Remembering the Commune:
Texts and Celebrations in Britain and the United States.

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Abstract

This thesis contends that the Paris Commune had a significant impact on late nineteenth and early twentieth century working-class communities and organisations in the U.S. and Britain. First, the thesis establishes the broader understanding of the Commune seen in large, elite newspapers from both the U.S. and Britain. Many radical authors countered this conservative opinion in their own smaller press that also hosted transnational discussion. This was a harbinger for Marx’s *The Civil War in France*, which came to dominate the socialist interpretation of the Commune. Marx established the Commune as a revolutionary ideal. This was further developed and became the socialist canon with works by Hippolyte-Prosper-Olivier Lissagaray and Ernest Belfort Bax. The proliferation of these works, especially Marx’s *The Civil War in France*, is examined with close attention to the publishers who established transnational links when printing these socialist texts. Marx’s work gained further influence through its impact on Lenin who referred to it frequently in *State and Revolution* and in the burgeoning Bolshevik mythology. Secondly, this thesis demonstrates how the Commune’s socialist interpretation manifested itself in both countries’ annual celebrations. These annual celebrations were a ritualised part of working-class lives which instilled the values speakers took from the Commune. Consistently, celebrating workers were exposed to idealised images of internationalism and martyrdom, as well as the idea that they were oppressed by their state. These celebrations often gave conflicting interpretations of the Commune which suited their shifting needs. By analysing their speeches, the Commune celebrations become a palimpsest, revealing these shifting objectives as speakers debated the merits of reform and revolution through the imagery of the Commune. As working-class and radical communities in both the U.S. and Britain faced state repression in the wake of the Haymarket Affair, 1886, and the Trafalgar Square Bloody Sunday, 1887, the rhetoric at Commune celebrations became increasingly violent. These celebrations were informed by the socialist canon of the Commune and through the annual celebrations in Britain and the U.S. the Commune was able to have a direct impact on lives of workers and radicals in both countries.
(i) the thesis comprises only their original work towards the Master of Arts except where indicated in the preface;
(ii) due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used; and
(iii) the thesis is fewer than the maximum word limit (30,000) in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

Signed:

Date:
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List of Abbreviations

AFL – The American Federation of Labor
CPBG – The Communist Party of Great Britain
CWF – The Civil War in France
ILP – The Independent Labour Party
IWA – The International Workingman’s Association
IWPA – The International Working People’s Association
SDF – The Social Democratic Federation
SL – The Socialist League
SLP – The Socialistic Labor Party
TUC – Trades Union Congress
U.S. – The United States of America
Introduction

On 28 May 1871, 147 Parisians were shot against a wall by the Versailles army and thrown into a trench in the *Père Lachaise* cemetery, ending the Bloody Week and the Commune. This wall came to be known as the *Mur des Fédérés*. The Commune has been a symbol for revolutionaries across the globe since 1871. This thesis considers its impact in the United States and Britain during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The Paris Commune was proclaimed after France’s defeat in the Franco-Prussian war that commenced 19 July 1870. Napoleon III was captured 2 September and Paris was besieged on 19 September. After Napoleon’s capture, the French Government of National Defence was formed by the National Assembly, they surrendered on 28 January 1871. Finally, 19 February 1871, Adolphe Thiers was made Chief Executive of the new democratically elected National Assembly established in Versailles. During this period Parisians faced cold, starvation and disease. There had been revolutionary unrest in Paris during the siege, which was amplified by the surrender; Parisians feeling that their sacrifices were in vain.¹

The Commune began on the morning of 18 March 1871. It was sparked by Thiers when he ordered the removal of cannons from Montmartre. However, the soldiers sent spoke with local women and when ordered to open fire, refused, and instead killed their generals.² On 26 March, Paris elected its own leaders and declared itself a Commune, separate from the Versailles National Assembly. The Commune was formed of radicals and workers throughout Paris.³ This government was fundamentally revolutionary and formed from 229,167 votes of an official electoral role numbering 485,569, though Paris’ population was reduced by war and besiegement.⁴

In this revolutionary space, many organisations flourished. Newspapers started publication and the Parisian clubs continued to spread radical rhetoric.⁵ One of the

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Commune’s most infamous acts was the destruction of the Vendôme Column. It was made from the copper of cannons captured by Emperor Napoleon I and was topped with his statue. The Communards considered it a Nationalist symbol that no longer represented Paris. On 12 April, legislation passed for its destruction and it fell 16 May.

Five days later, 21 May, Thiers’ troops from Versailles entered Paris and began butchering Parisians en masse. The next week came to be known as La semaine sanglante, the Bloody Week. Workers took to the barricades to defend their homes while revolutionary leaders abandoned military strategy in the hopes that street-fighting would lead to victory. The Parisian dead are estimated to be as high as 37,000.

This thesis investigates the Paris Commune’s impact on the working class in the U.S. and Britain. It contends that the Commune exerted a significant influence on working-class organisations, communities, and class identity. The organisations discussed in this thesis were radical, predominantly socialist, and attempted to influence the wider working-class communities around them. In June of 1871, Karl Marx’s pamphlet The Civil War in France (CWF) espoused what came to define the socialist interpretation. Organisations in both countries adopted similarly radical interpretations and annual celebrations in honour of the Commune continued into the next century. The British and American organisations which followed the socialist interpretation formed their communities around often conflicting images of the Commune and adopted ever changing class identities. Into the twentieth century, Marx’s CWF was widely reprinted by working-class publishers in multiple forms and its interpretation augmented and increased in the wake of the 1917 Bolshevik revolution. The importance of the Commune in these communities is examined from when CWF was first printed in newspapers to its subsumption into Bolshevik mythology.

This thesis considers the Commune’s place amidst the larger change within the working class at the end of the nineteenth century. The thesis will demonstrate that the Commune was a source of inspiration for socialist authors who produced a canon of literature. This canon was sold to a working-class audience and provided the foundation for socialist ideas to be propagated at annual celebrations. At these celebrations, some ideas

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9 Ibid. 162.
fluctuated on what could be understood of the Commune, but key socialist ideas remained consistent. During the nineteenth and early twentieth century the Commune had a direct impact on the working class of the U.S. and Britain through its literature and celebrations.

Britain and the U.S. are the focus of this thesis. Both countries had shifting interpretations of the Commune which lend themselves to a comparative analysis. The two countries had strong political connections, through their colonial past and the continued movement of people. When compared to continental Europe, both countries had a political freedom, allowing working-class communities to engage in political discourse. Again, when compared to Europe, Britain and the U.S. were unlikely to seek change through revolution. Importantly, the two countries also shared their language, allowing for transatlantic relationships. Finally, an analysis of the two countries’ relationship with the Commune is valuable due to the little attention it has received in historical scholarship. These shared connections make the U.S. and Great Britain useful candidates for analysis.

This thesis considers the transnational impact of the Commune within labour and socialist groups. It therefore subscribes to the larger transnational turn within labour history. Class is a foundation of social history and E.P. Thompson’s definition of class still serves as a central pillar: “[b]y class I understand an historical phenomenon, unifying a number of disparate and seemingly unconnected events, both in the raw material of experience and in consciousness.” Thompson’s definition of class has been consistently used by social historians. Other leading labour historians include Eric Hobsbawm, and U.S. historian David Montgomery, who have both contributed to the discussion of class. Labour history was further developed by Ira Katznelson and Aristide Zolberg who analytically showed four elements of class – “structure, ways of life, dispositions, and collective action” – and that there was no norm in class formation. It has been highlighted by Hobsbawm and transnational historian Akira Iriye that there is an internationalist nature to many Marxist

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works and the social histories surrounding them. This in part comes from the ideals of Marx and is perhaps most strongly seen in his iconic motto; “working men of all countries, unite!”

Transnational histories are broad in topic. Marilyn Lake defined it as the study of “lives and events [which] have been shaped by processes and relationships that have transcended the borders of nation states.” Ian Tyrell was amongst the first transnational historians who, in 1991, critiqued concepts of nationalism and exceptionalism in American history, instead considering the impact of other nations on the U.S. In 2007, Tyrell defined transnational history succinctly: “[t]he purpose of the transnational label was in fact more precise: to focus on the relationship between nations and factors beyond the nation.” Patricia Clavin has also discussed the potential of transnational historical approaches to change our understanding of chronological boundaries and relationships, especially within European history. Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann developed histoire croisée; an interweaving approach to history. These European, Australian, and American historians all show how transnational history is able to generate new approaches within the discipline.

Transnational history has been applied to labour, class and internationalist movements. Kirk’s two volume work Labour and Society in Britain and the USA (1994) analysed workers’ collective labour movement organisations and protests and placed them in a larger social context through a comparative examination. Van Der Linden’s Transnational Labour History (2003) compiled essays that showcased how labour history can be reinvigorated through placing national stories in a broader context. Most recently Leon Fink has published The Long Gilded Age (2015) which examined American labour and socialist

23 Linden, Transnational, 3.
organisations that looked internationally for inspiration. These authors analysed both unique and unifying elements of labour history to understand labour movements and their importance.

This thesis analyses Commune celebrations to understand their role in forming memory and rituals within organisations and communities. This investigation of community formation considers collective memory, ritual, and narrative. Many scholars have studied memory to understand its role in society and history. Jan Assmann’s *Cultural Memory and Early Civilisation* was influential in establishing this debate and used Maurice Halbwachs as inspiration, especially his *On Collective Memory*. Assman’s book analysed the connection between memory, the individual, and cultural continuity. Susannah Radstone has written on connecting memory to research and the realities of memory in culture. Memory has been used when analysing other key ideas on societies such as trauma, nationalism, and repression or amnesia. Scholars have discussed how commemorative events change to reflect larger external changes, how stories of rebellion can empower both governments and resistance organisations, and how a memory is forged by an event’s early interpretations. Berthold Molden analysed the role of hegemonic forms of memory when understanding how a dominant interpretation of an event, like the Commune, is formed by society. Furthermore, when celebrating a subversive interpretation, people begin to stand in dialectical opposition to the memory of society. Concepts from memory studies allow a more detailed analysis of the changes within the working-class communities of nineteenth century Britain and America.

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24 Fink, Gilded, 1.
26 Ibid. 2.
30 Brian Conway, "Local Conditions, Global Environment and Transnational Discourses in Memory Work: The Case of Bloody Sunday (1972)," ibid.,(2) 195.
Anthropological perspectives, established by Victor Turner in *The Ritual Process* (1966), surrounding ritual, and its role on community formation are also influential on this thesis. David Kertzer’s *Ritual, Politics, and Power* (1988) is vital when analysing how the ritual of Commune celebrations was established and how ritual is used when forging a community. Celebrations signify the Commune’s importance, while validating the organisations and their messages.  

David Carr’s *Time, Narrative, and History* (1991) shows how organisations changed the narrative of the Commune to redefine their past, and provide a “satisfying coherence” to the organisation’s current objectives. Together, these concepts explain how Commune celebrations formed as a working-class ritual, focussed on community. The understanding of the past was malleable so that it could provide meaning to the often-contradictory aims of the Commune.

Newspapers are the key primary source for this thesis, many British and American observers had their introduction to the Commune via newspapers in 1871 and throughout the century. Colette Wilson, Michelle Coghlan, and Alban Bargain-Villeger have all used newspapers to understand the Commune’s impact in France, America, and Canada respectively. Larger dailies consulted in this thesis include: London’s *Times, Daily news*, and *Standard*, and the American *Chicago Tribune, New York Times* or *Washington Post*. These newspapers typically presented a hostile interpretation of the Commune and formed the conservative opinion. Conversely, the working-class press of both the U.S. and Britain often looked past the chaos and saw a new revolutionary ideal. Key working-class newspapers referred to in this thesis include: Britain’s *Bee-Hive, Commonweal, Justice, and Freedom* and the American *Alarm, People, Socialist, and Workingman’s Advocate*. The crucial concepts of many socialist and working-class organisations were represented in their newspapers, making them an invaluable source when examining the Commune’s impact on these communities. This thesis investigates the influence of the Commune on workers by demonstrating the interpretation developed by socialists, and how it was proliferated into wider working-class communities by their press.

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Karl Marx’s *CWF* was published just after the Commune ended and came to define the socialist interpretation.\(^{37}\) This text is the Commune’s historiographical foundation, defined its understanding for many workers, and a key piece of historical debate for academics. Hippolyte-Prosper-Olivier Lissagaray’s *History of the Commune of 1871* also appealed to workers and modern historians.\(^{38}\) Lissagaray was a journalist and barricade defender in the Commune. His book was first published in French in 1876 and then translated by Eleanor Marx, Karl’s daughter, in 1886. The support from Karl and Eleanor Marx, and the texts’ historical rigor meant it was widely read, rather than other Communard pieces which were typically memoirs.\(^{39}\) English socialist Ernest Belfort Bax also wrote a popular short history on the Commune in 1895.\(^{40}\) During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries these three texts were the socialist canon for the Commune.

1917 saw the Russian revolution, which brought the Bolsheviks to power and the proclamation of communism. Lenin was heavily influenced by the Commune, referencing it frequently in *State and Revolution*.\(^{41}\) Much of Lenin’s position was a reiteration of Marx’s and clarified perceived misunderstandings amongst his contemporaries. The Commune’s significance to Lenin led to the event gaining a key position in the Soviet revolutionary mythos.

The socialist canon developed by Marx, then Lissagaray and Bax, was advanced by Lenin. Socialist organisations endeavoured to circulate these works amongst the working classes of both the U.S. and Britain. This is discussed in detail within Chapter One. These four texts are both primary and secondary sources that defined the Commune for many workers, but also formed its historiography. Future authors often defined their work as supporting or disparaging these socialist interpretations.

