice of a given art). The Commune, then, by introducing a new element into its situation, also induced fidelity to it on the part of those who made up the Commune and those who take it to be a defining precedent for their own politics. The consequences of the Commune (beyond the new type of working

class subject it introduces) are “a new world” opened up through the day-to-day existence of the Commune and a “subjective capacity,” along with the “organization” of that capacity, for practicing politics in a new way.⁵⁹ This world and this capacity were muted when the Commune fell, but “the Commune had not *realized* a possible,” but rather “was the creation of one,”⁶⁰ an event that provokes and orients future practices rather than being, in and of itself, the fulfillment of revolutionary politics.

The advantages of Badiou’s treatment are twofold. First, by engaging with the historical chronology of the Commune as well as how it is remembered, the essay makes the argument that the consequences of the Commune need not end with it, nor must they be reduced to an empirical case study of a failed revolution. Framing the Commune as an event, in this specialized definition of the term, allows a concise statement of the new political practices it introduced— perhaps not the first working class political subjects (here the previous 23 years of French history, among many other political practices in other times and places, constitute a compelling refutation), but a notable example of such subjects’ constitution of themselves as political actors in their own terms rather than those of an already established political order. Moreover, such an account provides a way to remember the Commune so that it becomes an impetus to political action in the present (a precedent to be lived up to or practiced, a reminder that such politics are possible and at least somewhat sustainable).

While the essay succeeds on these fronts, Badiou’s approach raises several objections. First and most specific to the literature on the Commune, Badiou completely excludes Marx from his account. Marx’s text, on the one hand, “praises everything that

appears to lead to a dissolution of the state and, more specifically, of the nation-state,”⁶¹ while at the same time dwelling on the Commune’s lack of military centralization, financial disorganization and other features which look like ”incapacities” primarily from a statist perspective.⁶² Badiou sees this contradiction as symptomatic of Marx’s larger ambivalence about the nation-state as a political form, one that will ultimately result in the figure of the party familiar from its many twentieth century manifestations. The idea that Marx was primarily concerned with the institutions of the Commune, while borne out by Lenin’s reading, is contradicted by the letter of Marx’s quoted above. It will also, as will become evident over the next several chapters, be contradicted by Marx’s conceptual and historical arguments in *The Civil War in France*.

My second and third objections to Badiou’s argument concern his philosophy more generally. Badiou fails to account for the specificity of semantic or signifying action as a factor in political agency. Presentation of the existent terms of a given situation, and their representation alike take the form of a “count” which structures and determines the catalogue of aspects of the situation legible to those in it.⁶³ This vocabulary of the count, and the larger mathematical frame of Badiou’s philosophy, elides differences in the causal workings of nonsemantic systems (such as biological or physical systems) and those systems structured by symbolic linkage and action. This produces an aporia that becomes glaring in the context of the Commune—both of the occurrences Badiou discusses as key terms of the event of the Commune, the Declaration which he sees as its inauguration and the May 10 statement of the Comité Central to quell debates over the Commune’s future “to save the ‘Revolution of March 18’ which had

‘begun so well’⁶⁴ which arguably terminates it are declarations, publicly circulated statements by the symbolically anointed heads of the Commune. Despite this, there is no attempt to account for them as documents, or to ask how their signatories, composition or circulation produce particular effects. Within Badiou’s essay, this leads to a slippage between the declaration of a break with the parliamentary Left on March 19th and the failed seizure of arms on March 18th widely considered to mark the Commune’s beginning.⁶⁵ Both of these occurrences seem important to Badiou’s account, but which one signals a true event? The point, rather than to decide on one or the other, is to signal that things are more complicated than that. Accounting for the mutual effects of symbol on world, and vice versa, is a necessary step in asking what the significance of the Commune, the style of Marx’s intervention, or any other prominent component of the situation is.

I will close my discussion of Badiou with a final objection, one that highlights the problems already listed as well as providing the beginning of a way out of them. Badiou defines the Commune as a “political declaration” that functions as an event. For Badiou, though, a movement or organization successfully practices politics to the degree that it avoids the trap of State institutions. The State in this theory is a locus of contradiction: nineteenth century French politics share the trait that “the mass political movement is largely proletarian.”⁶⁶ Despite this, though, “there is a general acceptance that the final result of the movement will involve the coming to power of Republican or Orleanist politicians.” This is one version of the stakes faced by many social movements—whatever the movements’ composition and long-term goals, they will at some point

translate these goals into the terms of the governmental (in this case parliamentary) institutions that surround them. Where most would see this as a necessary step, Badiou argues that what is often perceived as the failure of a movement to make this translation is in fact a function of a “structural gap” between the aspirations of a movement (which potentially outstrip the emancipatory possibilities available without revolutionary change) and the institutions which constrain these possibilities into the terms of a given context.⁶⁷ The radicality of the Commune for Badiou is its “break with the Left”, where “the Left” means anyone who subscribes (even for laudable reasons) to parliamentary politics.⁶⁸ Instead of appealing to the established order, the Commune attempted to constitute a new one based on the premise that “the resources of the proletarian movement”⁶⁹ were adequate to conduct the business of the Parisian economy and social life. Regardless of its immediate success or failure, the Commune was revolutionary for Badiou because it provided the novel *form* (break with current political institutions, attempted constitution of a new order) which subsequent movements would have to take to effectively call themselves “political” (i.e. to successfully change existent relations of power).

The stakes of this perspective as well as the problems with it have been a topic of discussion for Marxian theory before and since Badiou, and can be felt in Lenin’s question as to whether the Commune’s democracy (and its more parliamentary elements) forms an obstacle or a stepping-stone to some other politics that would leave contemporary categories of politics, including democracy, behind altogether. On the one hand, Etienne Balibar has argued that a core component of capitalist domination (and, implicitly, domination of all types) is the dissociation of such efforts from the domain of

politics, such that they are “directly perceived in the space of the dominant ideology as ‘nonpolitical’, even if to obtain such a result a whole arsenal of forms of state action must be deployed.”⁷⁰ Anticapitalist efforts, to be effective, should consist, in part, of the attempted displacement of this boundary, so that “politics” ceases to mean the day-to-day practices of governmental institutions, and comes to mean struggle over a variety of other domains thus far designated “private” (apparatuses of discipline and governance, the habits of everyday life, the direct challenges to the working day and to political institutions imposed by mass movements). On the other, to simply equate politics with mass political action risks a roughshod universalism, in which all movements are reduced to expressions of a homogenous “politics.” If taken as an empirical given (unequivocally identified with either a condition of economic privation or with politics considered as mass movement) the proletariat must appear “either as the *other[...]*of *capital*, or as the *other[...]*of the *bourgeois state*.”⁷¹ Either choice would lead to paralysis, the first because it would ignore (among other things) the State’s role as the guarantor and enforcer of the measures needed to ensure capital’s continued existence, the second because it would flirt with fascism among a number of other unconscionable political formations.

At a less extreme level, identifying politics with those mass movements which avoid recourse to parliamentary solutions does nothing to blunt the ability of established structures of power to co-opt or derail them. To cite one example, Kristen Ross has established that the lack of legibility of the protests in France in May 1968 was a significant factor in these protests later being read as a “benign transformation of customs

and lifestyles” from those of an “authoritarian, bourgeois state” to those of an individualistic, entrepreneurial consumer society, with any political dimension subsumed into the trope of the “youth revolt.”⁷² The quality that Badiou prizes in the Commune, its inability to be described in conventional political terms, can just as easily lead to it becoming a rhetorical palimpsest to be covered with whatever discourse is written over it. The response, more or less shared by Ross and Balibar, is to develop an intermediate vocabulary to describe the practices and points of orientation assembled in a particular historical moment that overlap with the practices of contemporaneous state institutions but which are not reducible to those practices. The reason for singling out particular practices as revolutionary (or not) changes with the moment, but is guided by a “search for the conditions[...]that can precipitate class struggles into mass movements, and for the forms of collective representation that can maintain, in these conditions, the instance of class struggles within mass movements.”⁷³ Instead of being a sociological demographic or particular sector of labor (such as workers in large-scale industry), “revolutionary form[s] of subjectivity or identity” coalesce out of such moments as “partial effect[s]” of them, and persist only as long as the conjunction between a group of people characterized by exploitation and the practices or forms of representation that allow those people to relate to one another as participants in a struggle against that exploitation persists (147). Such a solution is useful because it neither turns a blind eye to the effectiveness of reactionary political institutions, and the degree to which mass movements will likely be implicated or trapped within those institutions, while at the same time striving to precipitate new ways of living and relating that point beyond them.

Both Ross and Harvey's spatial account of the Commune and Badiou's discussion of its implications for subjectivity provide further building blocks for a materialist theory of political style. Ross articulates the stakes for a concept of stylistic invention when thinking about the ways in which political movements frame themselves. First of all, (and paraphrasing Marx) movements that merely adopt the rhetorical garb of previous ones do so at peril of being coopted by those in power, or of having their legacies erased after the fact by functionaries all too eager to fold such movements into established narratives. Second, though, Ross' treatment of the Commune points to a basic epistemological problem for social movements. If a collective is trying to create novelty—if their political agenda is predicated on an "equality", or an antagonism to exploitation that resists stable frameworks for valuing political demands (from constitutions to frameworks based on human rights, national identity, or whatever else), then how to describe them? A partial answer is provided by the art and poetry Ross analyzes, which strives to be productive of political action in, rather than representative of, the moment in question. Marx's text will provide an example of an attempt to perform the same task after the fact, creating a new vocabulary that will have been the terms in which the Commune (or the potential for political change it represented) expressed itself.

Harvey and Badiou both modify the elements that Ross brings to the table. The important point to take from Harvey here (one that will be seen to be strictly compatible with Marx in the next chapter) is that "class" is about resistance to exploitation, and the replacement of relations of domination with relations of egalitarian collective control, which do not rest on a traditional industrial working class subjectivity (one can equally be

exploited and be a bus or taxi operator, a skilled laborer such as a carpenter or electrician, a domestic worker, an unwaged worker or whatever else). An analytic of class on this model would foreground the fact and workings of exploitation, but seek to diversify the solutions to it. Badiou's turn to the subject suggests, in the context of the Commune, that such solutions will involve creating new types of subjectivity, and ways of doing politics not currently considered "political." The problems with his position suggest that what is meant by "subjectivity" in the contexts he uses it must be substantially augmented before it bears fruit. One layer of such specification will be rhetoric, the ways that events such as the Commune constitute new ways of "speak[ing] and being spoken to"⁷⁴ and, specific to this project, the role of political orators such as Marx in making these new ways legible and able to be disseminated as political practices.

Reading Marx Composing: The Role of Philosophy in Marx's Rhetoric

The vast majority of work we have by Marx—drafts, notebooks, letters—was never intended for publication. *The Civil War in France* is one of many cases where the material that went into the work in question exists in rough form, as well as a final one; it is unique in this respect among the trilogy of writings—*The Class Struggles in France*, *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, and the *Civil War*—in that we have both draft copy and a finished one. The disparities between the drafts are striking and instructive for thinking about how Marx approached history.

The first draft of *The Civil War in France* reads like a series of notes filed under different topics from "Thiers,"⁷⁵ "Chanzy, Archbishop of Paris, etc.,"⁷⁶ and "The Commune."⁷⁷ Many of these headings occur more than once, and under them are

accumulated pieces of newspaper clippings, usually in the original language, and Marx's fragmentary, impressionistic commentary, for example the observation that "within this war of cannibals the most disgusting the <literary> shrieks of the hideous gnome [Thiers] seated at the head of government!"⁷⁸ The overwhelming impression is a mixture of what, following Jean-François Lyotard's reading of Marx,⁷⁹ could be called two different figures of desire with respect to the Commune: Marx the journalist, who tries to stitch the reports he is gathering from a number of sources into a coherent narrative (from letters sent by Communards to the International or to Marx, to newspaper accounts, to snippets of speeches by Thiers), and Marx the revolutionary in mourning who, unable to be a mere observer, is driven to insult and invective of Shakespearean proportions by his horror at those being killed. The desire to give an account of what happened for posterity mingles with the desire to give vent to personal grief.

In the passages toward the end of the draft, focusing on the Commune, Marx finds the topic of his speech. His observations about what he thinks the Commune means are situated in a meticulous set of very local historical notes. "The different movements at Paris aimed at the Commune, as a measure of defense against the foreign invasion, as a realization of the rise of 4th September. Its establishment on 31st October failed only because...", etc.⁸⁰ The increased narrative consistency here attests to Marx's realization that he must trace the Commune's historical roots before arriving at its present, but he is still accounting for it in a way no one outside the immediate context other than a student of the France of 1870 could get anything from. When he arrives at the Commune proper, his writing is a mixture of lists of policy proposals, detailed descriptions of how delegates

for the Commune were selected, and bullet point descriptions of the uprising as the product of “spasmodic resistance” during the siege, and of earlier workers’ struggles over the previous six months.⁸¹ Reading Marx’s draft is still a pleasure, and it is an informative source for figuring out how the Commune worked, but it does little to speak to its historical and political significance, or to those not already somewhat unfamiliar with its minutiae.

As *The Civil War in France* is revised, the question of the Commune’s larger meaning becomes more pronounced, and the text becomes more focused on the two months of the Commune’s existence. A comparable passage in the second draft of the text, though it is still rough, is organized much more tightly:

The Commune had, after Sedan, been proclaimed by the workmen of Lyons, Marseilles and Toulouse. Gambetta [a French republican political orator and publisher] did his best to destroy it. During the siege of Paris the ever recurrent workmen’s commotions again and again crushed on false pretenses by Trochu’s Bretons, those worthy substitutes of Louis Bonaparte’s Corsicans, were as many attempts to dislodge the government imposters by the Commune. The Commune then silently elaborated was the true secret of the Revolution of the 4th of September. Hence, on the very dawn of the 16th March, after the rout of the Counterrevolutions, drowsy Europe started up from it’s dreaming under the Paris thunderbursts of *Vive La Commune!*⁸²

There follows a history similar to the one I have outlined above, but more expansive, accounting for the previous several decades of French history, and the events immediately preceding the Commune, in some detail. The passage continues, immediately after the above quote, with the framing of the Commune as a “sphinx” I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, and the answer to the question “what is the Commune, then?” is a long, detailed narrative. Contrast this with the final version of the

passage, which contains none of the above, save the following: “On the dawn of 18th March, Paris arose to the thunderburst of *Vive La Commune!* What is the Commune, that Sphinx so tantalizing to the bourgeois mind?”⁸³ The question this time around is answered with a brief quote from the March 18th manifesto printed by the Commune government, with the caption that the Commune represents the realization on the part of Paris that Communism requires the destruction of the state apparatus, and a much more condensed historical narrative, which centers on 1789 and 1848.

The final form Marx’s historical narrative takes will be examined in much greater detail over the next three chapters. The point here is that the two personae I assigned to the Marx of the first draft of the text continue over into its final form. It would be incorrect to say that either Marx the journalist or Marx the revolutionary mourner makes its way out of the speech as it is edited down. Rather, they spin an ever-closer spiral, dancing with one another around the centripetal moment of the Commune’s “working existence”⁸⁴ and its global historical significance. Despite the more direct focus on the Commune, though, someone reading the final form of the speech would have little idea what the Communards did from day to day. Instead, by the time it is delivered, Marx clearly sees the answer to the question “What was the Commune, then?” as more about its significance for global social struggles and, peripherally, the future of French politics, than about what its institutional workings looked like. Marx must affect a rhetorical balancing act between informing his immediate audience about what happened on the one hand and, on the other, making larger points that will be of political use to any member of a global audience who can read his speech, even many years later. This balancing act is

achieved, I would argue, through the deployment of what Hegel called philosophical history—the organization of historical data, “construed” as a “raw material” to be formed according to conceptual thought.⁸⁵ The figure in the center of the spiral described by the figures of Marx the journalist and the revolutionary is a philosopher who seeks to use the Commune to create concepts that will serve subsequent generations.

If the thesis that philosophical concepts are what transforms the chaos of Marx’s notes into the finished text of *The Civil War in France* is to be one of the central aspects of my reading of the speech, then it is necessary to know what a concept is for Marx, and how (in the larger context of his thought) I can coherently make the argument that it does this work. Marx sees concepts as doing two interlinked types of work: inducing political action and facilitating a certain type of historical reading.

One of the earliest points at which Marx discusses conceptual thought vis-à-vis political action is in his “Introduction to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right,” published in 1844. The article is a sketch of the history of Europe accounting for the differential trajectories of political and conceptual development. Marx argues that what France and other European countries experienced politically in the years leading up to the article (especially the more radical wings of the revolution that ended with the French July Monarchy of 1830), Germany has experienced philosophically. In one sense, this is a disadvantage; Marx berates Germany for being historically backward, the “*philosophical* contemporar[y] of the present without being its *historical* contemporar[y].”⁸⁶ On the other hand, those who would accuse Marx of an uncritical or vulgar materialism here would be wrong. Marx wishes, using Germany as an example, to take account of

philosophy as a concrete practice with material effects, including it in the “real seed of life” subject to political or sociological analysis.⁸⁷ Still more radically, though, he argues that philosophy (in this case German, post-Hegelian philosophy) can have useful political effects beyond its borders: philosophy is the “*theoretical conscience*” of all of modern Europe, an effective starting point for discussing “the *imperfection of the modern state*, the damaged condition of the flesh itself.”⁸⁸ It would be an obvious mistake to think that Marx advocates thought absent political action. “Philosophy as philosophy” must be “transcended,”⁸⁹ but this cannot be accomplished without “realizing it.” What this means is a problem that Marx will wrestle with throughout his career, but here the implications of realizing theory are formulated succinctly in terms of material force. Revolutions must effect material change to be effective, the “material basis” forming the “passive element” necessary for a revolution’s success, but “theory also becomes a material force once it is gripped by the masses.”⁹⁰ As with religious belief (Marx’s example in the pages that follow this citation), ideas have the power to create subjective habits, inspiring day-to-day practices of devotion to a cause, the construction of an “inner priest”⁹¹ or, more optimistically, an inner revolutionary whose passions are marshaled in the service of radical social change.

In his notebooks of the late 1850s, published as the *Grundrisse*, Marx returns to explicitly consider the role of philosophical concepts in his thought, this time as the central feature of a materialist mode of political and scholarly inquiry. Standard social scientific method, he tells us, aims for “the real and the concrete”; in the case of political economy (or any other social scientific scholarship along this line), this results in a

pendulum-like swing from concretion to abstraction, and back again.⁹² Finding the mass of particulars too chaotic, the social scientist proceeds to categorize and break these concrete populations down, moving “toward ever-thinner abstractions” until the “simplest determinations had been reached.”⁹³ “From there, the journey would[...]be retraced” until the concrete had once more been arrived at, appearing this time, not as a chaotic mass, but as a “rich totality of many determinations and relations.”⁹⁴ Marx does not set his own method in opposition to this one, but rather historicizes it; the materialist next step is asking under what (complex) historical conditions allow apparently “simple” abstract concepts to emerge and come to fruition as useful concepts.⁹⁵ Taking the example of labor, Marx argues that while “labor” had been discussed, in general, before it became the lynchpin of a theory of value in the work of Adam Smith and others, its taking on this role “presupposes a very developed totality of different kinds of labor, of which no single one is any longer predominant.”⁹⁶ Abstract labor is only legible as a content in certain historical circumstances; it carries analytic force for these circumstances, but it is also a symptom of the concrete historical relations which lead the concept to make sense in the first place. Thus any concept whatever, abstract as it may appear, is “a product of historical relations” and “possess[es] its full validity only within these relations.”⁹⁷

Charting a broad arc across Marx’s work, concepts are thus both weapon and tool; they have at the same time political and analytic weight, and these two dimensions are fully intertwined. In one of the more perceptive global readings of Marx’s work, designed specifically to work through the “crisis of Marxism” of the late 1970s and early 80s, Louis Althusser provides a temporally-oriented rereading of this distinction. Althusser

argues that Marx deploys concepts twice; in a given writing, they function as “two different places” within the same theoretical “space.”⁹⁸ Concepts are, in the first place, driving principles of analysis: they form the analytic principle for “the whole” of whatever object Marx is studying at the time.⁹⁹ Althusser employs the example of the class struggle, identified as an omnipresent conceptual motor behind the analyses of the *Manifesto*, *The Class Struggles in France*, and the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, allowing Marx to read a complexity of political developments as a product of the class struggle as process and organizing principle. At the same time, though, Marx “arranges for the theoretical ideas to appear *a second time*, but by situating them in a determinate, extremely limited ‘space’ within the place occupied by the same global reality.”¹⁰⁰ This move, which Althusser argues makes Marx a true materialist, is his affirmation (in contradistinction to both Hegelian idealism and that materialism that relies on appeals to objective knowledge as central arguments) that his ideas are not omnipotent. Not only can concepts form “principles of explanation of the given whole”; Marx also possesses an “acute practical consciousness of the conditions, forms and limits within which his own ideas can *become* active” politically.¹⁰¹ In contrast to the global analysis offered by the first approach, termed the theoretical one, the second approach to concepts requires that they be studied for their specific history, place and effects in a given conjuncture. Thus treated, they can become forces for political change Marx describes above, allowing the substitution of inner revolutionaries for inner priests. For Althusser, this reading also allows Marx to be rescued from those who have turned his teachings into dogma. The argument goes that, as perceptive as Marx was, he failed to recognize that his own ideas

might fall victim to political misuse, which can be rephrased in the dichotomy above:

Marx's analytic use of his concepts and his uses of them to intervene in different political conjunctures are treated as one and the same when in fact they should be separated.

Asking what concepts Marx uses to organize *The Civil War in France* will give us a key to his style, mirroring Althusser's formulation, both its perspective on the past, and the possibilities it articulates for intervening into the present as well as into future political struggles. To the extent that Marx's thought has been a powerful force in shaping the landscape of twentieth century politics, which scarcely seems a contestable argument, reading Marx for his concepts, and asking how his employment of certain concepts affects his rhetoric and vice versa is a viable method for reading Marx rhetorically. In adopting this method, I draw on the work of Matthew S. May, who argues for a conception of "writing about speech-making as a philosophical enterprise that draws out the immanent concepts of past rhetorical performance[...]making them available as inventional resources for future engagements"¹⁰² both textual and political. In the long term, this approach will allow a shuttling between the divergent paths of "Marx" and "Marxism" discussed in the first chapter, and the crafting of a map of how key rhetorical moments in the history of twentieth century communism, from mass uprisings in various countries to internal debates to the instantiation of communism in different institutional forms, from party to state to commune, among others, constitute different hermeneutics of these concepts. It will thus allow a much more nuanced reading of the rhetoric of communism than has heretofore existed in rhetorical studies, and will be a useful method

for weaving the extant scholarship on Marx and other communist historical figures into a larger tapestry.

There is another, more topical reason, for inquiring into the conceptual composition of *The Civil War in France*. Without making a claim that the present is in any way identical to the French Second Empire, many features of the Empire's culture and social composition have only become more widespread and more palpable over the course of the almost century and a half since the Commune. David Harvey, in his study of nineteenth century Paris as "the capital of modernity," highlights several such features. Gaping disparities between rich and poor driven by ever more reckless financial speculation and an "insecure[...]arbitrary and capricious"¹⁰³ credit system, the use of geography and urban planning as tools to construct the everyday lives of consumers as patterns of profit-making "circulation of goods and people"¹⁰⁴ and as a tool of social engineering, the continual spread of surveillance and incessant data-gathering¹⁰⁵ as mechanisms of governance, and the use of indebtedness as a weapon against all but the richest¹⁰⁶: all these features of Parisian society cannot but seem to anticipate the global future. If this is true even in part, then the rhetorical artifacts generated by those trying to negotiate and exert agency within such a context might also have productive resonances with the present moment. Writing about Honoré de Balzac, one of the great novelists of the period (and much admired by Marx), Harvey argues that his work forms a "concentric mirror of the bourgeois universe" even outside its own time, and that his description of their immersion in a hellish "dark light" of their own making has bearing even now.¹⁰⁷ To the extent that Marx's historical context has suggestive, if complex, relationships to

the present, his intervention into that context can likewise constitute a proleptic intervention into our own moment and a set of resources for negotiating it in politically productive ways. In the same way that Balzac's words might one day form the epitaph of bourgeois society, Marx's attempt to build a new society within and against the old might prove adequate in many ways to the present. The next several chapters will test this claim through examining three concepts that drive Marx's composition: debt, history, and community. In the course of demonstrating how these building blocks are used, an overall picture of the style of *The Civil War in France* will emerge. In the end, this picture will prompt the far more complex question of what relation they (and Marx's style) have to history since 1871.

Chapter 3: Debt and Synecdochic Subjectivity

What elasticity, what historical initiative, what a capacity for sacrifice in these Parisians! After six months of starvation and ruin, due to internal treachery even more than the outside enemy, they rise, beneath Prussian bayonets, as if there had never been a war between France and Germany and the enemy were not still at the gates of Paris! History has no example of similar greatness! If they are defeated, only their “good nature” will be to blame!

-Marx, to Ludwig Kugelmann, April 17, 1871¹

This snippet of one of Marx’s letters, written around the Commune’s midpoint, provides a useful expansion of Marx’s view of what kind of subjectivity, exactly, the Commune produced. Marx goes on in the letter to list the same political mistakes described by Badiou, Lenin, and the other commentators already discussed—a set of “conscientious scruples”, from neglecting to march on Versailles in the immediate aftermath of the departure of Thiers and co. to the Central Committee’s cession of power to elected delegates of the Parisian neighborhoods before the debris of the old regime had been effectively cleared.² All of these, though, are couched in the above, for which Marx saves his pathos: the good nature of the Communards, which leads them to historically significant acts under the worst of circumstances, and leads them to continue to be good people, even after the *Versillais* forces have begun their massacres. As Marx emphasizes to Kugelmann a week later, “Whatever the immediate outcome, a new point of departure of world historic importance has been gained.”³

In this chapter, I will argue that the subjective qualities Marx ascribes to the Communards provide a way for Marx to locate politics in the Commune which, while not ignoring its strategic successes or failures, allows the Commune to become a motivating force for political action, from Marx’s immediate context into the present. Marx locates

the historical importance of the Commune in the “resilience” and good nature of the Parisians more than in any question of State. Whether given strategic actions will work or not (and at the point when Marx writes these letters it is not clear, though the situation is increasingly bleak), the new point of departure Marx sees for world history lies in the day-to-day existence of the Commune and the qualities (the motives for action and subjective capacities) of those who participated in it. Marx articulates these subjective capacities through a series of tropes that define what the Commune did for those connected to it and what the implications of the Commune’s actions are for future generations. This chapter will focus on the central one of these tropes—debt, in both its financial and moral senses—arguing that an account of debt in Marx’s speech is also an account of the ways he sees class composition working in the Commune’s immediate aftermath. Marx’s choice of debt as one of the core concepts of his discussion of the Commune, however, has more than immediate significance; in focusing on it, he also discusses the links between struggles over debt and struggles against capitalism writ large—a discussion which has urgent bearing on the early 21st century’s political moment. Before looking at the trope of debt, it will be helpful to ask how a theory of tropes, in general, might be related to a reading of Marx, and what the link is between tropes and the constitution of subjectivity.

Subjectivity and Trope

Like many of Marx’s historical writings, *The Civil War in France* marks a point where “the ‘two-class’ or ‘three-class’ schemas” often thought essential parts of Marx’s thought “explode in a series of subdivisions,” producing the “astonishing idea that crisis

(and revolutionary) conjunctures are those in which classes decompose as social groups defined by simple and distinct ‘interests’ with a direct expression or direct political representation, especially in the form of well-defined parties.”⁴ These explosions, rather than indicating a simple ideational contradiction in Marx’s thought, are places where Marx tries to set his system to work to make the most of a historical crisis, most often (as Balibar’s gesture at the “bad” side of history cited earlier suggests) one which appears at first glance as a defeat. In other words, it is not Marx’s schemas that fragment, but life; Marx’s methods are ways of responding to the political failure of the two or three class framework Balibar describes. In such fractured moments, Marx must find a way to re-knit some form of collective political agency adequate to its context.

The question of how rhetorical and literary figures might accomplish this task has been addressed by Hayden White. In an essay that discusses the breadth of Marx’s work, but focuses on *The German Ideology*, *Capital*, the *Manifesto* and the political pamphlets Marx wrote, White argues that Marx makes consistent use of a progression of four figures to describe the economic and historical logic of capital. For White, Marx charts the intersection between physical, purely “mechanistic causal agencies” that underlie human agency and proceed in “strictly deterministic terms”⁵ and an “organic” causal logic that characterizes the social order. “Although the whole social order follows, and is determined in its gross configuration, by causes operating mechanically,” the various modes of material production that underlie different societies produce a set of social relations that operate synecdochically, relating different social parts (from people to institutions and classes) and strands of causal linkage to a social totality.⁶ White sees the

development of this relation as progressing through a metaphorical relation of indiscriminate parts to one another (producing clumps of causal links) through a gradually richer set of metonymic associations whereby the parts are linked to one another in an “extended series.”⁷ These two modes of causality, which White sees as mechanical, are mapped by subjects synecdochically as parts of a larger conception of totality. This process, more or less isomorphic to what Fredric Jameson has called cognitive mapping, informs particular subjects’ conceptions of the “total logic” of the world in which they exist, as well as their place in that logic.⁸ White argues Marx believes that eventually, given a rich enough process of totalization (which implies the working through of partial perspectives, such as those of class interest), such social linkage can at least potentially precipitate “the dissolution of all classes and the transformation of humanity into an organic whole.”⁹ The development and dissemination of this perspective by critics allows “an Ironic apprehension of the essentially paradoxical nature of a social organization which breeds poverty in the midst of plenty, war in a situation in which peace is possible, scarcity[...]in the midst of affluence.”¹⁰ Strikingly, White argues that the progression from metaphor through metonymy and synecdoche into irony is mirrored in both Marx’s development of the value-form in *Capital*, Vol. 1 and in the actual process of coalescence of social movements as a large-scale historical arc. The value form moves from the perspective of isolated exchanges (“20 yards of linen=one coat”) to an “extended series” of such exchanges (“20 yards of linen=one coat=10 lbs. of tea=...*ad infinitum*) to their “endow[ment] with attributes as parts of a whole”¹¹ which becomes the measure of value, medium of exchange and, finally assumes the form of the

commodity (1/2 ton of iron *or* 10 lbs. of tea *or* one coat=20 yards of linen; 20 yards of linen, or whatever other commodity= x weight in gold or whatever other money commodity).¹² So too does concrete class struggle pass through the same stages, from the “incoherent mass” of laborers who carry out isolated struggles against their daily conditions of existence to their vacillation between organized struggle against oppression and falling apart into factions, as a prelude to “consciousness” of their own potential unification as part of a social whole.¹³

White’s account of the tropological progression of Marx’s thought is as frustrating as it is useful. There are several criticisms, especially of White’s reading of Marx’s theory of value and of the descriptions of communism in *The German Ideology* that merit critical readings outside the scope of my project. The issues with White’s approach that are germane here may be summed up in two points. First, though White does an admirable job of arguing against Marx’s critics that charges of economic determinism in Marx are “not even half true,”¹⁴ his explicit choice of project—to map the historical imagination of the European nineteenth century—leads him to assume that Marx desires (and equates communism with) the “ultimate integration of the forces and objects that occupy the historical field” as well as the “integration” of humanity into a harmonious whole,¹⁵ implying that Marx, uniformly throughout his career, desired or foresaw an imminent end to history, and saw himself as a prophet of that end. Second, on a related note, White claims to be able to “specify the dominant style of Marx’s thought” without judging his politics one way or another, breaking with “Marxist ideologists and their opponents”¹⁶ alike in giving a neutral account of Marx’s theory. Neither of these

issues are necessarily misreadings, but are products of White's theoretical assumptions, and they result in a tendency to abstract the conceptual movement of Marx's work from the political tasks it set itself, in a way that (contrary to White's intentions) destroys the link, made as early as the "Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," between effective conceptual work and effective political practice.

White is more interested in the underlying logic of Marx's thought than in the metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony he uses to map it. These tropes, however (in the order which White gives them) are recognizable as the master tropes listed by Kenneth Burke in the appendix to *A Grammar of Motives*. Burke sees each of these tropes as representing four primary ways of effecting "the discovery and description of 'the truth'".¹⁷ For him, each trope, though it may be emphasized or fall into the background of a given style of thought, is but an "evanescent moment" which implies the other three styles, and which tends to lead out of itself toward them. The four styles of thought Burke links to metaphor (perspective), metonymy (reduction), synecdoche (representation), and irony (dialectic) provide clues as to his somewhat idiosyncratic uses of the tropes. For Burke, like White, metaphor simply means the connection of two or more objects in thought. This connection, also figured as mechanical, is linked by Burke to pragmatic description: a thing possesses "degrees of being," qualities and uses, in proportion to the number of metaphors that agglomerate around them.¹⁸ Metaphor implies metonymy, the conveyance of "some incorporeal or tangible state in terms of the corporeal or tangible."¹⁹ Burke reads the slippage of metaphor and metonymy in terms of an oscillation between figuring the tangible in terms of the intangible (metaphor) and vice

versa (metonymy). This allows a dual use of each trope to “dramatize” symbols by grounding them in “the tonalizing, posturing body in a material scene,” as well as elevating bodily disposition to symbolic status.²⁰ In a revision, *avant la lettre*, of White’s juxtaposition of mechanical to organic causality, each of these tropes, for Burke, has a use in terms of “poetic realism” (linking actions together symbolically) as well as “scientific realism” (the mechanical description of the motions of things.²¹ Synecdoche and irony continue the progression of complexity in the tropes. Beginning from the “usual range of dictionary sense” ranging from “part to whole, container for the thing contained, sign for the thing signified, material for the thing made[...], cause for effect, effect for cause,” Burke’s version of synecdoche groups its various definitions around an “integral relationship” or “convertability” between the terms juxtaposed.²² Irony, finally, moves beyond the juxtaposition of individual terms to the attempt, “by the interaction of terms upon one another, to produce a *development* which uses all the terms.”²³ Burke sees the tendency to move between terms (and, specifically, to move from the less inclusive to the more inclusive, from metaphor to dialectic) as part of a drive to construct a “representative anecdote” which determines the specific progression of analysis, and relation of concepts to one another, in each conceptual system (or each subject’s narrative about their motives and relation to the world).²⁴ At the level of dialectic, the attempt to encompass a totality of all the terms runs the dual risk of ossification (overextending itself to the degree that it becomes dogmatic or simply no longer useful) and a relativistic attempt to make the whole cohere without contradiction or conflict.²⁵

Burke's framework suggests a more dynamic use of the figures White describes. In the first place, Burke makes clear that White's progression of tropes is not unique to Marx's work, but may be mapped on to any sufficiently broad attempt to tell a story about the way the world works.²⁶ Burke thus forces the question of what is unique about Marx's relationship to this progression that makes him a useful political and historical analyst. Second, by foregrounding the oscillation between the relation of acts to symbolic motives, as well as the corresponding decomposition of symbol into an ensemble of bodily dispositions or habits, Burke's tropes become devices for linking objects (including human bodies) together in thought and, hence, of inflecting their physical interaction with one another. This gives us an approach that can be described as rhetorical (in that it discusses how symbols effect bodies) and materialist (in that it agrees with Althusser that "ideas are not omnipotent"). Finally, unlike White, Burke does not avoid the question of how the use of these tropes as devices for changing the world must change or expand our ideas of their definition and relation to one another. He is therefore able to provide a more robust discussion of each of these terms in their function as philosophical concept.

Burke and White effectively demonstrate the ways that literary trope can be used to describe different maps of history, its teleology (or lack thereof), and individuals' ability to intervene in historical events. Two more recent thinkers, Ernesto Laclau and Paul de Man, are useful for outlining the implications of such a tropological approach for subjectivity, specifically. De Man's utility is primarily in the emphasis he adds to Burke's point that symbol systems inform bodily processes and habits, as well as in his linkage of

this point to more self-consciously philosophical modes of thought. In a series of studies of a number of thinkers from Pascal and Locke to Nietzsche, De Man emphasizes that where philosophy wants to describe experience denuded of all literary artifice, experience in its raw state, it cannot help but be thoroughly literary when doing so. Locke, for example, when describing the color “gold,” defines it as a “body of a certain shining yellow,” but then immediately resorts to the examples of solar light, and of a peacock’s tail—examples which unavoidably bleed into metaphor.²⁷ Even the most apparently unreflective experience is tropological. If philosophical styles of thought can be mapped using tropes, as Burke and White maintain, these maps also persist, whether we like it or not, unconsciously and in the most minute recesses of our experience.

The thinker who bridges the gap between these everyday experiences and the grand gestures of social theory is Ernesto Laclau. In a commentary on De Man following the latter’s death, Laclau argues that tropes structure subjects’ relationships to politics as well as their own experience. De Man’s theory of trope, writes Laclau, is a theory of representation as “constitutively inadequate”: predicated on a reference to a master term that is fictitious and inherently unstable, though it does not avow itself as such.²⁸ This results in a concept of politics (which Laclau links to his and Chantal Mouffe’s theory of hegemony) that sees political representation as grounded on a master term (such as “the people”, a particular national iconography, “liberty” or something else) which is “suspended between being internal” (i.e. just another representation among others) and “external to the system” (i.e. a transcendent ground of representation).²⁹ Political representation, like perception, is thus grounded on a fiction of a stable, unified totality,

whether spatial (the homogenous unity of a national body) or temporal (a foreordained end of history that will draw humanity into an organic whole) that inevitably excludes those groups that would make its fictionality apparent if they were represented (from the economically disadvantaged to undocumented immigrants or migrants who are not readily located as citizens of a given nation-state). Both subjects' relations to their own perceptions and their relations to a larger political totality partake of the tropes and figures that White and Burke discuss. The implication of this for Laclau, developed much more extensively elsewhere, is that political action consists in the commandeering, by a given excluded group, of the position of this fictional unity (for example, a demand for full citizenship rights) in a way that, if done in a strategically effective way, calls the entire system of representation into question.

The recognition (drawing on the discussion of Negri from my first chapter) that antagonism, and the production of antagonistic subjects, are the “motor” of Marx’s work³⁰ suggests that the tropes of metaphor, metonymy, irony, and (in particular) synecdoche as they have been described here can work as tools for producing political subjects, both at the level of immediate or phenomenological experience and at the level of larger structures of representation. Unlike the thinkers above, though (save perhaps for Burke and De Man), I wish to expand the idea of political action which a discussion of tropes can facilitate beyond the idea of the universal as the necessary standpoint for political action. One initial way of doing this is offered by Negri’s argument that totality in Marx, rather than being an attempt to integrate parts into a whole, is rather a “relation and a unity of differences.”³¹ Marx’s work, on this reading, does not aim at an end to

history, but at a progressive enrichment of the relations between individuals and a heightened recognition of their common lot of exploitation (and, hence, ability to resist that exploitation). *Contra* White in particular, the difference between the development of the value form and the development of class composition is that while the value form develops toward abstraction (totality as the equivalence of all products to money, and as the abstract equivalence of labor across the world market), class struggle uses a similar movement to produce in those who subscribe to it an idea of totality as recognition of the different and conflictual processes that go into capitalism's apparent unity, driven not by the push toward an organic whole. Instead, this alternate concept of totality would foreground the recognition/production of different struggles as driven by a common resistance to exploitation. This resistant totality is fundamentally also a resistance to the kind of positive universality that Laclau sees as necessary to political action, and an attempt to disrupt systems of abstract equivalence *tout court*.³² Over the next few sections of this chapter, I will show that in *The Civil War in France*, Marx takes care to describe such a totality as part and parcel of capitalism, and to develop exactly the kind of alternative concept of totality glossed by Negri above. These two deployments of trope—an abstractly universal one, and the partial, processual one Negri describes—will thus be reframed as two sets of tools for composing social and political relations.

Trope as Defense: Marx and Versailles' Propaganda

The context of *The Civil War in France* splits Marx between this philosophical goal and a more immediate political one. Marx must most urgently speak to the morale of those in his immediate audience, as well as the audience for his published text, who are

partisans of the Commune, combating rampant demoralization. Especially in the French context, this meant combating the propaganda issued over the course of the Commune's existence from Versailles, which was used as a pretext for Favre's call to hunt down the members of the International, as well as the efforts made to hunt down other partisans of the Commune. In *The War on Paris, 1871*, historian Robert Tombs surveys this propaganda, arguing that it accounted for much of the bloodshed in the Commune's immediate aftermath. In particular, Tombs argues that the propaganda was a compositional tool in its own right, forcing a group of people "from many different units," political/religious backgrounds, and regions of the country, some of whom had served in the war against Prussia and some of whom were conscripted to fight the Commune,³³ into an anger at the Parisian revolt that resulted in the "appalling repression" that reached its climax during the bloody week.³⁴ After mid-March, the *Versillais* took pains to isolate their troops from national newspapers and Communard publications, such that "the only regular news came from orders read on parade and government proclamations posted in the camps."³⁵ From early April until the end, these channels were supplemented with two newspapers, *Le Soir* (more critical of the Assembly and essentially center-Republican, described as Thiers' "unofficial newspaper" in contemporary accounts) which issued in a separate Versailles edition from 22 March forward, and *Le Gaulois*, which "concealing for the moment its Bonapartist sympathies, restricted its political line to general support for 'order'", a catch-word for the coalition between center republicans and monarchists that had brought Louis Bonaparte to power in the 1850s.³⁶ Thus, while manifesting superficial tension with one another, both papers,

along with the news distributed to the military, upheld three common arguments that portrayed the Commune as “an impossible and criminal regime necessitating repression, if necessary by force”: order against the Commune’s disorder, nation against the Commune’s factionalism, and liberty against the Commune’s tyranny.³⁷ Examining these three arguments in more detail will give some idea of the political situation in which Marx intervened.

The argument from order took two basic forms. Initially, discussion focused on the election of the National Assembly through universal (male) suffrage, and the ostensible procedural legitimacy of the elections, with the Commune being depicted as an undemocratic coup. As time went on, both because of the Assembly’s initially limited mandate of negotiating the peace, and based on the Commune’s organization of elections after its takeover, such reasoning appeared increasingly spurious even to political journalists.³⁸ The dominant argument in the later stages of the Commune focused on “the defense of property and the existing social hierarchy against ‘anarchy’”. In the words of Jules Simon, then Minister of Instruction, ‘one overturns aristocracy, which is a privilege...One does not overturn the bourgeoisie, one attains it,’ for to destroy the bourgeoisie would be to destroy civilization.”³⁹ Favre, the Nationals’ Foreign Minister, depicted the Communards as “‘criminals who have usurped power, not to establish a political principle, but to achieve the satisfaction of the most debasing passions.’” Along with this went a focus on specifically financial corruption: *Le Gaulois* on May 7 published an editorial arguing that “until now, [the Commune] has done no more than ‘open up cashboxes.’”⁴⁰ On April 11, a general order to the troops remarked that “[the

Communards] steal public funds and[...]everyone's savings[...]they loot private houses[...]."⁴¹ Finally, the Commune was described as criminal, possessed of a desire to "conquer, by armed force and at other people's expense material pleasure and the right to idleness"⁴² and composed of "ex-convicts, drunkards, pimps, *declasses*, all the worst vermin" in Paris.⁴³ Against this, the Assembly was figured implicitly as an elected, rational government who (most importantly) would leave the valuables of propertied citizens intact and in their possession.

The Versailles propaganda's juxtaposition of nation with faction followed the legal argument it made, equating the debauched passions and criminality of the Communards with pro-Prussian and anti-French sentiments. These arguments followed from concerns about property rooted in French Republicanism and the idea that (as *Le Gaulois* put it on April 1) "no one can doubt any longer that they are for France's ruin, misery, disorganization and shame."⁴⁴ This was supported with all the anti-German sentiment left from the war. *Le Gaulois* published a column on May 20th stating that the Commune represented the Prussians' "'crushing us with their vengeance[...]how much were they paid to earn the Prussians' applause?'"⁴⁵ and *Le Soir* wrote a day earlier of the "'instinctive" feeling"' that there was "'foreign gold in the workers' pockets.'"⁴⁶ Both papers extended this perception that the Commune served Prussian interests to attacks on its leaders. *Le Soir* described the movement as "no longer Parisian, it has become cosmopolitan[...]the adventurers of every country, dedicated makers of European revolutions, have come together in Paris"⁴⁷ and *Le Gaulois* described "a degenerate Pole[...]as commander in chief, a second-hand American as the Carnot [a military leader

during the 1789 revolution] of the insurrection[...]so Paris is in the power of the insurrection, but the insurrection is in the power of the foreigner.”⁴⁸ The “cosmopolitanism” of the Commune and its pan-European rhetorical aspirations were depicted as anti-French, and their motives were depicted as financial gain through foreign bribery.

The final theme of the propaganda was the depiction of the Commune as tyrannical. Functionally, this meant the dissociation of Communard identity from Parisian (and, by extension, French) identity. *Le Gaulois* wrote on May 3 that “three quarters of the people getting themselves killed, maimed or imprisoned are equally enthusiastic—that is, not at all.” The insurrection itself was depicted as being masterminded by a small conspiracy, whom the populace followed because they were “intellectually feeble or totally ignorant[...]either to do as their friends do or because forced, or because tempted for pay.”⁴⁹ This propaganda is mirrored in the official negotiations with the Commune that focused on separating a small minority of masterminds or planners from the larger populace whom, it was implied, would be treated leniently for letting the *Versillais* take the city back. The way this and other propaganda effected the line troops who later entered Paris is reflected in the statement of a volunteer for the army that he “would gladly have seen the ringleaders shot[...]those whose writings and speeches have undermined the people[...]those who have taken advantage of the country’s disasters and put so many unfortunates over the precipice.”⁵⁰ As time went on, the accusation that a small minority was manipulating the entire city became a way to further dissociate

French identity from Communard identity, as well as a justification that, when the *Versillais* finally did invade, those who still fought them deserved to die.

These three themes provide a picture of the rhetorical battle in which *The Civil War in France* took sides. All three tropes (appeals to republican politics, national identity, and depiction of the Commune as antidemocratic) relied on assumptions implicit in French national identity and republican values. All three also focused on attacking the Commune—the sticky question of the National Assembly’s popular mandate was allowed to fall by the wayside, such that it could “win” (after the massacre of the Communards) by default. At a deeper level, though, each of the appeals also appeals to a core component of global capitalism, be it property, the nation-state, or a certain type of electoral politics. They manifest what Andrew King has dubbed the rhetoric of power maintenance: a series of “strategies that are potent options for a powerful group experiencing a serious challenge.”⁵¹ King’s framing of these devices is as general as possible, examining strategies such as humor and ridicule, and is designed to facilitate analysis across historical periods and genres of elite group. The propaganda of the Versailles papers provides a map of some of the strategies King lists, especially the leveling of accusations of betrayal (of nation, property, etc.) that is more specific to ascendant global capitalism.⁵² It thus provides a map of appeals leveled against much more recent anticapitalist movements. This point brings us back to the weight of Marx’s speech outside the context it was given in, and to its use of trope. The first way we can speak of tropes at work in *The Civil War in France* is what James Aune, in quite a different context, called trope as “defense” against uncritical identification with a given

symbol system: the attempt to produce “absence, not fullness” of what Kenneth Burke would call piety to the terministic screen of capitalism, rewriting the day-to-day actions of the Government of National Defense synecdochally, as parts of a larger capitalist whole, the better to critique them.⁵³ Examining Marx’s responses to Versailles (and, implicitly, to larger mechanism’s of capital’s valorization of its own institutions) will put us in a better position to understand the alternative he provides.

Debt as a Weapon of Class War: Marx’s Map of the Orator Capitalist

The Civil War In France opens with a salvo against Thiers, Trochu, Favre and co. which mixes depictions of their capitulation to Prussia with personal indictments of their handling of matters of state, in particular financial corruption. The question of capitulation and the degree to which the Assembly can be said to have upheld or betrayed French national identity is thus linked with the category of the legal—their betrayal of the laws and founding ideals of the French republic. It is also linked, through the question of the personal motives of those involved in crushing the Commune, to questions of war debt, and of who stands to gain (and lose) financially from the Commune’s destruction.

Marx’s early descriptions are blunt in depicting the President and Ministers of the Assembly as a conspiracy for the destruction of France.⁵⁴ His charges are based on a set of documents seized by the Commune when it took Paris that included private correspondence of several members of the government regarding their plans for capitulation to the Germans. Marx begins with the election of the National Assembly. The election, held in Feb. 1871, was explicitly a mandate, following Louis Bonaparte’s capture, to negotiate the “National Defence” of France with respect to the Prussians.

Marx tells his audience that they “did not hesitate one moment to turn [their mandate] into a Government of National Defection.”⁵⁵ He quotes Favre’s remarks, on the eve of the truce, that “the first question put to me by my colleagues on the very evening of the 4th of September [the day of the uprising which deposed Louis’ government] was this: Paris, can it with any chance of success stand a siege by the Prussian army? I did not hesitate to answer in the negative.”⁵⁶ From the moment of their election, those at the head of the national government had planned to leave France (especially Alsace and Lorraine) to the Prussians, and use Paris as a bargaining chip in negotiations. “Documentary evidence” of this “treason” was left in Paris upon the “wild flight” of the government “*capitulards*” to Versailles, evidence that fueled their desire to destroy Paris, and the documents along with it.⁵⁷

The charges of conspiracy, by themselves, would be nothing out of the ordinary, and would stand or fall on empirical proof. For Marx, these documents primarily serve as a framing device for describing the character of those in the assembly as it affects their attitude toward the Commune. Jules Favre, says Marx, orders one of the representatives sent to the Assembly by Paris shot because he had published documents proving that Favre had “by a most daring concoction of forgeries,” in the days before the war, “contrived to grasp, in the name of the children of his adultery, a large succession which made him rich.” Ernest Picard, Thiers’ Finance Minister, through an almost Ciceronian attack on his family, is depicted as the brother of one guilty of the “theft of 300,000 francs, while manager of one of the branches of the *Société Generale*,” and as complicit in the theft.⁵⁸ Jules Ferry, the Mayor of Paris who fled when the Commune took power,

is a “penniless barrister” who contrived through political office “to job a fortune out of famine.”⁵⁹

Marx’s insults build to a description of Thiers, occupying several pages, which is the high water mark of his stream of invective as well as providing a glimpse into his overall strategy. Thiers is President, “has charmed the French bourgeoisie for half a century,” because he is “the most consummate intellectual expression of their own class corruption.”⁶⁰ Marx traces Thiers’ trajectory from an intellectual defender of Louis Phillipe (France’s previous monarch) and a demagogue who “incited mob-riots against the clergy” and ordering the massacre, in 1834, of participants in a republican insurrection.⁶¹ After the 1848 revolution, Thiers shifted, chameleon-like, to join forces with Orleans and Bourbon monarchists, becoming “the leading mind of the ‘Party of Order’ and its Parliamentary Republic, that anonymous interregnum, in which all the factions of the ruling class conspired together to crush the people, and conspired against each other to restore each of them its own monarchy.”⁶² Manipulated through the party of Order into supporting Louis Bonaparte, he was “made a dupe” of by the latter, who had already been described as a consummate dupe by Marx in the *18th Brumaire*. Marx describes his use of the rhetoric of an “economic Republic” to “endow himself with three millions a year,” having “entered his first ministry under Louis Phillippe poor as Job” and “left it a millionaire.”⁶³ In sum, Thiers is

A master in small-state roguery, a virtuoso in perjury and treason, a craftsman in all petty stratagems, cunning devices, and base perfidies[...]with class prejudices standing him in place of ideas, and vanity in the place of a heart; his private life is as infamous as his public life is odious—even now, when playing the part of a French Sulla [Roman

dictator] he cannot help setting off the abomination of his deeds by the ridicule of his ostentation.⁶⁴

Thiers and the cabinet, then, taken together, “could find, in the ruins of Paris only, their ticket-of-leave” from prosecution for their intrigues over the previous several decades.⁶⁵ Even as they “denounc[ed] the people of Paris as a band of escaped convicts in utter revolt against family, religion, order and property,”⁶⁶ the assembly abused their mandate, cultivated the full flower of corruption, and connived first to surrender and then bombard Paris not through devious design, but because it “was the only serious obstacle in the way of the counter-revolutionary conspiracy” and because, through their own ineptitude, Paris possessed the means to expose their corruption and convict them for it.⁶⁷

Interested consumers of news who had access to Marx’s words could readily latch onto his story of conspiracy and scandal as a reason to hate, or at least distrust, those who had destroyed the Commune. He is also up to something else, though, and it shows most strikingly in his depiction of Thiers. Thiers is not just corrupt; his actions are the intellectual and political expression of a particular class interest. His shift from monarchist to supporter of Louis to moderate republican reflects the view that political ideas are like securities, to be traded on in the interest of securing one’s political future. Though Marx does not mention it, listeners and readers of the speech familiar with French politics would know that Thiers had, early in his political career, had a side vocation as a historian, during which he wrote a multivolume history of the French Revolution and a prominent pamphlet, “On the Democracy in France,” which “was speedily translated to English and was hailed by the Tory John Wilson Croker as ‘the finest defense of property since Burke.’”⁶⁸ Across the various political positions Thiers

took, then, the one constant is support for private property and those who hold it. Likewise, in each of the other cases, the various political moves Marx describes each member of the government of national defense making are read as a reaction to their social station and to the historical moment in which they find themselves; Ferry, to use another example, is corrupt because he begins as a penniless barrister and wishes to become something more. Bureaucratic corruption is not an individual affair, but a product of the social context of the various political figures in question. Marx argues that they behave as they do because they are symptoms of a system which overlays (though just barely) a naked appeal to class interest with the ever-shifting ideological terrain of a parliamentary government.⁶⁹

Marx's defense against the propaganda issuing from Versailles reveals a first way that synecdoche and subjectivity work together in Marx's speech. His indictment of the various figures at the core of France's national government functions as a counterpart, in the realm of political oratory to the literary realism discussed by Lukacs throughout his career. As Fredric Jameson puts it, Lukacs sees it as a central characteristic of realism that characters, while they exist as "concrete individualities," are also expressions of a "type": they "stand, in other words, for something larger and more meaningful than themselves[...]some more general or collective human substance."⁷⁰ This typicality is, in the terms of Jameson's I cited in the first chapter, a product of the fact that the form taken by a given aesthetic composition does not work over an inert raw material, but rather fragments already formed by the myriad of antagonistic historical forces that go to work in shaping each "unique historical moment."⁷¹ It also means, in the terms this chapter

employs, that Marx is deploying synecdoche as a formal code with which to organize the historical materials he is dealing with. Marx's attack on the French government relates apparently partial expressions of political corruption to a totality characterized by an ever-expanding capitalist system, and the political institutions through which it is mediated. This allows those who encounter his speech to read what appear to be disparate regimes of government (the monarchy, Louis Napoleon, the then-current elected government) as the product of the same social forces, as well as inculcating habits of such symptomatic reading in the future.

Debt, Forgiveness, and Antagonism

In the latter half of his speech, Marx shifts to discuss the ways he sees a diversity of French political constituencies of the time as having a stake in supporting the Commune and its political legacy. As with his denunciation of Thiers and the ministers, the reasons he gives weave political and economic history together, showing how the national debts France had accumulated over the previous decades and their expiation through heavy taxes levied on France's poor are part and parcel of the same political-economic system of which Thiers and co. are symptoms. Here, though, the narrative already developed with respect to the National Assembly reveals its obverse side: a much more radical debt which links together the different factions Marx discusses together in common political cause, should they choose to embrace it.

Marx begins globally. The "multiplicity of interpretations to which the Commune has been subjected, and the multiplicity of interests which construed it in their favor showed that it was a thoroughly expansive political form, while all previous forms of

government have been emphatically repressive.”⁷² As he explains what this means, it is clear that the Commune’s political innovations are immediately linked to its economic measures. The Commune was expansive because it “intended to abolish that class-property which makes the labor of the many the wealth of the few. It aimed at the expropriation of the expropriators. It wanted to make individual property a truth by transforming the means of production, land and capital[...]into mere instruments of free and associated labor—but this is Communism, ‘impossible’ Communism!”⁷³ In so doing, though it had “no ready-made decrees to introduce *par décret du peuple*,”⁷⁴ the Commune “annexed to France the working people all over the world.”⁷⁵

This is, in substantial part, the relationship that Marx sees between the Commune and then-existent financial and governmental institutions. This more abstract appeal to the global working class, which forms the central organizing principle of this part of the speech, bookends appeals to specific French political constituencies, all of which will be different but aimed at a common result. Marx wants a diversity of segments of the French population to feel sufficient “gratitude” for the economic and political precedent the Commune has set to take sides in “the present, severe trial” besetting the former Communards, aiding those who have fled persecution and continuing to fight for the principles the Commune represented.⁷⁶ The primary reasons he argues they should do this are financial. The middle classes, “ruined[...]economically by the havoc [the Second Empire] made of public wealth, by the wholesale financial swindling it had fostered, by the props it lent to the artificially accelerated centralization of capital, and the concomitant expropriation of their own ranks,” owe the Commune for saving them by a

sagacious settlement of that ever-recurring cause of dispute among the middle-classes themselves—the debtor and creditor accounts.”⁷⁷ The specific policies Marx mentions as expropriating the middle classes’ wealth are described throughout the first two thirds of the speech and include laws passed by the Assembly which restricted the deferment of payments on overdue loans, and taxed, among other things, printed reading matter, both of which had had a chilling effect on commerce in the city. Instead of appealing to any larger political aspirations (or even Republican ideals), Marx argues that the middle class should support the Commune precisely for their own economic self-interest.

The same gratitude asked of the middle classes is asked of the peasants, then widely viewed as a bastion of conservatism. Early in the speech, Marx clarifies the then-common perception of the Assembly as the protector of the provinces by dissociating the national government of France from small farmers. Instead, he argues that those encamped at Versailles drew their political support “from large (mainly royalist) landowners.”⁷⁸ Later, he argues that “of all the lies hatched at Versailles and re-echoed by the glorious European penny-a-liner, one of the most tremendous was that the Rurals represented the French peasantry.”⁷⁹ Instead of representation in Versailles, the peasantry should see a whole string of abuses perpetrated by the actors in power in 1871, all of which consist in continually increased taxation. The bourgeois of 1815 had imposed the “milliard of indemnity,” and in 1848 they had “burdened[the peasant’s] plot of land with the additional tax of forty-five cents in the franc; but then he did so in the name of the Revolution; while now he had fomented a civil war against the revolution, to shift on to the peasant’s shoulders the chief load of the five milliards of indemnity to be paid to

the Prussian.”⁸⁰ On the other hand, the Commune would have “delivered the peasant” both from the debts of a war that Thiers, Louis Bonaparte, and co. had helped wage and from “the notary, advocate, executor, and other judicial vampires,” i.e. the burgeoning and frequently highly paid civil service, by making them “salaried communal agents, elected by, and responsible to” the populace at large, and would have cancelled the mortgage debts of many rural landowners.⁸¹ The several listed taxes stemmed from the breadth of political changes taking place over France in the nineteenth century, and included money extracted from peasants following the restoration of the monarchy to compensate nobles for lands lost during the French revolution, and more taxation in the 1840s (especially in the provinces) to feed the growing waves of industrial workers flocking to the cities. There was also the debt of the war with Prussia, which France owed and which would be paid through further taxation. As with the middle classes, Marx had laid the seeds for his discussion of the war debt earlier, when he argued that (in addition to the financial indiscretions already discussed) Thiers and co. had negotiated the payment of the debt to Prussia precisely to line their own pockets, and that the Prussians’ agreement to delay payment of the debt until the pacification of Paris had sealed the Commune’s fate.⁸² Importantly, Marx cuts across different legal regimes to show the common personalities and economic forces involved. Despite a change in regime, the leaders of the National Assembly are merely Louis Bonaparte’s lackeys in parliamentary garb.