Many of the Commune’s early histories were not supportive of the Communards. French histories reflected either a condemnation of the Communards – Maxime Du Camp’s *Les convulsion’s de Paris* (1878-80) – or a growing republican appreciation of the ideals, but not the acts – Camille Pelletan’s *La Semaine de Mai*.\(^{42}\) In 1896, Thomas March wrote an


\(^{39}\) Tombs, *Commune*, 202-3.


\(^{42}\) Tombs, *Commune*, 203-4.


Historians then began to analyse the revolutionary motives of Paris’ workers. In David Harvey’s *Consciousness and the Urban Experience* (1985) he studied the formation of new spaces in the Second Empire and during the Commune. Concluding that the infamous redesign of Paris during the Second Empire contributed to a revolutionary environment by spreading workers across the city’s *arrondissements*. Workers were now separated from the bourgeoisie by space, time, and wealth, which solidified their class identity. Roger Gould’s *Insurgent Identities* (1995) challenged Harvey’s hypothesis. Gould asserted that the class

47 Tombs, *Commune*, 206-7; Gluckstein, *Commune*, 177-81.
connections of 1848 were severed and in 1871 workers fought for their arrondissements, rather than class identity. Regardless of the Communard’s class consciousness, nineteenth century American and British workers were presented with a class based interpretation of the Commune.

Space was brought to the forefront of the Commune’s history by Harvey in 1985. In 1988, Kristen Ross wrote *The Emergence of Social Space*, which analysed the poetry of Communard Arthur Rimbaud to understand the Commune’s enduring influence. Martin Johnson’s *Paradise of Association* (1996) analysed political space when examining the club culture before and during the Commune.

Robert Tombs’ *The Paris Commune 1871* (1999) considered both the Commune’s history and its historiography. Tombs concluded that the Commune does not lend itself to a singular analysis or understanding: “[t]hus, during their lives and after their deaths, the Communards were conscripted into many causes.” Many twenty-first century histories reflect this analysis, studying only one aspect of the Commune.

The aforementioned transnational shift can be seen in the Commune’s historiography when Phillip Katz authored *From Appomattox to Montmartre* (1998) and Alice Bullard wrote *Exile to Paradise* (2000). Bullard analysed race and class when studying the Communard prisoners exiled to New Caledonia. Katz wrote on the cultural significance of the Commune in the U.S., the rapid movement of information from Paris to New York, and the Commune’s impact on middle-class Americans. Katz closely analysed their newspapers and artistic works which reflected a deep fear of the Commune, a fear projected upon the American working class. However, Katz asserts that the Commune was not influential on strikers during the Great Strike of 1877, and that afterwards it had little significance. Similar to this thesis, Michelle Coghlan has challenged Katz’ assertion in *Sensational Internationalism* (2016) in which she claims the Commune was influential on both migrant and national communities.

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58 Ibid. 178.
using Commune celebrations as evidence. This is part of her larger argument to show the Commune’s continued impact on American consciousness through literature and art in the long nineteenth century.

The gendered history of the Commune has been defined by its heroines and infamous petroleuses. Edith Thomas’ *Women Incendiaries* (1966) questioned the existence of pertroleuses with no definitive evidence of their existence. Gay Gullickson’s, *Unruly Women of Paris* (1996), focused on the portrayal of Communard women in images and people’s memories. More recently, in 2004, Carolyn Eichner wrote of three feminist heroines from the Commune in *Surmounting the Barricades*. These texts bring together the significant role of women during the Commune, and criticises the Communards for limiting the official roles of women.

Historians have also considered the role of memory during and after the Commune. David Shafer’s *The Paris Commune* (2005) analyses the role of revolutionary tradition in the Commune, studying those who fought and why. He analysed Communards, the International, women, and the revolutionary culture that drove them. Collette Wilson’s *Paris and the Commune, 1871-1878* (2007) instead analysed the conservative memory of the Commune in newspapers and art. This narrow focus allowed for a deep analysis of sources to reveal a new approach to the creation of the Commune’s image. These two texts highlight the significance of memory and how the formation of an image can be more valuable than the event itself; this process will also be highlighted in my thesis, but in a transnational context.

Historians have continued to analyse the events in Paris to find either the Commune’s glory or anguish. Donny Gluckstein’s *The Paris Commune* (2006) was a return to the Commune’s socialist interpretation and framed the conflict between Versailles and Paris as “an unbridgeable social one – between capitalism and socialism”. Gluckstein re-examined the interpretations surrounding the Commune including the works of Marx, Trotsky, and Lenin. He highlighted the Commune’s achievements, and condemned Versailles for the

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59 Coghlan, *Sensational*, 83.
63 Shafer, *Commune*, 187.
64 Wilson, *Paris and the Commune, 1871-78*.
65 Gluckstein, *Commune*, 126.
horrors of the Bloody Week.66 These horrors were fully explored in John Merriman’s Massacre (2014).67 Merriman formed a comprehensive display of the death, destruction and horror in the Commune.

Published in 2015, Communal Luxury, also by Ross, analyses Europe to find the lingering impacts of the Commune in culture and memory. Ross examines the Commune’s internationalism and follows its later influence in international organisations. Ross uses this understanding of the Commune to reconceptualise Marx’s interpretation and other thinkers in revolutionary organisations across Europe.68 Overall, Ross’ book is revolutionary within the historiography: her broader perspective allowed for an analysis of the Commune’s unique power.

Commune celebrations have occurred across the globe and been analysed by historians in many languages. Around the Commune’s centenary Soviet authors covered celebrations from across the USSR. Historians examined Commune celebrations in Bulgaria from 1893-1944,69 Germany in 1876,70 Romania 1921-1944,71 and Ukraine 1924-1937.72 More recently French historians have considered Commune celebrations within their own country. In 2006, there was a study of Commune commemorations across France from 1871-1914,73 and another study which examined the French Communist Party’s commemorations from 1920 to the Second World War.74 In 2017, Andy Willimott has shown how the Commune was celebrated in rural 1920s Russia and its impact on communities.75 In 2005, Dennis Bos, a Dutch historian, analysed how the barricade became a symbol of revolution76

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66 Ibid. 159.
67 Merriman, Massacre.,
74 Corentin Lahu, Le Pcf Et La Mémoire De La Commune De Paris Commémorations Et Usages Politiques De 1920 À La Veille De La Seconde Guerre Mondiale ([S.l.]: [s.n.], 2014).
and in 2014 published a book in Dutch on Commune celebrations across the globe.\textsuperscript{77} A review of his 2014 book highlights that it does not consider the role of collective memory, nor the fluctuating nature of the Communes celebrations, instead presenting them as uniform.\textsuperscript{78}

British and American Commune celebrations have been discussed as a part of their labour movements’ larger respective histories. In Britain Ross and Thompson\textsuperscript{79} both examined celebrations in relation to the Socialist League and William Morris. In the U.S. Bruce Nelson focussed on anarchist celebrations in Chicago prior to the Haymarket Affair of 1886.\textsuperscript{80} Coghlan also analysed celebrations in Chicago and New York to understand the internationalist culture in these communities.\textsuperscript{81} This thesis differs because of its transnational approach and focus on the question of reform or revolution presented in celebrations.

The Commune has generated many historical works and a large debate. Space, memory, transnationality, gender, and class have all been discussed through the Commune. Many of these nuanced debates cannot be considered in this thesis, instead it intends to further establish the Commune’s significance beyond its national boundaries, like Katz, Coghlan, and Ross. To observers in Britain and the U.S. the Communards were presented as workers and radicals; the legacy of this presentation and its impact are the core concern of this thesis.

This thesis is split into two chapters. The purpose of the first chapter is an external analysis of how the Commune impacted the working class, by examining the changes in the discourse surrounding the Commune by the British and American radicals and journalists who wrote on it. This discourse was established by the conservative press and followed by radical newspapers. The interpretation of the Commune came to be dominated by Karl Marx, and the socialist literature that grew around his work. The chapter ends by examining how these texts were circulated to the working class. The second chapter is an internal examination of the working class, examining how the Commune existed in working-class

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{77}Dennis Bos, \textit{Bloed En Barricaden. De Parijse Commune Herdacht} (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 2014)
\item \textsuperscript{78} Maarten Van Ginderachter, "Bloed En Barricaden. De Parijse Commune Herdacht," \textit{International Review of Social History} 60,(2) (2015).
\item \textsuperscript{80} Bruce Nelson, \textit{Beyond the Martyrs: Social History of Chicago's Anarchists, 1870-1900} (New Brunswick: Rutgers U.P., 1988) 128.
\item \textsuperscript{81} Coghlan, \textit{Sensational}, 84.
\end{itemize}
communities and how it was evoked in community formation. This was facilitated by the annual Commune celebrations in Britain and America. The chapter considers the Commune’s key themes of internationalism, community and martyrdom. While there were consistent themes in Commune celebrations, organisations rewrote their interpretations of the Commune to represent shifting electoral or revolutionary goals. These changing interpretations represent the fluctuating nature of these radical working-class communities. This thesis argues the two-fold importance of the Commune, first, as the subject of educational texts for teaching on socialist concepts, and second, how celebrations were used to coalesce these ideas with working-class communities.
1. The Development of the Commune’s Socialist Interpretation.

Karl Marx’s *The Civil War in France* (*CWF*) came to dominate interpretations of the Commune over the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Marx’s interpretation has been addressed by academics, however, this thesis investigates how *CWF* came to dominate amongst socialists and the working class. British and American workers were presented many interpretations of the Commune, from initial newspaper reports in 1871 to socialist literature over the nineteenth and twentieth century. Lissagaray, a Communard fighter on the barricades, and Bax, an English socialist, added to Marx’s work and formed a socialist canon. Marx’s *CWF* was circulated in the working class by socialist publishers such as Chicago’s Charles H. Kerr Publishers and London’s Twentieth Century Press. *CWF* relied on their transnational connections to spread across the U.S. and Britain. Through this process *CWF* dominated socialist interpretations and became widely available to the working class. These editions included introductions written by socialist journalists and thinkers who built on the Commune’s significance as it became associated with the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. Marx’s stature as a thinker and his triumphant narrative both led to *CWF*’s popularity. However, it came to dominate through its widespread publication.

This chapter begins by considering the broad opinion of the Commune from large newspapers and first-hand accounts in books. These pieces presented a negative interpretation of the Commune. This negative opinion is here referred to as the ‘conservative’ representation, although more accurately refers to those not from the radical perspectives covered throughout the chapter. It is important to examine the conservative interpretation of the Commune, due to its widespread availability and because many radical writers framed their own writing as a response. The chapter then considers the radical interpretations found in other newspapers. These ‘radical’ interpretations refer to those printed in the smaller, more working-class orientated press, which often supported the Commune. The emerging debate on the Commune is best understood through these newspapers’ interpretations. The American *Workingmen’s Advocate* printed correspondence from German socialist Wilhelm Liebknecht, and in Britain, *Bee-Hive* held lively discussions on the Commune. The third section is a

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breakdown of Marx’s *CWF*. Marx focussed on what the Commune could have been and how it was representative of his ideas on the state, class relations, and a vision for the future. The penultimate section analyses the other socialist literature on the Commune, the critical interpretation from Bax and the full, emotive, history by Lissagaray. For socialists, these texts, particularly Marx’s, became the Commune’s canonical texts. These pieces defined the socialist interpretation and were the first reference for those interested in learning about the Commune. The final section considers the many organisations which reprinted and proliferated Marx’s work and Lenin’s *State and Revolution* (1918). The distribution of Marx’s *CWF* shows how the Commune became affiliated with Bolshevism, socialism, and Marxism. *CWF*’s availability does not mean it was read widely by the entire working class. Rather, Marx, Lissagaray, and Bax dominated the socialist interpretation and were made widely available by socialists to workers. Furthermore, *CWF* was advertised as a critical text to any workers who became interested in the Commune, socialism, or Bolshevism. This radical association meant the Commune became a symbol of revolution, rather than reform.

**Conservative Readings of the Commune**

From March to June 1871, the Commune appeared daily in conservative newspapers around the world. For many readers, these articles formed the entirety of their knowledge of the Commune. These conservative representations came from articles in large newspapers and books written by those visiting Paris during the Commune. It was common practice for regional newspapers to republish the articles of larger papers, both foreign and domestic; given such habits, a common, hostile view soon emerged.83 Considering this shared view, this section compresses the British and American coverage to analyse the larger conservative opinion being developed. This section will first introduce the various sources used in building this example of the conservative interpretation. This is followed by examples of negative coverage: the destruction of the Vendôme Column, the Bloody Week, and reports proclaiming the International Workingmen’s Association (IWA) as the Commune’s instigators. The intended audience for texts was typically not the working class,84 but

83 From Chicago Tribune: “Paris After the Capture” 13-June, 1871; “Foreign” 06-April, 1871; “Foreign” 28-April, 1871; “Foreign” 26-May, 1871.
nonetheless, these opinions were spread widely and many radicals felt it necessary to correct their perceived inaccuracies. These conservative opinions caused many radicals, including Marx, to pose their argument as a counterpoint.