Throughout this section, Marx’s description of the Commune as an economic entity overlaps with a description of it as a political one. The Commune is depicted as the

fulfillment (through supersession) of a secular Enlightenment democracy. Again, this appeal is directed in particular at the urban middle class and petit bourgeoisie as well as rural smallholders and peasants. Marx's arguments regarding finance focused on specific laws. Here, he takes a step back to outline the contradictions he perceives in parliamentary democracy. Where the Revolution of 1789 was historically progressive, sweeping away the systems of entitlement typical of feudalism, its existence quickly fell behind its aspirations. The central fault for this lay in the divergence between the executive and legislative bodies. On the one hand, while in theory open to anyone, property qualification (as well as historical precedent) meant that Parliament became "the direct control of the propertied classes," productive of "huge national debts and crushing taxes."⁸³ At first, this meant that these classes were divided against themselves, but development of France's economic infrastructure meant that "the State[...]assumed ever more the character of[...]a public force organized for social enslavement."⁸⁴ Within the procedural forms of parliamentary democracy, the Revolutions of 1830 and 1848 transferred control of the Republican apparatus "from the landed to the propertied classes," which contradictions eventually led to the propertied classes' "joint-stock government" in the form of Louis Bonaparte.⁸⁵ Instead of being a forum for the popular reconciliation of differences, the Assembly became merely (in Thiers' words) representative of that which divided the ruling classes least.⁸⁶ The increasing visibility of this rule of the rich forced the Assembly to "invest the executive with continually increased powers of repression"⁸⁷ which led to not only the Second Empire—with "a *coup d'état* for its certificate of birth, universal suffrage for its sanction, and a sword for

its scepter”⁸⁸ but also the basis of government on an avowed appeal to “the peasants”, those ostensibly” absent from the struggle between capital and labor.”⁸⁹ This confluence of forces led, in Marx’s words, to the unrivaled conspicuous consumption described in chapter 2, “the misery of the masses[...]set off by a display of shameless, debased and meretricious luxury.”⁹⁰

For anyone not in the European economic elite, Marx argues, the Commune remedied this misery. The Commune extended universal suffrage from the national assembly to the civil service, making offices “responsible and revocable at short terms”⁹¹ and paying all civil servants “workman’s wages.”⁹² Police, too, were turned into the “responsible and at all times revocable agent of the Commune,” and the increased power of elected local councils meant that the Commune could “function as executive and legislative at the same time.”⁹³ By the “disestablishment and disendowment of all churches as proprietary bodies” and the end of church subsidies, the Commune broke the “parson power” that had enforced ideological uniformity, and “the priests were sent back to the recesses of private life, there to feed upon the alms of the faithful in imitation of their predecessors, the Apostles.”⁹⁴ Finally, like the rest of the civil service, the judiciary “became elective, responsible and revocable.”⁹⁵ This directly elected model of governance was to become the form of “even the smallest country hamlet.”⁹⁶ Instead of deciding every several years “which member of the ruling class was to misrepresent the people in parliament,” this model constituted true democracy, likened (in a metaphor truly bizarre to read in Marx) to the way “companies, like individuals, in matters of real business, generally know how to put the right man in the right place and, if they for once

make a mistake, to address it promptly.”⁹⁷ The Commune, as a whole, replaced the principle of “hierarchical investiture” with that of directly elected, locally rooted government.⁹⁸

Marx once again divides his appeals between the middle classes and the peasants. In the case of the middle classes, the Second Empire had “suppressed them politically, it had shocked them morally by its orgies, it had insulted their Voltairinism by handing their children over to the *frères Ignorantins*” [Ignorantine brothers, a play on the names of Catholic monastic orders], it had insulted their national feeling as Frenchmen by “precipitating them headlong” into a costly war which had left France in ruins. The backlash against the Empire culminated, after the fall of the Commune, in the left-republican parliamentary coalition of the *Union Republicaine*, the “true middle class party of Order” which came out in support of the Commune in its last days.⁹⁹ As for the peasants, the Empire had preserved the existence of the “great landed proprietor, himself an encroachment upon the conquests of 1789,”¹⁰⁰ had (as with the middle class) imposed religious, police and administrative power from above, detached from communal political process, and had enacted a series of repressive measures (including the above taxes) through the 1850s. The Commune was thus, to Marx “the true representative of all the healthy elements of French society, the true national government.”¹⁰¹

Along with the broad appeals to popular government and to the dismantling of political hierarchy, the Commune’s forgiveness of debt is the only appeal that remains constant across the different parts of French society that Marx addresses. Whereas those then involved with the national government continually imposed more debt on the

populace, furthering their own gain and crushing France under their policies, the Commune uniformly forgave such debts. In return, Marx asks that the middle classes and the peasants show a continual “gratitude” toward the Commune by supporting it and its members through the then-current crisis. As with Marx’s earlier discussion of Thiers, this entreaty could be taken as a simple appeal to self-interest. Once again, though, there is a second layer of argument alongside the first, and once again its structure is that of synecdoche, this time aligned with the dynamic relation of differences that characterizes the communist totality Negri describes. Debt (and its relief by the Commune) forms a salutary counterpart to the parliamentary order which takes a babble of disparate voices, from monarchists to republicans and homogenizes them, ensuring that the games of national politics are rigged in favor of capital. Those who affirm (from the perspective of a worker, a member of the middle class, or a poor farmer) that the Commune’s forgiveness of their debts, and destruction of the institutions that generated them is cause for a second debt of “gratitude” exchange their monetized debt for quite a different coin, one which they can only pay back through political struggle. Marx asks his audiences to make a decision in favor of the Commune, acknowledging their common relationships with one another as subjects both indebted to (exploited by) capital and indebted to (partisans of) the Commune.

This second debt is the other version of totality at work in the speech. In the text itself, it is located in a figure notable for the paucity of references to it in a work by Marx: the working class. “The working class” is the only term Marx uses to refer to those he addresses that does not refer to a specifically outlined constituency. Rather, the working

class here are a subject position: each of the more specific appeals to French political constituencies fills in this empty phrase with a common (though unique to circumstances) description of how that group of people has been exploited over the previous decades of French history.¹⁰² At the same time, though, the workers of the world that Marx describes overflow these more concrete subjectivities with an invitation that could refer to Marx's audience, or to us as readers of the text, to fill in the specific stories of exploitation that occupy our history. Marx's invitation reminds its addressees that "the working class have no ready-made utopias to introduce *par décret du peuple*", and that, instead of existing as a self-evident political identity, they must continually work through the implications of this identity via "a long series of struggles" that will "transform" them in ways they cannot even comprehend.¹⁰³ They must trade in their "ideals" for a sensitivity to "new historical forms" and the willingness to experimentally actualize them.¹⁰⁴ Marx's appeal to the working class links disparate subject positions to a totality in dynamic flux, asking: are you exploited? Whether as rural farmer whose land has been appropriated or as urban worker or artisan? Can you provide the details to add yourself to the list already given? Then the Commune stands as a precedent (not an ideal or model) for your own struggle. Instead of the universal, Marx thus brings out the common within the singular experience of each constituency without ignoring that singularity, and invites his readers to gratitude (not blind devotion), to the precedent of the Commune for having made this commonality apparent and inviting other iterations of the same emancipatory politics.

This point helps further clarify the relation between politics and economics here—whereas Marx’s appeals to each constituency of French political life contain specifically French references to Republican tradition and history, his appeal to the working class does not invite its readers to become Republicans. Rather than an imperialist occupation of the “working people all over the world” in the name of French universalism, the “annex”¹⁰⁵ of the workers of the world proclaimed by Marx hews closer to its Medieval Latin root, *annexare*; it binds the struggles of the globe to a common *nexus* of political struggles. The commune does not occupy the territory of these other struggles, but develops a repertoire of “technolog[ies] of deliberation”¹⁰⁶ (of which recognition of common indebtedness is central) that allows disparate movements to be linked in trans- (and anti-) nationalist force. It invites present and future generations alike to work out their own emancipation, taking what they can from the Commune and using it as proof that the politics of which it is an example is possible.

Conclusion: Rhetoric and/as Debt

Those living through the present moment may be thought of as one such future generation. Since the time at which Marx wrote, and especially in the past several years, debt has become a central topic of political discussion, and an ever more important factor in producing national and international political subjectivity. Tracing the debt crisis in the US and Western Europe, Maurizio Lazzarato cites the disturbing statistics that debt has become “the second highest item in the French budget after education and before defense”. In the US and UK, “the level of household debt relative to disposable income is, respectively, 120% and 140%.”¹⁰⁷ This vast rise in both household and national debt

carries with it a corresponding increase in interest payments that, increasingly, make repayment of the principal debt unlikely or nearly impossible. Crises in Greece and elsewhere, caused in large part by the collapse of national credit systems and burgeoning national debt, demonstrate that the same issues are all the more starkly present outside of the core countries of global capital.¹⁰⁸

A growing debate across several academic disciplines has expanded on the implications of these more abstract numbers for political agency and subjectivity. Lazzarato shows that, on the one hand, what many authors have termed “finance capital” is centrally a device for capitalism to manage future risk by controlling the future behaviors of those subject to it.¹⁰⁹ Debt is one of the primary ways of doing this: by generating a situation where the debtor’s ability to pay is considered to reflect his or her moral standing, and where financial conditions are such that one will almost never be able to pay back one’s debts in full, the continual effort to repay (and to discipline oneself to better be able to repay) becomes one of the main things driving a given subject’s decision-making processes. The result is the creation of what both Lazzarato and Hardt and Negri call indebted subjectivity, a mode of life wherein debt “controls you. It disciplines your consumption, often reducing you to strategies of survival.” It also dictates your future choices: “If you finish university in debt, you must take the first paid position offered in order to honor your debt. If you bought an apartment with a mortgage, you must be sure not to lose your job or take a vacation or study leave from work.”¹¹⁰ In short, debt reduces the possibilities of “choice and decision which the future holds” to actions conducive to the “reproduction of capitalist power relations,” while also

generating a moral economy—debt equals guilt—that justifies punitive violence against those who cannot or do not pay.¹¹¹

This much is largely agreed on by the various thinkers who have approached the crisis from perspectives critical of capitalism. The debate turns on two points: whether the concept of debt is reducible to its current manifestation as an appendage of finance, and what the best strategies are for addressing the situation. Lazzarato's genealogy of the indebted subject stretches well before the twentieth century; nineteenth century authors like Nietzsche and Marx, he argues, were already able to see the problem. Moreover, the phenomenon itself, though it bears full flower in the present, can be traced in its basic elements all the way back to the most elementary systems of human exchange.¹¹² David Graeber, drawing on a vast range of anthropological and historical literature, tells a similar story, arguing that the basically unequal relationship between debtor and creditor stretches back thousands of years. The unique feature of the present moment is that relations of credit and debt that for most of history were primarily about personal relationships involving people one knew have become impersonalized, “detached from real relations of trust”¹¹³ and become ubiquitous. We, almost all of us, now owe debts to people we will never meet, or institutions that have no human feeling in the first place. The result is that the moral economy Lazzarato discusses becomes ever more widespread, but Graeber also makes its grisliest consequences clear. Debt turns “human relations into mathematics”; not only are we guilty if we are indebted, but if we cannot pay our debts, then the consequences, however reprehensible in ethical terms, appear as a precisely quantifiable tit for tat and, hence, as far more excusable than taking someone's

livelihood, house, or life out of simple revenge.¹¹⁴ The solution for both authors is, at minimum but not necessarily in its entirety, some form of sweeping jubilee or debt forgiveness. Those who wish to change the present system must “fight for the cancellation of debt” and its abolition as a “system of power relations.”¹¹⁵ This can take the form of tactical resistance such as that by organizations like Strike Debt, or a more sweeping call for revolutionary change.¹¹⁶ The common factor is an evaluation of debt as a harmful social force and a desire to cancel or abolish it.

The negative evaluation of debt by the above thinkers stands in tension with attempts to rehabilitate debt as a concept while jettisoning its directly monetary manifestations. Richard Deinst’s *The Bonds of Debt* joins those I have discussed so far in contributing to a map of global debt and its political implications, discussing the links between debt economies and war, debt and commodity fetishism, and the role of humanitarian spectacle (typified in his analysis of Bono) in maintaining systems of global inequality based around debt. He parts company with these thinkers in that he sees debt, not as necessarily sutured to capitalism, but also as a term for a politics that would combat the inequalities he describes. For Deinst, appeals to end debt ignore the fact that to be indebted to others is part of the human condition; it is one way of describing each individual’s implication in complex systems of relationships.¹¹⁷ The danger with calls to free ourselves from debt is that they express a desire to be free from social relationships, to be truly individual and beholden to no one. In contrast, Deinst argues, “intransigent indebtedness might prove to be a truly radical position: every attempt to explain” demands for a recognition that we are all necessarily indebted “as fiscally irresponsible

will have to include an explanation of who benefits from[...]austerity.”¹¹⁸ This would still mean disrupting financial mechanisms of power but would do so through excess rather than austerity, forcing a recognition that debt is not “economically calculable.”¹¹⁹ Instead, each manifestation of indebtedness reflects “unmet social needs” that can be recast as “political demands.”¹²⁰ The end goal of Deinst’s advocacy would be a recasting of debt as the set of mutual obligations of “truth, trust and love” that mark our constitutive relation to other people, “promises” of support that bind effective political communities together.¹²¹

The first contribution a reading of Marx makes to this entire debate is that he highlights the same problems and tensions between social bond and monetary debt over a century ago. His diagnosis of France is a larger argument for his contemporary relevance, as well as a need to re-evaluate the strategies he advocated for changing the situation. More specifically, though, he provides a way to link together the parts of the contemporary debate on debt. In many ways, whatever tension exists between Graeber’s, Lazzarato’s, and Deinst’s positions stems from a confusion over terminology. All these authors agree that debt in the present moment has become a force for inequality, and they agree about the broad outlines of how it has done so. They differ in strategies about how to proceed, and about whether the vocabulary of debt is a politically useful one. Thinking about Marx as a rhetor, trying to gain his various addressees’ adherence to a cause, brings out the political strengths of both sides of the debate. On the one hand, Marx shows that a rhetoric of debt can be a device for mapping apparently disparate political regimes and points of view as parts of a diagram of how capitalist power works. On the other, he also

shows that that same rhetoric can equally be a device for composing sites of social struggle. Crucially for the above thinkers, Marx's use of two types of synecdoche allows a translation between the two rhetorics. A symptomatic reading of Thiers and co. as parts of a capitalist whole leads to a desire for social change. How can one affect this change? By resisting in a way that orients one as part of a larger group of those who have been exploited, making horizontal (in White's terms, metaphorical) connections from person to person as well as synecdochic connections to the series of social struggles that constitute the working class. Marx's words are a persuasive device that can be copied in the present; they also frame the strategies of resistance to debt and intransigent indebtedness as different ways of making the connections Marx describes and form a political yardstick for how well such strategies will work. Finally, Marx unifies what Graeber calls trust or moral obligation and what Deinst discusses as nonmonetary debt into the larger concept of the "debt of gratitude," a device that has the further advantage of showing how even people who are not immediate parties to the Commune can hold a "debt of gratitude" or obligation to it, and attempt to repay that obligation through social struggle. The way Marx's debt of gratitude works outside the immediate context of the Commune is the subject of my next chapter.

Chapter 4: A Rhetoric of Lost Causes

The classless society is not the final end of historical progress, but rather its often failed and finally accomplished interruption.
- Walter Benjamin¹

Marx's appeal to debt marks a tension in his speech between his immediate political intervention and the ways it might be taken up by future readers. The first of these readers is himself. Several years later, as we have seen, Marx's assessment of the events of the spring of 1871 has soured: he writes to friends that the Commune made strategic mistakes, that it was not socialist, and that it could have used more common sense.² Exuberance has been replaced by resignation, and proclamation of the Commune as an unheard of event in history has been replaced by a retreat into despair. But what does this mean for Marx's earlier speech? Does this more sober observation alter the meaning of his initial discussion?

In this chapter, I will argue that Marx's initial passion with respect to the Commune allows him to think against historical common sense, in ways that are far more productive than his later assessment. Marx's framing of the Commune in *The Civil War in France* poses it, in the terms of a certain philosophy, as the site of a new problem. Gilles Deleuze, the modern thinker who has gone the farthest in exploring the relationship between problems and solutions, sees the concept of the problem as one main way of describing how *doxa*—the settled common sense that asks questions only in accordance with pre-set and pre-given responses—might be usefully transformed by interaction with a *paradoxa* that lays out the conditions for a completely novel set of responses, a multiplicity of “complexes of relations” that provide ways to make the status quo otherwise than it is.³ Thinking this way does not preclude pragmatic political

strategy; on the contrary, problems “insist and subsist” in their solutions, and the problems we pose will fundamentally shape the solutions that result from posing them.⁴ In other words, the Marx of the earlier speech is attempting, for himself and his various hearers and readers, to map the network of political relations the Commune allowed to emerge, and the ways it should inform subsequent solutions to the question of anticapitalist government.

In practical terms, this move on Marx’s part makes the text into a rhetorical artifact caught between two times—the linear, immediate time of historical events as they are laid out in journalistic coverage of the Commune over the spring and summer of 1871, and another temporality, that of the Commune’s “own working existence,”⁵ which breaks into the time of political business as usual, and leaves transformation in its wake. Marx’s speech prompts a discussion of how the experience of time characteristic of political protest, revolt, and ongoing political struggle relates to the narratives of innovation and progress characteristic of traditional liberal historiography and hence, implicitly, of capitalism. Taken together, both of these questions allow us to address the problem, crucial for rhetorical studies of social movements and for activists alike, of how to treat movements that have “failed” or been surpassed in empirical terms. I will begin by outlining some of the ways these problems have been dealt with by previous scholars indebted to Marx, before giving his speech a second reading, this one geared to the temporal dimension of the text.

Historical Debt

Speaking of the future of Marxism soon after the fall of the Soviet Union, Jacques Derrida designates Marx's political and theoretical legacy with the term inheritance. For Derrida, this term has several implications. First of all, it designates a conception of history in general. To treat the past as an inheritance means that it is, at base, impenetrable. The parties and entities we inherit from (at their widest, the sum total of the past) are forever concealed. "One always inherits from a secret—which says, 'Read me, will you ever be able to do so?'"⁶ What people inherit from the past is something that is never fully graspable, but the inevitable gaps, contradictions and other lacunae in our understanding of history (sutured, in Derrida's framework, to the slippages and instability inherent in language) prompt a response. Our interpretations, our readings of the past, proliferate; in being confounded by the past, we are incited to excavate it anew over and over again. Contrary to some readings of Derrida as apolitical, though, this instability of our knowledge of the past means that history is necessarily political. One's attitude toward the secrets of the past—what we inherit from it—"can consist only in *the injunction to reaffirm by choosing*. 'One must' means *one must* filter, sift, criticize, one must sort out several different possibles that inhabit the same injunction."⁷ Put another way, what we inherit is not the past as a thing, but as a process of contradictions that forces us to choose a side. Interpretations, attempts to stitch shut these contradictions, will be generated, whether we like it or not. By inheriting well and by being good debtors to the past, we must realize that interpretations fail, and continually force ourselves to recognize the weight this failure places on us to select different ones. To disown this failure is to treat history as a set of (first or final) causes, of "given, natural, transparent,

univocal”⁸ origins and ends. This option destroys not only that minimal portion of agency that consists in selecting from among the historical conditions in which we find ourselves,⁹ but more importantly, also the responsibility that the present has to the cacophonies and harmonies, cries, laughter, and (perhaps most chillingly) the silences of history’s “dead generations.”¹⁰

If this is inheritance, then what, specifically, does the present inherit from Marx? What does he tell us to do within this more general injunction to recognize the weight of the past? According to Derrida, he asks us first to conjure, in a dual etymological sense: to *con-jure*, to make common pact or oath with, others “against a superior power,” in order to put the ghosts of the past to peaceful rest, but at the same time to conjure, as in a magician’s trick, those voices lost, suppressed or silenced by history, to make what is “not there at the present moment”¹¹ impress itself as ethical onus, to hail the ghosts of those whom the past has not allowed to rest easily so that we may intercourse and exchange (*Verkehr*)¹² with them. Second, and with more immediate political impact, Marx exhorts us as to the form this conjuration takes. In a time when the death and destruction birthed from the “axiomatics of the party” has rendered suspect the organizational forms of the left, and the current structure of global capitalism has begun to render such forms obsolete, Marx’s testament to us is to call for consideration of the “finitude” and historical transience of “the State, and thus of the traditional party or labor union.”¹³ Again, though, in contrast to the quietism that such skepticism frequently produces, Derrida makes clear that Marx maintains the imperative to political action in spite of (or because of) this crisis. The mere fact that “the communist ghost exists,” that it

still haunts, results in a call, common throughout the “different languages” spoken by the world’s ghosts, to a party-form adequate to the multiplicity of the cries of hope and fear which impress themselves upon the present.¹⁴

Derrida’s concept of historical inheritance has a few implications. The first, and probably the most banal, is that Derrida’s general framework for thinking about history is an eminently rhetorical one. The points of *stasis* that history leaves us will inevitably be contested and papered over with words, but a properly ethical attitude consists in acknowledging the stasis as primary, and interpretation as an attempt to come to grips with it. This observation becomes more specific (and more useful for rhetoric) in that Derrida gives us a specific temporal framework for how this clash of interpretations comes about. We are left with contest and multiplicity because the past presents itself not as a single, linear causal chain, but as a series of overlapping and contradictory causes. This, in turn, offers a way of relating to the future. Not only, to be ethical, must present generations attempt the impossible task of acknowledging past generations; to do so requires the realization that a given set of organizational forms for doing so (parties, unions, workers’ councils, etc.) has only a contingent and strategic utility. What remains, over and above these specific forms, is an injunction to solicit, to let our sleep be troubled by history’s unquiet dead, and to adopt strategic forms in the service of (and in tension with) their legacy.

This first implication bears fruit in a second point, germane to scholarship on social movements, and especially on how we remember them after they are gone. After a long career forged in a political context that includes party communism as a major

political factor, Derrida chooses to write about Marx only after Marx's legacy has been firmly put into question. For him, then, the injunction to choose a certain narrative of history, and to make common cause with those who would make a similar decision, becomes most important as an ethical concern at the point when a particular story of how history works is on the verge of being silenced or, on the other hand, being elided from awareness by its insertion in a settled narrative of historical progress or the failure of a certain political project (in this case, communism). This presents several tasks for the scholar of social movements. First, it encourages a focus on historical recovery of the voices that are the most symptomatic—foreclosed or repressed, yet operative in the status quo, either as undiscussed foundation (those whose ongoing suffering enables a privileged few to sleep without fear of literally becoming ghosts ourselves) or as cliché and straw figure (Marx the crackpot, communism as the architect of totalitarianism). Second, it encourages scholars to take a more expansive view of what happens to a movement once it has been declared dead. To comb the forgotten parts of history for alternate narratives also means choosing what to think and labor over in the present; historical work is theoretically and practically productive only insofar as it obeys the injunction to a present political choice. Finally, the injunction to choose may revolve around support (or, in scholarly terms, focus, or adoption) of a specific set of groups or movements, but it also means (as we have already seen Marx do) emphasizing commonalities within and through differences, so that one's chosen objects of study are neither held up as exceptions with a monopoly on political truth nor studied for their own sake as self-contained wholes. Rather, one's choice of what to study reveals differences

(one's own positionality, the historical singularity of a given movement, tensions with other movements or with established power) while producing commonalities (concepts that allow one to draw links between different movements, a sense of the intersection of different concerns and strategies). Derrida's approach provides a conceptual armature that inspires and directs historical scholarship on the rhetoric of social movements.

This reading helps us see Derrida's utility as well as his limitations. On the one hand, Derrida gives us a version of Marx that is adaptable to a variety of concerns within and outside traditional Marxist politics, and to a position on history that effectively links scholarly method, a politics of emancipation, and a set of ways for thinking about history and making political decisions within and outside the academy. On the other, as many readers of Derrida have pointed out, "the importance of *Specters of Marx* lies more with the questions and problems that are produced by its movement"¹⁵ than by the ways it shows those problems as informing a choice of political solutions. Some have argued that this feature of the text means that the result of Derrida's recovery of Marx is a Marx divested of political force, "no longer[...]anything but his own ghost."¹⁶ Bringing this discussion back to that of Deleuze above, we can say that Derrida's weakness is not a focus on problems, but divesting them from their relationships to the solutions they suggest. This can mean that "political decision" is reduced to an imperative to acknowledge, without doing much about, Marx's relevance for the contemporary world.

Inheriting the Nightmares of the Past

Despite the criticisms that have been made of it, Derrida's framework works as a prolegomenon for thinking about (and with) Marx after the fall of the Soviet Union. It

tells those who would read Marx, in the wake of the demise of his most visible legacy, what the stakes are for continued attention to his work, while cautioning those who would ignore it. Criticisms of Derrida's work force attention to another question: assuming one wants to conjure Marx's ghost, along with the chorus of those for whom he wrote (as well as innumerable others whom he could not or did not account for), what are the consequences for politics?

A parallel, and entirely more visceral, philosophy of history to Derrida's comes from the work of Walter Benjamin. In his "On the Concept of History," Benjamin offers a series of aphorisms that describe his conception of historical ethics. Of the many directions these aphorisms have led subsequent interpreters, among the most visible is Benjamin's polemic against a conception of history as progress. Conventional history, which Benjamin terms historicism, tries to relate to the past "the way it really was."¹⁷ This relationship implies several things. First of all, this conception of history looks upon the past with an untroubled gaze. Attempting to "relive an era" in its verisimilitude, the historian adopts a process of empathy with the past, "blot[ing] out everything they know about the later course of history."¹⁸ This apparently impartial empathy, all the more because it pretends not to, impacts the present. Saturated with respect for the past and for the desire to grasp its essence, this view of the past inevitably favors history's victors. Such historians participate as spectators in a "triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate."¹⁹ Carried along in this procession, as in a war, are "spoils," "cultural treasures" borne by the "great minds and talents who created them" from the raw material of history. Most historical scholarship (and, implicitly, the

perspective on history of those in power) obeys this injunction—to choose those things from history immediately recoverable for use, generative of (cultural or monetary) profit, that cure our indigestion, grant us pleasant dreams, and perhaps give us a perspective, all “so intensely historical”²⁰ on the past that we can learn something from, and that will perhaps produce a little humanitarian sentiment in the bargain.

How are we to relate to history, then? Benjamin does not trade empathy for scholarly sangfroid, but expands it into something much more radical. From the perspective of those being stepped over by the boots of “great men” (and they are most frequently men), much the same desire—to “grasp the genuine historical image as it flares up, however briefly”—produces, instead of triumphal contentment, sadness.²¹ The “cautious detachment” with which the historical materialist views the cultural treasures of the present allows glimpses of the “anonymous toil” of those whose bodies have formed the coal of history’s baubles, with the result that “there is no document of civilization which at the same time is not a document of barbarism,” a stain on both the material of history and on the manner of its transmission to present generations—the classic works, apparatuses of education, and the very matter of the knowledge in question.²² This realization (which must be maintained as an ongoing discipline of reading historical documents and relating to the place of oneself and others in the present) produces in the materialist scholar of history the realization (far before it became fashionable to say so) that “the state of emergency in which we live is not the exception but the rule.”²³ “Astonishment” at the brutalities of history, in the hands of the materialist historian, is replaced by despair over “the concept of progress itself.”²⁴

Once again, this is an apparent dead end. For reasons far more immediately affecting than Derrida's, Benjamin's text can produce, along with a certain jadedness, an ongoing, melancholic sense of despair (though, of course, only a fraction of that experienced in the life of the text's author) which can in turn lead to quietism. For Benjamin though, pessimism about the past coexists with a different idea of the "treasures" of history, one that Benjamin argues can potentially precipitate a "real state of emergency," this time for those in power.²⁵ Historicism obeys (in Derridean terms) an injunction to choose events, and connections between them, that shore up the status quo from forces that would propose alternatives to it. This leads to a concept of "universal history," an "additive" process that "musters a mass of data," ordered in a linear "causal nexus" to "fill the homogenous, empty time" leading to the present.²⁶ Historical materialism, on the other hand, is based on a principle of "construction"²⁷ that takes into account the objects that confront the historian, their historical genesis, and the array of (inherently political) ways of relating to those objects. Benjamin's materialist historian confronts each of the objects of his or her study as a "constellation saturated with tensions" and, at the same time, as a "monad," an object "blasted out" of the linear continuum of history, appearing as a radical rupture or break with its spatial and temporal surroundings.²⁸ Viewing historical objects this way activates a "shock" to thinking which allows the historian to view the present through its bits of detritus, trash and forgotten elements, to see those elements as precisely the keys to understanding the present (and how it could potentially become otherwise) through a process of juxtaposition.²⁹

This shift in method has immediate political consequences. What the historical materialist recovers for posterity is not a metaphorical gem to be displayed, but rather a piece of uncut coal for setting fires or using as a weapon; the visions of rupture and paths not taken produced by historical scholarship become resources for social critique, and for alternative political projects. For Benjamin, in contrast to visions of communism predicated on an idea of progress, which “content[s] itself with assigning the working class the role of the liberator of *future* generations,” any materialist concept of history worth the name forces a political decision in the present in a way that resonates powerfully with rhetorical conceptions of *kairos*—in allowing the rubble of the past to affect us, we become better equipped to see that which is accumulated by the present, and better able to use it to take advantage of the “small gateway[s] in time” through which change might be brought about.³⁰

Benjamin’s potential as a resource has not been lost on rhetorical scholars. A 2011 special issue of *Rhetoric and Philosophy* engaging with Benjamin usefully illustrates his potential for thinking about object-oriented materialisms,³¹ the fragmentary nature of the aftermath of violence, and its relationship to (state and social) law,³² Benjamin’s utility for debates over political theology and the rhetorical study of revolutionary politics,³³ and the relationship of sexuality to political life.³⁴ To use Benjamin to think about rhetorical studies’ encounter with Marx, and about the politics of rhetorical history, extends each of these projects by addressing questions of political decision, collective memory, and futurity that are relevant to all of the above articles’ concerns. At this point, another look at *The Civil War in France* will show how the

tension between two methods of engaging with history in the speech is an example of a rhetorical enactment of several aspects of Derrida's and Benjamin's concepts which allows us to think about their links to narrative and political practice.