The London *Times* is an excellent barometer of conservative British opinion, and valuable due to its emphasis on foreign correspondents. *The Times* had set the tradition and benchmark for other papers, spending more on foreign than domestic news.\(^{85}\) The Franco-Prussian war had increased interest in foreign coverage and boosted circulation across multiple dailies.\(^{86}\) On 22 March 1871, the circulation of *The Times* was 67,806.\(^{87}\) Correspondent Henri Blowitz had interviewed Reich’s Chancellor Bismarck, these high-status connections are thought to have impacted his coverage of the Commune.\(^{88}\)

American newspapers were similarly eager to print up-to-date reports on the Commune. Cost-prohibitive telegraph-based communication across the Atlantic meant short messages and the loss of the Commune’s nuances. However, this did not stop New York newspapers, *The Times, Herald, World* and *Tribune* running multiple large articles daily.\(^{89}\) *The New York Times* average circulation in 1871 was 36,000.\(^{90}\) The information coming across from the Atlantic was from correspondents, many of whom were staying in Versailles, and an anti-Communard bias was often evident.\(^{91}\)

In 1871, Britain and the U.S. were developing a small, conservative, history of the Commune. Early histories of the Franco-Prussian war relegated the Commune to an after piece of their larger text, though the books’ titles misleadingly gave it greater significance due to the wide interest in the event.\(^{92}\) For a fuller account of the Commune, interested readers could turn to first-hand reportage. William Fetridge was an American, long-time Paris resident, and guide book writer, whose publisher was Harper and Brothers.\(^{93}\) Second, John Leighton, an Englishman and book cover designer, was published in both New York and

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\(^{86}\) Williams, *Read*, 114.

\(^{87}\) Brown, *Newspapers*, 52.

\(^{88}\) Ibid. 227.


\(^{92}\) Ibid. 72-3.

London.94 And third, an Englishman who only went by the name of ‘Davy’ also had his experiences anonymously published.95 Later, experiences of the Commune also appeared in memoirs: Reverend William Gibson (1895),96 Edward Bowen (1902),97 and Ernest Vizetelly (1914).98 These sources have been used by historians: John Merriman included Fetridge, Leighton, Gibson, and Vizetelly in Massacre,99 and like this section, Phillip Katz used Fetridge when understanding American reactions to the Commune.100 These first-hand accounts are examined here, with newspapers, to understand the conservative opinion presented to readers.

In both American and English newspapers, daily news printed inaccuracies and obfuscated events in Paris, maintaining a consistently negative opinion of the Commune. Updates were conventionally reported under the ‘Foreign’ and ‘Latest Intelligence’ sections. News was often a selection of short telegrams, presented together unedited from the foreign correspondent; newspapers did not habitually try to analyse or explain events.101 This led to an abundance of information in newspapers on the Commune, but much unverified content. Fetridge noted that each day contradicting reports and corrections appeared in the French news, which never reached readers in the U.S.102 The confusion and short accounts meant that readers sometimes struggled to get an accurate sense of the unfolding events in Paris.103 Samuel Bernstein accurately characterised coverage in the U.S. as depicting the Parisians as violent socialists, unfit for government, ruled by the International, and deserving of all punishment which might come their way.104 While the readers may have been unsure of events, newspapers were certain of who was at fault.

The destruction of the Vendôme Column is valuable in understanding the conservative nature of coverage on the Commune. Americans watching the event had varying opinions,105 but the international press uniformly condemned its destruction. London’s

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99 Merriman, Massacre, 311-27.
100 Katz, Appomattox, 44.
101 Brown, Newspapers, 233.
102 Fetridge, Fall, iii.
105 Katz, Appomattox, 42-3.
Times, Daily News and Morning Post correspondents all reported on the toppling. The Times described it as: “emptying the cup of disgrace to the dregs.” The anonymous Englishman used this article, adding that “men looked awe-struck at one another like naughty children who had broken something which they ought not to have dared touch.” The New York Times believed that just as the destruction of the first column, featuring Louis XIV, amidst the chaos of 1793 had given way to the Empire, the destruction of the second column was a foreboding sign of things to come. The Chicago Tribune featured National Guardsmen striking the face of Napoleon’s statue with the butts of their rifles. In his book Leighton condemned the Communards: “Now I must tell you plainly, you are absurd, contemptible, and odious!” and compared the act to destroying Notre Dame or the Louvre. Fetridge described it as an “insensate and odious crime.” American ambassador Elihu Washburne considered it the “greatest infamy of modern times” He noted 20,000-people observing. In contrast, the opinion that has been widely accepted by historians show the destruction of the column was a deliberate and symbolic act. In particular, David Shafer has argued that the destruction of the Column was a conscious effort to alter national memory. First-hand accounts and newspapers ignored the symbolic rationale for the Communard actions, in favour of depicting vandals.

Fetridge, and in the anonymous Englishman’s tale. The petroleuse gained a firm grip on the American psyche. Vizetelly’s account, from 1914, labelled these tales “exaggerations, and in many instances absolutely untrue.” Historians now largely consider the petroleuses a myth too. The Archbishop, who had been taken hostage by Communards, was executed. Newspapers labelled him a martyr who “suffered the death of a martyr in the cause of religion at the hands of the Communists”. The Archbishop’s death has been linked anti-clericalism, however, more importantly, historians have shown that his execution became an excuse for Versailles to justify their bloody repression. His label as a martyr shows an acceptance of this rationalisation from newspapers. The merciless death of the Archbishop and depravity of the petroleuses became defining features of the Commune’s history across the globe.

Though predominantly conservative, transatlantic newspapers were willing to criticise Versailles and respect the defenders on the barricades. The New York Times lamented the struggle as a “Carnival of horror” and contended that while the Commune had been “purely fiendish”, Versailles may not have acted “nobly or wisely in taking so fiendish a revenge.” A London Times correspondent, called the defenders’ efforts “superhuman” and suggested that they were “fighting with an energy and heroism worthy of a better cause.”

Leighton discussed his participation in the construction of a barricade, feeling unable to refuse an “old man with a long white beard – a patriarch of civil war” who asked him to help gather stones. The recent historiography discusses the repression from Versailles as brutal and overzealous.

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122 Fetridge, Fall, 341.
123 Englishman, Insurrection, 140.
124 Coghlan, Sensational, 23-52.
125 Vizetelly, Adventures, 325.
126 Tombs, Commune, 131; Shafer, Commune, 158; Jellinek, Commune, 339; Thomas, Incendiaries, 140-60, Thomas is unsure, lacking definitive evidence either way.
127 “News” Times 29-May, 1871.
128 Tombs, Commune, 123-5.
129 Shafer, Commune, 134; Merriman, Massacre, 184.
130 “A Dying Revolution” 28-May, 1871.
133 Leighton, Paris, 310.
134 Gluckstein, Commune, 158-63; Merriman, Massacre, 201-24; Shafer, Commune, 86-104; Jellinek, Commune, 338-63.
The IWA was often blamed for the Commune, thereby framing the events as a kind of socialist, working-class revolution. London’s *Times* argued on 29 March that the IWA was one of two major elements in the Commune, and that the organisation was more powerful in France than elsewhere.\textsuperscript{135} After the Commune fell *The Times* considered that “the ruling spirits of the Revolution from first to last were the Socialists of the International Association”\textsuperscript{136} and “of the powers of the Insurgents for destruction there can be no doubt, and this may be fairly attributed to the policy and guidance of the International.”\textsuperscript{137} *The Times* also associated the IWA with the internationalism and fraternity responsible for the destruction of the Vendôme Column.\textsuperscript{138} First hand-accounts supported this rumour, in particular Reverend Gibson was sure the insurrectionary movement was caused by the International society.\textsuperscript{139} Leighton relayed a story from a local informant, in which Parisian voters were allegedly directed by the Central Committee, and the Committee by a shadowy power: “the International, of course.”\textsuperscript{140} Historians have attributed this conspiracy to rumours from Versailles.\textsuperscript{141} Regardless of its origin, these rumours made the Commune seem more a conspiracy than an expression of Paris’ desires.

Marx’s *CWF* was taken as an IWA confession for responsibility of the Commune by *The Times*: “[t]he International Working-Men’s Association has not only accepted the responsibility of the Communist Revolution, but has already avowed its determination to continue the struggle.”\textsuperscript{142} *The Times* were not alone in this interpretation. *The New York Times* also reported that the IWA had “accept[ed] the responsibility of the conflagration”, and promised a recurrence.\textsuperscript{143} Excerpts of Marx’s *CWF* circulated in American dailies,\textsuperscript{144} *New York World* went so far as to publish much of the third address and praised its writing. Newspapers came to different conclusions on the piece’s value, and radical newspaper

\begin{footnotes}
135 “The Communists and the Communalis[ts].”
136 “Editorial” 31-May, 1871.
137 “After the Insurrection.”
139 Gibson, *Commune*, 198.
143 “General News” 17-June, 1871.
144 Bernstein, *Political*, 179.
\end{footnotes}
Woodhull and Claflin’s Weekly claimed hundreds of thousands of copies circulated in Europe and America.\textsuperscript{146} His apparent role in the Commune made Marx and the IWA infamous.\textsuperscript{146} Much of the immediate coverage of the Commune took a conservative approach that sought to highlight the destruction caused by the Commune. In publishing quickly, inaccuracies marred coverage. First-hand accounts corrected some of these errors, but reached the same negative conclusions regardless. Examples of this process, such as the Vendôme Column, show how prolific the fundamentally uniform interpretation became.

Immediate Coverage of the Commune by the Radical Press

While the conservative press was quick to condemn the Commune, workers were exposed to many opinions from other news sources. Prior to Marx’s \textit{CWF} other radicals produced similarly positive discussions of the Commune and working class. This section will first examine Britain’s \textit{Bee-Hive}, the contributions of journalist Edward Spencer Beesly, and the ensuing debate. Second, it considers the letters sent from Wilhelm Liebknecht in Germany to American newspaper \textit{The Workingmen’s Advocate}. These letters represent the importance of transnational perspectives in understanding the Commune, a harbinger for Marx’s later significance. These newspapers also stand out when compared to the conservative press; rather than newspaper’s foreign correspondents telegraphing short news segments for print, these papers relied on longer letters. The letters allowed for a fuller debate to be presented to readers. Before Marx’s interpretation came to dominate, we can see a plurality of opinions, some similar, while others dissent.

British Newspapers

This section uses \textit{Bee-hive} as its primary source because of the plurality of debate presented in its articles during the Commune. The section ‘Communicated Articles’ was added in 1871

\textsuperscript{146} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{146} Tombs, Commune, 198; Shlomo Avineri, \textit{The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx} (London: Cambridge U.P., 1968) 242-3.
and overall had seventy contributors.\textsuperscript{147} Reynolds Newspaper (1850-1967) was also a leading working-class publication and a supporter of the Commune,\textsuperscript{148} describing the destruction of the Vendôme Column as “heroic”.\textsuperscript{149} While supportive of the Commune, Reynolds Newspaper focussed on the events and news. Instead, Bee-Hive’s ‘Communicated Articles’ allow for an analysis of opinion pieces that reveal the different attitudes towards the Commune presented to readers from multiple sources with varying ideological perspectives.

In 1871, Britain’s most influential trade union journal was Bee-Hive,\textsuperscript{150} self-described as “The People’s Paper.” Many newspapers had failed to survive through the post-Chartist period; Northern Star (1837-1852), People’s Paper (1852-1858), Workingman (1853-1858),\textsuperscript{151} and other papers, which had focused on their singular craft, went out of print.\textsuperscript{152} This meant that during the Commune Bee-Hive and Reynolds Newspaper were the leading working-class newspapers. George Potter started Bee-Hive after he failed to gain sympathy in the press during the builders’ strike of 1861. Bee-Hive was in print until 1878 and its largest circulation was 8,000 in 1865.\textsuperscript{153} It had been the official organ for the London Trades Council and IWA, though this connection was repudiated by the IWA in 1870.\textsuperscript{154} The paper had distinct influence from the Liberal party, bought in 1869 by Daniel Pratt, who was supported financially by millionaire Liberal MP Samuel Morley.\textsuperscript{155} Marx and Engels bemoaned Bee-Hive’s ownership in their correspondence.\textsuperscript{156}

Many of Bee-Hive’s correspondents wrote that readers should not trust the mainstream press. Lloyd Jones was a well-known working-class journalist\textsuperscript{157} who wrote in support of the Commune a week after its inception and asked readers to ignore the daily paper’s correspondents who attributed “[e]very mean and ignoble motive” to the

\textsuperscript{147} Stephen Coltham, "George Potter, the Junta, and the Bee-Hive Part 2," \textit{International Review of Social History} 10,(1) (1965) 42.
\textsuperscript{149} “Justifiable Vandalism” 21-May, 1871.
\textsuperscript{150} Harrison, \textit{Guardians}, 141-2.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid. 174-175.
\textsuperscript{154} Harrison, \textit{Guardians}, 144-5.
\textsuperscript{155} Coltham, "Bee-Hive," 33.
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid. 33.
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid. 41.
Communards. James Aytoun wrote that the press misrepresented the “honest, brave, and highly intelligent” Parisian workmen. Positivist J.H. Bridges wanted to “shield [the Commune’s] memory from the foolish and all but unanimous injustice of the English Press.” The Commune’s most prolific defender in *Bee-Hive* was Beesly who declared: “our newspapers are not to be believed.”

Beesly wrote twelve articles which defended the Commune and working class in *Bee-Hive* between 25 March and 24 June 1871. A professor of history at University College London, he was the chairman at the inaugural meeting of the IWA, and though not a member, a friend of Marx. He was engaged with unions and workers’ movements, but a self-professed positivist, rather than socialist. Frederick Harrison, another positivist, was also an ardent supporter of the Commune. While the socialist interpretation came to dominate, at this early stage, readers were presented multiple ideological interpretations of the Commune.

Beesly’s correspondence demonstrates an adoration of the Parisian workers. They defended Paris with “courage and devotion” while barraged by “a tempest of shot and shell” and “held their ground with astonishing fortitude.” Beesly presented the workers as heroes, they were described as fighting “for labour all the world over” and that they deserved “gratitude and veneration” for their struggle. In contrast to the conservatives, Beesly embraced the internationalism of the Vendôme Column’s destruction: this was apparently another sign of “the fraternal spirit growing up between the working classes of all countries.” Beesly appreciated the internationalism in the Commune while also revering its soldiers.

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159 “Republicanism v. Communism” 10-June, 1871.
160 “Dr. Bridges on the Commune of Paris” 08-July, 1871.
161 “Professor Beesly on the Paris Revolution” 25-March, 1871.
163 Positivism here refers to the doctrine formed by French thinker August Comte which posited that through science and reason we can understand human values and society. With this understanding, a new spirituality will guide society. (Ibid. 19-21).
165 “Defence of Paris” 20-May, 1871.
166 “Professor Beesly on the Commune” 29-April, 1871.
167 Ibid.
Beesly’s articles provoked critical responses from many *Bee-Hive* contributors. Regular contributor Reverend Christopher Neville\(^{168}\) attacked Beesly’s condemnation of the press and support of revolutionaries.\(^{169}\) T.J. Dunning accused Beesly of being “too innocent to form a proper judgement” and cited the Commune’s cessation of rent as evidence of their disastrous intent.\(^{170}\) J.R. Hollond wrote that the use of violence must be justified, and that Communards had not shown their goals to be so just.\(^{171}\) Neville agreed with Hollond, adding that reform cannot come at the “cost of civil war, a sea of blood, and the destruction of an enormous amount of property.” Neville also declared his adoration for the English working class had grown, due to “their respect for life and property”.\(^{173}\) Neville continued to criticise Beesly for his praise of the Parisian workers for their “courage, patience, order, discipline, good sense and sagacity”, such words now invalid with the death of the Archbishop and other prisoners.\(^{174}\) Others were more direct. Aytoun said that Beesly “has asserted, in his zeal for the late Commune, what is totally contrary to the real facts.”\(^{175}\) And John Storr wrote “Professor Beesly, still untaught, writes in the *Bee-Hive* of last Saturday in his usual rabid style.”\(^{176}\) Alongside criticism, others came to support Beesly. John Holmes praised Beesly’s description of the “Reds”\(^{177}\) as brave and Joseph Leaper wrote that “it is quite refreshing to all friends of truth to read the outspoken and manly sentiments of the learned Professor”.\(^{178}\) Marx expressed in a private letter an admiration for Beesly’s articles, considering them “further sacrifice you are making to the good cause.”\(^{179}\)

*Bee-Hive* reveals the lively debate on the Commune’s merits. Readers exposed to this debate saw many viewpoints which differed from the conservative press. Positivists considered property more inalienable than their socialist counterparts, yet remained sympathetic to the Communard motives. The newspaper’s impact was transitory, when

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\(^{168}\) Coltham, “*Bee-Hive*,” 32.

\(^{169}\) “Professor Beesly” 01-April, 1871.

\(^{170}\) “The Commune in Paris” 08-April, 1871.

\(^{171}\) “The Commune” 20-May, 1871.

\(^{172}\) “The Commune” 27-May, 1871.

\(^{173}\) Ibid.

\(^{174}\) “The Late Commune” 03-June, 1871.

\(^{175}\) “The Situation in France” 24-June, 1871.

\(^{176}\) “Modern Revolutions” 10-June, 1871.

\(^{177}\) “Belleville v. Versailles” 29-April, 1871.

\(^{178}\) “Professor Beesly and the Paris Commune” *Bee-Hive* 22-April, 1871.

\(^{179}\) Harrison, *Guardians*, 148.
compared to the permanence of CWF. However, the newspaper showed readers Beesly’s internationalist and heroic ideal of the Commune before CWF was published.

United States Newspapers

In 1871, *Workingmen’s Advocate* was the preeminent labour paper\(^{180}\) and is the focus of this section for its transnational connections. The U.S. was still developing its labour and union press in 1871, however, by 1885 it had over 400 papers.\(^{181}\) Union periodicals of this time were an exponent of their own industry, while larger organisations, like the Knights of Labor, founded their newspaper in 1880.\(^{182}\) *Workingman’s Advocate* (1864-1879) was founded as the Chicago Trades Assembly’s official newspaper by Andrew Cameron, and became the organ for the National Labor Union in 1866.\(^{183}\) Newspapers like *People’s Monthly* (1871-1875), and *National Labor Tribune* (1873-1958), did not have the same influence as *Workingman’s Advocate*. However, the Boston Unitarian paper *Radical* (1865-1872), printed articles and a book refuting claims from *The New York Tribune* about the Commune.\(^{184}\) *Workingman’s Advocate* focused more than most English-language papers on foreign affairs and maintained a close relationship with the IWA.\(^{185}\) It is the key source for this section due to its prominence, affiliations, and, most importantly, transnational correspondence on the Commune from Wilhelm Liebknecht.

*The Workingman’s Advocate* printed news on the Commune beyond Liebknecht’s letters: IWA meetings\(^{186}\) and updates on group discussions of the Commune in San Francisco\(^{187}\) and New York.\(^{188}\) The newspaper printed parts of Marx’s CWF and other favourable speeches on the Commune.\(^{189}\) Both *Workingman’s Advocate* and *The Radical* worked to dispel rumours about the Commune. *The Radical* ended its analysis espousing that

\(^{181}\) Ibid. 299.
\(^{182}\) Ibid. 113-36.
\(^{185}\) Liebknecht, *Letters*, 5.
\(^{186}\) “The Commune” 20-July, 1871.
\(^{187}\) “Correspondence: From California” 08-July, 1871.
\(^{188}\) “Correspondence: From New York” 08-July, 1871.
\(^{189}\) “CWF” 15-July, 1871.
to move forward, workers need to be unified across the globe.\textsuperscript{190} Workingman’s Advocate also highlighted the similarities in the workers’ positions in Paris, New York and Chicago.\textsuperscript{191} These papers published articles on international events, and were keen to dispel falsehoods from the conservative press.

German socialist Wilhelm Liebknecht was not the only supportive writer for the Commune, but his letters to Workingman’s Advocate showed a uniquely transnational perspective to audiences and highlighted its far-reaching nature. Liebknecht had met the editor, Cameron, at the IWA’s Fourth Annual Congress.\textsuperscript{192} Liebknecht was a radical from a young age, instrumental in developing socialist politics in Germany,\textsuperscript{193} and a member of the North German Confederation parliament for the Social Democratic Workers’ Party of Germany. His letters advocated for workers and international solidarity in the face of an imperialist war. This anti-military position resulted in imprisonment from 19 December 1870 to 28 March 1871. Liebknecht was also a member of the IWA and had a close relationship with Marx and Engels.\textsuperscript{194} His first letter to Workingman’s Advocate was on the Franco-Prussian war, written 5 November 1870 and printed 26 November. The three-week gap was caused by the lengthy postage time of letters, but allowed for fuller communication, rather than the short telegram relied on by the conservative press. Letters were printed under the headline “Correspondence: From Leipzig” with most appearing after the Commune’s fall.

Liebknecht showed the Communards as heroes and was supportive of their cause, though there was some initial hesitation: “[b]ut far be it from me to condemn the men who have planted the red flag on the Hotel De Ville of the French capital.”\textsuperscript{195} Liebknecht was quick to defend the Commune’s reputation. He asserted that Paris had suffered greater damage during its sieges than from Communard fires, that the pertroleuses were a fabrication, and that it was the ‘Forces of Order’ that used petroleum bombs.\textsuperscript{196} As a German, Liebknecht also wrote on the role of the Prussians. Liebknecht condemned the Prussians for their role in the breach of the Commune’s defences\textsuperscript{197} and for holding prisoner French

\textsuperscript{190} Linton, Commune, 26.
\textsuperscript{191} “The Commune and the International” 08-July, 1871.
\textsuperscript{192} Liebknecht, Letters, 1-2.
\textsuperscript{193} Raymond Dominick, Wilhelm Liebknecht and the Founding of the German Social Democratic Party (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982) xii.
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid. 132.
\textsuperscript{195} Liebknecht, Letters, 17; “Correspondence: From Leipzig” 17-June, 1871.
\textsuperscript{196} 01-July.
\textsuperscript{197} 08-July.
soldiers sympathetic to the Commune. Liebknecht discussed the difficulties socialists faced against an increasingly fearful oppressive class, who “in the blindness of their terror” embraced “the stupid idea of eradicating socialism by brutal force”, as was apparent in the farcical trials of the Communards. Liebknecht indicated to his American audience that radicals across the globe were standing in solidarity with the martyred workers.

Alternative American and British press allowed for a radical perspective on the Commune before Marx’s interpretation came to dominate. Both Beesly and Liebknecht wrote on internationalism and the heroism of the workers, while dispelling the lies of the press. Beesly’s work was important for sparking an active debate, which brought out attackers and supporters of the Commune and showed readers the different ideologies surrounding the Commune. Liebknecht presented an important alternative perspective which emphasised the global unity of the working-class endemic to the Commune by sending letters across the Atlantic. The authors show how radicals were quick to embrace the Commune as a symbol of working-class power and governance for the future, and presented it as such to their audiences.

Karl Marx’s Interpretation of the Commune

This section considers Marx’s interpretation of the Commune in CWF and how its intellectual accessibility allowed it to define the Commune for generations. Marx presented the Commune as a conflict of dialectical opposites: heroic workers against villainous bourgeoisie and labour against capital. CWF consists of three addresses Marx gave to the IWA: two during the Franco-Prussian war and the third on 30 May 1871. All were written and delivered in English. The first edition of the pamphlet was published on 13 June 1871, contained only the third address, and totalled 36 pages. English radical Edward Truelove published it on behalf of the IWA in their shared offices at 256 High Holborn, London. The pamphlet originally sold for twopence and had multiple runs that year. It was widely circulated and

198 29-July.
199 02-September.
200 25-November; 02-December.
printed in many languages. Marx formed his interpretation using newspaper clippings and correspondence with those in Paris.\textsuperscript{202} The first American edition was printed by the IWA’s Washington section in 1871. They included a brief preface which established the piece as a repudiation to the lies of the American press and ‘Forces of Order’.\textsuperscript{203} In 1891, a new edition was published in German by Friedrich Engels, for which he provided an introduction. This publication also included the first and second addresses. Engels’ introduction was included in many subsequent editions. Engels’ opinion on Marxism carried great influence after Marx’s death in 1883. This pamphlet came to define the Commune for many readers who were henceforth only exposed to Marx’s interpretation.

Although Marx came to support the Commune, he was initially trepidatious about the prospect of revolution. He wrote in the second address on 9 September 1870 that upsetting the new government with the enemy so near the gates of Paris “would be a desperate folly.”\textsuperscript{204} Some historians have claimed that \textit{CWF} does not represent Marx’s true interpretation of the Commune, citing a dismissive 1881 letter with Domela-Nieuwenhuis as evidence.\textsuperscript{205} Shlomo Avineri separated Marx’s opinions on the actual and potential of the Commune, but concluded that Marx intended to distort reality to produce the image of a working-class Commune.\textsuperscript{206} Georges Haupt included the actual/potential divide of \textit{CWF} and added Marx’s idealised image of the Commune when divining his objective in the text.\textsuperscript{207} Some hypothesize Marx’s later negativity was due to unpleasant encounters with exiled Communards in London.\textsuperscript{208} Kristen Ross has highlighted how \textit{CWF} is different to many of Marx’s other texts; unlike \textit{Capital},\textsuperscript{209} it was designed to influence those watching the Commune. David Harvey, Donny Gluckstein,\textsuperscript{210} and Ross all accurately emphasise the fallibility of Marx and that his opinion changed as the Commune unfolded. Marx read of events as they happened but also received letters from Communard friends in peril, these close relationships made him a distant actor in events.\textsuperscript{211} Such an active position meant Marx knew the value of supporting the Commune: while initially he may have faltered, we can see

\textsuperscript{202} Roger Thomas, "Enigmatic Writings: Karl Marx's the Civil War in France and the Paris Commune of 1871," \textit{History of Political Thought} 18,(3) (1997) 483-511.
\textsuperscript{204} Marx, \textit{Cwf}, 44.
\textsuperscript{205} Schulkind, \textit{View}, 244-5; Thomas, "Enigmatic," 484.
\textsuperscript{206} Avineri, \textit{Marx}, 239-49.
\textsuperscript{208} Thomas, "Enigmatic," 506; Tombs, \textit{Commune}, 199.
\textsuperscript{209} Ross, \textit{Luxury}, 7.
\textsuperscript{210} Gluckstein, \textit{Commune}, 181.
\textsuperscript{211} Ross, \textit{Luxury}, 77.
a whole-hearted support by his third address. Harvey and Ross both discuss this moment as being of great importance. Marx embraced the accidental nature of history when he could have denounced the Commune and continued hoping for the ideal revolutionary scenario. Instead, he chose to amplify what he valued in the Commune.212

In establishing his black and white interpretation of the Commune Marx’s third address first criticised the Versailles Government of National Defence to demonstrate the villainous nature of the Bourgeoisie. Marx slandered the new government: “[i]n this conflict between national duty and class interest, the Government of National Defence did not hesitate one moment to turn into a Government of National Defection”,213 referring to their willingness to work with Bismarck. Marx systematically maligned the character of those in the new government, Jules Favre (philanderer), Ernest Picard (joke), Arthur Picard (thief), and Jules Ferry (penniless barrister).214 Before he turned his pen to Chief Executive Adolphe Thiers, who was portrayed as a “master in small state roguery, a virtuoso in perjury and treason, a craftsman in all the petty stratagems, cunning devices.”215 These condemnations are a part of Marx’s process for analysing the Commune in an accessible manner, establishing villains and heroes to oppose them.