Learning to Read the Papers

Those who heard Marx speak, as well as readers of the published text of *The Civil War in France*, would have encountered the text as a continuation of two previous lectures, delivered in July and September of 1870. The tone of these speeches is as impassioned as anything else Marx wrote, but their purpose seems to be primarily one of informing a larger reading public about the military and political movements then taking place within France. Marx is interested in discussing what is at stake in the war, who the major players are, and what the implications of the war are for people who live in the regions effected by it. In a paragraph from the end of the first speech, representative of the overall tone of these lectures, Marx writes:

On the German side, the war is a war of defence; but who put Germany to the necessity of defending herself? Who enabled Louis Bonaparte to wage war upon her? Prussia! It was Bismarck who conspired with that very same Louis Bonaparte for the purpose of crushing popular opposition at home, and annexing Germany to the Hohenzollern dynasty. If the battle of Sadowa had been lost instead of being won, French battalions would have overrun Germany as the allies of Prussia. After her victory, did Prussia dream one moment of opposing a free Germany to an enslaved France? Just the contrary. While carefully preserving all the native beauties of her old system, she super-added all the tricks of the Second Empire, its real despotism, and its mock democratism, its political shams and its financial jobs, its high-flown talk and its low *legerdemains*. The Bonapartist regime, which till then only flourished on one side of the Rhine, had now got its counterfeit on the other. From such a state of things, what else could result but war?³⁵

The concerns of this writing are immediately apparent. Marx has been tasked by the International with providing a speech that weighs in on the war in an editorial manner. This speech, as well as the one which follows it, fulfill this task using a straightforward, didactic tone. Both describe the actors (Bismarck, Bonaparte), major events, such as battles, and their implications for policy in language that, while sprinkled heavily with invective, would have been easy to follow for anyone familiar with the events of the day, and would have given those who were unfamiliar a sense of what was going on, and how it stood to affect Europe.

Three main aspects of Marx's tone in these preliminary lectures, and in the first part of the Commune speech, are important here. A first point, and a hallmark of Marx's rhetoric throughout his career, is his use of invective and colorful personal attack. As is already apparent from the previous chapter, the targets of Marx's ire range from the "political shams and financial jobs" of the French Second Empire to its major political personalities such as Thiers, the "virtuoso in perjury and treason."³⁶ Its use specifically in these early speeches, though, and in the first part of the Commune speech, allows us to say something about why Marx employs invective to such a degree, beyond a taste for rhetorical flourish. Invective for Marx works, like Jeremy Engels' descriptions of it in the early US republic, to "constitute[...]identities" and as a "curative rhetoric" to "soothe[...]anxieties" and "expiate[...]sins."³⁷ Engels argues that invective has an antidemocratic bias; it "tends to perpetuate anxieties about boundaries, identities and enemies rather than curing them, or addressing their more systemic causes."³⁸ This sweeping of a statement should prompt caution; like any rhetoric, invective interacts with

its contexts. While Engels successfully demonstrates invective's antidemocratic uses in the early US republic, his admonition is not necessarily valid in general. Moreover, Marx's use of invective here, while certainly constitutive and curative, deploys neither of these functions in the service of a stable identity. Instead, personal attack is explicitly employed to perform a symptomatic reading of French (and global) politics. This differs from Engels' reading, for two reasons. First, those targeted are not singled out for any quality connected to their personal identity. Perhaps more crucially, though, in contrast to Engels' examples, Marx's invective is not used to shore up any hierarchical set of power relations. Rather, his use of personal attack works precisely to articulate M. Thiers as a representative of particular social process, in another layer to the strategy I described in Chapter 2; the "personal" nature of the attack does not serve to indict him in terms of his own actions and motives, but as the most vocal representative of his own milieu and the political structures that produced him.

Marx's use of invective to isolate apparently personal actions as symptoms of larger collective processes finds a counterpart in a second rhetorical feature of these three speeches. In the paragraph quoted above, Marx asks who benefits from certain political developments during the war and, answering his own question, points to Bismarck and Bonaparte. Throughout the speeches, invective is put to work in the interest of this second move: demystifying, for a reading public, what is really going on in contemporary politics, who benefits from apparently innocuous developments, and what the consequences are for European politics. The trend becomes even more explicit in Marx's lecture on the Commune; the entire attack on Thiers is based on the private papers,

“intimate correspondence” and other documents seized from the Hotel de Ville after the members of the National Government fled.³⁹ Marx is trying to uncover a conspiracy; the connivance of those in power in Prussia and France alike to end the war prematurely and negotiate a truce with Prussia that would destroy the radical elements of French society. At this stage, then, Marx attempts to educate those who hear his speech to read what appear to be impersonal political developments as the products of the specific calculations of those in power, teaching his audiences to be detectives. By examining his deductive reasoning and judgments of character, they are led to similar habits of judgment themselves, the ability to think through present events “outside the conceptualizations” and stories afforded them by those in power.⁴⁰ A narrative layer is added to the synecdoche I discussed in the last chapter. As he reads the major figures of the French government as symptoms of the march of capitalism, he also reads world-historical events as a product of these figures’ deception, indicting their actions in yet one more way.

Following on this last observation, it is clear, third and finally, that these strategies are inadequate by themselves. Marx provides his audiences some targets for their ire, but does so in a simple movement from past to present. If we remain with this portion of the speech, the events Marx discusses—the war and its consequences—are a *fait accompli*, and those who read his texts have nowhere to go from here. In the earlier speeches, this strategy was adequate, in the sense that events were ongoing. Marx could content himself with simple reportage. A dual exigency, though, necessitates a change; whatever intervention would have been possible to save the Commune is no longer so.

Marx must figure out what to do with it now that it is beyond saving. Second, though, insofar as the Commune is really an example of a new form of social existence, Marx must likewise figure out a way to discuss this new example, in terms that do not reduce it to the politics of the past.

Lightning Flashes and Reverberations

[S]omething is happening as time passes. I know that time and not, for example, space, is making something happen. Something that has happened before, although in a sense, every time is the first time, so experience counts for nothing, which is better in the end, because experience is generally a hoax.

- Roberto Bolaño, *Amulet*⁴¹

It is difficult, reading any of Marx's historical work, to avoid the impression that we are being told a story. Much of Marx's long-form writing on national politics (in particular that dealing with France) proceeds as a narrative account of how the political situation got to be the way it is, a description of the actors and plot of a segment of history analogous to the demystifying narrative related above, though frequently also with a parallel conceptual development that provides readers with a set of tools for doing their own historical criticism. *The Civil War in France* is no different, with the following exception: Instead of merely accounting for the past, Marx is both pushed toward the future (by the importance of the Commune as a historical moment) and trapped in the past (in the sense that the Commune is no more and business as usual has resumed). The result of this quandary is that, when he actually begins to speak of the Commune, the demystificatory reading of French politics Marx has undertaken in the first pages of the pamphlet is brought to a halt by the Commune's break with conventional politics. Marx is pushed away from the immediate group addressed by the speech (for many of the people to whom the Commune should be significant are not yet born) and toward what

Samuel McCormick has described as the text's eavesdroppers. McCormick uses these terms to frame the way that philosophers' letters to political elites have historically been used as a form of address to wider publics. In the context of Marx's speech, this slippage among audiences means that, in addition to the audience that is "known, ratified, and engaged directly" by the speech (i.e. the members of the International), Marx also addresses auditors who are known and ratified (i.e. considered as an audience by the author) such as Thiers, Faure and the fleeing Communards, addressees who are known but not specifically figured as targets for the speech (the reading public of Europe), and eavesdroppers, "strictly potential" audiences who are implicated in a text's future contexts rather than its immediate one.⁴² This framework is a useful heuristic for talking about who philosophical texts are addressed to and how their mode of address works. Like the letters McCormick cites, Marx's speech, in blurring the lines between oratory and the philosophy of history, goes out of its way to implicate all of these (but especially the last). The narrative break produced by Marx's description of the Commune is the moment when Marx begins to consciously speak, not only to his temporally immediate audiences, but to an audience out of sync with the present—those who will make the Commune significant (or insignificant) by the way they obey the injunction to choose a particular interpretation of it.

A brief clarification of what I mean by narrative is necessary here, as is a note on the relationship between narrative and the philosophies of history described so far. Of these, Derrida's thought is the easiest to connect to a concept of historical narration. As Barbara Biesecker has argued, Derrida's larger thought can be thought of as a

commentary on what she terms the rhetoricity of human existence—the inevitable splitting of any given text between its desire to project a seamless, overarching truth and the inevitability that its ambivalences in meaning, its slips and starts, will render any such truth both deferred (always lying ahead in an imaginary, never-realized future or end of history) and differing—indeterminate as to what it even means.⁴³ The injunction to choose outlined in *Specters of Marx* is a recognition that, while historical causes and our experience of them are garbled, confused, and ambivalent, stories will be told, interpretations will reassert themselves; we must narrate (or figure, or communicate somehow) despite communication's failure. Not to do so means quite literal paralysis, politically and personally. Narrative, specifically historical narrative, is, in this sense, the way people represent “what happened” to themselves so that they can form a conception of their own motives.

The first part of Marx's speech is an intervention at this level. In taking larger historical events and personalizing them, Marx narrates the past in order to render his audience the agency of feeling like specific developments are the product of particular parties, that those parties have designs on history, and those designs can then be combatted by those with the inclination. In moving toward the future, though, Marx's injunction to choose breaks down. The Commune is such a historical novelty, so saturated with contradictory causes, effects and meanings, that Marx's impulse to a particular settled account of who benefits from particular developments grinds to a halt (at least partially in spite of himself). In encountering the Commune, Marx is forced to make creative moves in his own thought that attempt to anticipate and intervene in future

conjunctures rather than present or past ones. In so doing, he ceases to speak to his immediate audiences (who need, for their own piece of mind and sense of motives, to “know” what is “really going on” with history) and begins to speak to potential audiences, those of the future who will need, for their own political agency, to unsettle rather than settle their conceptions of what history means, and whether it in fact means anything other than the work they put it to. In other words, Marx moves from a provisional acceptance of a somewhat settled historical hermeneutic that suspiciously asks what really happened, to a creative effort, analogous to that of Benjamin’s historian, to blast an object (the Commune) out of its historical continuum in order to put into “interference” with the present.⁴⁴ In shifting from a reading of the Commune that tries to explain it to one that traces its contours as a novel historical problem, Marx obeys what could be described as an injunction to let the secret of history in, palpating its meaning to creative ends, without ever answering the exhortation to “read me” in any stable manner. He also obeys Benjamin’s injunction to take what is apparently a failed revolution (and what he himself would later describe as such) and place the “very specific moment” of just a few months prior to the speech he is giving in tension with the present to reveal what might have been, and what might be for future generations who must negotiate the Commune’s legacy.

The rhetorical shift in Marx’s speech is signaled by a question: “What is the Commune, then, that sphinx so tantalizing to the bourgeois mind?”⁴⁵ Marx shifts from the matter of fact discussion of the first part of the pamphlet to a riddle just waiting for an Oedipus to solve it (and loose the tide of status quo-shattering of events such a solution

would precipitate). The first answer Marx provides in his speech is the one laid out by the revolutionaries themselves—the Commune, according to the March 18 manifesto, is a recognition that “the proletarians of Paris” have the “imperious duty and absolute right to render themselves masters of their own destinies.”⁴⁶ “But the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes.”⁴⁷ The answer offered by the Commune’s supporters immediately complicates itself.

This opening movement tells us how we, as an audience are to receive this part of Marx’s speech—as a continued indictment of the French national government and all those who would see the Commune destroyed, but also against (at least a certain version of) the explicit statements of its leaders. The Commune serves as a challenge to both groups. For those in power, it is a challenge to settled structures and privilege of all sorts. For those who would support it, the Commune asks that they do more than take up things (institutions, categories of representation) as they are. Seizure of political institutions is not the point; what is important is to move beyond the accumulated “rubbish”⁴⁸ of centralized State power to generate new political institutions and ways of living together.

The explicit statement by the Commune’s members of what its goals and workings are is a tentative first solution to the problem raised by the Commune’s existence. It is remarkable, given the tone of the first half of the speech, and of Marx’s other addresses on the war, how little this solution is discussed for itself. Instead, Marx tells a story about where the Commune came from: at base, it is the product of a process that began with the development of the “centralized State power” that served “nascent middle-class society as a mighty weapon in its struggles against feudalism.”⁴⁹ The

French Revolution of 1789 purified this apparatus of “all manner of medieval rubbish, seigniorial rights, local privileges” and the other “relics” of feudalism like a “giant broom.”⁵⁰ This revolution marked a “progressive phase in the class struggle,” but this historical progress, like all such phases, was the creation of a fundamentally ambivalent moment—the manifestation of the political forces available at the time (i.e. the nation-state) freed from the trappings of tradition that had hindered them until now.

Unfortunately, the moment was not seized. Instead of the fulfillment of the revolutionary promise of 1789, the ensuing decades produced the Empire. The institutions that the revolution had produced, and parliament in particular, led to “the direct control of the propertied classes” over government, “a hotbed of huge national debts and crushing taxes” which “assumed more and more the character of the national power of capital over labor.”⁵¹ The transition through the various forms of government marking the early to mid-1800s exacerbated the process, culminating in a second Empire “with the *coup d’etat*” for its birth certificate, universal suffrage for its sanction and the sword for its scepter.”⁵² Marx argues that parliamentary politics in France in the 1840s, while ultimately a tool for capital to ensure its continued domination via an uneasy compromise (in the form of the republican-monarchist coalition of the Party of Order) between different philosophies and points of view. The Second Empire, after Louis Bonaparte’s election, “freed” the bourgeois of these ideational divisions. This produced two developments. On the one hand, “industry and commerce expanded to colossal dimensions; financial swindling celebrated cosmopolitan orgies; the misery of the masses was set off by a shameless display of gorgeous, meretricious and debased luxury” on the

part of the bourgeois.⁵³ Separated from even an electoral tie to popular politics, the governmental practices of the French state likewise deteriorated, becoming “the greatest scandal of that society and the very hotbed of all its corruptions.”⁵⁴

These few pages form a transitional section between Marx’s description of the war and his description of the Commune. Their first important feature is Marx’s use of a strategy of condensation to take large swaths of history and articulate them as concise dates that would resonate in the European reading public’s memories of its own history. For example, most would remember 1789 as France’s foundational moment—the Bastille was stormed on the 14th of July, and on the 9th of the same month the National Assembly (composed of nobles and large-scale property owners), created to advise the King, declared itself the National Constituent Assembly and established a house of the Assembly elected by popular vote, with no property qualifications for office. Marx needs this date to remind his audience of the Revolution as popularly known, but the several years of negotiations with the monarchy, scattered uprisings and other political activity that culminate in Louis’ death in 1793 are all folded into this one (arguably, by some standard, premature) dating of the revolution. The movement which Marx characterizes as sweeping away feudal institutions might as easily be characterized as beginning in 1792 with the ascendancy of the radical left in the National Assembly and ending with the Terror,⁵⁵ and there are also any number of reorganizations of the French judiciary, confiscation of noble lands, and other trends which could equally serve as barometers for the change he is talking about. Marx thus condenses the historical events of the revolution and the shifting institutional politics of several years of French history into a

single symbolic moment, one that may be invoked throughout the speech by its date and place in the popular imagination.

The same is true of Marx's treatment of the following several years of history. An array of disparate regimes and personalities are condensed into references to policies, dates or specific events that would be known to anyone with a grounding (through living in it or through learning about it) in 19th century French history. This is in part a simple effort to paint this history in broad terms that the widest possible number of people could understand. It also, however, allows a presentation of French history as a struggle between dueling forces and tendencies—those characteristic of the most radical elements of the Revolution of 1789, and those which stepped in to fill the gap in time which the revolution opened up. Nineteenth century French history thus follows from a moment of potential, an opening onto another nineteenth century; the revolution could have led to a radically different Europe, especially in terms of the development of capitalism, than in fact took place. The failure to take advantage of this opening results in the loss of revolutionary potential of even those potentially radical developments, such as universal suffrage (already rendered implicitly non-universal by its reduction to propertied men) that 1789 had spawned.

The conflict between the legacy of 1789 and the regimes that followed it results in the Commune, the “direct antithesis of the Empire.”⁵⁶ Marx argues that the Commune was the “positive form” of the republic proclaimed in 1789 and again in 1848; it actualized what these revolutions had prefigured ideationally. The Commune's political practices served as a “model to all the great industrial centers of France,” many of which

(notably Lyons and Nanterre) emulated Paris' example by instantiating Communal governments of their own. In the end, the Commune is (among other reasons) so revolutionary because it is such an open-ended model, equally capable of serving Paris and "the smallest country hamlet."⁵⁷ We have already seen how Marx frames the Commune as the fulfillment of the project of 1789: here he specifies (as discussed in the previous chapter) that the Commune "amputated" the measures of curtailment of church power, secularized public education and the model of "revocable" and universal suffrage from any claim to set the State as a superior entity to the nation, recognizing it for the "parasitic excrescence" that it is.⁵⁸ As a transition into the constellation of different subject positions already described, Marx emphasizes that the Commune is a "completely new historical creation." While it is "generally the fate" of such creations to be mistaken for "the counterpart of older and even defunct forms of social life," in this case the medieval Communes, the Commune is not a simple struggle against "over-centralization."⁵⁹ It is instead a transfer of forces "absorbed by the State parasite" back into the "social body" of France.⁶⁰

It is clear, from the terms that Badiou and others have already applied to the Commune, what Marx's target is—precisely the idea of state power, centralized top-down government, which he sees the Commune as destroying. How does this discussion relate to this chapter's concerns, more specifically to Marx's narrative of French history? Marx discusses this historical period in terms of the emergence of new institutions, the rhetoric attached to those institutions, and their relationship to everyday life. Institutions such as the state (as Marx said already in the opening pages of *The German Ideology*) are

emergent out of myriad interlinked processes of exchange and intercourse.⁶¹ In that context, Marx is concerned first of all to develop a genealogy of human society (which he argues occurs when the human animal goes from simple satisfaction of needs to producing in order to satisfy these needs—hence, producing more needs that did not exist before). Where he is concerned with history, it is less with thick historical description than with the concept of the various modes of production that have inhabited European society, and which include different arrangements of productive forces as well as social relations that organize those forces.

The relation that *The German Ideology* postulates between social process and (implicitly static) institutions is one of lag—process congeals, organizing itself into institutions. These institutions serve to ensure stability, but are also tools of power maintenance and control; they can serve to ensure that, despite the development of productive forces in ways that would allow a more fully egalitarian social system, actual social organization remains hierarchically administered. *The Civil War in France* recapitulates this general narrative, but toward different ends. At the beginning of the arc just described, Marx emphasizes that political and economic relations change “simultaneously.” Ideally, then, the gap between a unitary state power and a plural civil society should not exist; political institutions should keep pace with the development of relations of exchange and of productive forces. Marx’s discussion of the decades of French history preceding the Commune is a dramatization of such a process in terms that are messier and harder to parse than those of *The German Ideology*. They show political institutions as a series of emergent relationships between people. All of the specific

institutions Marx focuses on—the church, educational institutions, universal suffrage and parliament—are framed here as devices for governing the social body (in terms that recall with some precision Althusser’s description of ideological apparatuses or Foucault’s description of apparatuses of governance).⁶² The narrative arc of the speech from 1789 to the 1870s describes how these ways of organizing relationships, formed during a revolutionary moment, are stymied (like technology held back by a corporation for fear it will negate the corporation’s profit margin) by those who hold power, who turn ostensibly progressive institutions into agents of a larger relational apparatus—the State—which is used to overcode and lend significance to the others.

This section of *The Civil War in France* shows this process in all its fits and starts. The revolutionary opening of 1789 is a moment of innovation—a place where technologies of political relation (such as revocable and elected political service) are developed and refined. These technologies have a dual significance. On the one hand, like the Commune, they represent novel forms that sweep away the old institutions of the feudal system and institute new ones. On the other, like Marx’s descriptions of industrial technology in volume 1 of *Capital*, these political technologies are placed in the service of the structures of power in which they develop.⁶³ Pressing parliamentary democracy into the service of those with power, then, means that its institutions will stop short of actualizing what revolutionary political potential they possess. Instead, they will become justifications for the existing order, of how democratic it is, and ways of inducing people to relate as citizens of a state authority rather than political agents in their own right. The Commune thus appears as an attempt to reappropriate the means of political production,

to take the potential inherent in these technologies and (severing it from the larger relation of the state) put it to new and better use.

This last point makes clear the specifically rhetorical significance of this part of the speech. In setting up this history as a decades-long social struggle, and in defining particular political and educational institutions as the terrain of this struggle, Marx's various audiences are prompted to place themselves as actors on the scene of this struggle, which (like that of 1789) is an opening onto a new political moment. Instead of forming their agency based on a conception of what really happened in the past, the ambiguous past event of the Commune becomes an impetus to decide "what really happened" for the future, to exercise collective agency in destabilizing the power structures that have reasserted themselves. Even if the Commune has fallen, the way Marx uses the past shows how a moment of emergence of political novelty can, if thwarted, lay dormant. The reappropriation of the relational strategies that make up the status quo can reorient apparently reactionary institutions back toward their revolutionary potential. How do we know where to look for such moments? By searching the apparently settled legacy of political history for moments that, though we may think we know what they mean (either in that they have been rendered banal details in the historical narrative, or in that they have become clichés), escape full accounting, and asking what emerged in those moments (or what persists in the shadows of their supposed legacies) that is worth reclaiming.

A final important point about this part of the speech concerns the issue of the Commune's universalism. The use of particularly French moments of collective memory

allows Marx to avoid neglecting his most immediate audiences, especially those in France attempting to sort out the Commune's legacy. Such a move would also allow Marx access to the larger European reading public. The dates he chooses would have signified the broadest universalism that the French republic represented for Europe (and, ostensibly, the world), and anyone who accorded the French revolution political significance would thus be made a partisan to the narrative. Simultaneously, in making it clear that the political practices of the Commune are not analogous to anything that has come before, Marx allows us to re-read the potentially problematic statement that the Commune has annexed to France the workers of the world. Marx's framing of the Commune is universalist insofar as he sees it as a model for subsequent revolutions. What forms the model, however, is not the contingent historical details that precipitated the Commune, but the relational strategies that emerged from those details.

To think about the Commune's utility for political strategy requires that Marx chart a careful course between two problematic alternatives: to avoid placing the Commune in the context of French republicanism would be as bad as simply asserting that the rest of the world should be like France. The way Marx takes out of this is to think in terms of relationships rather than stable identities. The political institutions Marx describes, from popular electoral government to the establishment of a civil service are not laudable in themselves (or because of some immortal French republican tradition) and can, and have, gone badly. Their reemergence in 1871 is potentially revolutionary because of the uses to which they are put (the use of elections to foster bottom-up local government, the use of a civil service to keep positions of political power "at all times

revocable”) and the sets of political relations between people, localities and collective institutions they foster.⁶⁴ He ensures that his audiences know that the Commune emerged from a specific set of circumstances, in a particular time and place, and that it is not possible to abstract from these circumstances, and he shows how the political institutions emergent from these circumstances are irreducible to them, producing forms of relation that can emerge (differently, but with analogous political effects) in completely different times and places.

This universalism, and the philosophy of history that it implies, is further deployed as a rhetorical technique when Marx reaches the present of the Commune, and the different parts of France that encountered it. The interplay between the concrete details of each French constituency’s experience and the moment of the Commune becomes more complex than it was in my previous discussion. First of all, like Benjamin’s historical object, the tensions in the story of each political group Marx discusses mimic the larger tensions he outlines in his narrative of French history. Reading these accounts as a narrative rather than a simple list of policies sets them in motion. It is not only possible to see how each political grouping has a stake in the Commune, but is also evident how each of these groupings themselves emerged, and how they came to have such a stake. Those Marx discusses in his speech are thus brought to a new relationship with their national history, as well as their place in it.

Marx’s use of narrative also allows us to give a tense to the different layers of indebted subjectivity discussed in the last chapter. Along with the history of excesses and abuses of power on the part of the French government, Marx also locates in the past some

figures who appear politically empowered on the surface, but who lack insight into the present moment, merely wishing to lay hold of things as they are. Marx argues that “in every revolution there intrude, at the side of its true agents, men of a different stamp; some of them survivors and devotees of past revolutions, without insight into the present moment, but preserving popular influence by their known honesty and courage; others mere brawlers, who[...]have sneaked into a reputation as revolutionists.”⁶⁵ In the case of this sort of partisan, the past is a blind that obscures knowledge of what is going on in the present. The case of the figures discussed in the last chapter is more complex. Marx tells the middle classes, peasants, and the other demographics he addresses that they owe a debt of gratitude to the Commune, for its “sagacious settlement” of their financial accounts and its fulfillment of the best aspects of their “Voltaireinism”⁶⁶ through secularizing education, disempowering the Church, and empowering popular democracy. The peasants and middle classes are thus part of Marx’s narrative in a dual sense. On the one hand, they are emergent products of the history he has narrated in the previous section of the speech. They would not exist (*qua* masses or social groupings) absent this history, and so Marx can only appeal to them via these very national, historically specific tropes. Their “debt” is bound up with the particularity of their own situation, but it stands in tension to that situation as something that, if they embraced it and act in the interest of future revolutions, can carry them through their situation (through the gap opened by the Commune in settled history) to a different world and set of circumstances. The bulk of Marx’s discussion, then, tries to stand at the center of this tension, showing those “trapped” in the past how that very same past is not a trap, but instead a wealth of

possibilities for political change that may be exploited by a particular orientation toward the past as potential for something as yet unrealized.

This brings us, finally, to the working class as it is figured in Marx's speech. I have already pointed out that this class lacks any concrete identity or history. Instead, it is a goal for the concrete masses Marx discusses to aspire to as emergent social organization and a way of discussing what the future might hold. This last point—futuraity—is what a discussion of Marx's narrative allows us to add. The working class is the only group that Marx addresses in the present, and then in the future tense. Whereas the peasants and middle classes “had [been] saved” by the Commune, the working classes “have no ready-made decrees” to introduce (even after their moment of political triumph has supposedly passed). Instead, the Commune is the first in a “long series of struggles” through which they “will have” to pass. They have “no ideals” (i.e, no positive social existence) other than these struggles; their role is to “set free the elements of the new society” within the old.⁶⁷

This use of temporality clarifies the relationship Marx sees between history and the uses made of it by the present. The final part of this section of the speech combines the constellation of different subjects with the moment of political decision represented by the Commune. Each of the earlier narratives is recapitulated in geographic terms. Paris, the seat of the Revolution, is evoked for its status as national and revolutionary symbol, while Versailles, the seat of the Parliamentary government of Favre and Thiers, is made the reincarnation of an out-of-touch aristocracy. The distinction between Versailles and Paris, especially in relation to the Commune, would have resonated with

those who knew France's revolutionary history. Prior to 1871, "Paris Commune", referred, in general, to the councils governing the municipal districts of Paris after the late 1789. Olivier Bernier provides a concise description of the Parisian government at the time:

Versailles, the great golden palace set in its majestic park, remained unchanged after 1789[...] the court could, if it chose, think that, after all, the monarchy was intact. In Paris, though, they knew better [...] A new city government was set up with a central body, the Commune, elected on September 18. Far more important, each of the sixty districts, originally, a mere constituency, became a little self-contained republic with its own assembly and its own executive.⁶⁸

The Commune, then, was historically contrasted to Versailles, the local, republican governing body boiling with revolutionary fervor while Versailles remained pristine. On August 9, 1792, the previously existing Communal body was replaced by an "insurrectional body," which turned its local control into a separation from the national government, one motivated by the "extreme left."⁶⁹ In contrast, although the National Assembly became more radical over time, transforming from an advisory body that had largely been the mouthpiece of the King into a more traditional parliamentary function after the passage of the "Declaration of the Rights of Man"⁷⁰ and its more radical reconstitution as an executive (and then a Constitutional "Convention Nationale") in 1792,⁷¹ it was still largely constituted by nobles, and at one remove from the direct government of the people. It was also the forum for the drafting of constitutional measures and decrees that would result in the Terror of the 1790s. Those members of the National government who had fled to Versailles can thus stand in, for those hearing the speech, as a second Louis XVI. Once again, then, the political procedures and

technologies characteristic of French republicanism stand in tension to their historical past; the Commune is both the fulfillment of republicanism and a movement away from it into something new, which emerged in incipient form in the eighteenth century, but which is only now brought into the light of day.

This geographic juxtaposition allows Marx to further condense the emotional weight of the first part of his speech into a biting conclusion. Earlier, 1789 and 1871 form two parts of a historical narrative, progressive and reactionary, respectively; here, the geographical trope allows Marx to juxtapose them as a false France, situated in Versailles, and the true France of Paris, each possessed of its own history. Which of these histories to embrace is a decision all of Marx's readers and listeners must make.

Conclusion: Narrative and Revolutionary Innovation

“Time is not measure, but ethics”
-Antonio Negri⁷²

Marx's use of narrative in *The Civil War in France* allows a move from a discussion of the tropes he employs in his speech to an account of the way those tropes coalesce around a master figure. The synecdochic uses Marx makes of debt to cement his various audiences' common political interest is possible because the class positions he discusses are emergent out of the specific power relations at work in European history. With his story of the Commune, Marx condenses and selects among these relations to produce a narrative “imaginary resolution” of the overwhelming array of “real contradiction[s]” which produce the identities and possibilities for action legible in the present historical moment.⁷³ To call narratives imaginary does not reduce their material effectiveness; imagination, rather, “enact[s]” other levels of social process so as to make

them legible to individual or collective subjects.⁷⁴ This way of thinking about narrative, developed by Fredric Jameson, maintains that “history[...]is not a text, it is fundamentally non-narrative and non-representational; what can be added, however, is that history is inaccessible to us except in textual form, or in other words that it can be approached only by way of prior (re)contextualization.”⁷⁵ Jameson’s theory has a rhetorical counterpart in the work of Maurice Charland, who argues that narrative constructions of the history of a particular group call that group into being, producing a political orientation in the world that generates subjects’ conceptions of their membership in larger collectivities, as well as desires to act on behalf of the group into which they have been rhetorically called.⁷⁶ Marx’s speech does precisely this, with one major difference. In Charland’s account and that of others working with the same concepts, narrative generates a singular group identity oriented toward political decision in the present moment (in the case of Charland’s example, a popular referendum on whether or not to legally constitute a Quebecois identity in Canada). To a similarly settled narrative that imaginarily attempts to constitute its audiences as supporter of the Commune, Marx adds a second story, one which breaks down as soon as it establishes itself, showing how a virtual revolutionary future is contained within past moments of historical rupture (1789). This lends the very concrete moment of political decision in Charland’s account mobile. One can “support the Commune” in the immediate sense of sheltering refugees from it or combating anti-Communard propaganda, but it is also possible to support it outside its immediate historical context by engaging in future political action to which the Commune, like 1789, stands as a testament that political change is possible. Marx’s text

moves from narrative to a Derridean conjuration, not of a specific political organization (whether party, national government or whatever else) but of an imperative to work out the political technologies that will be adequate to future struggles to bring this particular version of the “working class” (a unity of struggle across spatial and temporal lines) to fruition.