By contrast, the workers are framed as revolutionary heroes: “[t]he glorious working men’s Revolution of March 18 took undisputed sway of Paris.”216 Both in life and in death: “[t]he self-sacrificing heroism with which the population of Paris – men, women, and children – fought for eight days after the entrance of the Versaillese, reflects as much the grandeur of their cause.”217 Marx’s depiction shows the Commune itself to be worthy of such deeds and spirit.

These strong judgements (combining deification with character assassinations) construct the Commune as a black and white event. The reader has no room for ambiguity in Marx’s presentation: the Commune is a battle of good and evil. Workers and those who side with them in the revolution are heroes, worthy of the society they create; those who go against them deserve the same punishment the bourgeoisie gave the Communards.

212 Ibid. 77-8; David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000) 174-5.
214 Ibid. 51-2.
215 Ibid. 52.
216 Ibid. 65.
217 Ibid. 104.
Marx demonstrated that those in the Commune were heroes and villains, but frames the conflict itself as capital against labour: “they now used that state power mercilessly and ostentatiously as the national war engine of capital against labour.” Marx demonstrates the bourgeois state’s function as “the enslavement of labour by capital.” The Commune was a “working class government, the product of the struggle of the producing against the appropriating class.” Marx presents the Commune as a working-class state, the inevitable result of class struggle.

Marx presented the Commune as free of state powers, an image future revolutionary states could emulate. The Commune endeavoured to eliminate existing forms of state oppression, first the “physical force elements” of the police and army, and next the “spiritual force of repression” associated with the powers of the church. In this process, education and science were also “opened to the people”, judges were to serve the people, rather than the government, and regional centres given self-governance. “Instead of deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to misrepresent the people in Parliament” the very form of representation was to change, ensuring the people were served. All of this was in service of freedom from parasitic state powers. Marx’s goal was to illustrate that the absence of oppressive state powers resulted in a virtuous, utopian, workers’ state.

In order that others might strive to emulate his interpretation, Marx presented the Commune as a utopia achievable through emancipation: “[w]ith labour emancipated, every man becomes a working man, and productive labour ceases to be a class attribute.” Marx also supported the Commune’s appropriation of property and capital for freeing labourers. This utopia became international as the reader is reminded of the Commune’s Prussian finance minister, Leo Frankel, its infamous Polish General Dabrowski and the destruction of the nationalist icon, the Vendôme Column. The Commune was also given moral superiority through its capacity to establish peace on the streets: “[w]onderful, indeed, was the change

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218 Ibid. 76.
219 Ibid. 78.
220 Ibid. 83.
221 Ibid. 79.
222 Ibid. 79-80.
223 Ibid. 81.
224 Ibid. 82.
225 Ibid. 84.
226 Ibid. 84.
the Commune had wrought in Paris!” After championing the virtues of the Commune, Marx again attacked Thiers and those who fled Paris after creating the dystopic conditions leading to revolution. This utopia/dystopia paradigm brings the themes of villains against heroes, and labour against capital together.

The last section of CWF examined the bloody week to explain the glaring divisions between classes: “[e]ach new crisis in the class struggle between the appropriator and the producer brings out this fact more glaringly.” The Commune, according to Marx, has made the dividing lines clear: this is a conflict of worker and bourgeoisie, labour and capital, hero and villain, freedom and tyranny, utopia and dystopia. As the title suggested, this was a civil war, with defined enemies; to the bourgeoisie the workers were not a simple foe to be defeated, but a conflicting ideology to be exterminated. The piece was written with stark, broad comparisons, intentionally designed to make readers form an allegiance with the Commune. In demonstrating the Commune as a virtuous, communist, working-class revolution, Marx strives to ensure that future revolutionary efforts will be guided by his interpretation of the Commune, rather than emulating the event itself.

Progression of the Socialist Interpretation in Nineteenth Century Literature.

Marx’s CWF became the most prominent text, but throughout the nineteenth century a socialist canon was formed by radical authors. Their texts built on CWF, educating workers further on the Commune, anarchy, and socialism. The most prominent and significant of these texts were Bax’s A Short History of the Paris Commune and Lissagaray’s History of the Paris Commune of 1871. Other pamphlets existed, including Kropotkin’s, The Commune of Paris, presenting readers with an anarchist interpretation, and other Communards wrote memoirs, such as Vesinier, but none had the wide circulation, influence, or historical

227 Ibid. 94.
228 Ibid. 104.
229 Ross, Luxury, 81.
perspective of Bax and Lissagaray. Their texts were sold on both sides of the Atlantic and became essential pieces of workingmen’s knowledge on the Commune. Together, Marx, Bax, and Lissagaray created a unified interpretation which defined the Commune for socialists and radical workers.

Bax was a leading English socialist whose Commune history was sold on both sides of the Atlantic, and although differing from Marx’s, it became a part of radical reading lists. Bax was born to a Victorian, middle-class family and followed news of the Commune when he was sixteen. He considered the Bloody Week as the “martyrdom of all that was noblest”, shedding tears at its downfall. That year he began attending meetings of Positivists due to their support of the Commune, seen from figures such as Beesly. In 1879 he attended a Communard celebration and was exposed to Marxism. Bax became a leading figure in British socialism, a member of the Social Democratic Federation and Socialist League, and editor of their respective newspapers *Justice* and *Commonweal*.

On 27 January 1894, *Justice* began publishing articles by Bax under the title “The Paris Commune” which together formed his book *A Short History of the Paris Commune*. The seventeenth and final article was published on 1 December 1894 and in 1895 it was published by Twentieth Century Press. This edition also included the three addresses by Marx that comprise *CWF* and was republished in 1903 and 1907. *Justice* continued to advertise the book on their front page a year after its initial release and it was advertised in American socialist reading lists alongside Marx and Lissagaray.

Marx taught the Commune’s value through what could have been; Bax instead concentrated on what was, focusing on its failures. Bax analysed failures in leadership and organisation then made applicable lessons for future revolutionaries. In discussing these failings, the Commune’s successes were associated with its apparent failures. After a military loss where Charles Delescluze gave an eulogy on 3 April, Bax concluded that “[f]rom this time forward the history of the Commune is largely a history of military blunders and

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235 Ibid. 18-20.
236 Ibid. 30-35.
239 “Socialist Books” *People* 11-March, 1900.
incapacity allied with bravery and good intentions.” Bax was disappointed in governments fractured leadership, and he criticised them for their ignorance of the Versailles assault, who were instead “passing decrees of a useful and ornamental nature-many of which were excellent in themselves, but few of which were timely”.

In his final article/chapter, The Lessons of the Commune, Bax made his argument clear: the central lesson of the Commune was that it is of utmost importance to have a single organisation of socialists and workers to lead the revolution with a clear and unified goal. The reader was also reminded that the capitalist media is not to be trusted, as it will always defend “the interests, real or imagined, of the dominant capitalist class.” Though critical of the Communard government, Bax still portrayed the workers as heroes who acted “in defence of an ideal” with unique bravery which redeemed the century. Furthermore, he revered the martyrdom of the militant “willing to surrender himself completely for a future that meant the happiness of his class and a nobler life for humanity.” Bax maintained Marx’s emphasis on heroic workers and a villainous bourgeoisie, but insisted upon a novel distinction between the workers and the Communard government. While the workers were heroic, the government was fractured and incompetent. Bax suggested his readers learn from the Commune’s failures, unlike Marx’s interpretation of successes.

Kropotkin’s pamphlet, The Commune of Paris, was published a year later, in 1896, by J. Turner in London. Kropotkin believed the Paris revolutionaries’ greatest error was the formation of a government, opposite to Bax, who thought the Commune needed strong working-class leadership and government. Kropotkin presented an alternative to the socialist interpretation, one that presented the Commune as a forerunner to statelessness: “[t]he Communes of the next Revolution…will be Anarchist.” The pamphlet did not receive the same advertising or international advertising, but nonetheless provides valuable insight into the radical discussion on the Commune’s merits.

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241 14-April.
242 02-June.
243 01-December.
244 Ibid.
245 04-August.
246 Ibid.
247 Kropotkin, Commune, 10.
248 Ibid.15.
Lissagaray’s *History of the Paris Commune of 1871* was a socialist history which extrapolated Marx’s position and supported his conclusions. It was first written in French in 1876, and in 1886 Eleanor Marx-Aveling finished her English translation of the text. It was published in London by Reeves and Turner in 1886 and in New York by the International Publishing Company in 1886 and 1898. T.F. Unwin of London printed a 1902 edition.

Lissagaray’s work had a much larger scope and size than Marx or Bax. It shares a similar perspective with *CWF* and the two became closely associated. This is unsurprising. Eleanor Marx’s introduction reveals that the book appears largely unedited, because “[i]t had been entirely revised and corrected by my father. I want it to remain as he knew it.”  

In Lucien Sanial’s appendix on the Bloody Week for the New York 1902 edition of *The Paris Commune*, he says that “[i]n order to form an approximate idea of their extent and savagery, it is necessary to read [Lissagaray’s] thrilling account.” Raymond Postgate also recommended it as a fuller history of the Commune in his own 1921 *CWF* introduction.

Lissagaray’s work was often advertised alongside Marx’s and is a part of the same socialist historiography. It was advertised first on a list titled: “The Best Socialistic Literature” in the International Library Publishing Co. 1900 edition of *CWF*. Georges Haupt noted that working-class interest in the Commune could be seen in Lissagaray’s popularity at working-class libraries.

Lissagaray’s book used his own experiences from the barricades to inform his history of the Commune. The text recounts the Commune’s history with heroic imagery to create a virtuous depiction of the Commune, one worth emulating. Historian Robert Tombs accurately described it as “passionate, caustic, often unreliable, coloured by his own views, friendships and enmities, yet detailed documented and readable, it is still after more than a century arguably the best general history of the Commune.” Tombs went on to highlight its Marxist viewpoint and the stirring depiction of the Commune. The text mostly concentrates on the events of the Commune, of its 36 chapters only the first two discuss events prior to 18 March. Lissagaray follows the chronological events of the Commune, and addresses new laws as they are announced, the initial support of the provinces, the military defeats and the changes in personnel. The final eleven chapters consider the Bloody Week and the

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249 Lissagaray, *Commune*, i.
252 *The Civil War in France*, vol. 1 (New York: International Library, 1900) 81.
254 Tombs, *Commune*, 203.
repercussions for those prosecuted as Communards. Lissagaray’s past as a journalist, his experience on the barricades and his relationships to those executed or exiled to New Caledonia all define this final section. As a survivor, his story is given an authenticity and authority which other authors cannot possibly match.

Reviews of Lissagaray’s book show that it was immediately associated with socialism; partially due to Eleanor’s introduction. The Pall Mall Gazette criticised Lissagaray and his text’s class-based approach: “[h]atred of the middle class animates every line of his book.”

The Birmingham Daily Post used quotes from Eleanor’s introduction to explain the book and noted that the Bloody Week and trials were of the “saddest dramatic interest.”

Reynolds Newspaper included three large excerpts in an overwhelmingly positive review. In the Socialist League’s Commonweal, William Morris wrote that it should “be read by all students of history as well as by all Socialists.”

The newspaper also included a full review written by Bax that recommended “it ought to be in the hands of every Socialist.” However, Bax’s review also discussed the Commune and often reflected his own opinion. These reviews are indicative of how quickly this work was accepted amongst radicals.

Lissagaray told a fuller history, but continued to position the workers and Communards as heroes. He tells of triumphant moments that could motivate readers to try for a Commune of their own: “[t]hus, amidst the frantic cheering of the people, for the first time since 1848, the flag of equality overshadowed this spot, redder than its flag by the blood of a thousand martyrs.”

Lissagaray acknowledged the Commune’s place in a revolutionary lineage, but more importantly the story—a flag of equality redder than ever before that overshadows Paris, the cheering people—all of this builds up the Commune as awe inspiring. Lissagaray was emphatic that the workmen formed and maintained the Commune: “[t]his week ended with the triumph of Paris...For the tenth time since 1789 the workmen put France upon the right track.”

Lissagaray discusses the virtuous workers in much the same way as Marx, further entwining their two interpretations.

255 “History of the Commune” 06-September, 1886.
256 “New Books” 08-October, 1886.
258 “the translation of...” 21-August, 1886.
259 “Lissagaray’s ‘History of the Commune.”’ 04-December, 1886.
260 Lissagaray, Commune, 62.
261 Ibid. 126.
Lissagaray went further than Marx in exalting the virtues of martyrdom, though this is unsurprising considering his closeness to events. He witnessed the death of Delescluze as he dramatically stood atop the barricades, Lissagaray wrote: “[t]he Versaillese have stolen his body, but his memory will remain enshrined in the heart of the people”. Lissagaray believes that through death Delescluze, and all other dead communards, became immortal. Lissagaray also discussed Versailles’ tribunals and short interrogations that followed these heroic deaths:

‘Did you take arms? Did you serve the Commune? Show your hands.’ If the resolute attitude of a prisoner betrayed a combatant, if his face was unpleasant, without asking for his name, his profession, without entering any note upon any register, he was classed. ‘You?’ was said to the next one, and so on to the end of the file, without excepting the women, children, and old men.