In this sense, Marx’s speech conjures three sets of ghosts (perhaps recalling Dickens more than the figure of Hamlet, whom Derrida employs so extensively). Marx’s ghosts of revolutions past are conjured by being raised to the level of narrative; the moment of rupture of 1789 is made legible to his present audience through its emergence into a story highly charged with the feelings associated with that moment. The contradictions represented by the revolution, unlike in Jameson’s account of narrative (but in a way he would probably embrace), are only “resolved” insofar as they are suppressed. Marx’s conspiratorial reading of France’s present makes it clear who the spirits of the past are conjured against—the tricks and machinations which would keep them (unhappily) in their graves, a move on the part of Theirs and co. that is bolstered by the latter group’s own set of ghosts—skeletons in the closet rather than the shades of politics past. Finally, once they are raised, Marx’s spirits of 1789 are given body and form in the altogether earthly raiments of the global working class, who make common cause in order to conjure forth future revolutions. Borrowing from Hariman’s statement that styles constitute “mirror texts” for particular aspects of history, Marx’s stylization of history works as “a kind of hallway mirror that reflects, frames and creates a moment of assessment of the figure standing before it”—in this case, the crowd of historical figures

who Marx brings to life—but also as a magic mirror that uncannily doubles these figures with their multiplicity of potential future incarnations, while also making clear some of the political technologies that will allow the conjuration of these future incarnations.⁷⁷

The nature of the future described by Marx's text, and of the working class who he projects forward as the agent of that future, could be called messianic. One of the implications of Benjamin's text, which I described earlier, is that materialist historical scholars should look for the cracks in history through which things might become different. In Susan Buck-Morss' terms, these cracks are parts of the past whose meaning is apparently settled, but where history's balance of power might have been "*rescued*" and the fissures in the apparent order of the present situation where the present might be imagined otherwise.⁷⁸ They are messianic because they constitute a "secret index" by which the present "is referred to redemption," by which, if we seize the opportunity, things might become other than they are, and by which the past might be retroactively made the precursor to a moment of the redemption of its oppressed, rather than an ever-increasing pile of bloody casualties of progress.⁷⁹ This conscious maintenance of tension between past, present and future shows one way of cultivating what Christian Lenhart has termed anamnestic solidarity—solidarity not just with present political struggles, but also those of the past and future, from a "vantage point that transcends the limits of both contemporary action and historical retrospection."⁸⁰ Marx provides a way to think about (and implement) this vantage point as a tension between history, present decision and futurity rather than as a transcendent perspective on history.

“The working class” in Marx’s speech is a name for those who, after recognizing their exploitation by capital, teach themselves to try and seize moments of potential historical rupture. Rather than Paul Klee’s *Angelus Novus* (the painting Benjamin selects to figure his angel of history) continually blown backwards and forced to look at history’s accumulating debris, a better visual figure for Marx’s rhetoric of history might be given by combining the figure at the center of Klee’s painting with Diego Rivera’s *Man At the Crossroads*: pulled in all directions by the contradictory debris accumulating on all sides, Marx (and, implicitly, subsequent rhetors trying to replicate the political effects he works to produce) attempts to grasp and intervene in emergent historical circumstances, using his speech to enfold those who stand to become history’s debris into the center of a *kairotic* cyclone.⁸¹ Like the apprehension suggested by the sidelong glance of Klee’s angel, Marx is shocked by history’s turns to the bad; they paralyze him, even making him recant his own earlier affirmations of revolutionary novelty. The Marx of the Commune speech, though, is able to combine such shock with the upward turned eyes of the proletarian figure at the center of Rivera’s mural, looking ahead in order to assess the wind of the storm which blows from Paradise and attempt to ride it, pulling others into the (hopefully successful) path that he will chart rhetorically through his call for political decision in favor of the Commune. Rather than a reading of Rivera’s painting that suggests humanity in control of its own destiny though, the worker’s machine (like the technologies of relation contained in Marx’s speech) charts a course that is centered within history only insofar as a delicate balance of forces outside the orator’s control are maintained and can be put in centrifugal balance rather than merely being mastered or

dominated. Like Hariman's Machiavelli, then, Marx is a realist. Unlike Hariman's Machiavelli, though, Marx's realism shows narrative to be a tool for intervening in material conditions, one crucial part of a given historical conjuncture among others.

The narrative component of Marx's speech demonstrates the temporal dynamic of Marx's style. It also produces another problem. My reading of Marx, while staying close to his rhetoric, has also held him up as a philosopher.⁸² This raises the question of the relation between Marx's philosophy and his rhetoric. Like the issues discussed over the previous two chapters, this question is a pressing one for rhetoric, and for political style in particular: as Aune's critique, outlined in the first chapter, makes clear, Hariman's choice to make his project about a philosophical typology rather than a sociological analysis of the practices of political style runs the risk of reducing the texture of lived experience to abstraction. Likewise, within historical materialism, the question of the role of theory and philosophical concepts in political practice, raised by figures from Vladimir Lenin and Georg Lukacs to Louis Althusser and E.P. Thompson, looms large.⁸³ What is theory's utility for politics? Is it useful or not? In the following chapter, I will return to *The Civil War in France* one final time in order to interrogate the relationship between conceptual or philosophical and rhetorical practice, a discussion that will also address the genre of Marx's speech. I will argue that Marx's speech represents a revolutionary epideictic in which philosophical concepts and rhetorical tropes form necessary, mutually reinforcing parts of a larger political project.

Chapter 5: Crisis, Community and Revolutionary Epideictic

The simplest generic characterization one could offer of *The Civil War in France* is that it is an epideictic speech, more specifically a eulogy. Marx hopes, through praise of the Commune's travails, and blame of those who crushed it, to continue the process of constructing a revolutionary community that the Commune began, and to secure the Commune as a site of memorial reference for such a community. Insofar as it engages with the question of community, Marx's speech thus provides a key point of intersection between rhetoric and historical materialism. Both fields have grappled with a crisis of community: rhetorical studies has done so in its engagement with the fragmentation characteristic of contemporary political and cultural milieu, while materialism (especially that aligning itself with communism) has had to deal with adjusting to these same aspects of the contemporary moment and with the larger crises of communism that accompanied the last few decades of the twentieth century.

In this chapter, I will discuss the concept of community articulated in *The Civil War in France*. In so doing, I will argue that Marx's speech provides a case study for a revolutionary epideictic rhetoric that is a productive way to navigate crises of community in both rhetoric and historical materialist thought. The politics of community developed in the Commune speech provide a model for composition of relations of solidarity and collective capacity that are irreducible to either the complete absence of community (as in the discussions of postmodern fragmentation prevalent in rhetorical studies) or to the identitarian concepts of community which have rightly come under thorough critique in recent years. Engagement with Marx's speech will facilitate a discussion of Marx's

thoughts on the relationship between community, audience and political violence. It will also allow a productive return to and extension of my discussions of Marx's use of concepts to organize his oratory in Chapter 2, as well as the philosophies of history I engaged with in Chapter 4.

Community and Epideictic Function

From its inception in classical treatises on rhetoric, the concept of epideictic presents itself as a paradox. The genre is associated with the most lighthearted of occasions (speech contests, oratorical party games), with pedagogy (*epidexis* as demonstration or imitative model), and with somber civic events (most notably the annual funeral oration contests held to celebrate the Athenian dead). Aristotle, defining its formal features in contrast to courtroom or forensic oratory and the deliberative speech most frequently practiced in legislative assemblies, provides a list of the conceptions of audience, purposes, and temporal dynamics characteristic of the genre. Epideictic rhetoric first of all distinguishes itself in what it asks of the audience. Whereas judicial and deliberative oratory intervene in an avowed moment of contingency, asking those who hear the speech to judge the quality of the intervention, epideictic merely asks that its hearers serve as observers [*theoroi*], concerned solely with the "ability [*dynamis*] of the speaker."¹ Where judicial and forensic rhetoric deal primarily with the past and future, "in epideictic, the present is the most important."² Finally, as each speech genre looks to different goals, bracketing those adopted by the other genres, epideictic rhetoric trades focus on advantage and disadvantage (deliberative) or justice and injustice (forensic) for praise or blame.³

While Aristotle's discussion of speech genres as parts of an interlinked whole has already been remarked upon, what emerges as doubly remarkable in this passage is just how much epideictic enfolds and is complicated by the other genres Aristotle discusses. Speaking of epideictic rhetoric's "time," Aristotle writes, immediately after arguing that "for epideictic, the present is most important", that "all speakers praise and blame in regard to existing qualities, but they also often make use of other things, both reminding the audience of the past and projecting the course of the future,"⁴ a temporal complication that goes unremarked on for the other genres. The goals of epideictic rhetoric—praise and blame—are equally inconsistent. Speaking later of the *topoi* best employed in epideictic rhetoric, Aristotle clarifies his point by saying that epideictic deals with "virtue or vice, honorable or shameful" things.⁵ Of what does virtue (here the translation of the Greek *arête*) consist? Among other things, "justice" and the courage to perform "fine actions" in times of danger,⁶ qualities which would seem to abut on forensic and deliberative rhetoric, respectively. The definition is only complicated further by Aristotle's characterization of virtue as an "ability [*dynamis*]," the very same word he had offered as a criterion, apparently aesthetic in contrast to the political judgment of forensic or deliberative rhetoric, for judging epideictic speech. Upon closer inspection, the apparent innocuousness of epideictic rhetoric is a mask for its complexity. Epideictic rhetoric in the Aristotelian sense invokes apparently settled values in order to praise or blame its subject, but it asserts these values through recourse to conjecture about the past and projection into the future, relying on criteria that are held to be the provenance of more overtly political genres. Moreover, the category of ability, deployed as both a criteria for

judging speakers and the subjects they speak about, contains within it these very same overtly political criteria. In the classical vein, then, epideictic rhetoric is potentially the most (literally) para-doxical of genres, standing at the intersection of common sense with contingency, and of shared values with sites of political and judicial controversy that might lead to contests over the meaning and implications of those values. All of this is, of course, potential in Aristotle rather than actual; his discussion of virtue [*arête*] in the specifically Athenian context of a gendered, xenophobic concept of Greek manhood means that actual instances of epideictic in the classical sense are unlikely to embrace this paradoxical dimension.⁷ The transition from the Greek *polis* to modern discussions of community, however, will make the contradictions at the heart of epideictic more overt.

If Aristotle's definition of epideictic focuses on its rhetorical form, modern discussions of the concept focus on its rhetorical function, specifically that of creating and cementing a sense of community. In a sense, this is the unacknowledged premise of Aristotle's discussions of epideictic topics and form. Transposition of the category into a pluralistic, secular space makes the issue of community overt. In the most influential modern discussion of epideictic, Chaim Perelman and Lucille Olbrechts-Tyteca argue that, despite a "lack of understanding" of the genre so far, epideictic rhetoric performs a function crucial to all rhetoric.⁸ Drawing on "values held in common by the audience and the speaker," though "unformulated" in conscious thought by the audience until the moment of the speech, the epideictic orator seeks to "create a disposition toward action" on behalf of a larger sense of collective identity or "communion."⁹ Later accounts specify the community created by epideictic rhetoric as a mimetic one. In Gerard

Hauser's words, epideictic generates "accounts of nobility worthy of *mimesis*" which then creates a common ground for political deliberation and engagement.¹⁰

Like Aristotle's definition of epideictic as a speech genre, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's focus on epideictic as communitarian function at the core of rhetoric raises more questions than it answers. In contrast to Aristotle, this focus is frustrating more for its simplicity than its incoherence or complexity. On the surface, here, epideictic is simply rhetoric aiming at identification between individuals to form and maintain an ideally stable community, working with values that were held by the audience in the first place. This description is consonant with discussions of secularism's view of community as precarious, in need of "continuous reformation, reinvestment and reinvocation"¹¹ by its members, and caught between ostensible pluralism (*The New Rhetoric* refers to community as a general structure, rather than to any particular community, as Aristotle does) and the "violence" of a "universal reason" that continually reforms community by policing its borders and keeping its various outsides at bay.¹² If this is the case, though, what does it mean to say that the values invoked reside (even if this is only true most of the time rather than as a rule) in the unconscious, or at least the preconscious, of the audience?

This passing reference to the unconscious prompts a further question: inadvertently, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca have invited us to read their text as a symptom of the time period in which it was written. Appearing as it does in 1958, this preoccupation with community actually concerns a particular, historically-bound concept of community, one marked (particularly in Europe) by the aftermath of the Holocaust as

well as by discussions about, and concerns over, communism and the spread of global capitalism. Since *The New Rhetoric* appeared, scholarly attempts have been made to diagnose (and manage) community's fate with increasing frequency, and across the political spectrum: Robert Putnam and other social capital theorists have bemoaned the loss of "reciprocity" and lack of community engagement characteristic of the contemporary moment,¹³ and communitarians such as Michael Sandel have attempted to renew a focus on community within US constitutional jurisprudence, among other places.¹⁴ On the left, an array of theorists have engaged the same questions from the perspectives of communicative capitalism,¹⁵ the emergence of "post-political" subjectivity and the death of the enlightenment citizen-subject,¹⁶ the concept of the postmodern,¹⁷ and the capture of subjectivity, communication and indeed life itself into the vertiginous circulatory cycles of capitalism.¹⁸ Within rhetorical studies, the crisis of community has been most widely discussed in the context of Michael Calvin McGee's fragmentation thesis.¹⁹ McGee argues that a set of "new cultural conditions" has affected a "collapse of context into text"; where in the past, discourses were assumed to be aimed at a stable community of readers possessed of a homogenous body of knowledge, the past few decades have seen a shift from "presumed homogeneity into presumed heterogeneity" of audience and textual circulation, combined with an ever-increasing technological and semantic fragmentation of textuality. For McGee, the primary implications of this thesis relate to criticism; where before, rhetors (from politicians to activists) produced rhetorical artifacts, which were then read and interpreted by critics and other readers, now texts are already cast in the form of fragments. In this model,

traditional hermeneutics is rendered obsolete. Instead, critics assemble texts through kludging together different fragments, stitching together artificial wholes in order to “identify and solve[...]social problems.” McGee’s narrative of the transition from text to fragment could be thickened or challenged in any number of ways, but it provides a useful thumbnail sketch of the implications of cultural fragmentation for contemporary rhetorical criticism.

If recent history has produced an increasingly fragmented cultural space, then what of epideictic rhetoric in the present? Bradford Vivian answers this question by linking the practice of epideictic to the politics of public memory. In his discussion of the commemorative ceremonies held in New York on the first anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, Vivian describes how, because it was believed that original commemorative speeches would prove inadequate to the occasion, the organizers of the ceremony put together a menu of “cherished” patriotic speeches and prose,²⁰ including Thomas Jefferson’s draft of the Declaration of Independence, the Gettysburg Address, and Franklin Roosevelt’s “Four Freedoms” speech, to be read by an assortment of public figures. The result provided an apparent demonstration of the more traditional versions of epideictic I have discussed so far, “instructing audiences catechistically in putatively common accounts of collective origins, experiences and ideals.”²¹ In contrast to academic critics and others who criticized the leaders who spoke for not writing original material, Vivian argues that epideictic has traditionally been “intended to symbolically preserve cultural tradition, collective memory and political order—not to stand apart from or transcend them.”²² The “artlessness” and unoriginality of the speeches, then, was only to

be expected. What Vivian finds more interesting is that the particular speeches selected, because of their canonical status, may be framed as communicating “nonpartisan truths available to all Americans, irrespective of historical or cultural circumstance.”²³ The paradoxical result of this is that what was originally political speech is rendered as the sacred and ostensibly apolitical expression of neutral US values. Vivian dubs this depoliticized citation of the US political canon neoliberal epideictic: speech that “claims the transcendence” of a civic religion of US values over “historical crisis” and the “profound inequalities evident in a multicultural polity” such as the US, and that employs the force of political cliché to shore up a sense of national community and support for global corporate empire at a time when such inequalities have been glaringly dramatized.²⁴

Vivian’s concept adds several important aspects to the story about community I have already told. Though Vivian argues that repetitive, ritual forms are common throughout the epideictic tradition, it is notable that writings and passages that are in a fairly strict sense clichés were selected for reading. Precisely because of their “unoriginality and artlessness,”²⁵ the platitudes of US civil religion contained in the documents circulated more easily as sound bites, and carried an imperative for those viewing the ceremonies to “remember” the US’ past in terms of “universally consumable symbols” of ready patriotism that discourage a collective engagement with either the past or the present.²⁶ Here Vivian touches on a point that Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari have discussed as characteristic of language under capitalism: the reduction of speech to “very short phrases” that “command life,” training those who hear them to be relays in a

larger system of emission, reception and transmission of these same phrases in the service of ensuring the continual re-creation of a population of docile speaking subjects.²⁷ In this circulation of political cliché, meaning is relatively unimportant; what matters is that the repetition of the phrases structures the habits of discourse of those who hear them (as in the refrain of a song or popular television catchphrase stuck in one's head) and makes them into a certain type of speaker ready for more of the apoliticized, consumable symbols Vivian describes. His example is thus one node in the larger systems of capitalist circulation already mentioned. The memorial rituals surrounding 9/11 served to, at one stroke, produce in their audiences (through recalling the destruction of the towers and through the very banality of the speeches they cite) affects of despair and fear of the loss of US national community, and an attractive remedy for those affects in the form of comforting, ritually repeatable phrases from the US political canon.

This dynamic parallels the particular process of “arousal and fulfillment of desire”²⁸ specific to global capitalism and conceptually formulated in thinkers from Marx to Deleuze and Guattari. To sum up a complex and multifaceted argument, capital thrives on crises spatial, semantic and temporal. Capitalism is continually beset with contradictions of all sorts, from the basic problems of the limit of the working day and of production and incessant vacillation between reliance on money and reliance on even less tangible credit, to the continual drive to geographic expansion and ever-increasing density and speed of circulation that has driven capitalism to ever-increasing global breadth and technological development. Recent scholars of capitalism have theorized this dynamic in terms of subjectivity, as capitalism both produces different types of

subjectivity (including many types potentially antagonistic to it) and then folds those types back into its own circuits of surplus-value: revolution becomes revolutionary chic, and incipient desires for an end to the scarcity artificially generated by capital become cultures of conspicuous consumption (which can then be turned into propaganda to justify further austerity). What plays out at the level of production and commodification also holds temporally. Technological development and struggles on the part of unions and other groups have led to a situation where at least a small portion of the world's population spends comparatively more time away from work. Capital brings this full circle by dissolving the boundaries between work and "free" time, such that even non-work time generates surplus value, in the form of YouTube clips that garner advertising revenue, time spent deciphering viral marketing campaigns in order to win merchandise, or (at least for a certain period of the 1990s and early 2000s) stock-market speculation as hobby. Overall the picture is one of the capture of what at first appears as capitalism's outside, with the eventual result that both halves of the process, the production of difference and its exploitation for profit, are solicited and contained within capitalism itself.²⁹

Once temporality enters the equation, the parallels between the processes of capitalism and the politics of community Vivian describes become even more important: neoliberal epideictic reaches into the past so as to produce a very specific form of messianic time. The cited speeches culminated in the one original piece of rhetoric of the day: President George W. Bush, who, invoking the Gospel of John, described the US as a light in darkness, and the culmination of a messianic mission that is the reason why

“history has matched this nation with this time.”³⁰ Vivian argues that such rhetoric is “ahistorical. It conforms to a divine calendar in which social agents cannot change prophesied ends” but can only “hasten” them through appropriate action.³¹ This is true to an extent, but describing this messianism as part of the larger workings of global capital puts a finer point on things. Bush’s rhetoric is historical on its face, but the US, framed as the site of the return of a Christian messianic force, is the foreordained agent of the end of that history as the geographic and military center of the global market.

The logic of predestination at work in Bush’s speech recalls that of Calvinism, but it also recalls the core logic of capitalism. The succession of patriotic citations, many of which can and have been taken up as far more radical political resources than they are in this case, work to produce a range of affects from feelings of solace to patriotic passion in those who hear them; these affects, in and of themselves, might be resources for demonstrating how the US has failed the radical potential of its historic legacy, for generating collective political agency, or any number of other things. Both the form of the ceremony (the culmination of the event with Bush’s speech, the commemoration’s connection to larger webs of media circulation) and Bush’s rhetoric act to channel these passions into passive obedience and into militaristic and consumerist desires. The crucial addition to Vivian’s account is that, beyond just inducing desire for the Bush administration’s post-9/11 policies out of thin air, the epideictic rhetoric of the 9/11 ceremony worked to capture desires for community and for a more humane world that had arisen in response to September 11th, and that were at least potentially liberatory, converting those desires into the reactionary ones Vivian is concerned with.

Vivian confines his discussion to a single case study. Other authors, however, allow us to read the features he describes under the heading of neoliberal epideictic in the context of global capitalism. Catherine Chaput, in her discussion of rhetorical circulation, critiques Vivian's implicit liberalism in terms consonant with those I have just employed. Vivian, on Chaput's reading, has a problem with epideictic rhetoric at the point that it grows excessive, stirring up passions in its audiences to the detriment of "the political agency promised by liberalism."³² This argument only works, however, at the point that such political agency is still an option or, indeed, ever existed in the first place. Instead, Chaput argues, we should see "passions" and "reason" alike as the function of a global circulation of political affect that we cannot avoid or escape. Taken uncritically as a "gut sense", affect "does not crumble under the weight of better arguments or more information"³³ but rather persists as a series of unconscious linkages of "disparate actions, sensations and events"³⁴ that condition motives and bodily habits, predispositions and desires. Chaput suggests that conceptualizations of discrete rhetorical moments, like the 9/11 commemoration ceremonies, should be folded into a larger discussion of the global circulation of signs, images and affects. This shift in discourse provides the theoretical tools to better interrogate the links between disparate situations (and, implicitly, different levels of circulation, from the most obviously material to the most semiotic) that constitute the fabric of contemporary capitalism.³⁵

This detour through recent debates on the subject of community provides some tools for thinking about the workings of epideictic rhetoric under capitalism. In the first place, Vivian's account admits one more conceptual analogy. The community he

describes as neoliberal is constructed around what Paolo Virno has called a dialectic of dread and refuge.³⁶ Neoliberal epideictic responds to a collective rupture of community (the attack on 9/11, with its attendant fears and anxieties about security) by encouraging practices of community that revolve around “a dangerous search for protection”³⁷ from future ruptures in the form of a blind acquiescence to national sovereignty and faith in economic health as a marker of safety. Implicit in this dynamic is a rigid attention to policing a community’s boundaries and borders, designating certain lines of passage, such as international trade, as beneficial, and certain others (of bodies or information) as dangerous and harmful. The community invoked in neoliberal epideictic must continually produce insecurity and anxiety, the better to recapture that anxiety as a desire for recovery of an illusory past, depicted as “lost or broken”³⁸ and a future in which that which is broken may be restored. From the perspective of the subject of such a community, such a desire is a desire for death, or of millions of deaths perpetrated in the name of security and as a down payment on a “community yet to come.”³⁹

The addition of Chaput’s account to Vivian’s provides some larger reasons for why this dialectic of dread and refuge works the way it does in the present moment. In short, she allows a shift of focus from the epideictic component of Vivian’s account to the neoliberal, a term which he glosses in terms of individualized consumerism, but which is not fully elaborated. Jodi Dean defines neoliberalism as “a philosophy viewing market exchange as a guide for all human action,”⁴⁰ which arose in the wake of criticisms of Keynesianism, the New Deal, and other policies founded on state regulation of the economy and on welfare provision, and that has since come to be a core part of life in

most, if not all regions of the capitalist world, but especially its economic and cultural centers. This philosophy has resulted in two major developments: first, it fosters a conception of the role of national-level government as a guarantor of markets through “rights of property and contract,” as well as policies (such as welfare-to-work programs, privatized social services, etc.) designed to produce “subjects of and conditions for markets,” both already established and new.⁴¹ Second, on the level of subjectivity, neoliberalism occasions a shift from identity as communitarian and stable (e.g. one is a worker, a student, or a citizen) to an ever-shifting menu of “imaginary” subject positions whose only ground is economic production and consumption.⁴² The result of both of these options (which go along with the cultural fragmentation described by McGee above) is an elision of anything like traditional political agency, in favor of obedience to an ideal of a free market in which “everybody wins.”⁴³ Along with this comes ever-increasing precarity, as an ethos of market competition (in which, it is assumed, those who lose deserve to do so) replaces both communitarian values and ethical precepts of mutual aid and support.⁴⁴

Dean’s discussion of neoliberalism as a function of capitalism stitches together the threads from the authors discussed so far. On this larger model, the ceremonies Vivian describes and others like them are parts of a larger whole that produces and maintains a certain version of community, characterized by a sense of fragmentation or fear of the loss of community, and a set of civic rituals and procedures of government undertaken to continually re-cement it and shore up its boundaries. Together, Chaput and Dean make some more concrete political implications of this system clear. On the one

hand, we cannot simply bemoan the loss of community (and supposedly unproblematic individual agency). Thinking in terms of different regimes of circulation allows the binary of community and its loss to be replaced with the more productive question of different structures of community and their political effects. On the other, Dean brings out some crucial aspects of Chaput's position that Chaput does not make clear.

Circulation is not symmetrical; it affects different subjects differently, rewards some and polices others based on their success in the market. Notions of community and security, and of their loss, are disciplinary tools for producing and maintaining good consuming subjects. This is true of the economic core of global capitalism, but it is continually more extensively impressed on the lives of individual subjects (wherever they might be) as well as on populations and regions of the world not privileged by being located at the center of the market economy. By figuring politics as process of symbolic consumption, the planners of the 9/11 commemorations do not just shore up notions of US exceptionalism. They help to produce a larger global system of the colonization and administration of ever-expanding regions of life by markets, which decreases political agency globally.

The production of subjectivity in the 9/11 commemoration ceremony also implies a particular politics of collective memory. Vivian's description of the ceremony, in addition to mirroring the dynamic of expansion of global capital, also mirrors the paradigm of historical scholarship Benjamin critiqued under the name of historicism. Recall that Benjamin's target is a methodology that looks at the past through the lens of progress, exploring the great treasures of history in order to polish them up for present

use and consumption. In a similar fashion, the commemoration ceremonies function as a feedback loop whose terminus is the present (conceived as the ongoing endurance of the equivalent and exchangeable, persisting into the future). If Benjamin's revolutionary messianism occasions an "open" relation to history conceived as unfinished, radically alterable at any moment, occasioning a continual search for potential moments of intervention, the messianism Vivian describes works by folding highly significant historical signifiers (including some with marked revolutionary potential) into a settled narrative whereby the present is the logical culmination of the past, to be mined as a resource in order to keep the future the same. Having outlined the general features of the currently prevalent politics of community, another look at Marx will highlight some resonances with the current moment, as well as some potential alternatives.

The View from the Balcony: Violence and Immunitarian Community

The abstraction of the discussion so far, both of the language of debt deployed in Chapter 3 and the philosophies of history discussed in Chapter 4, pose the danger of allowing us to forget the bloodshed encompassed under the name "Paris Commune," the thousands of people massacred and homes burned. If we do this, we risk assuming the subject-position of those for whom Marx reserves his most concentrated scorn toward the end of his remarks, the "gilded, the idle Paris", watching from Versailles,

considering the civil war but an agreeable diversion, eying the battle through their telescopes, counting the rounds of cannon, and swearing[...]that the performance was far better got up than it used to be[...]the men who fell were really dead; the cries of the wounded were cries in good earnest, and besides, the whole thing was so intensely historical.⁴⁵

To forget the violence of the Commune would be to fall prey to the *Versillais* propaganda, which staked the majority of its appeal on minimization of both the number of people risking their lives in the insurrection and the effects of the measures employed to subdue them. Still more pointedly, to the degree that we partake in this scene as the types of spectators Marx is describing, we are witnesses at an execution: the cries of the “men who fell,” especially in the last few weeks of the Commune, would not merely have been heard by those at Versailles at a distance or seen in the form of the reflected light of gunfire, but instead would have rung throughout the grounds in person as prisoners of war were brought before the government and shot.

Marx’s description of the violence of the *Versillais*, especially in the spectator cast it is placed in above, coupled with the descriptions he gives of violence on the part of the Communards, are a first place to locate the politics of community in his speech. In the above paragraph and elsewhere, the *Versillais*’ attitude toward the carnage in Paris carries with it a conception of violence as a tool for policing the borders of community (and a closed and individualized subjectivity) as well as an ethics of spectatorship. In contrast, his description of Communard violence constitutes a critique of this attempt, as well as an alternative ethics of violence that he seeks to foster in his audience.

Marx’s discussion of the violence that terminated the Commune’s existence recalls yet again the philosophies of history as haunting I discussed in the last chapter. The dead of the Commune, he argues, join a long line of “ghosts of the victims assassinated[...from the days of June 1848, down to the 22nd of January 1871”⁴⁶ at the hands of the National Assembly and Louis Napoleon, all the way back to France’s last

monarch, Louis Philippe. The National Assembly, however, guards itself against these hauntings through the attitude Marx describes in theatrical language above. As an ever-increasing parade of prisoners of war are brought to Versailles to be subjected to retributive “atrocities”⁴⁷ by Thiers and co. or, as the battle draws on, massacred during the bloody week which makes these preliminary atrocities appear “ludicrous,”⁴⁸ the ministers and their hangers-on remain aloof. “[H]ands in their trouser-pockets,” Thiers and co. stroll about, reading news reports, “jeering” the prisoners and applauding their military commanders, as “they boast of having commanded the massacres of national guard troops.”⁴⁹ Among “all the horrors,” Thiers’ composure remains undisturbed; he “boasts on his bulletin that *L’Assemblée siège paisiblement* [the assembly meets peacefully], and proves by his constant carousals[...]that his digestion is not troubled in the least.”⁵⁰

Marx’s attempt to conjure specters haunting nineteenth century Europe has a number of components. Most immediately apparent is his critique of a number of different rhetorics of representation (theatrical, historical and political) which those at Versailles use to inoculate themselves against facing up to what is happening to the Commune. The executions and ever bloodier news from Paris are first recast, in the minds of those sporting at Versailles, as theater. This idiom of the spectator has parallels in much other modern political thought, particularly the work of Immanuel Kant. In one of the essays which comprises the *Contest of the Faculties*, Kant argues that the surest proof of human progress lies in a “universal and disinterested sympathy” toward one side of a conflict (in the case which Kant discusses, the French Revolution of 1789) “against

their adversaries, even at the risk that their partiality could be of great disadvantage to themselves,”⁵¹ where the conflict in question concerns the essentially “moral” advancement of humanity as a whole away from war and domination. This sympathy flirts with participation and “enthusiasm” for the event in question, but stops at “universal and disinterested [...] exaltation” at the rights won by those fighting, though those looking on have not “the slightest intention of participating in their affairs.”⁵²

The example of the Commune is apparently a sharp contrast to this, but only apparently. Unlike the French Revolution, which may or may not merit the sympathy Kant encourages, the carnage following the Commune admits of an easier protest against it. Yet implicitly, the question Marx puts to his audience as to whether they will support the “real” Paris of the multitude, or that of Thiers and the spectators is also (even if they express support for the Commune) a question about whether they will consider themselves spectators or parties to the conflict. In his treatment of the relationships between early insurance and finance capital, eighteenth century aesthetics, and the intercontinental slave trade, Ian Baucom discusses the political implications of Kant’s idea of spectatorship. Kant’s mode of sympathy, he argues, invites an investment in human suffering, but it does so in a speculative manner that preserves the identity of the subject doing the investing. This type of spectator to an event, like the French Revolution, participates in it only through abstraction. From the particular decisions, battles, deaths, and passions that make up the revolution is gleaned a concept of how “humanity in general”⁵³ will react to the events. Investiture thus occurs not into one side or another of a given conflict, but in a “transcendent third category”⁵⁴ that does not admit

of partisan sentiment. The investment is speculative because there is a focus on its future returns: an increased capacity for sympathy, an emotional education that allows one to experience powerful world events, “all so very historical,” without putting one’s identity as a subject into jeopardy (or actually committing to act on behalf of such events). One emerges the same person as before, but more sensitive and caring about the world’s problems.

The decision as to whether to distance oneself from the violence waged in the name of order and capitalist progress through an aesthetic shield is also a question about futurity. Kant’s investment in the revolution occurs as a product of reflection on the progress of the human race as an abstract whole.⁵⁵ Support for even the most egalitarian aspects of the French revolution is hence transformed into a model of revolution as civilizing mission. The political actions that will be taken as a result of this sympathy depend on “the planetary reproduction of a particular [revolutionary] experience,” the “global dissemination and consumption of a single sublime spectacle.”⁵⁶ In their investment in educating, without fundamentally changing, the spectating subject, they further depend on what Angela Mitropoulos, writing about the contemporary prevalence of contracts as a tool of governance, calls the containment of contagion through the assumption of risk.⁵⁷ The “contract” to agree to invest in events only “disinterestedly”⁵⁸ works as a counterpart to financial speculation because both take a situation that could provoke an unmitigated systemic crisis (financial crises such as overproduction or simple loss of goods in one case, widespread commitment to revolution in another) and make it

manageable, while at the same time ensuring the system is flexible enough not to collapse if it is challenged.

Regardless of whether he consciously intends to offer a critique of Kant's position here or not, Marx's speech warns those it addresses away from a detached attitude toward spectatorship which more recent reflection has done further work to articulate to capital. It is easy to read Marx's words as an indictment of more than those who cheered while Paris burned, having nothing to lose by it. The attitude he criticizes is that of those members of the Chamber of Deputies, authors, and artists who fled Paris to safer climes, either early or late in the Commune's existence, rather than do the difficult political work of trying to make it happen. It is also that of "the servants' hall of European journalism"⁵⁹ who, as Marx argues, delighted in publishing rumors of massacre, torture and debauchery in Paris while the Commune held power, and then expressed shock (or barely disguised glee) as it was destroyed. Finally, it finds its left-wing counterpart in a fetishization of revolutionary violence typical of Felix Pyat and other radical journalists during the siege and the Commune, already described by Marx in my previous chapter as "mere bawlers, who by dint of repeating year after year the same set of stereotyped declamations against the government of the day, have sneaked into reputations as revolutionists of the first order" and who constitute an "unavoidable evil" in revolutionary situations.⁶⁰

All these targets share characteristics of the disinterested spectator. Thiers and co. are the most egregious, imagining themselves vindicated as representatives of a universal humanity who has the luxury of merely observing the triumph of their history. Their speculative investment does not even contain the ultimately sterile sentimentality

theorized by Kant. Instead, their extrapolation of the events of the Commune onto the larger march of history yields the self-satisfied poise of a smug progressivism. Journalists, especially those who were in Paris in 1871 and who extrapolated their personal experiences of the Commune into the palatable shock of journalistic accounts (along with those who read them), are closer to the kind of spectatorship Kant describes. Sympathetic or not to those killed, their descriptions of the violence will inevitably be translations of a particular experience into the supposedly universal idiom of newspaper coverage, able to be consumed at a comfortable remove from the action. Pyat and other commentators, insofar as they declaim support for the Commune without working to further its political project in the moment or afterwards, risk no more than words. The common denominator of all of these parties to the Commune is that they substitute actual efforts to continue the Commune's legacy in other times and places for a "narrative experiment in interestedness" that either explicitly seeks to draw pleasure from those suffering in Paris or, in the reading, "satisfies any demand for justice the reader[...]might otherwise be inclined to articulate,"⁶¹ allowing them to consider the Commune as distant (either spatially, because they are not in Paris, or temporally, because it has already fallen) and hence, safely digestible.

The tradeoff between words and deeds in such narrative experiments, along with their speculative nature, recall the contemporary capitalist idea of community from the beginning of this chapter. In Vivian's account, the initial impetus to cite canonical speeches, rather than create new oratory for the commemoration ceremony, comes from the trope, traditional to epideictic rhetoric at least since Pericles, that the speaker's words

are inadequate to speak to the acts he or she must commemorate.⁶² The answer to this inadequacy offered by the commemoration (as by journalists and commentators on the Commune) is to attempt to close this gap with certitude and a sense that everything will be alright: those watching from Versailles know very well what is happening, it is so harmless as to be a spectacle. The journalists and pamphleteers Marx critiques, though they laud the Commune, likewise fall prey to this logic in their critiques of the French government. In a gesture of representative capture, the potential crisis offered by the Commune—the idea that it represents a “completely new”⁶³ way of doing politics to be taken up and experimented with—is reduced to the catalogue of conflicting interpretations offered, allowing spectators the “fantasy of participation”⁶⁴ in politics without doing its work. The adequate political gesture, instead, would be to admit that there is a crisis—for the interpreters to own their loss for words rather than substituting them with cliché. Finally, then, the attitude towards violence Marx indicts is one of imaginary communal closure, of keeping tumult and crisis at a distance, physically and emotionally. In an example of what political philosopher Roberto Esposito has called the immunitarian paradigm in modern politics, the spectators to the Commune are concerned with keeping its revolutionary fervor, like a contagion, from spreading beyond its borders. Their politics of spectatorship works as a supplement to the cannon fire being rained on the actual insurrection as part and parcel of this effort. Worse than mere avoidance, Marx’s description of the view from Versailles suggests, a desire to keep community (and ourselves) well-fed, well-rested, and at a safe remove from the violence

of capital that registers us as complicit with it, whether or not we are its conscious consumers.⁶⁵

The View from the Crowd: Insurrectionary Order and Political Contagion

If many of the reactions to the Commune described in Marx's speech are attempts to keep a political contagion quarantined within its bounds, what does the contagion look like? To Marx, it looks peaceful: "From the 18th of March to the entrance of the Versailles troops into Paris, the proletarian revolution remained so free from the acts of violence in which the revolutions, and still more the counter-revolutions, of the 'better classes' abound."⁶⁶ The "real Paris," that of the "vile multitude," maintains an easygoing order before it is destroyed, a "far cry" from the siege, much less the

meretricious Paris of the second Empire[...]no more corpses at the morgue, no nocturnal burglaries, scarcely any robberies; in fact, for the first time since the days of February 1848, the streets of Paris were safe, and that without any police of any kind. 'We' said a member of the Commune, 'hear no longer of assassination, theft and personal assault; it seems indeed as if the police had dragged along with it to Versailles all its conservative friends.'"⁶⁷

Despite painting a picture of an apparently peaceful Paris, Marx does not ignore the violence committed on behalf of the Commune. He treats it in part because he cannot avoid it; the way he treats it, though, nuances his description of the Commune's peaceful nature. Marx focuses on two incidents that catalyzed the narrative of mob violence in an assortment of journalistic publications, the first of which is the death of Clément Thomas.

Thomas was an ex-Commander of the National Guard, "hated" in Paris, especially among the workers, for his brutality during the insurrection of 1848. Among the regiments of the National Guard who joined the Communards, Thomas was

“regarded[...]as chiefly responsible for the massacre of the National Guard at Buzenval” during the siege of Paris, and who was captured (along with another general) during the attempt on the part of the Guards loyal to the National Assembly to seize the cannon from the Paris Guards.⁶⁸ Alistair Horne describes his death as follows:

Beyond all control, the mob burst into the house [where they were being held], demanding their immediate extinction[...]according to a witness, one of the guard officers yielded to the mob, calling for a show of hands. ‘Everybody raised his hand’ and General Thomas was dragged out into the little garden[...]no proper execution squad was formed, and after the first ragged volley of shots, the old General still stood there[...]shot after shot was fired until he finally fell with a bullet through the eye, insulting his executioners to the last breath. Lecomte [the other general] was then dispatched with one shot to the back.⁶⁹

This description gives a sense of the tragedy of the situation, while also giving a sense of the atrocities Thomas had committed as general. Marx’s account is similar, though he elaborates more on Thomas’ past. In his reading, Thomas is largely responsible for suppression of attempts to elect a Commune in November 1870, and “during the whole of his tenure of command” in the fall and winter of that year, “he made war, not on the Prussians, but on the Paris National Guard”⁷⁰ by preventing “their general armament” during the siege, and pitting “bourgeois battalions against workmens’ battalions.”⁷¹ While he does not excuse the execution of the two generals, Marx argues that “the Central Committee and the Paris working men were as much responsible for the killing of Clément Thomas and Lecomte as the Princess of Wales was for the fate of the people crushed to death on the day of her entrance into London.”⁷²

The second incident of Communard violence Marx describes is the reported death of civilians in the Place Vendome during the initial seizure of Paris, a second refrain in

the anti-Communard propaganda. Marx treats the rumored massacre as “a myth which M. Thiers and the Rurals persistently ignored in the assembly, entrusting its propagation exclusively to the servants’ hall of European journalism.”⁷³ Marx does not deny that the Commune was violent, but he attempts to show that the violence described in press coverage of the events was blown out of proportion, and that it cannot be linked specifically to those in power. He also expands on the story of what caused it. Recalling the litany of ghosts in *The German Ideology* (and Derrida’s reading of this litany), Marx describes the intimations of violence on the part of the Commune as shades that “arose before [the] faces” of those in power and haunted them in the form of rumors of massacre in the Place Vendome, causing the fleeing National Government itself to unleash the violence which occurs. Where the “two national guards killed” and “nine severely wounded” left behind by the runaways from Paris were the product of an organized volley “dispersed into[...]the silly coxcombs of the former officials of Empire”, these relics of the old government were in fact the ones guilty of mob violence.⁷⁴ Upon an ostensible retreat from Paris at the beginning of the Commune, these “rabble, secretly armed with the weapons of the bravo, fell into marching order, ill-treated and disarmed the detached patrols and sentries of the national guards they met with in their progress, and, on debouching from the rue de la Paix[...]attempted to break through the line drawn up there and thus to carry by surprise the headquarters of the National Guard in the Place Vendome.”⁷⁵ The violence offered in retaliation was neither the Central Committee’s fault, nor could it have been prevented.

The Commune is bookended with violence; Lecomte, Thomas and the rest of those killed in mid-March have their counterparts in the hostages executed at the end of the Commune, notably Archbishop Darboy, whose death occasioned much of the retaliatory execution in Paris after the Commune falls. Marx adopts a similar tack when discussing these deaths, writing unequivocally that “the real murderer” of the Archbishop “is Thiers.” The Commune’s hostages, held safely and well-treated for much of its existence, were killed only after weeks of “continued shooting of prisoners on the part of the Versaillais,” and after Thiers had repeatedly refused to exchange Darboy and a number of hostages for the socialist leader Auguste Blanqui, because he knew “it would give to the Commune a head” and organizing force.⁷⁶ Once again, the Commune’s response is a shocked reaction to the calculated murder perpetrated by those in power.

It would be mistaken to read Marx as endorsing popular violence wholesale. Instead, his descriptions of these initial outbursts offer an ethic of violence that is also a partial ethic of community. His first reason for not condemning the violence of the Commune centers on the question of agency. For Marx, crisis under capitalism is not the exception but the rule. Crises take many forms, but one of the most primal (in the sense that it comes first historically, as well as in the sense that it is at the very core of the workings of capitalism) is the founding violence of capital. In the passages of *Capital* devoted to the origins of capitalism, Marx describes how, once it had gained momentum through a period of mercantile exchange, capitalism needed ever more fuel. It found this first in the form of “free laborers,” who were torn from their communities, former livelihoods and geographic location and “freed” to seek work in newly constructed urban

industrial districts. In many cases, even this pretense of freedom was not accorded the process, which produced slaves rather than wage laborers.⁷⁷ A number of other authors since Marx have made the point that this violence at the origins of capital, concealed from those enmeshed in its workings, remains necessarily ongoing, in the form of a still-active slave trade, the forms of domestic, care and service labor historically performed by (largely unwaged) women,⁷⁸ and the apparently abstract forms of insurance and financial speculation.⁷⁹ It also, as Marx himself noted, and others⁸⁰ have further articulated, appears in the regimes of colonial conquest and, later, calculatedly unequal development that sustain global capitalism. It is perhaps most evident to those at capitalism's global core, however, in the quelling of uprisings, the violent recapture of space, time, infrastructure and life reclaimed from those who desire (however briefly) its collective control.

Marx places Clément Thomas' and Lecomte's deaths in this larger context in order to assert a different narrative of what caused them. He does this in two ways. First, by making Thomas' role in the suppression of previous uprisings clear, he shows that the generals' deaths were produced by the logic of crisis already described. The people had no agency in the matter because it came as a reaction of the remembered deaths of 1848. Moreover, via analogy to an official state event (the entrance of a ruler into a city, the commotion of which caused deaths), he shows that the unruliness and supposed violence of the multitude, when it is not a product of active efforts to suppress it, current or remembered, merely follows the logic of the times. Deaths incurred in the day-to-day course of the mass gatherings characteristic of politics in modern nation-states do not

arouse concern about the criminality of those states, when in fact both phenomena, while cause for concern, are products of the same logic—combating either (the norm or the supposed “exception”) requires combating the logic underlying both. The other shots fired as the Commune ended are a product of the same problem—a reaction to a cycle of violence whose impetus lives at Versailles, even if it escapes the control of those who set it in motion.

In between these grisly bookends lies the peace of the Commune itself. It is notable that Marx’s anonymous Communard lauds not just the end of petty theft but the collapse of the voyeuristic attitude to death characteristic of the second Empire. The “corpses at the morgue” he or she describes are not just deaths, but entertainment. Rupert Christensen begins his history of the Commune by describing, among other things, Paris’ fondness for “theatrical horrors.” Entering the morgue in the Quai Napoleon, one encounters a “glazed partition behind which stand two rows of black marble tables, inclined toward the spectator and cooled[...]. On these tables are exposed the cadavers of those found dead or drowned, naked except for a strip of leather across their loins” and generally “left for three or four days” after they are discovered, regardless of the state they are in.⁸¹ This incidental detail throws the rest of the crimes Marx lists in a new light as symptoms. The violence of the crowds who ring in the Commune’s beginning and end only makes apparent the violence that existed, as routine, and was readily consumed by the proponents of law and order as entertainment. Moreover, the peaceful contrast offered by Marx’s informant means the initial violence of the Commune, by bringing to light the violence of Paris in its moments of supposed law and order, allows (in an inversion of

Benjamin's "real state of emergency") a real state of peace to reign as Paris gets down to the daily task of collectively deciding the parameters of its own existence. The violence of the Commune, in its lack of "pretense to symmetry" with the violence of the ruling power and its creativity, is one attempt (and thus a historical resource for thinking) about a revolution that would upset the "strange[...]symmetry"⁸² of popular indignance at the violence of those in power and the indignance of the powerful, such as Thiers, at the violence of the Commune.

As much as Marx's formulation of the peace of the Commune might gesture at a way out of the cycle of violence endemic to capitalism, it still, at least per his description, fails to escape it. The logic of action and reaction that permeate Marx's discussion of the generals, the archbishop, and the Commune's brief period of peace is a limit to his description of it. Be that as it may, what he says is still productive for thinking about revolutionary violence in its relationship to community. To get at how, it is necessary to return to the discussion of haunting from the previous chapter. In the situations Marx describes, those who escalate the conflict are described as driven to violence by ghosts—the ghosts of 1848 or the somewhat more docile ghosts of Lecomte and Thomas, who rattle their chains enough to cause havoc in Paris, but not quite enough to reach Versailles.

How does Marx want the Commune's spectators to view it, then? Are those who would view the Commune ethically to be haunted by ghosts? In another part of *Specters of Marx*, Derrida highlights the perils of Marx's language on the subject of haunting. Derrida argues that Marx thinks, falsely, that he can distinguish successfully between

Geist (spirit) and *Gespenst* (specter, ghost) as two figures of the past, one representing the “true” course of history, the other illusion or falsehood. Derrida argues that Marx, at least in his early work, seeks to separate the two, divining the spirit of triumphant communist futurity from the specters of the past that both weigh on revolutionary politics (as the ghosts of the French Revolution weigh on the rebels of 1848 in *The 18th Brumaire*)⁸³ and haunt those who would deny their presence. Much as he would like to, Derrida argues, Marx cannot separate the two: the ghosts which drive him to write and the spirits that would form a firm compass for future social relations and the reappropriation of the body away from its spectral (ideological) form are indistinguishable.⁸⁴ This presents a problem, though, raised in the last chapter: if we allow ourselves to be haunted by the ghosts of history, we risk being overwhelmed. How does the decision to conjure these spirits help produce a community?

For Baucom, Derrida’s philosophy (though not, specifically, his reading of Marx) is one resource for thinking about an alternative to the liberal cosmopolitanism he sees as bound up with finance capital, and which I have linked to a specific type of communitarian violence in the first part of this chapter. Rather than abstracting one’s sympathy for a given event into a commodity consumable and exchangeable throughout humanity as a whole, Baucom argues that a decision to embrace history ethically is an investment in the “singular conditions of address” attendant on one’s speech about the event in question, and a commitment to parsing the “deeds and crimes that Kant says are the one thing the event is not.”⁸⁵ Those who view the violence of the Commune in this vein, as Marx does, determine to follow the passions and events attendant on each

moment of the Commune's existence and to "speak as if injured by what it holds in unrelenting observation."⁸⁶ They thus speak as "aggrieved witnesses" to the tragedy, rather than "disinterested spectators"⁸⁷ in a hope that others will do the same. In Derrida's idiom, one can do justice to the Commune not merely by recognizing the ghosts (as the previous chapter already established) but by telling their stories in as singular and exacting a detail as possible and by using these stories (much like the Commune uses the ghosts of 1848) as impetuses to innovate and build on the projects of the dead who remain always out of view, urging one to continual political work. The ghosts of 1848 and, if we choose to hear them, those of the Commune are singular and concrete (rather than abstract) reminders of the deeds and crimes of the Commune. By lending an interested ear to their stories, the ghosts become agents of the contagion feared by Thiers and co.—a spread of the Commune beyond its spatial and temporal borders, without abstracting or universalizing it. What is substituted for the unrepeatable historical event of the commune is "not fungibility" or abstraction, but "relation", a common set of "interests" and "'transverse' forms of culture, identity, and solidarity that emerge from the act of holding to, enduring, relating and avowing" the "complicity" of our present existence as part of a global order⁸⁸ with the scenes of violence (including the Commune's destruction) that underwrite it.

Marx agrees. If those who hear him wish to honor the ghosts he conjures up, they can help spread the "rinderpest"⁸⁹ of the Commune beyond its borders. During the same section of the text as he encourages us to choose between Paris' dual natures, he likewise offers a distinction between two cosmopolitanisms. The spectacle at Versailles is not just

served up to the French. It is attended by the “lackeys[...] blacklegs[and] literary *bohème*”⁹⁰ of all of Europe. The Commune was precipitated by a truce between France and Prussia, but through closer inspection, Marx argues that this truce can be seen as an emergence into legibility of a new transnational class—the bourgeoisie. The Commune did not create the bourgeoisie, of course, but Marx reads the deal between Bismarck and Thiers to ensure the pacification of Paris as the “com[ing] out into[...] lurid light”⁹¹ of the naked class interest underlying apparently separate nation-states. The Commune affects, in blood, a genealogy of bourgeois values of “civilization and justice” as spawned by the “undisguised savagery and lawless revenge”⁹² of the violence at the center of capital, the *ressentiment* toward the exploited that produced these values (at least in this particular, widespread, instantiation of them) and which persists as their root. Unlike responsibility for the deaths that began the Commune, the insurgents are fully responsible for making this common cause across borders available for all to see. The result is that, at least for those who do not view the Commune at one remove, the “hideous face” of “bourgeois civilization”⁹³ shows its own contours to be that of the “cosmopolitan conspiracy of capital,”⁹⁴ in an inversion of the accusations of international conspiracy issuing from Versailles.

The refrain of cosmopolitanism, before the dismal cast Marx gives it, should have called something else to mind—the imaginary Parisian in Lissigaray’s history from Chapter 2, strolling through Paris in the Commune’s last days, accompanied (especially the closer he or she draws to the battle site) by comrades-in-arms from other nations who are ready to die for the cause. Much as he repurposes the legacy of the French Revolution

to a new set of revolutionary ends, Marx gives us a second cosmopolitanism, in contrast to that of Thiers. Those who congregated at Versailles, French or not, were unified in Marx's view by an attitude toward history that invited "rakes of all countries" in for a seat at the carnage.⁹⁵ In contrast to this hodgepodge of spectators stands a cosmopolitanism of participation. The Commune "admitted all foreigners" to its cause; while (even as their leaders conspired) the national government "found the time to display their patriotism by organizing police-hunts upon the Germans in France,"⁹⁶ the Commune "pulled down[...]the Vendome Column", the "colossal", phallic monument to French militarism and "honored" all those who came from abroad to help fight.⁹⁷ It also welcomed the women of Paris as political participants, decades before France expanded legal suffrage to include them, and Marx points out that they repaid their debt, "joyfully", fighting and dying as comrades in arms amongst the rest.⁹⁸ Like the cynicism of Thiers and Bismarck, which transcends national borders, the heart of the "Association" of struggles against capital, figured here as the International, reveals itself to be "nothing but the international bond" between the exploited of all countries, "wherever, and in whatever shape, the class struggle obtains any consistency."⁹⁹ The battle between the "mercenaries" of capital and those who fell to their volleys continues "again and again, in ever-growing dimensions," and it is the duty of those who survive to rejoin it again and again in its many forms.¹⁰⁰ Struggle, like exploitation, knows no borders.

A "Theoroi" of Revolutionary Epideictic

The politics of witnessing Baucom constructs and its links to his counter-discourse of cosmopolitanism suggest a closing look back at Aristotle, for *theoros*, the

word he uses to designate the observer of epideictic, is also a word for witness. Discussing the religious and political history of the term, Gregory Nagy isolates two meanings the term carried for Athenians (and the Ancient Greeks more generally) and which would have been familiar to Aristotle. A *theoros* is literally ““one who observes the vision[*thea*]”” of a prophet, specifically at the behest of a community. In context, it designated those whom Athens and other cities sent to Delphi to consult the oracle of Apollo and to bring the oracle’s message back to the city. Herodotus also discusses the *theoros* in the context of the Olympic and other athletic contests as “the official delegate of a given *polis*, ‘city-state,’ who is sent out to observe the athletic games and bring back news of the victory.”¹⁰¹ If the *prophetes* designated the one who announced the (religious or communal/political) message, the *theoros* was the one who carried it, under pain of severe sanction, to an appointed audience in order to faithfully transmit it.¹⁰² Finally, as a number of more recent rhetorical scholars have argued, a *theoros* can also be a theorist, in the philosophical sense of the term. Robert Danisch and Brooke Rollins have read Foucault and Derrida, respectively, as authors (or practitioners, in Derrida’s case) who have used epideictic genre, especially the eulogy, as a resource for thinking about ethics and the work of philosophy.¹⁰³

A focus on the various meanings of the term *theoros* is productive in that it asks what the implications of the politics of community in Marx’s speech are for his various audiences. It also complicates matters, especially when the vision being described in an epideictic speech, or an analysis of one, is neither civic nor religious, but theoretical in the modern sense of the term. In the first place, there is a slippage between rhetor and

audience. Marx the philosopher is a *theoros* in that he witnesses a vision (the flood of fragmentary accounts of the Commune that come to him over the course of March and April of 1871). Presuming the claim that his speech is a eulogy holds, his audience, definitionally, should be *theoroi* as well. What, if any, is the distinction, and what are its implications? The civic or political, religious or prophetic, and philosophical registers of the term *theoros* will provide three core features of Marx's revolutionary epideictic.

Politically, to say that Marx and his audience are both *theoroi* highlights their indistinction, revealing a key difference between Aristotle's concept of community, the modern concept of community theorized by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, criticized by Vivian, and Marx's concept. For Aristotle, "community" implicitly referred to a particular community—the Athenian (or, at most, Pan-Hellenic) one, with its particular values and political practices. For the more modern theorists I discussed, it meant "community" as an abstract entity; in principle, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca's discussion would be applicable to any community whatever. As Vivian, and my discussion of capitalism's uses of community made clear, though, this apparent abstraction has a concrete historical base—the cycle of circulation of global capitalism, which makes different, particular communities exchangeable subsets of an abstract type, the better to occasion concerns about their dissolution and calls to reaffirm community and tradition which frequently take the form of its commodification and dependence on the logic of the market.

The difference between the communities these other authors describe and Marx's is that, for Marx, there is no historical *fait accompli* to report. In both of the other

versions of community I have treated (and in the classical meaning of *theoros*), the report being offered is of something that is already happened, and has taken place within a stable community. Modern versions of the definition would have to take communal dissolution into account, of course, but as we have already seen (at least in the version of such civic events Vivian describes), there is always the hidden foundation of the market. A neoliberal epideictic may index contingency (such as the various national feelings of anxiety that proliferated after 9/11), but behind it all stands the implacable logic of capitalism, consumption as a ready solution for crisis. In contrast to both of these, Marx wishes to open history up, acknowledging the need to recognize not just the loss of particular communities, but the predatory nature of the supposedly natural, universal system (capitalism) that has taken their place. In an important sense, then, there is no distinction between Marx's witnessing and his audience's; he is someone who has been asked to write about the Commune, but as one interested party among many. His stake in the Commune is not to adjudicate between a set of correct representations and a set of incorrect ones, but, using the mass of news clippings, letters and other documents he culls into his notes for the pamphlet and the ethical guide of an interest in collectively participating in furthering the Commune's legacy, he reports on what it might still mean as a political project. Instead of prophetically representing an event (which his audience, as *theoroi* then report), Marx and his audience are *theoroi* in the same sense of the term. He strives to create more rhetors, guided by historical data (whether accessed through his pamphlet or otherwise) and an interest in "holding-to, enduring, relating, and avowing"¹⁰⁴ the Commune and participating in subsequent extensions of its project.

This raises a problem, though, one highlighted by the religious meaning of the term *theoros*. Marx prognosticates: he argues that after the Commune, things will never be the same, that the Commune has made the common class interests of the exploiters and exploited apparent for all to see, and that the first thunderclap of the Commune will be followed, in somewhat short order, by a larger storm. As with other aspects of Marx's assessment of the Commune's success or failure, the empirical validity of his claims are not the most interesting part of the problem. Rather, as Derrida has already told us, the point is that Marx must intervene into the "multiplicity of interests"¹⁰⁵ which construed the Commune in their favor. He cannot avoid choosing, and as Aristotle makes clear, an intervention in the present necessarily involves both invocations of the past and prognostications of the future. Like it or not, Marx has been dubbed a prophet by those who commissioned him to speak on their behalf, and it would be naive to suppose he will not, and has not, been taken up as such. Despite himself, it would appear that, as soon as he tries to interpret the Commune, Marx is doomed to be the detached, judgmental observer he condemns in other interpretations both sympathetic and hostile to the Commune.

Marx must fold past and future into his speech and, as the one up on stage (or with his name on the title page), he is necessarily at the center of the fold he makes. A turn to the conceptual dimension of his speech, though, will show that the way he does this affords him a way out. To show this, it will help to return Althusser's distinction, which I invoked in the second chapter, between two uses of conceptual thought in Marx's work: a global, analytic one, which makes the concept the central focus of a historical or

political narrative, and a local, strategic one, which asks what the concept can do, in a given conjuncture, to affect political change (as well as what its potentially reactionary uses are and how to guard against them). This distinction is readily transposable into temporal terms. Each of the concepts developed in *The Civil War in France* and discussed so far in my reading of it, whether debt, history, or community, manifests itself in the text in two ways: An intervention into the past, matter-of-factly stated, that sets up the political stakes of the moment at which Marx is speaking, and a projection of the concept in question into the future, as an organizing principle for continuation of the Commune's project.