This writing is more personal, with the word “You”, the reader is asked a question and interrogated in the process. If they respect the heroes of the Commune and the society they represent, then readers must answer “yes”. The reader is “classed”, their punishment is decided and must instead take up arms. Lissagaray wrote an educational history of the Commune, but charged it with emotive power. His work fundamentally supported Marx’s, presenting the same black and white analysis and advocating for the same revolutionary force and communist interpretation.

Lissagaray and Bax are, after Marx, the two most significant socialist authors on the Commune from this time. All three authors used the Commune to educate audiences on important socialist ideals, if in different ways. Marx drew out the Commune to be an example of a working-class state, Bax, an important lesson on organisation, and Lissagaray a complete, if emotional, history. These interpretations all reinforced each other and were advertised to those workers who were eager to learn about socialism and the Commune.

262 Ibid. 362.
263 Ibid. 384.
The Re-publication and Dominance of Marx’s *The Civil War in France*

The process by which Marx’s opinion on the Commune came to dominate can be traced in the re-publication of his work. *CWF* appeared in working-class orientated pamphlets and newspapers consistently as Marx’s writing was broadly circulated throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Marx’s interpretation became dominant amongst socialists and radicalised workers because of his stature within their community, the clarity of his short work on the Commune, and *CWF*’s widespread accessibility. Many early twentieth century editions included additional appendices, notes, or introductions. These additions added to the history of the Commune and were designed by editors to give further weight and significance to *CWF*; readers read both Marx’s interpretation and were told why it mattered. Bax and Lissagaray reinforced Marx’s opinion, and this continued with Lenin’s *The State and Revolution*. The Commune became closely associated with the Bolshevik tradition through Lenin. This connection was embraced by other authors, and the USSR itself. Through the widespread publication, and Marx’s influence on other socialist thinkers, *CWF* was cemented as the dominant interpretation of the Commune presented to the working class by socialists.

Initially, Marx’s interpretation of the Commune was circulated through newspapers. Marx’s third address was printed over six editions of *Workingman’s Advocate*, between 15 July and 2 September 1871. Beginning 17 March to 7 April 1895, *The People*, official newspaper of the American Socialist Labor Party, printed the third address over four issues and ran advertisements for socialist books, including *CWF*. On 17 June 1871, days after the pamphlet’s publication, *Bee-hive* printed excerpts from Marx’s third address and advertised the pamphlet. A *CWF* advertisement appeared in English newspaper *The Republican* on 15 June 1871 recommending that “[e]verybody should read it.” On 1 August, *The Republican* also printed part of a debate the Land and Labour League held on the virtues of *CWF*. These newspapers had a large circulation within the community of

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264 “A Select List of Socialist Books”.
265 “The International Working Men’s Association”.
266 “The Civil War in France”.
267 “Mr. Odger, Karl Marx, and the International”.
radicals and are indicative of organisations eager to spread Marx’s interpretation to as wider readership as possible.

Many organisations published and promoted *CWF* in both the U.S. and Britain. The International Library Publishing Co. of New York released *CWF* as volume one of their socialist literature series in 1900. It contained Engels’ introduction, the third address, and advertisements for similar socialist literature. In 1902, the New York Labor News Company, the Socialist Labor Party’s publisher, published *CWF* with notes and an appendix by Lucien Sanial, a French leader of the party. The pamphlet was instead titled *The Paris Commune*, perhaps due to the 1901 French edition of the text edited by Charles Longuet, retitled *La Commune de Paris*. New York Labor News reprinted this pamphlet in 1913, 1914, 1917, 1919, 1920, 1934 and beyond.

Sanial’s appendix added gruesome details of the Bloody Week using newspapers and books as sources and gave greater clarity to readers of the villainous nature of the Government of National Defence. Sanial’s discussion on the Bloody Week began with General Galliffet’s response to a woman pleading for her life: “Madame, I have visited every theatre in Paris, your acting will have no effect on me.” Sanial also wrote of the nightmarish mass graves “immense pits ten meters square...in which layers of twenty corpses.” Of the many who were executed there were stories of “people imperfectly shot and buried before life was extinct” leading to tales from nights where “houses in the neighborhood were roused by distant moans, and in the morning a clenched hand was seen protruding through the soil.” These ghastly depictions were enhanced by Sanial’s reminder about reports of the Seine running red with blood during the Bloody Week. The book also included extensive notes, further educating readers. In his address Marx showed the bourgeoisie as greedy, idiotic, and geared wholly towards the preservation of their wealth. Sanial added to this by showing them as monsters, incapable of mercy, compassion, or humanity.

The many transatlantic publishers for *CWF* shared connections and inventory when spreading socialist literature. In Chicago 1886, Charles H. Kerr & Company began as a

268 Marx, *Cwf* (1900), 81-2.
269 Marx, *Cwf* (1920), 112.
270 Ibid. 110.
271 Ibid. 112.
publishing house for the Western Unitarian Conference magazine *Unity*.\textsuperscript{272} In 1899, under the influence of Algie Simons and Chicago’s increasing radicalism, Kerr and his company moved toward Marxism and began translating and publishing Socialist literature for American audiences.\textsuperscript{273} In 1901, the company purchased the pamphlets’ inventory, including copyrights and printing materials, from New York’s International Library Publishing Company, which was founded by the Socialist Labor Party.\textsuperscript{274} The collection included Marx’s *CWF*. Simons travelled to Europe and made international connections with London’s Social Democratic Federation and other groups to secure more literature for their audience.\textsuperscript{275} This relationship went both ways, as many Kerr editions of socialist work were sold in English radical bookshops and distributed by English organisations. English workers could become shareholders in the company and buy books at half price.\textsuperscript{276} Between their books and magazines, the Company garnered an audience of both the working class and radical intellectuals.\textsuperscript{277} 

Marx’s interpretation of the Commune became so closely associated with the event itself that editors were keen to expand it by including Marx’s smaller, separate discussions. Both Kerr and New York’s International Publishers included four letters from Marx to Dr. Kugelmann on the Commune.\textsuperscript{278} In these letters, Marx referred to the Communards as too “magnanimous” toward their opponents and labelled them “Heaven-Stormers”.\textsuperscript{279} He also wrote that during the Commune he was “continually denounced” and after his address he had “the honor of being the best calumniated and most menaced man of London.”\textsuperscript{280} For the reader these letters accentuated the image of Communards as heroes, but also painted a clearer picture of Marx. These additions indicated that the Commune was becoming more associated with Marx over time, so much so that anything he wrote on the matter was thought worthy of publication.

\textsuperscript{273} Ibid. 82.  
\textsuperscript{274} Ibid. 86.  
\textsuperscript{275} Ibid. 87.  
\textsuperscript{277} Mark Pittenger, *American Socialists and Evolutionary Thought* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993) 120.  
\textsuperscript{279} Marx, *Cwf* (1934), 127.  
\textsuperscript{280} Ibid. 129.
Early twentieth century workers could easily buy a copy of CWF, which is indicative of the text’s importance within the larger socialist canon. The 1933 International Publishers edition of CWF was published in New York, but printed in England. This was a common practice of International Publishers which purchased overseas copies to first test a book’s popularity. Indicative of great interest, International Publishers reprinted CWF in 1940, this time in the U.S., and again in 1949 and 1962. The many editions from different organisations and companies make it apparent that an American worker did not have to look hard to find Marx’s CWF: it was in their newspapers, advertisements, and accessible from many groups for a small fee of 5 to 25 cents. The wide distribution of Marx’s writing also meant that for many it was not just the dominant, but the only opinion they read on the matter.

Bax also had an important role in the spread of CWF. He provided an English translation for Engels’ original German introduction to the 1891 edition, and this translation was used in both the U.S. and Britain. In the U.S. it was part of both the International Library Publishing Co., 1900, edition and a 25-cent edition published by Kerr. In London, it was included in the unusually titled The Commune of Paris being the Addresses of the International Workingmen’s Association on the Franco-German War of 1870, and the Pamphlet of the same body, The “Civil War in France” of 1871 which was published by Twentieth Century Press Limited. An advertisement for the Twentieth Century Press edition also appeared in Justice on 18 July 1896. In the second text, both Engels’ and Bax’s names are on the front page, but the author is the IWA, rather than Marx himself. Additionally, included in Bax’s A Short History of the Paris Commune, also published by Twentieth Century Press, were the three addresses of the IWA, the third titled CWF, though again without Marx’s name. These addresses were included in both the 1895 and 1907 editions. While Bax had presented a different interpretation of the Commune, for some readers in both the U.S. and Britain, Bax was closely associated with Marx’s opinion.

Twentieth Century Press was the publishing group for the Social Democratic Federation and published pieces by leading English socialists: Bax, Morris, Hyndman, and Eleanor Marx-Aveling. Founded in 1891, the business was slow to develop, being relaxed at collecting payment from its working-class readers, but by 1897 began to generate profit.

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283 ‘The Commune of Paris’.
284 Bax, Commune, 99.
went on to be a leading printer for English socialists and later Bolshevik ideas throughout the century.

After the Russian Revolution of October 1917, the Commune came to be closely associated with Bolshevism, which was reflected in the new editions of the *CWF*. In England, the 1921 Labour Publishing co. edition included a preface written by Raymond Postgate. Postgate was the son of a University College professor and Raymond himself was an accomplished journalist; in June 1921 he became Editor in Chief of the Communist Party of Great Britain’s (CPBG) newspaper, *The Communist*. In his introduction, Postgate exalted the value of Marx's work, not only for displaying his theories “but purely and simply as an historical record of facts.” In presenting Marx’s work as fact, Postgate demonstrates that Marx’s interpretation had come to define the Commune over the previous fifty years. However, much of the introduction focuses on the important parallels between 1871 and 1917. The Commune was an end for the “epoch of ‘bourgeois’ revolutions” and the beginning when afterwards “we find that all over Europe the uprising revolutionary and reformist movements have for their object the economic and political defeat of the capitalist class”.

By the 1930s, Lenin’s writing on the Commune came to be almost as closely associated with it as Marx’s. CPBG published through Martin and Lawrence, later Lawrence and Wishart, and released their edition of *CWF* in 1933, 1937, and 1941. The appendix of the 1933 Martin and Lawrence, and the 1933 International Publishers editions of *CWF* included an article from 1908 by Lenin in *Zagranichnaya Gazeta*. This article reminded the audience of the two-fold goals of the Commune, the liberation of France from the Prussians, and the

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287 Marx, *Cwf* (1921), 1.

288 Ibid. 4.

289 Ibid. 4.

290 Ibid. 5.
“socialist liberation of the workers from capitalism”. Most importantly Lenin showed that the value of the Commune was in its lessons: “it stirred up the socialist movement throughout Europe, it demonstrated the value of civil war, it dispersed patriotic illusions and shattered the naïve faith in the common national aspirations of the bourgeoisie.” Lenin’s arguments are important, but for the student of the Commune the very inclusion of Lenin’s writing is itself of greater significance. In the linking of Lenin to later editions of *CWF*, Bolshevism and the Commune – 1871 and 1917 – are also drawn closer together.

One of Lenin’s most influential texts, *State and Revolution*, also included a chapter which closely analysed Marx’s *CWF*. It was written on the eve of the October Revolution and first published in Russian the next year, 1918. To get socialist materials out of the USSR, emissaries to Western countries filled their suitcases with books and pamphlets which went to friendly organisations. *State and Revolution* was published jointly in October 1919 by the British Socialist Party in London and the Socialist Labour Press of Glasgow. The British Socialist Party went on to join other organisations to become the CPBG which often republished *State and Revolution*. Lawrence and Wishart printed editions in 1933, 1935, 1941, 1942, and 1947. In 1931 Martin Lawrence also published as a part of their Little Lenin Library, *The Paris Commune*, which included eleven different excerpts of where Lenin had written or spoken on the Commune.

Lenin’s writings faced greater difficulty entering the American market, where Kerr’s radical publishing program had faced state repression for its anti-war stance. New York’s Vanguard press printed it in 1926, 1927, and 1929, while International Publishers printed it in 1932, 1933, and 100,000 copies in 1934. The text concentrated largely on its titular concepts, with the Commune as a key example. Like Marx, Lenin frequently engaged in polemical attacks, which elicited a pamphlet from Karl Kautsky, and a response from Lenin.

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291 Cwf (1933), 79.
292 Ibid. 81.
In *State and Revolution*, Lenin began his discussion of *CWF* by analysing a line which had been added to the preface of *The Communist Manifesto*: “[b]ut the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes.” The importance of the line is as a reminder that workers cannot use the system in place, but must dismantle it entirely and begin again if they are to be free. Lenin insisted “proletarian democracy” was to replace it. In Lenin’s presentation, proletarian democracy was a system based on the Paris Commune’s government and army, which Lenin considered a “fuller democracy”. And Lenin’s vision of the Commune in action was itself drawn from Marx.

Lenin’s *State and Revolution* took further cues from the Commune as he described the process for state formation in the future. These future democracies transfer power from the “democracy of the oppressors to that of the oppressed class”, much like the proletarian democracy established by the Commune. Lenin drew on Engels in the next chapter of *State and Revolution* to explain the role of the state post revolution. This was done to refute claims made by contemporary socialists about Marx. “The Commune was no longer a state in the proper sense of the word” and that once the Commune became established, the remaining state functions would have “withered away”. Lenin praised Marx for how he interpreted the Commune to form a new idea of state: “he studied the birth of the new society out of the old…and tried to draw practical lessons from it.” Lenin finishes with certainty that time will soon “continue the work of the Commune and confirm Marx's brilliant historical analysis.” Lenin took Marx’s analysis of the Commune to inform his work, however he did not supplant Marx’s interpretation, as *CWF* was reprinted frequently after *State and Revolutions* publication. Instead, Lenin’s authority from the leadership of a major socialist revolution further elevated Marx’s interpretation, even if it did become inextricably linked to Lenin’s Bolsheviks.

298 Marx, *Cwf*, 73.
300 Ibid. 69.
301 Ibid. 70.
302 Ibid. 77.
303 Ibid. 85-6.
304 Ibid. 106.
305 Ibid. 78-9.
306 Ibid. 91.
Interpretations of the Commune were dominated by Marx’s writing, and State and Revolution built on that legacy, which was reflected in the new Soviet state. Later CWF editions also reflect this change, including the introduction by Postgate which clearly links the two revolutions. The Commune soon became fully associated with the Bolshevik tradition, a relationship the Bolsheviks encouraged. The Communard song ‘The Internationale’ became the USSR’s national anthem, and the state backed the production of plays, films, and histories of the Commune.307 A name given to children was ‘Parizhkommina’, streets were called ‘March 18th’, and on the Commune’s anniversary newspapers ran frontpage articles on its significance. Perhaps most symbolically Lenin’s body was entombed with a Communard flag and a portion of a Communard banner sent to space in 1964.308 The Commune no longer needed to be a model for change, since that change had apparently occurred. Instead, the Commune became a precursor to the USSR, a transition acknowledged by those who made annual marches to the Pere-Lachaise cemetery.309 The Commune was used by Bolshevik leaders as a measure of success, and as their history to justify their own revolution.310 After the Russian Revolution historians focussed more on the Socialist interpretation of the Commune and its connections to Bolshevism. In 1896, Thomas March’s History of the Paris Commune 1871 made no mention of Marx or Lissagaray.311 However, after the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, Edward Mason’s history from 1930 began discussing Marx and Lenin in his Introduction’s first pages and attacked their “Communist interpretation” in his final chapter.312 In 1937, Frank Jellinek also included them in his more favourable history.313 The Commune’s association with socialism meant that after the Russian Revolution it was further connected to the new Soviet state.

Marx’s writing became the dominant interpretation of the Commune through its repeated publication in the socialist and communist organisations of the U.S. and Britain. This established the Commune as a key part of socialist history, but interest in the Commune also elevated the relevance of Marx’s work. If workers wanted to learn more about socialism, Bolshevism, or the Commune, all topics were linked, through the eminently available CWF.

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308 Tombs, Commune, 202.
310 Haupt, Aspects, 33, 46.
311 March, The History of the Paris Commune of 1871, vii-viii.
313 Jellinek, Commune, 389-90.
Lenin then took Marx’s message and amplified it through his own writing and the Bolshevik press, cementing it as a part of the Commune.

Conclusion

New York Labor News Company ran advertisements for books in the Socialist Labor Party’s newspaper, *People*. On 2 March 1901, the Commune’s thirtieth anniversary, they had an extended advertisement for Lissagaray’s *History of the Commune of 1871*, Bax’s *Short History of the Commune* and Marx’s *CWF*. Each book had a section discussing its contents, size, and cost. These books were advertised as the quintessential working-man’s knowledge on the Commune. Marx’s, the cheapest, was described as “the masterly manifesto on the Commune.”

The advertisement is representative of this chapter which has shown the development of a socialist canon and its dissemination amongst the working class. *CWF* was just one of many interpretations which discussed the Commune in 1871, but had far greater impact than the newspaper discussions of the time. Marx’s *CWF* has remained a key part of the Commune’s historiography, but this chapter has shown how it came to be the most readily available to workers through internationally aware publishing groups.

For the socialist interpretation of the Commune to dominate – one of brave revolutionaries forging their own state – it had to contend with those who emphasised its failures and dangers. The conservative opinion showed the Commune as the act of demons hellbent on destroying the pillars of society. Debates appeared in newspapers, *Workingmen’s Advocate* and *Bee-Hive*, that exposed workers to alternative ideologies which supported the Commune and condemned the conservative press. Marx’s *CWF* espoused the Commune as the harbinger of a glorious new society for working-class emancipation. This opinion, with Lissagaray and Bax, defined the socialist interpretation. Marx’s interpretation was made available to readers on an incomparable scale. It was adopted by Lenin who embraced it within the Bolshevik mythology. The Commune was used by radicals to educate a working-class audience not just on Paris 1871, but socialist, Bolshevik and Communist ideas. The impact of the Commune on the working class then was through education and as a demonstration of their collective power. The dominance of Marx’s interpretation, and the

\(^{314}\) ‘The Anniversary of the Paris Commune’.
Commune’s association with Bolshevism made it an exclusively radical event. Marx’s interpretation came to dominance through his stature, its narrative and circulation meaning that it was the interpretation celebrated by workers decades after the last Communards were executed in the *Père-Lachaise*. 
2. Nineteenth Century British and American Paris Commune Celebrations

Prior to May’s Bloody Week, the Commune was celebrated as a great success. Those within the Commune thought themselves victors, and across the Channel in Britain, many shared this triumph. On the Sunday afternoon of 16 April 1871, four weeks after the Commune was founded, approximately 7,000 British citizens came together, showing support for their French fraternity. The gathering was organised by the International Democratic Association. Banners reading “Vive la Commune” were held high and a band performed. After a procession through the streets speeches were read, culminating in an address to the Communards published in *Reynold’s Newspaper* and *Bee-hive*. This long address included phrases that revealed how the Commune was already being upraised in almost mythic terms. The proclamation welcomed the Commune as “sublime” and Communards as “the pioneers of progress and the architects of a new and purer social state.” The Commune was also described as a “resurrection of the glorious era of the first French Republic”, affirming a connection to the great revolution of eighty years beforehand. The proclamation went on to ardently approve many of the Commune government’s reforms. It drew attention to the sacrifice of militants: “we claim them as martyrs on behalf of human progress.” The proclamation closed with an affirmation of friendship and a claim of connection: “[w]e the people of London…tender you the honest, uncompromising hand of friendship and fellowship. Long live the universal republic, democratic and social.”

This was by no means an isolated expression of sympathy and fraternity for the Commune, for over the next century celebrations were staged across Europe, Asia, and the Americas. The London proclamation in 1871 can be considered the beginning of a much larger tradition of celebration. In Britain, celebrations were their largest from 1886-1892, when London had overlapping events and more across the country. In the U.S. celebrations were across the country from 1872 into the twentieth century. In New York, large celebrations happened in multiethnic organisations, and as smaller cultural events. Chicago

316 “Republican meeting in Hyde Park” 23-April, 1871.; “English Sympathy with the French Communists” 22-April, 1871.
was the most consistent, with large celebrations into the twentieth century. These were often disparate communities whose only contact came from telegrams shared at such events. This thesis looks at the organisations that tried to shape these small communities into a singular revolutionary, working-class community. These radical organisations were typically socialist or anarchist and often shared members, ideas, ambitions, and celebrations. This thesis uses the word ‘celebration’ because it was the title given by organisers. Sometimes they could more accurately be described as a ‘memorialisation’, however, they were consistently celebrations of the Commune’s victories.

Annual celebrations focused on the Commune’s internationalism, community, and martyrdom while facilitating discussion of key anarchist and socialist concepts. In this way, the chapter argues, Commune celebrations fostered stronger radical working-class communities. Those celebrating were at different times presented images of the Commune as a symbol of working-class governance or as a symbol of violent revolt. These alternating images vied for dominance throughout the nineteenth century as communities’ attitudes toward violence changed.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the economic and organisational nature of the working class in the U.S. and Britain. The chapter then examines the international solidarity of the celebrations by examining how workers perceived the Paris Commune and developed an increasingly international working-class awareness. Thirdly this chapter will examine how the celebrations of the Commune functioned as a palimpsest. Under analysis, speeches from celebrations reveal that the interpretations of the Commune were rewritten to accommodate the shifting needs of organisations, whether they be revolutionary or electoral. Penultimately, the chapter discusses the importance of Commune celebrations in forming communities, paying close attention to the Social Democratic Federation and Socialist League in London, and the rise of anarchist movements after the Haymarket Affair of 1886. This analysis is facilitated using concepts of collective memory, narrative, and ritual to understand processes of community formation. Finally, the chapter explores the end of the Commune celebrations as May Day rose to prominence. In summary, the celebrations show the direct impact of the Commune on working-class people, their organisations and community. While celebrations may sometimes have been an excuse to gather, the Commune consistently represented oppression, internationalism, and martyrdom amidst turbulent ideologies.
The Working Classes of the United States and Britain

Commune celebrations were an annual ritual, attracting workers and radicals in both the U.S. and Britain. To understand these celebrations’ impact and importance, it is necessary to examine the workers’ broader lives and the context these annual events existed in. This section discusses each country separately from 1871-1900. First by considering the economic realities, and working-class organisation through unions and strikes. The increased economic opportunities gave workers more ability to exert their influence through unions and organisations, places which allowed for community development. The communities formed in this process could come together and commemorate an event in recent history, like the Commune. Each section will then focus on these growing radical communities, in the U.S., the rise of anarchism and the Haymarket Affair, and, in Britain, the development of socialism. This section on U.S. and British working class provides contextual information for this chapter’s analysis of annual events around 18 March.

United States

The U.S. was establishing a modern working class at the end of the nineteenth century. In 1870, only 25.6% of the population were living in urban environments, however, 47% of the total labour force was employed in non-agricultural areas. This led David Montgomery to suggest that much of the rural population was also engaged in industry and manufacturing. By 1900, the population of the U.S. had almost doubled and continued to urbanise; 39.7% now lived in cities. Between 1860 and 1900, the labour force in manufacturing, mining, construction and services grew from 4-million to 18-million. In Chicago, the biggest industry through the seventies, eighties and nineties was the slaughter of animals, followed by industries such as lumber, iron and steel, and men’s clothing.

319 Peter George, The Emergence of Industrial America (USA: State University of New York Press, 1982) 6.
320 Kirk, Labour, 9.
321 Nelson, Martyrs, 12-3.
Migration into America meant that in 1870, only 65.1% of wage earners were American-born, 10.8% were German and another 12.2% Irish. In 1871, 5,780 French immigrants entered the U.S., along with 107,201 Germans and 61,463 Irish people. Many of the Communards who came to America congregated in New York.  

In Chicago, 1870, almost half of the city’s population was born overseas, including 17.7% German and 13.3% Irish while only 0.4% were French. The city soon began to level out and by the end of the century Chicago was only a little more than a third foreign-born and 10.1% born in Germany. In 1884, a study of Chicago’s ethnicity revealed 75.9% were first or second generation foreign-born, 33.6% of the city being of German origin. The German immigrants in the city in 1870 were predominantly skilled blue-collar workers and remained that way to the end of the century.

A modern working class was establishing itself and was further developed through unions and larger organisations. The Knights of Labor, formed in 1869, grew to prominence in the 1880s with 750,000 members in 1886. The Knights were America’s first mass organisation of workers and focussed on moral and political education of its members. The organisation succeeded by linking skilled and unskilled workers and forming working-class communities. Though disdainful of politics and unions, the Knights still enjoyed success at the ballot box and in strikes. The success of this organisation caused Assemblies to appear internationally. The American Federation of Labor (AFL) was formed in May 1886, with Samuel Gompers as president. The organisation was composed of many crafts’ individual unions and followed business unionism, meaning it privileged economic over political reform. The AFL was fundamentally conservative, working to make slow gains for its many unions. The AFL was formed of unions which from 1880 to 1883, had experienced massive growth: the Bricklayers Union, 303 to 9,163; the Printers Union, 6,520 to 12,273, and the Cigar Makers Union 4,409 to 13,214. It is also important to remember that these unions often ignored the plight of black people and women, to their own detriment.

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322 Katz, Appomattox, 162.
323 Nelson, Martyrs, 16.
324 Ibid. 18.
328 Kirk, Labour, 83-90.
The Socialist Labor Party (SLP) developed as a working-class political organisation. The International Workingmen’s Association (IWA) was moved to New York in 1872 and experienced small growth, including a section of Communards. The Working-men’s Party (former IWA affiliate) came to prominence and entered politics, renaming itself the SLP. The SLP was successful in Illinois, St. Louis and parts of the east coast over the next two years. In 1880, the SLP were disheartened with politics after the failure of a joint presidential ticket, causing them to stop chasing the ballot for another decade. The SLP was often in conflict with the AFL over whether it was workers issues could be best addressed by political or union action. The SLP held many annual celebrations in honour of the Commune and their shifting objectives can be seen in the themes celebrated.

This era also saw an unprecedented wave of strikes, coupled with their organisations, this is indicative of a more active and engaged working class. The aforementioned Great Strikes of 1877 started 14 July when West Virginian railway workers went on strike. The strikes spread quickly and there were work stoppages across many industries in Pennsylvania, Maryland, New York, Illinois, and Missouri. It lasted 45 Days, and ended with Federal troop intervention. During the strikes the press feared an “American Commune” and Chicago’s Mayor labelled strikers: “ragged Commune wretches”. In 1881 there were 471 strikes with over 100,000 workers cumulatively involved, with 47.3% of these strikes organised by unions. In 1886, there were 1432 strikes, with 407,000 participating workers. Of these, 53.3% were ordered by unions and elicited 37 sympathy strikes. 1886 is referred to by historians as the ‘Great Upheaval’ for its massive change in labour movements, evidenced by membership in the Knights of Labor exploding, The Haymarket Affair, and this wave of strikes. The next year, the number of strikes was the same, but those ordered by unions grew to 66.3%. From 1886 until the end of the century only in 1888 were there less than a thousand strikes (906) and in 1890 there were more than twice that number with 1,833. The number of workers involved in strikes over a year went as high as 505,000 and in any given year more

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331 Ibid. 11.
than 60% of strikes were ordered by a union. 1890, 1891, 1893, and 1894 all had over 100 sympathy strikes, the greatest number in 1891 with 204, forming 11.5% of all strikes that year.\textsuperscript{336} Strikes, Unionisation, and working-class organisations are all indicative of a more socially and politically aware working class that engaged with radical organisations and their commemorative events.