The first use of Marx's concepts affects a folding of the past into the present moment. The litany of financial policies laid out in the speech, for example (the blood tax, the use of egregious taxation against peasants and middle classes alike) takes what appear to be a multiplicity of political regimes and different interests and condenses them; likewise, the straightforward narrative arc from 1789 to 1871 in the speech condenses decades of history into a few dates—1789, 1848—and a few figures, such as Thiers. Both of these narratives are driven by a use of the concept in question to structure a highly selective historical narrative that will mobilize the most powerful communal associations of those Marx addresses (indebted people throughout France and Europe in one case, and French patriots—by extension France as a whole—in the other) to culminate in the Commune.

The second use of the concept Althusser describes is a thread that runs through *The Civil War in France*'s historical narrative before reaching a crescendo in Marx's

descriptions of the working class as a group that, in working through the problems assigned it by history, will come to constitute itself as a political force. As Marx develops a historical narrative through his pamphlet, there are specific points where it is clear things might have been otherwise—a more radical revolution of 1789, a less naïve 1848, and, finally, the Commune. Likewise, as Marx describes the degree to which the Commune released each of the constituencies he discusses from debt, that different, nonrecuperable form of debt appears that is the debt of gratitude and action owed the Commune. In both cases, moments of revolutionary potential flit around behind the scenes before bearing fruit in potential future action. The potential for innovation in the face of history, as well as the potential for trading financial debt in for a sense of collective obligation, are present in the choice to support the Paris of the “vile multitude,” to work through the “long struggles,” “transforming” people and social relations alike toward which the concepts point the way.¹⁰⁶ While Marx cannot know when or where the future struggles he postulates will take place, the concepts gleaned from the experience of the Commune are guides to the practices that will see those struggles progress, if not ever to absolute success, at least farther beyond the coordinates of the moment at which he writes.

This politics of the concept forms a final facet of Marx’s politics of community, which throws it into further contrast with the capitalist community Vivian describes as well as the somewhat different version Marx critiques in Thiers. Concepts in the Marx of *The Civil War in France* are a mechanism for orienting oneself in past history, in a way that translates individual experience into collective and (especially in the concept of

history Marx develops) renders an apparently necessary, settled history as an interplay between contingent rupture and capture. They are also a guide to the possibilities for political change available to the present and the future. On this model, the concept appears as a common tool that accesses the singular at either end. On the one hand, a concept such as debt or history plays out differently in relation to different individual and collectivities; no two members of the French constituencies Marx discusses (and no two people today, for that matter) experience debt the same way, but the concept of debt allows a community to emerge based on the commonalities between the singular histories encompassed by the term. On the other, a concept will interact, perhaps much later in chronological time, with other singular political experiences in other times and places, and allow the construction of a common political experience in these other times and places, actualizing differently each time. Concepts are the fabric of Marx's community, and the solution to the dilemma of authority described a few pages earlier. They allow him, despite his being at the head of the room speaking, to contribute to the production of the community of which the Commune is the prototype rather than try to lead it.

Conclusion: Style and Crisis

Over the preceding pages, I have tried to develop three concepts from Marx's *The Civil War in France*, for what they say about the relationship between Marx's processes of thought and stylistic composition and his status as a resource for contemporary politics. I will conclude by describing some of the results of the encounter between Marx's style and the theory of political style as it has been discussed so far in rhetorical studies, trying along the way to further unpack some of the political implications of Marx's speech.

Most of the criticisms that have been made of Hariman's original treatment of political style have been conceptual; Hariman is too philosophical, too modernist, not a robust enough theorist. Perhaps the most damning criticism, though, is an implicit self-criticism. To the degree that Hariman frames his own project as providing a set of "defens[es] against aesthetic manipulation,"¹ presumably that we might move toward a less oppressive ensemble of global political systems, he fails. All the political styles he chooses, save the republican style he sees as emanating from Cicero's work, bear contemporary fruit as tools for the unequal wielding of power, whether late-20th century political realism's "obstruct[ion]" of "motives for political renewal,"² the courtly style's "brittle defenses" of the "excessive privilege"³ of celebrity culture, or the "petty knowledge" and mindless performance of duty afforded by the bureaucratic style.⁴ The deliberative traditions and history of republicanism hold out some hope for Hariman (and have been where commentators, such as Aune, who have discussed political style in the context of Marxism have gone for political inspiration).⁵ Even he admits, though, that it

currently does more work through “interplay with other styles” than as a political force in its own right, and the modern examples he cites are local and fleeting moments of participation in “school boards, church boards, union organizations, and other political groups”⁶ that seem neither likely to change deeply entrenched inequalities of global power nor necessarily inclined to do so. By the end of Hariman’s book, those who approached it in search of defenses against the aesthetic may be satisfied; those who approach it looking for aesthetic resources for an improved politics are left with very little, other than a catalog of modernity’s dead ends.

In one sense, these dead ends are simply an accurate diagnosis. Drawing on Fredric Jameson, Hariman defends his larger project by arguing that contemporary political subjects inhabit a “vortex of discourses” that can be “rapidly transformed at any time, in any place, for unstable duration.”⁷ The result is that the distinction between political content and political form I discussed in the first chapter is blurred, such that particular stylistic regimes “have no *a priori* relation with any issue, event or outcome.”⁸ Subsequent attempts to remedy this problem, in particular the literature that has emerged on democratic style, has only encountered further ambiguity. As Jeremy Engels points out, the rhetoric of “democracy” has been as readily used to alienate or curb genuine attempts at popular government as it has been used to foster them.⁹ While some useful tools may be gained from thinking about a democratic style, I would submit that political style needs to account for Marx’s work (and, in the long run, Marxism more generally) if it is to be an effective resource for scholars thinking about the relationship between rhetoric, aesthetics and politics.

In his study of the “coming into being of the notion of the ‘author,’”¹⁰ Michel Foucault is brought to a halt in front of Marx’s work. He has spent several pages arguing that one of the main features of the fate of texts in the twentieth century has been “the effacement of the writing subject’s individual characteristics,”¹¹ and, in the space of a short essay, attempted to trace the complex relationships of appropriation, attribution and circulation that allow us to say someone is, or was, the author of a certain set of texts, and the historical emergence and variance of these relationships.¹² When he turns his attention to the nineteenth century, Foucault is struck by the emergence of something new—authors of a “theory, tradition or discipline,”¹³ as Homer, Aristotle and the Church Fathers were, but fundamentally different from these earlier figures. These figures (whose sole examples in Foucault’s text are Marx and Freud) are dubbed “founders of discursivity.”¹⁴ The exceptional nature of the practices they found lies in the fact that they produced, not just a body of work that can be cross-applied in one or more times and places, but a set of “possibilities and [...] rules for the formation of other texts.”¹⁵ Other authors, including those who inaugurate religious or philosophical traditions, “exceed their own texts.” They make possible “a certain number of resemblances and analogies”, themes and variations, of which the original work is the “model or principle.”¹⁶ Freud and Marx, in addition to this, create a possibility for “something other than their discourse” which all the same “belongs to what they founded.”¹⁷ The difference between these two types of textual production, though unclear at first, is the way that subsequent uses of an author’s work differentiate themselves from that work. One engages with a scientific text or a theoretical *oeuvre* of the type Foucault sees in Aristotle by either

copying certain parts of the model (themes, stylistic devices, formulae) or criticizing or falsifying them. This renders a certain type of obsolescence possible: “Reexamination of Galileo’s text may change our understanding of the history of mechanics, but it will never be able to change mechanics itself.”¹⁸ Rereading Freud and Marx’s texts in different historical moments, on the other hand, “modifies” those discursive practices themselves, without falsifying the theories of their founders.

This short excursus is intended to demonstrate the basic way that a style found in Marx’s work differs from the other styles Hariman discusses (in ways that have critical as well as political consequences). While Marx’s texts, like any other, cannot *a priori* guarantee the political consequences they endorse, a return to Marx’s style can allow us to rewrite the practices of political criticism and action he initiates in ways that respond to a moment of history far different from his own (and in ways that allow its successful rereading despite the “staggering betrayal of it which bore the name of the Soviet state”, along with other such betrayals, past and present).¹⁹ Put another way, whereas Hariman’s text attempts to trace a set of styles ranging from the classical age to twentieth century modernity from their inceptions to their terminus in late capitalism, my examination of Marx’s style has begun (in tandem with much of the literature on style and radical democracy) the project of tracing a discursive practice begun at the height of modernity as it might yet form a “master trope” for a future politics.

One name for this master trope is crisis, an idea that was present, implicitly or explicitly, in my discussions of debt, history, and community as they figure in Marx’s speech. I will conclude by showing how this concept links these discussions together, and

what it brings to them. The concept of crisis is most evident in Marx's discussion of community, which under late capitalism is synonymous with an ever-present perception of community in crisis, paired with a series of expiatory measures which seek to forestall, inoculate, or shore up the boundaries of different communities in the hope of securing their integrity once and for all.²⁰ In significant part, these crises and the search for refuge from them are both functions of a single process—capitalism's simultaneous need to unmoor people, objects and political institutions from their historical roots, "freeing" them for an expanding array of new uses, and also to ensure that those roots stay intact enough (or are sufficiently re-created) to continue to form a resource for it. The result is the feeling of an ever-shifting political and cultural landscape that Hariman invokes Fredric Jameson to describe above.

If Hariman already accounts for such crisis, then what does Marx add? One answer is provided by philosopher and literary critic Cesare Casarino, who argues for the necessity of distinguishing between the "delirium of the crisis" that characterizes the feverish attempt to mimic or represent capitalism's continual fragmentation and reassemblage of culture and "the delirium of the writing of crisis" which tries to precipitate a future beyond this day-to-day experience of dissolution and fear.²¹ The second kind of writing, of which Marx's work is an example, differs from the first kind of writing in two key ways. First, as any glance at the newspapers between October of 2008 and the present would confirm, crisis is always depicted (from capitalism's perspective) as coming from "an unpredictable and uncontrollable exteriority" like "war, famine, pestilence," the presence of foreign agitators in Paris, or a few corrupt bankers, who

ravage “an otherwise healthy *corpus economicus*.”²² Despite occurring with clockwork regularity under capitalism, crisis is always figured as an exception, rather than the logical consequence of the rule, allowing the idea that capitalism is a fundamentally good or healthy political and economic process to continue to persist unchecked.²³ The second kind of writing, by contrast, takes crisis for the regular pattern that it is. Another major difference is that, while attempts to represent crisis try to cobble together the smashed pieces of social order pell-mell, in the name of tradition, national security, the market or something else, or just sit back and merrily ride along in the debris, the attempt to write crisis—to intervene within and against it poetically and rhetorically—tries to think “the future of the past.”²⁴ This means not only anticipating a future in which the manufactured crisis has become a real one (i.e. an opening onto something other than capitalism) but also thinking about history as it “will have been” given this outcome, combing the past for moments which anticipate alternate ways of living and organizing the world.²⁵

Based on my arguments throughout the project, the connection between Marx’s work and this way of thinking about writing should be intuitively clear. The concepts of community, history and debt in *The Civil War in France* are three attempts to write the crisis of the Paris Commune’s destruction. Against the alternatives of death in the wake of the Commune’s demise or acquiescence in the face of a triumphant French government, Marx tells his audiences to think about their debts. On one level, listening to Marx heightens the crisis of those who hear him. For those he addresses, thinking through the full catalog of debts he references would be overwhelming, a list of ever-mounting injuries and reminders of their precarious position in life. On the other, though, it

produces recognition that the personal crises (of the ability to provide food for self and family, retain one's land, or remain out of prison) are not products of a lack of financial discipline or one or the other bad governmental regime, but the system that has produced it all. Marx's asks his audiences to work toward against this system by exchanging this easily quantifiable and representable debt for their recognition of indebtedness to the Commune for its forgiveness of their financial debts, as well as to unforeseeable and unquantifiable future struggles. Marx responds to France's decades of debt-related crises with the attempt to write a crisis of his own into being, one not repayable except in the coin of social change.

Marx's attempt to turn the crisis of debt into an apparatus for producing new social relations has its temporal counterpart in his use of history. In thinking through 1789, as well as through the immediate past of the Commune, Marx asks what these moments will look like to a future in which active struggles against capitalism are a major global force. In the words of Michael Löwy, writing about Walter Benjamin, Marx's use of history reminds his audiences that "the future may open 'closed' historical cases, may rehabilitate misrepresented victims, revive defeated hopes and aspirations."²⁶ Marx's style intervenes in what the past means from the perspective of a different future, allowing those who would fight for that future a glimpse of the different meanings their own history might have. Through the realization of these different meanings, Marx seeks to prompt them to act as though that future were in the process of being realized.

The final way Marx attempts to write the crisis of the Commune lies with his pairing of community and concept. I have already said that Marx's concepts are the fabric

of an alternative community that avoids the vicious circle of capitalist crisis, in that they allow Marx's testament to the Commune to generate insights in different times and places without (necessarily) placing him in a privileged interpretive position. Marx's words thus respond, across centuries of historical change to a quite different crisis, the early twenty-first century crisis of community. In the historical work they perform (their rendering of debts owed those who died to try and secure a different, more equitable future), the concepts Marx derives from the Commune exhort us to work toward that same future in our own present, so that the dead of the Commune, and other struggles, will retroactively be rendered significant. They also show us how to read other historical events, producing concepts of our own to parse these events' political significance, bearing witness to them without impressing an authoritative interpretation. In response to a crisis in his own time, Marx shows how to construct the fragmentary genealogy that will set future struggles to work along the same lines as the Commune. The genealogy he puts into place allows those who wage battles far into the future to participate in a community premised on a common thread that winds itself through a multitude of different struggles and explorations of political potential.²⁷

Marx's thought constitutes a valuable resource for rhetorical scholars, and those who think about political style in particular. To fully explore how will require more research—the above reading took less than 50 pages of text as a central focus, and Marx produced tens of thousands. Moreover, in order to avoid one of the pitfalls of Hariman's text (the potentially myopic focus on single exemplars), it is incumbent on future research to trace the many instances of historical contest and interpretation of what Marx said,

what his world historical significance is, and how his style has been cited by a vast diversity of groups throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The concepts I have outlined are some points of orientation for such a reading.

In returning to Marx as if for the first time (both in that Marx's political oratory remains underexplored as a resource in rhetoric and the critical humanities alike and in that I attempt to embrace Marx's contradictory, creative nature as an author rather than taming it into a system), the most basic implication of my project for rhetorical studies is that rhetorical scholars, starting with a turn to Marx's thought, should strive to explore the contradictory and diverse ensemble of social movements inspired by Marx, as well as those bearing the name of communism. Such a potential area of study would encompass criticism of the rhetoric of the Soviet Union, the Communist Party and other organizations, exploring it would also address

events, texts and bodies as heterogeneous as Blake's visionary prophecies[...]Toussaint L'Ouverture and the Santo Domingo revolution, the Palestinian *intifada*[s], the Italian *Autonomia* Movement, Jean Genet's poetics of betrayal, Frantz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*, Walt Whitman's *Calamus* poems, the war poetry of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, the maroon communities of Jamaica[...]Nat Turner's slave revolution, China's Long March, the African-American civil rights movement, the past and present Zapatista peasant uprisings in Mexico, the poetry of Mahmud Darwish, Gillo Pontecorvo's *The Battle of Algiers*, Oscar Wilde's *The Soul of Man under Socialism*, Rosa Luxemburg and the Spartacists, Guy Debord and the Situationists, the queer politics of ACT UP, Sergei Eisenstein's cinema, the music of the Clash, and that twentieth-century Catholic heresy known as "liberation theology"

along with the revolutionary feminism of the Redstockings group in the US, Lotta Feminista in Italy, and a myriad of other expressions, sites and "icons of endurance, resistance and solidarity," past and present.²⁸ Many of these topics and events have

already been addressed by rhetorical scholars, but the history of Communism allows us to view them, and their connections to one another, in a new light. Put another way: this project has not even begun to trace the full contours of a political style or a rhetoric premised on Marx's work (if such a thing were even possible). It is merely a brief sketch, albeit a theoretically productive one.

This historical provocation has its counterpart in a theoretical and political one. Marx's utility for thinking about contemporary rhetoric remains to be explored, in thinking about public discourse and politics in the present and in studying rhetorical history, the rhetoric of social movements, and other areas of rhetorical studies. Rather than seize on its difficult, fragmentary nature and fraught legacy as a reason to ignore Marx, my hope is that readers of this project will be convinced that his work is a useful political resource, worth studying in detail precisely because it "does not try to say everything," instead suspending its "final closure to allow, anticipate, and even require" the shock of future history, political actions and other "as yet unknown and foreign" elements to disturb the present "with a strange and revolutionary sign."²⁹

Notes

Chapter 1: Style and Historical Materialism

¹ Richard Deinst, *The Bonds of Debt* (London: Verso, 2010), 137.

² Staff, "Emerging-market Multinationals: The Rise of State Capitalism," *The Economist*, January 21st, 2012, <http://www.economist.com/node/21543160>

³ Robert Hariman, *Political Style: The Artistry of Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 4.

⁴ Hariman, *Political Style*, 188.

⁵ Hariman, *Political Style*, 3 (emphasis in original).

⁶ Hariman, *Political Style*, 3-4.

⁷ Hariman, *Political Style*, 19.

⁸ Hariman, *Political Style*, 33.

⁹ Hariman, *Political Style*, 32.

¹⁰ Hariman, *Political Style*, 46.

¹¹ For an alternate account of Machiavelli that takes his thought as the ground of a quite different politics, see Antonio Negri, *Insurgencies: Constituent Power and the Modern State*, trans. Maurizio Boscagli (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), esp. 37-96.

¹² Barry Brummett, *A Rhetoric of Style* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Press, 2008), 18.

¹³ Brummett, *A Rhetoric of Style*, 13.

¹⁴ Kenneth Burke, *Counter-Statement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 34.

¹⁵ Kenneth Burke, *Permanence and Change* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 74.

¹⁶ Burke, *Permanence and Change*, 75.

¹⁷ Bradford Vivian, "Style, Rhetoric and Postmodern Culture," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 35, no. 3 (2002): 25.

¹⁸ James Arnt Aune, "Democratic Style and Ideological Containment", *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 11, no. 3 (2008): 483.

¹⁹ Brummett, *A Rhetoric of Style*, 17.

²⁰ Brummett, *A Rhetoric of Style*, 17.

²¹ Brummett, *A Rhetoric of Style*, 21-22.

²² Stewart Ewen, *All-Consuming Images: The Politics of Style in Contemporary Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 75.

²³ Ewen, *All-Consuming Images*, passim. but especially 85.

²⁴ Hariman, *Political Style*, 6-7.

²⁵ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 82.

²⁶ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991), xi.

²⁷ A similar set of resources for expanding political style's capacities to deal with history and social change is provided by Karlyn Kohrs Campbell. . Campbell's *Man Cannot*

Speak for Her. . In this groundbreaking study of early feminism, Campbell dwells at length on the concept of “feminine style.” Though it “was not, and is not today, exclusive to women,” feminine style consists in a set of political resources—the use of consciousness-raising techniques to constitute audiences who believe in their own political agency and capacity for collective action, the strategic violation of audiences’ conceptions of propriety by occupying roles (in this case that of public speaker) historically denied women, and the use of feminized spheres of persuasion (such as domestic situations and moral instruction) to argue for equal legal, educational and political rights. . Campbell’s conception of feminine style forms a political style *avant la lettre*, by discussing style as subjects’ use of the rhetorical tools they have (decorum) to change balances of power and discursive norms. . By discussing how such a style developed historically, Campbell helps ground Hariman’s philosophical conception in political history, while also offering an incipient theory of radical political style whose implications could be traced through feminist history in analogous ways to that which my project attempts with Marx’s work. . See *Man Cannot Speak for Her, vol. 1: A Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1989), 12-15.

²⁸ Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1981), 34.

²⁹ Kenneth Burke, “Revolutionary Symbolism in America: Speech to the 1935 Writer’s Congress” in *The Legacy of Kenneth Burke*, eds. Herbert W. Simons and Trevor Melia (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 267

³⁰ Burke, in Simons and Melia, 274-280.

³¹ Burke, in Simons and Melia, 274-280.

³² Dana L. Cloud, “Change Happens: Materialist Dialectics and Communication Studies,” in Steve Macek, Lee Artz, and Dana L. Cloud, *Marxism and Communication Studies: The Point is to Change It* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 53.

³³ Frank Lentricchia, “Analysis of Burke’s Speech,” in *The Legacy of Kenneth Burke*, eds. Herbert W. Simons and Trevor Melia (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 292-293.

³⁴ Richard W. Wilkie, “Karl Marx on Rhetoric,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, vol. 9, no. 4, 1976, 232.

³⁵ Wilkie, “Karl Marx on Rhetoric,” 234.

³⁶ Wilkie, “Karl Marx on Rhetoric,” 239.

³⁷ Wilkie, “Karl Marx on Rhetoric,” 239.

³⁸ James Arnt Aune, *Rhetoric and Marxism* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 15.

³⁹ Aune, *Marxism*, ix.

⁴⁰ Aune, *Marxism*, 143.

⁴¹ Aune, *Marxism*, ix.

⁴² Aune, *Marxism*, 149.

⁴³ Dana L. Cloud, “The Materiality of Discourse as Oxymoron: A Challenge to Critical Rhetoric,” *Western Journal of Communication* 58, no. 3 (1994): 144

⁴⁴ Cloud, “Materiality,” 147.

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- ⁴⁵ Dana L. Cloud, Steve Macek, and James Arnt Aune, "The Limbo of Ethical Simulacra: A Reply to Ron Greene," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 39, no. 1 (2006): 74-5.
- ⁴⁶ Ronald Walter Greene, "Orator Communist," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 39, no. 1 (2006): 92.
- ⁴⁷ Matthew S. May, "Spinoza and Class Struggle," *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 6, no. 2 (2009): 207; see also Matthew S. May, "Orator-Machine: Autonomist Marxism and William 'Big Bill' Haywood's Cooper Union Address," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 45, no. 4 (2012), 429-451.
- ⁴⁸ See Mary Boor Tonn, "Militant Motherhood: Labor's Mary Harris 'Mother' Jones," in *Readings in the Rhetoric of Social Protest, 2nd ed.*, eds. Charles E. Morris III and Stephen Howard Browne (State College: Strata, 2006), Mary Treice, *On the Picket Line: Strategies of Working-Class Women During the Depression* (Champaign-Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), and Kate Zitlow Roggness and Christina R. Foust, "Beyond Rights and Virtues as Foundations for Women's Agency: Emma Goldman's Rhetoric of Free Love," *Western Journal of Communication* 75, no. 2 (2011): 148-167. . For an overview of the interactions between feminism and 20th century US communism, see Meredith Tax, *The Rising of Women: Feminist Solidarity and Class Conflict* (Champaign-Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001).
- ⁴⁹ Carl R. Burghardt, "Two Faces of American Communism: Pamphlet Rhetoric of the Third Period and the Popular Front," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 66, 1 (1980): 375-391.
- ⁵⁰ Georges Haupt, "Marx and Marxism," in *The History of Marxism, vol. 1: Marxism in Marx's Day*, ed. Eric J. Hobsbawm (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982).
- ⁵¹ Louis Althusser, "To My English Readers," in *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 2005); Georg Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972), 47.
- ⁵² Charles Barbour, *The Marx Machine: Politics, Polemics, Ideology* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012).
- ⁵³ Barbour, *Marx-Machine*, 8, 12.
- ⁵⁴ Lukacs, *History*, 47.
- ⁵⁵ Lukacs, *History*, 47.
- ⁵⁶ Lukacs, *History*, 50.
- ⁵⁷ Lukacs, *History*, 50.
- ⁵⁸ Lukacs, *History*, 50.
- ⁵⁹ Lukacs, *History*, 80.
- ⁶⁰ Lukacs, *History*, 80.
- ⁶¹ Lukacs, *History*, 80.
- ⁶² Lukacs, *History*, 47.
- ⁶³ Lukacs, *History*, 52.
- ⁶⁴ Cloud, "Change Happens," 58.
- ⁶⁵ Cloud, "Change Happens," 60.
- ⁶⁶ Antonio Negri, *Time For Revolution*, trans. Matteo Mandarini (London: Polity, 2004), 43.
- ⁶⁷ Negri, *Time*, 93.

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- ⁶⁸ Negri, *Time*, 92.
- ⁶⁹ Negri, *Time*, 118.
- ⁷⁰ Negri, *Time*, 95.
- ⁷¹ Negri, *Time*, 95.
- ⁷² Negri, *Time*, 116.
- ⁷³ Jeffrey Henderson, "Introduction," in *Aristotle: Poetics, Longinus: On the Sublime, Demetrius: On Style*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 152.
- ⁷⁴ Longinus, "On the Sublime", trans. W. H. Fyfe, rev. Donald Russell, sec. 1.
- ⁷⁵ Longinus, "On the Sublime", sec. 7.
- ⁷⁶ Longinus, "On the Sublime", sec. 1.
- ⁷⁷ For a concept of enfolding consonant with that offered here, see Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Sean Hand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 59 ff.
- ⁷⁸ Negri, *Time*, 144.
- ⁷⁹ Bruce Fink, *Fundamentals of Psychoanalytic Technique: A Lacanian Approach* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2007), 47ff.
- ⁸⁰ Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2007), 217.
- ⁸¹ Lacan, *Ecrits*, 216-7.
- ⁸² Lacan, *Ecrits*, 214.
- ⁸³ Lacan, *Ecrits*, 214.
- ⁸⁴ Burke, *Permanence*, 111.
- ⁸⁵ Burke, *Permanence*, 179.
- ⁸⁶ Burke, *Permanence*, 201.
- ⁸⁷ Burke, *Permanence*, 201.
- ⁸⁸ Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 368.
- ⁸⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Expressionism in Philosophy*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Zone Book, 1992), 218.
- ⁹⁰ Georg Lukacs, *Studies in European Realism* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964), 7, 154.
- ⁹¹ Jacques Ranciere, *Dissensus: Politics and Aesthetics*, trans. Steve Corcoran (London: Continuum, 2009), 176. For an overview of the debate that stretches from the early twentieth century to more recent times, see Fredric Jameson, ed. *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: Verso, 2007). . The long review essay by Jameson at the end of the volume usefully traces these debates from their inception in the early twentieth century to more recent developments. . Another notable, more recent intervention in the debate is Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, trans. Geoffrey Wall (London: Routledge, 2007).
- ⁹² Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 403.
- ⁹³ Etienne Balibar, *The Philosophy of Marx*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 2007), 100.

⁹⁴ Balibar, *Philosophy of Marx*, 99.

⁹⁵ Balibar, *Philosophy of Marx*, 99.

Chapter 2: Marx and the Legacy of the Paris Commune

¹ Leon Trotsky, “Lessons of the Paris Commune,” *New Internationalist* 2, no. 2 (1935): 43-47. . Accessed at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1921/02/commune.htm>

² Karl Marx, “The Civil War in France,” in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Writings on the Paris Commune* (London: Monthly Review Press, 1974), 74.

³ E. Belfort Bax, Victor Dave, and William Morris, *A Short Account of the Paris Commune of 1871* (London: Socialist League, 1886).

⁴ Representative histories written by participants or partisans to the Commune include Prosper-Olivier Lissigaray, *A History of the Paris Commune of 1871* (London: Verso, 2011), Louise Michel, *Red Virgin: Memoirs of Louise Michel*, trans. Bullitt Lowry and Elizabeth Gunter (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1981), and the Morris pamphlet quoted above. The Commune’s supporters also wrote a number of more poetic treatments; see especially Sarah Morgan Bryan Pyatt, “The Palace-Burner (A Picture in a Newspaper),” in Paula Bennett, ed. *Palace-Burner: The Selected Poetry of Sarah Piatt* (Champaign-Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005) and Jules Vallés, *The Insurrectionist*, trans. Sandy Petray (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1971).

⁵ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 69

⁶ Alistair Horne, *The Fall of Paris: The Siege and the Commune 1870-71* (London: Oxford University Press, 2007), 60.

⁷ Horne, *Fall of Paris*, 25.

⁸ Horne, *Fall of Paris*, 25.

⁹ Horne, *Fall of Paris*, 25.

¹⁰ Horne, *Fall of Paris*, 37.

¹¹ Horne, *Fall of Paris*, 35.

¹² Horne, *Fall of Paris*, 256.

¹³ Horne, *Fall of Paris*, 270.

¹⁴ Horne, *Fall of Paris*, 271-2.

¹⁵ Robert Tombs, *The Paris Commune, 1871* (London: Longman, 1999) 203.

¹⁶ Horne, *Fall of Paris*, 279.

¹⁷ Horne, *Fall of Paris*, 286.

¹⁸ Rupert Christiensen, *Paris Babylon: The Story of the Paris Commune* (London: Penguin, 1996), 276-77.

¹⁹ Lissigaray, *Paris Commune*, 233.

²⁰ Lissigaray, *Paris Commune*, 234.

²¹ Lissigaray, *Paris Commune*, 236.

²² Lissigaray, *Paris Commune*, 237.

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- ²³ Lissigaray, *Paris Commune*, 238.
- ²⁴ Lissigaray, *Paris Commune*, 238.
- ²⁵ Lissigaray, *Paris Commune*, 239.
- ²⁶ Lissigaray, *Paris Commune*, 243.
- ²⁷ Christiensen, *Paris Babylon*, 354.
- ²⁸ Horne, *Fall of Paris*, 414.
- ²⁹ Horne, *Fall of Paris*, 418.
- ³⁰ Robert Tombs, *The War Against Paris, 1871* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 107-111.
- ³¹ Christiensen, *Paris Babylon*, 369.
- ³² *London Times*, June 13, 1871, cited in Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 99.
- ³³ Roger V. Gould, *Insurgent Identities: Class, Community and Protest from 1848 to the Commune* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 54-55.
- ³⁴ Gould, *Insurgent Identities*, 198-199.
- ³⁵ Gould, *Insurgent Identities*, 199.
- ³⁶ Gould, *Insurgent Identities*, 199.
- ³⁷ Mikhail Bakunin, "The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State," trans. Sam Dolgoff, accessed April 1, 2013, <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/bakunin/works/1871/paris-commune.htm>
- ³⁸ Kristin Ross, *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune* (London: Verso, 2008), 97.
- ³⁹ Ross, *Social Space*, 119.
- ⁴⁰ Kristin Ross, *May 68 and its Afterlives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004) 74.
- ⁴¹ Ross, *May 68*, 4.
- ⁴² Gould, *Insurgent Identities*, 10.
- ⁴³ David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*. (London: Verso, 2012), 136.
- ⁴⁴ Harvey, *Rebel Cities*, 130.
- ⁴⁵ Harvey, *Rebel Cities*, 130.
- ⁴⁶ Harvey, *Rebel Cities*, 136.
- ⁴⁷ Harvey, *Rebel Cities*, 136.
- ⁴⁸ Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, trans. Robert Service (London: Penguin Books, 1992).
- ⁴⁹ Marx, in Lenin, *State*, 34.
- ⁵⁰ Lenin, *State*, 34.
- ⁵¹ Lenin, *State*, 34.
- ⁵² Lenin, *State*, 39.
- ⁵³ Karl Marx, *The Letters of Karl Marx*, ed. Saul K. Padover (London: Monthly Review Press, 1979), 334.
- ⁵⁴ Padover, *Letters*, 280.
- ⁵⁵ Alain Badiou, "The Paris Commune: A Political Declaration on Politics" in *Polemics*, trans. Steve Corcoran (London: Verso, 2010), 289.

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- ⁵⁶ Badiou, "Paris Commune," 286.
- ⁵⁷ Badiou, "Paris Commune," 279-286; see also Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (London: Verso, 2007), 173-187, 201-211.
- ⁵⁸ Badiou, *Being and Event*, 232-240.
- ⁵⁹ Badiou, "Paris Commune," 289.
- ⁶⁰ Badiou, "Paris Commune," 288.
- ⁶¹ Badiou, "Paris Commune," 262.
- ⁶² Badiou, "Paris Commune," 262.
- ⁶³ Badiou, *Being and Event*, 23.
- ⁶⁴ Badiou, "Paris Commune," 279.
- ⁶⁵ Badiou, "Paris Commune," 272-276.
- ⁶⁶ Badiou, "Paris Commune," 272.
- ⁶⁷ Badiou, "Paris Commune," 271.
- ⁶⁸ Badiou, "Paris Commune," 271-272.
- ⁶⁹ Badiou, "Paris Commune," 272.
- ⁷⁰ Etienne Balibar, *Masses, Classes, Ideas: Studies on Politics and Philosophy Before and After Marx*, trans. James Swenson (London: Routledge, 1994), 147.
- ⁷¹ Balibar, *Masses*, 147.
- ⁷² Ross, *May 68*, 6-7.
- ⁷³ Balibar, *Masses*, 147.
- ⁷⁴ Ronald Walter Greene, "Rhetorical Materialism: The Rhetorical Subject and the General Intellect," in Barbara A. Biesecker and John L. Lucaites, eds. *Rhetoric, Materiality and Politics* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), 43-65
- ⁷⁵ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 116.
- ⁷⁶ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 117.
- ⁷⁷ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 130.
- ⁷⁸ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 130, punctuation in the original.
- ⁷⁹ Jean-Francois Lyotard, *Libidinal Economy*, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).
- ⁸⁰ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 144.
- ⁸¹ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 146ff.
- ⁸² Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 195.
- ⁸³ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 69.
- ⁸⁴ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 81.
- ⁸⁵ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History with Selections from the Philosophy of Right*, trans. Leo Rauch (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1989), 10.
- ⁸⁶ Karl Marx, "Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," in *Early Writings*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Penguin, 1992), 249.
- ⁸⁷ Marx, *Early Writings*, 249.
- ⁸⁸ Marx, *Early Writings*, 250-251.
- ⁸⁹ Marx, *Early Writings*, 250.
- ⁹⁰ Marx, *Early Writings*, 251.

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- ⁹¹ Marx, *Early Writings*, 251.
- ⁹² Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (London: Penguin, 1993), 100.
- ⁹³ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 100.
- ⁹⁴ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 100.
- ⁹⁵ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 103.
- ⁹⁶ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 104.
- ⁹⁷ Marx, *Grundrisse*, 105.
- ⁹⁸ Louis Althusser, “Marx in His Limits,” in *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings, 1978-1987*, trans. G. M. Goshgarian (London: Verso, 2006), 47.
- ⁹⁹ Althusser, *Encounter*, 47.
- ¹⁰⁰ Althusser, *Encounter*, 48.
- ¹⁰¹ Althusser, *Encounter*, 48.
- ¹⁰² May, “Orator-Machine”, 434.
- ¹⁰³ David Harvey, *Paris: Capital of Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2006), 123.
- ¹⁰⁴ Harvey, *Paris*, 113.
- ¹⁰⁵ Harvey, *Paris*, 147.
- ¹⁰⁶ Harvey, *Paris*, 113.
- ¹⁰⁷ Harvey, *Paris*, 47.

Chapter 3: Debt and Synecdochic Subjectivity

- ¹ Padover, *Letters*, 280.
- ² Padover, *Letters*, 280.
- ³ Padover, *Letters*, 281.
- ⁴ Balibar, *Masses*, 144.
- ⁵ Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in 19th Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 315.
- ⁶ White, *Metahistory*, 315-316.
- ⁷ White, *Metahistory*, 325.
- ⁸ See Fredric Jameson, “Cognitive Mapping,” in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Champaign-Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 347-60.
- ⁹ White, *Metahistory*, 313.
- ¹⁰ White, *Metahistory*, 315.
- ¹¹ White, *Metahistory*, 295.
- ¹² For a detailed working through of these examples, see Karl Marx, *Capital, Vol. 1*, trans. Ben Fowkes (London: Penguin, 1990), 139-160, as well as Harry Cleaver, *Reading Capital Politically* (Leeds: AntiThesis Press, 2001).
- ¹³ White, *Metahistory*, 313.
- ¹⁴ White, *Metahistory*, 326.
- ¹⁵ White, *Metahistory*, 281.
- ¹⁶ White, *Metahistory*, 283.

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- ¹⁷ Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 503.
- ¹⁸ Burke, *Grammar*, 504.
- ¹⁹ Burke, *Grammar*, 505.
- ²⁰ Burke, *Grammar*, 507.
- ²¹ Burke, *Grammar*, 506.
- ²² Burke, *Grammar*, 507-508.
- ²³ Burke, *Grammar*, 512.
- ²⁴ Burke, *Grammar*, 510.
- ²⁵ Burke, *Grammar*, 513.
- ²⁶ This is a statement with which White would likely agree: throughout *Metahistory*, he maps metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony onto various thinkers, but with different emphases (Nietzsche, for example, is grouped under metonymy, while Benedetto Croce is White's thinker of irony). . Burke's advantage is that he more explicitly makes the malleability of these categories clear.
- ²⁷ Paul De Man, *Aesthetic Ideology* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Press, 1996), 39.
- ²⁸ Ernesto Laclau, "The Politics of Rhetoric," in Barbara Cohen, Tom Cohen and J. Hills Miller, eds. *Material Events: Paul de Man and the Afterlife of Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 234.
- ²⁹ Laclau, "Rhetoric," 234.
- ³⁰ Antonio Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx: Nine Lessons on the Grundrisse*, trans. Harry Cleaver (New York: Autonomedia, 1991), 44.
- ³¹ Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx*, 44.
- ³² While I employ Negri here for strategic reasons, this more dynamic concept of totality has a long history within Marxism, and is perhaps most extensively developed by Jameson (in the article already cited and elsewhere) as well as Theodor Adorno, in *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (London: Routledge, 1990).
- ³³ Robert Tombs, *The War Against Paris, 1871* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 106.
- ³⁴ Tombs, *War*, 109.
- ³⁵ Tombs, *War*, 109.
- ³⁶ Tombs, *War*, 109.
- ³⁷ Tombs, *War*, 111.
- ³⁸ Tombs, *War*, 111.
- ³⁹ Tombs, *War*, 111.
- ⁴⁰ Tombs, *War*, 112.
- ⁴¹ Tombs, *War*, 113.
- ⁴² General Appert in Tombs, *War*, 113.
- ⁴³ Tombs, *War*, 113.
- ⁴⁴ Tombs, *War*, 111.
- ⁴⁵ Tombs, *War*, 115.
- ⁴⁶ Tombs, *War*, 115.
- ⁴⁷ Tombs, *War*, 115.

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- ⁴⁸ Tombs, *War*, 115-116.
- ⁴⁹ Tombs, *War*, 116.
- ⁵⁰ Tombs, *War*, 117.
- ⁵¹ Andrew King, "The Rhetoric of Power Maintenance: Elites at the Precipice," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 62, ISSUE? (1976): 128.
- ⁵² King, "Power Maintenance," 133.
- ⁵³ James Arnt Aune, "Burke's Late Blooming: Trope, Defense, and Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 69, ISSUE? (1983): 334.
- ⁵⁴ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 54.
- ⁵⁵ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 52.
- ⁵⁶ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 54.
- ⁵⁷ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 52.
- ⁵⁸ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 54.
- ⁵⁹ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 54.
- ⁶⁰ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 55.
- ⁶¹ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 55.
- ⁶² Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 57.
- ⁶³ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 58.
- ⁶⁴ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 59.
- ⁶⁵ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 54.
- ⁶⁶ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 52.
- ⁶⁷ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 61.
- ⁶⁸ J.P.T. Bury, *Theirs 1797-1877: A Political Life* (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1986), 108.
- ⁶⁹ Marx had previously discussed parliamentary democracy, and the French system of government in particular, as one of the many "ruses of history" whereby capital extended its reach unbeknownst to (or even despite) the stated ideologies of those warring for position in legislative contexts. . See Marx, "Brumaire," especially 169-195.
- ⁷⁰ Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, 191.
- ⁷¹ Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, 193.
- ⁷² Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 77.
- ⁷³ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 77.
- ⁷⁴ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 77.
- ⁷⁵ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 80.
- ⁷⁶ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 78.
- ⁷⁷ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 78.
- ⁷⁸ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 60.
- ⁷⁹ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 79.
- ⁸⁰ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 79.
- ⁸¹ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 79.
- ⁸² Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 60.
- ⁸³ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 70.
- ⁸⁴ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 71.
- ⁸⁵ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 71.

⁸⁶ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 71.

⁸⁷ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 71.

⁸⁸ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 72.

⁸⁹ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 74.

⁹⁰ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 72.

⁹¹ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 73.

⁹² Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 73.

⁹³ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 73.

⁹⁴ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 72.

⁹⁵ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 73.

⁹⁶ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 74.

⁹⁷ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 74.

⁹⁸ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 74.

⁹⁹ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 78.

¹⁰⁰ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 79.

¹⁰¹ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 79.

¹⁰² This version of the working class in Marx parallels Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's description of current social antagonisms as "converging" on the substantively empty position of a "radical and pluralistic democracy." . It differs in that, whereas for Laclau and Mouffe, there is *no* positive content that links various struggles together under this sign save a contingent "hegemonic articulation," Marx is here pointing at a common debt which, though only contingently actualized in the moment of the commune, does contain the positive content of, as Cesare Casarino has put it, a "common denominator," namely a "collective assemblage" of "common[...]capacities" to transform the world which are not essentialist in the way that Laclau and Mouffe critique (because they are inherently potential rather than taking on a specific form) but are also real products of human being in the world, rather than the product of the workings of culture or hegemony. . See Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 2nd Ed. (London: Verso, 2001), 152, 176, and Cesare Casarino, "Universalism of the Common," *diacritics* 39, no. 4 (2009): 168, 173.

¹⁰³ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 77.

¹⁰⁴ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 77, 74.

¹⁰⁵ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 80.

¹⁰⁶ Ronald Walter Greene, "Another Materialist Rhetoric," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 15, no. 1 (1998): 21.

¹⁰⁷ Maurizio Lazzarato, *The Making of the Indebted Man: An Essay on the Neoliberal Condition*, trans. Joshua David Jordan (New York: Semiotext(e), 2012).

¹⁰⁸ John Lanchester, "Greece Versus the Rest," *The New Yorker*, June 18, 2012, last accessed on April 4, 2013 at

http://www.newyorker.com/talk/comment/2012/06/18/120618taco_talk_lanchester.

¹⁰⁹ Lazzarato, *Indebted Man*, 45.

¹¹⁰ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Declaration*, Kindle edition, Chapter 1.

¹¹¹ Lazzarato, *Indebted Man*, 46.

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- ¹¹² Lazzarato, *Indebted Man*, 76.
¹¹³ David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (New York: Melville House, 2011), 337.
¹¹⁴ Graeber, *Debt*, 14.
¹¹⁵ Lazzarato, *Indebted Man*, 164.
¹¹⁶ www.strikedebt.org
¹¹⁷ Richard Deinst, *The Bonds of Debt* (London: Verso, 2010), 171.
¹¹⁸ Deinst, *Bonds*, 175.
¹¹⁹ Deinst, *Bonds*, 174.
¹²⁰ Deinst, *Bonds*, 176.
¹²¹ Deinst, *Bonds*, 182-183.

Chapter 4: A Rhetoric of Lost Causes

- ¹ Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, quoted in Giorgio Agamben, *Potentialities*, ed. and trans. Daniel Heller Roazen (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1999), 56.
² Padover, *Letters*, 334.
³ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 163.
⁴ Deleuze, *Difference*, 163.
⁵ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 81.
⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (London: Routledge, 2006), 18.
⁷ Derrida, *Specters*, 18.
⁸ Derrida, *Specters*, 18. .
⁹ See Marx, “Brumaire,” 146.
¹⁰ Marx, “Brumaire,” 146.
¹¹ Derrida, *Specters*, 50.
¹² This word, employed by Marx and Engels throughout *The German Ideology*, “impl[ies] diverse notions of trade and war between family and tribal communities, and even communication in general, not to mention traffic in a narrow sense.” It also connotes sexual intercourse. . See Kojin Karatani, “Beyond Capital-Nation-State,” *Rethinking Marxism* 20, no. 4 (2008): 572.
¹³ Derrida, *Specters*, 127.
¹⁴ Derrida, *Specters*, 128-9.
¹⁵ Warren Montag, “Spirits Armed and Unarmed: Derrida’s *Specters of Marx*,” in *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Derrida’s Specters of Marx*, ed. Michael Sprinker (London: Verso, 2008), 80.
¹⁶ Pierre Macherey, “Marx Dematerialized, or the Spirit of Derrida,” trans. Ted Stolze, in *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Derrida’s Specters of Marx*, ed. Michael Sprinker (London: Verso, 2008), 80, 24.
¹⁷ Walter Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” trans. Harry Zohn, in *Selected Writings: Vol. 4, 1938-1940*, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 391.

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- ¹⁸ Benjamin, "History," 391.
- ¹⁹ Benjamin, "History," 391.
- ²⁰ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 85.
- ²¹ Benjamin, "History," 391.
- ²² Benjamin, "History," 392.
- ²³ Benjamin, "History," 392.
- ²⁴ Benjamin, "History," 395.
- ²⁵ Benjamin, "History," 392.
- ²⁶ Benjamin, "History," 396.
- ²⁷ Benjamin, "History," 395.
- ²⁸ Benjamin, "History," 395.
- ²⁹ Benjamin, "History," 397.
- ³⁰ Benjamin, "History," 397.
- ³¹ Julia Ng, "Each Thing a Thief: Walter Benjamin on the Agency of Objects," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 44, no. 4 (2011): 382-402.
- ³² Eric Doxtader, "Contending with Violent Words, or the Afterthought of (In)civility," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 44, no. 4 (2011): 403-423.
- ³³ D. Robert Dechaine, "Magic, Mimesis and Revolutionary Praxis: Illuminating Walter Benjamin's Rhetoric of Redemption," *Western Journal of Communication* 64, no. 3 (2000): 285-307.
- ³⁴ Miguel Vatter, "Married Life, Gay Life as a Work of Art, and Eternal Life: Toward a Biopolitical Reading of Benjamin," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 44, no. 4 (2011): 309-335. Dechaine's article, cited above, also deals with Benjamin's utility for queer scholarship, focusing specifically on ACT UP.
- ³⁵ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 37-38.
- ³⁶ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 59.
- ³⁷ Jeremy Engels, "Uncivil Speech: Invective and the Rhetorics of Democracy in the Early Republic," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 95, no. 3 (2009): 313.
- ³⁸ Engels, "Invective," 313.
- ³⁹ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 59.
- ⁴⁰ In this sense, Marx is an example of the philosophical method that Russell Ford ascribes to Deleuze. "Deleuze's Dick," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 38, no. 1 (2005): 41. ???
- ⁴¹ Roberto Bolaño, *Amulet*, trans. Chris Andrews (New York: New Directions, 2008).
- ⁴² Samuel McCormick, *Letters to Power: Public Advocacy Without Public Intellectuals* (State College: Penn State University Press, 2011).
- ⁴³ Barbara Biesecker, "Rethinking the Rhetorical Situation from the Thematic of *Différence*," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 22, no. 2 (1989): 121.
- ⁴⁴ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, ed. Rolf Teidemann, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 474.
- ⁴⁵ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 69.
- ⁴⁶ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 70.
- ⁴⁷ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 70.
- ⁴⁸ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 70.

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- ⁴⁹ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 70.
- ⁵⁰ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 70.
- ⁵¹ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 70-71.
- ⁵² Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 72.
- ⁵³ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 72.
- ⁵⁴ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 72.
- ⁵⁵ Olivier Bernier, *Words of Fire, Deeds of Blood: The Mob, the Monarchy and the French Revolution*, (New York: Little Brown and Co., 1992), 371-2, 408-9.
- ⁵⁶ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 72.
- ⁵⁷ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 74.
- ⁵⁸ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 74.
- ⁵⁹ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 74-5.
- ⁶⁰ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 75.
- ⁶¹ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology, Parts I and III*, trans. Roy Pascal (Eastford, CT: Martino Fine Books, 2011), 1-4.
- ⁶² For a further clarification of this concept, see Greene, “Materialist Rhetoric.”
- ⁶³ Marx distinguishes between machine technology (which opens up certain pragmatic potentials and its “employment by capital,” which harnesses those potentials to particular circuits of value-generation and social control. . See Marx, *Capital*, 554-555.
- ⁶⁴ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 74
- ⁶⁵ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 83.
- ⁶⁶ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 78.
- ⁶⁷ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 77.
- ⁶⁸ Bernier, *Words*, 60.
- ⁶⁹ Bernier, *Words*, 355.
- ⁷⁰ Bernier, *Words*, 291.
- ⁷¹ Bernier, *Words*, 351-3.
- ⁷² Antonio Negri. *Subversive Spinoza: (Un)Contemporary Variations*. Translated by Timothy S. Murphy, Michael Hardt, Ted Stolze, and Charles S. Wolfe. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).
- ⁷³ Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), 77.
- ⁷⁴ Jameson, *Unconscious*, 77.
- ⁷⁵ Jameson, *Unconscious*, 82.
- ⁷⁶ Maurice Charland, “Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the *Peuple Quebecois*,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73, no. 2 (1987): 133-150. . See also Nathaniel Cordova, “The Constitutive Force of the *Catecismo Del Pueblo* in Puerto Rico’s Popular Democratic Party Campaign of 1938-1940,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 9, no. 2 (2004): 212-233.
- ⁷⁷ Hariman, *Political Style*, 177.
- ⁷⁸ Susan Buck-Morss, “The Second Time as Farce...: Historical Pragmatics and the Untimely Present,” in Costas Douzinas and Slavoj Zizek, eds. *The Idea of Communism* (London: Verso, 2010).

⁷⁹ Benjamin, "History," 390.

⁸⁰ Christian Lenhart, "Anamnestic Solidarity: The Proletariat and its Manes," *Telos* VOL #?, no. 25 (1975): 133.

⁸¹ See Appendix for images of both paintings.

⁸² On the issue of Marx as a philosopher, see Balibar, *Philosophy of Marx*, especially chapter 1 and the conclusion.

⁸³ See especially Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar, *Reading Capital*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 2009), 14-75, as well as E. P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978).

Chapter 5: Crisis, Community and Revolutionary Epideictic

¹ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, trans. George Kennedy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), Book I, Chapter 1, section iii.

² Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, Book I, Chap. 3, sec. iv.

³ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, Book I, Chap. 3, sec. v.

⁴ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, Book I, Chap. 1, sec. iv.

⁵ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, Book I, Chap. 9, sec. i.

⁶ Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, Book I, Chap. 9, sec. ix.

⁷ Though there exist examples that can be read as full actualizations of epideictic's paradoxical and revolutionary potential—most especially Gorgias' "Encomium of Helen." . . . For a reading of this speech that implicitly does just this, see Nathan Stormer, "Encomium of Helen's Body," in Barbara Biesecker and John Louis Lucaites, eds. *Rhetoric, Materiality and Politics* (New York: Peter Lang, 2011).

⁸ Chaim Perelman and Lucille Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*, trans. John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), 49.

⁹ Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, *New Rhetoric*, 54-55.

¹⁰ Gerard Hauser, "Aristotle on Epideictic Rhetoric: The Formation of Public Morality," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 29, ISSUE? (1999): 18.

¹¹ Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2003), 43.

¹² Asad, *Formations*, 59.

¹³ Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 20.

¹⁴ Michael J. Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

¹⁵ Jodi Dean, *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

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- ¹⁸ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001) and *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (London: Penguin Books, 2005); Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, trans. Isabella Bertolotti, James Cascaito and Andrea Casson, (New York: Semiotext(e), 2004).
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- ²⁰ Bradford Vivian, *Public Forgetting: The Rhetoric and Politics of Beginning Again*, (State College: Penn State University Press, 2010), 73.
- ²¹ Vivian, *Public Forgetting*, 69.
- ²² Vivian, *Public Forgetting*, 69.
- ²³ Vivian, *Public Forgetting*, 74.
- ²⁴ Vivian, *Public Forgetting*, 67.
- ²⁵ Vivian, *Public Forgetting*, 68.
- ²⁶ Vivian, *Public Forgetting*, 68.
- ²⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 74-75.
- ²⁸ Burke, *Counter-Statement*, 124.
- ²⁹ For a more general discussion of this dynamic within capitalism, see Marx, *Grundrisse*, 408-9 as well as Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 257-8. . Within communication studies, applications of this conceptual framework to issues of communicative labor and audiences as sources of surplus value may be found in Ronald Walter Greene, "Rhetoric and Capitalism: Rhetorical Agency as Communicative Labor," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 37, no. 3 (2004): 188-206 and Jack Z. Bratich, "Amassing the Multitude: Revisiting Early Audience Studies," *Communication Theory* 15, no. 3 (2005): 242-265.
- ³⁰ Vivian, *Public Forgetting*, 84.
- ³¹ Vivian, *Public Forgetting*, 84.
- ³² Catherine Chaput, "Rhetorical Circulation in Late Capitalism: Neoliberalism and the Overdetermination of Affective Energy," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 43, no. 1 (2010): 3.
- ³³ Chaput, "Circulation," 8.
- ³⁴ Chaput, "Circulation," 8.
- ³⁵ Chaput, "Circulation," 19.
- ³⁶ Virno, *Grammar*, 13.
- ³⁷ Virno, *Grammar*, 35.
- ³⁸ Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, trans. Simona Sawnhay, ed. Peter Connor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 29.
- ³⁹ Nancy, *Inoperative Community*, 13.
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- ⁴⁵ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 82.
- ⁴⁶ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 67.
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- ⁴⁸ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 69.
- ⁴⁹ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 67-8.
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- ⁵¹ Immanuel Kant, "A Renewed Attempt to Answer the Question: 'Is the Human Race Continually Improving?'" in *Political Writings*, trans. H. B. Nisbet, ed. H. S. Reiss, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 182.
- ⁵² Kant, "Human Race," 183.
- ⁵³ Ian Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic: Slavery, Finance Capital, and the Philosophy of History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 203.
- ⁵⁴ Baucom, *Specters*, 207.
- ⁵⁵ Kant, "Human Race," 177.
- ⁵⁶ Baucom, *Specters*, 157.
- ⁵⁷ Angela Mitropoulos, *From Contract to Contagion: Biopolitics and Oikonomia*, (Brooklyn, NY: Minor Compositions, 2012), 25.
- ⁵⁸ Baucom, *Specters*, 207.
- ⁵⁹ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 60.
- ⁶⁰ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 83.
- ⁶¹ Baucom, *Specters*, 281. . With respect to the conclusions of my previous chapter, it is worth noting that what Baucom indicts is not narrative *per se*, but rather the particular kind of finished, unflinching narrative that relieves its readers of any need to act on the story it tells.
- ⁶² Vivian, *Public Forgetting*, 64.
- ⁶³ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 74.
- ⁶⁴ Dean, *Neoliberal Fantasies*, 13.
- ⁶⁵ See Roberto Esposito, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*, trans. Timothy Campbell, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), especially Ch. 1.
- ⁶⁶ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 64.
- ⁶⁷ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 83.
- ⁶⁸ Horne, *Fall of Paris*, 272.
- ⁶⁹ Horne, *Fall of Paris*, 272.
- ⁷⁰ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 65.
- ⁷¹ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 65.
- ⁷² Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 65.
- ⁷³ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 65.
- ⁷⁴ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 66.
- ⁷⁵ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 66.
- ⁷⁶ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 94.
- ⁷⁷ Marx, *Capital*, 873-940.

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- ⁷⁸ Leopoldina Fortunati, *The Arcane of Reproduction: Housework, Prostitution, Labor and Capital* (New York: Autonomedia, 1989); Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (New York: Autonomedia, 2004).
- ⁷⁹ Baucom, *Specters*.
- ⁸⁰ Samir Amin, *Eurocentrism*, trans. Russell Moore and James Membrez (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1989).
- ⁸¹ Christiensen, *Paris Babylon*, 13.
- ⁸² Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, 346.
- ⁸³ Marx, “Brumaire,” 146.
- ⁸⁴ Derrida, *Specters*, 161 ff.
- ⁸⁵ Baucom, *Specters*, 207.
- ⁸⁶ Baucom, *Specters*, 207.
- ⁸⁷ Baucom, *Specters*, 207.
- ⁸⁸ Baucom, *Specters*, 311.
- ⁸⁹ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 84.
- ⁹⁰ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 84.
- ⁹¹ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 90.
- ⁹² Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 90.
- ⁹³ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 91.
- ⁹⁴ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 92.
- ⁹⁵ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 80.
- ⁹⁶ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 81.
- ⁹⁷ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 81.
- ⁹⁸ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 92.
- ⁹⁹ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 91.
- ¹⁰⁰ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 96.
- ¹⁰¹ Gregory Nagy, “Ancient Greek Poetry, Prophecy, and Concepts of Theory,” in James L. Kugel, ed. *Poetry and Prophecy: The Beginnings of a Literary Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990) 62.
- ¹⁰² Nagy, “Poetry,” 62.
- ¹⁰³ Robert Danisch, “ ; Brooke Rollins, “
- ¹⁰⁴ Baucom, *Specters*, 311.
- ¹⁰⁵ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 76.
- ¹⁰⁶ Marx and Engels, *Paris Commune*, 77.

Conclusion

- ¹ Hariman, *Political Style*, 11.
- ² Hariman, *Political Style*, 49.
- ³ Hariman, *Political Style*, 94.
- ⁴ Hariman, *Political Style*, 176.
- ⁵ Aune, “Containment,” PAGE#?.
- ⁶ Hariman, *Political Style*, 140.
- ⁷ Hariman, *Political Style*, 12.

⁸ Hariman, *Political Style*, 11.

⁹ Jeremy Engels, "Democratic Alienation," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 11, ISSUE#? (2008): 471-481.

¹⁰ Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?" in *Essential Works of Michel Foucault, vol. II: Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion and trans. Josue V. Harari (New York: The New Press, 1998), 205.

¹¹ Foucault, "Author," 206.

¹² Foucault, "Author," 211-216.

¹³ Foucault, "Author," 216-7.

¹⁴ Foucault, "Author," 217.

¹⁵ Foucault, "Author," 217.

¹⁶ Foucault, "Author," 217.

¹⁷ Foucault, "Author," 217.

¹⁸ Foucault, "Author," 219.

¹⁹ Saree Makdisi, Cesare Casarino, and Rebecca Karl, "Marxism, Communism and History: A Reintroduction," in Saree Makdisi, et. al., eds., *Marxism Beyond Marxism* (London: Routledge, 1996), 2.

²⁰ These expiatory measures find perhaps their most extensive rhetorical catalog in Kenneth Burke's concept of the "cult of the kill." See Kenneth Burke, *The Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

²¹ Cesare Casarino, *Modernity at Sea: Melville, Marx and Conrad in Crisis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 65.

²² Casarino, *Modernity at Sea*, 64.

²³ For a several-centuries-long overview of capitalist crisis from early European modernity to the present which shows this regularity in detail, see Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power and the Origins of Our Times-Revised and Updated Edition* (London: Verso, 2010).

²⁴ Casarino, *Modernity at Sea*, 65.

²⁵ Casarino, *Modernity at Sea*, 65.

²⁶ Michael Löwy, *Fire Alarm: Reading Walter Benjamin's Concept of History* (London: Verso, YEAR?), 205.

²⁷ For more on the experience of "synchronicity within and through the diachronic" that characterizes the political and historical surplus that Marx conjures up, see Cesare Casarino, "Surplus Common," in Cesare Casarino and Antonio Negri, *In Praise of the Common* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 33.

²⁸ Makdisi, Casarino and Karl, *Marxism Beyond Marxism*, 3.

²⁹ Thomas M. Kemple, *Reading Marx Writing: Melodrama, the Market and the Grundrisse*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 82.

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Appendix A:



Paul Klee, *Angelus Novus*, 1920. Oil transfer with watercolor on paper. Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Available at Wikimedia Commons: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Klee_paul_angelus_novus_1920.jpg (Accessed June 19, 2013).

Appendix B:



Diego Rivera, *Man, Controller of the Universe* (Reproduction of *Man at the Crossroads*), 1934. Mural. Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City.
Available at Wikimedia Commons:
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Palacio de Bellas Artes Mural El Hombre in cruce de caminos Rivera 3.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Palacio_de_Bellas_Artes_Mural_El_Hombre_in_cruce_de_caminos_Rivera_3.jpg) (Accessed on June 21, 2013).