The U.S. also had a burgeoning anarchist movement that celebrated the Commune. Albert Parsons came to prominence during the Great Strikes of 1877 when he gave speeches to thousands in Chicago while representing the Working-men’s Party (SLP’s predecessor).\textsuperscript{337} After the SLP’s National electoral setback and a case of election fraud in the Chicago election of 1880, several radicals from the SLP lost faith and left the party, including Parsons and his following.\textsuperscript{338} Johann Most had been a radical influence across Europe before migrating to New York in 1882 after being incarcerated in Britain for articles he wrote in \textit{Freiheit} (Freedom), a newspaper he continued to publish in America.\textsuperscript{339} In October 1883, anarchist idealists, including Parsons and Most, joined at the Pittsburgh Congress and formed a doctrine to guide the International Working People’s Association (IWPA). While anarchists, the Chicagoan IWPA members still considered themselves followers of Marx and drew inspiration from the Commune.\textsuperscript{340} The IWPA grew quickly over the next three years to include many newspapers, including Parson’s own \textit{The Alarm}. This newspaper advertised the Commune celebrations of 1885, 1886 and the 1886 May Day strike that led to the Haymarket Affair.

After 1886, many Commune celebrations in Britain and the U.S. incorporated commemoration of Haymarket and placed a greater significance on martyrdom. The Haymarket Affair itself came after May Day, 1886, when an estimated 90,000 people marched in Chicago with nearly half that number striking across the city; similar events occurred across the country.\textsuperscript{341} On 3 May, August Spies of the IWPA addressed strikers, shortly afterwards police opened fire. Two strikers died. The next night approximately 2,000 met at Haymarket Square in response, speeches were read by Parsons and Spies, before

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\textsuperscript{337} Green, \textit{Death}, 76.
\textsuperscript{338} Avrich, \textit{Haymarket}, 51.
\textsuperscript{340} Green, \textit{Death}, 128-30.
\end{flushright}
police arrived again. A bomb went off in the police ranks and gunfire ensued. Seven policemen and four workers died, with many injured. A manhunt began, as did the first great red scare in America.\(^\text{342}\) The violent intent of the Chicago Anarchists has been debated by historians.\(^\text{343}\) Police, backed by public support, pursued an often-unlawful investigation and questioned hundreds; ten were charged with the murder of an officer.\(^\text{344}\) The Grand Jury acknowledged a debt to the police who saved the city from “a scene of bloodshed and devastation equal to...the Commune of Paris.”\(^\text{345}\) The two-month trial was conducted by an openly biased judge and jury.\(^\text{346}\) All eight were found guilty and seven sentenced to death. The anarchists were visited in prison by Eleanor Marx-Aveling, her husband Edward Aveling, and Wilhelm Liebknecht while on a national tour sponsored by the SLP. Samuel Fielden and Michel Schwab had their sentences commuted after appeals. On 10 November 1887, Louis Lingg committed suicide and the next day Parsons, Spies, Adolph Fischer and George Engel were executed. Sixteen years later, 26 June 1893, Illinois Governor, John Altgeld, issued pardons for Fielden, Schwab, and Oscar Neebe.

The later part of the nineteenth century was a dynamic time for American workers. Unionisation, strikes, and revolutionary ideas were all becoming a part of their lives. Working-class organisations endeavoured to create active and engaged workers in the face of state repression like the Haymarket Affair and the Great Strikes. Annual Paris Commune celebrations were used by radical organisations to form their own working-class communities.

**Great Britain**

In contrast to the U.S., Britain’s population was heavily industrialised and proletarian.\(^\text{347}\) By 1851, only 20% of occupations were agricultural and at the century’s end, half that.\(^\text{348}\) In


\(^{346}\) This too has been debated by historians: Avrich, *Haymarket*, 263-5; Green, *Death*, 212-3; Messer-Kruse, *Trial*, 45-54.


1860, unions had formed the London Trades Council and in 1868, northern unions had formed the Trades Union Congress (TUC). In 1874, the TUC had almost 1.2 million members, over the next fifteen years it halved, but rebounded in 1890 and the TUC sustained a membership of 900,000 until the century’s end.349 This boom in 1890 was a part of a larger trend of workers towards unionisation, typically referred to as ‘New Unionism’. New Unions were large institutions that brought together multiple trades, rather than singular craft unions. They began in the 1870s but failed to grow in popularity until the late 1880’s.350 Between 1888 and 1892, trade union membership doubled from 750,000 to 1,500,000351 and women joined in greater numbers, doubling from 50,000 between 1888 and 1893.352 Examples include the National Labour Federation in 1886, a Union of Sailors and Firemen in 1887, the Miner’s Federation in 1888, the Beckton Gas workers in 1889 and unions for different trades on the docks. Even the American Knights of Labor had over 10,000 British members by 1889.353 Existing craft unions also had a boom in growth during this time. From 1888 to 1891, the eleven largest skilled unions for metals and shipbuilding grew from 115,000 to 155,000, and the ten largest builder’s unions went from 57,000 to 94,000.354 Between 1888 and 1889, London had three large strikes: the match girls, the gas workers and the largest, the dock workers. This period of unionisation is especially important for English Commune celebrations, the largest of which occurred between 1886 and 1892.

Britain had faced a depression since 1873, but in 1888 economic conditions were favourable to labour and contributed to New Unionism and the above strikes.355 Between 1871-1901 the industrial sector constituted the majority of the work force, growing from 43% to 46%, 75% of these jobs were in clothing, textiles and machinery.356 Between 1886 and 1889 total industrial production grew nearly 25%, but remained steady until 1894.357 Real wages increased steadily from 1870 to 1889 only to stagnate until 1893.358 This was caused by an economic boom which also brought unemployment below 2%.359 Workers were

350 Kirk, Labour, 75-7.
351 Ibid. 63.
352 Ibid. 99.
353 Pollard, Britain, 202.
354 Ibid. 205.
357 Pollard, Britain, 213.
358 Ibid. 224; Hunt, Labour, 73-6.
359 Kirk, Labour, 63; Hunt, Labour, 304.
earning, paying, and working more which placed them in a favourable position for unionisation and community formation.

Marxist ideas entered late-Victorian thought and influenced existing social thought, sparking multiple organisations.\textsuperscript{360} This thesis focuses on the Socialist Democratic Federation (SDF) and Socialist League (SL) due to their roles’ as organisers for many of London’s Commune celebrations. Between 1879 and 1882, newspapers covered small Commune celebrations, they remarked on the internationalist nature of celebrations, and attributed them to the ‘Social Democrats of London’ at Grafton Hall.\textsuperscript{361} These smaller celebrations allowed for older pioneers of organisations to encounter younger militant radicals.\textsuperscript{362}

In June of 1881, the Democratic Federation was formed. The Federation was headed by Henry Hyndman, who was a recent convert to Marxism after reading Marx’s \textit{Capital}. Notable people at its first meeting included famed poet William Morris, Ernest Belfort Bax, Eleanor Marx, and Edward Aveling. They were soon joined by more working-class members, such as future strike leaders Tom Mann and John Burns, and Harry Quelch, who chaired many of the future Commune celebrations. Many members came from other radical London clubs, including followers of James O’Brien and the Chartist movement.\textsuperscript{363} The growth of this organisation caused E.P. Thompson to date “the effective birth of modern Socialism in Britain” from 1883.\textsuperscript{364}

In January 1884, the group launched their own newspaper, \textit{Justice}, and in July they renamed themselves the Socialist Democratic Federation. Marx had advocated for working-class emancipation to come from within, leading Engels to think the SDF ill-conceived.\textsuperscript{365} Over the next decade the SDF grew in London to have approximately 1500 members and nearly 40 branches, as well as developing across Britain.\textsuperscript{366} Skilled and craft workers were nearly half their members.\textsuperscript{367} Members typically remained for less than two years, this high

\textsuperscript{361} “The Commune” \textit{The Times} 21-March, 1879; “Meeting of Foreign Revolutionists in London” \textit{The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent} 19-March, 1880; “Miscellanea” \textit{Plymouth and Cornish Advertiser} 30-March, 1881.
\textsuperscript{362} Thompson, \textit{Morris}, 284.
\textsuperscript{364} Thompson, \textit{Morris}, 298.
\textsuperscript{366} David Young, ”Social Democratic Federation Membership in London,” \textit{Historical Research} 78,(201) (2005) 356.
\textsuperscript{367} Ibid. 363.
turnover rate led Engels to facetiously remark that the SDF had 100,000 members, however, this revolving membership meant greater exposure of their ideas. The Independent Labour Party was formed in 1893 and became larger and more influential within the working class. The SDF at different times tried to work or merge with them before forming the British Socialist Party in 1911.

On 27 December 1884, William Morris and others, including Eleanor Marx, left the SDF and on 30 December formed the Socialist League where they founded their own newspaper, *Commonweal*. Amongst many reasons for the split, the largest point of contention was whether to seek reform through the ballot box, which the SL considered fruitless. Hyndman maintained a strong leadership of the SDF and sought peaceful change and advocated for political reform, at the expense of economic or industrial action. As strikes and new unionisation increased in 1887, individuals from these organisations, the Marx-Avelings, Burns, Mann and Will Thorne, contributed as educators and organisers.

In 1886, famed Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin moved to London, started his own newspaper, *Freedom*, and came to prominence within the SL. Over the next two years the SL became increasingly anarchist; inspired by the Chicago anarchists’ martyrdom. Thompson noted that the SL had “[n]o serious joint campaign or common purpose – Commune Celebrations and Chicago Commmemorations apart – served to knit the league together.” In 1890, the SL held their last Commune celebration, which was for the first time separate from the SDF event. Perhaps the most stunning achievement of the 1890 celebrations was that two halls were filled to capacity, with enthusiastic workers, during one week to honour the Commune. By 1890, the SL was largely an anarchist organisation and in February 1891 it disbanded.

Workers in both Britain and the U.S. were becoming increasingly active and engaged with unions and strikes at the end of the nineteenth century. Simultaneously, growing socialist and anarchist organisations were holding Commune celebrations. These celebrations

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368 Ibid. 368.
375 Ibid. 518.
appealed to an emerging working-class culture.\textsuperscript{377} To analyse the impact of the Commune celebrations, it is important to remember the changing environment surrounding the working class.

**Internationalism in Celebrations**

Communard exiles in Britain and the U.S. led most of the celebrations in the immediate wake of the Commune. These celebrations typically consisted of speeches, balls and banqueting. While celebrations grew in number, they were not targeted at the local working class.\textsuperscript{378} In 1877, *New York World* reported that “[i]t is estimated that about 10,000 of French revolutionists who participated in the revolution of the Commune are now in the U.S., of whom about 2,000 reside in this city.”\textsuperscript{379} In 1878, the London *Times* believed that “[t]hey will be calmed when the exiles are permitted to return to France”\textsuperscript{380} and in 1879 they were a “good deal cooled by time and events.”\textsuperscript{381} By 1883, the Communards had been amnestied and they now celebrated in France.\textsuperscript{382} The Communard celebrations represent one way the Commune was used to facilitate internationally-orientated communities.

The Commune had drawn people from across Europe, and its celebrations did the same. The SL and SDF threw annual celebrations and their respective papers, *Commonweal* and *Justice*, printed articles espousing the values of the Commune to entice readers. The *Justice* articles often began with a variant of this quote from 1885: “[t]he Anniversary of the Paris Commune can never be passed in silence by Socialists, whatever their nationality.”\textsuperscript{383} This message remained unchanged in 1898: “[o]n the 18th of March Socialists all over the world celebrate the anniversary of the Commune of Paris.”\textsuperscript{384} Similar sentiments appeared in other European newspapers.\textsuperscript{385} Hyndman wrote in an article that the Commune had failed...
because other international cities did not have simultaneous uprisings. As an SDF leader, he believed that for future revolutions to be successful, individuals needed to consider themselves part of an international community.

Before the 1887 celebration, announcements appeared in Commonweal for celebrations in London, Nottingham, Norwich and Dublin. At their close, Commonweal noted that “[t]he great number of Commune celebrations this year is a sure sign of the increasing strength of the Socialist party in this country.” The article also recounted activities outside of London, including a tea-party and ball for sixty in Nottingham and events in Dublin, where a telegram from the English clubs “was read amidst great applause” from a truly internationalist audience. Justice reported on celebrations in Brussels, Liège, Madrid, Rome, Bucharest and Algiers; additionally, Kropotkin spoke of celebrations in Greece, South America, Cape Colony and Australia. Regardless of their validity, these statements meant those celebrating considered themselves as part of an international movement. The 1888 London celebration continued the exchange of memos from other celebrations where it received 20 from England and Ireland alone. Speakers presented the Commune as a beacon for the international working class: “[i]f the Commune had been successful it would have been a precedent for the workers of Berlin, London and America.” International telegrams continued to be read at celebrations to come.

While in Britain they spoke about internationalism, America’s migrant population lived it. New York’s celebrations were reflective of their communities’ deep multiculturalism. Celebrations were held in multiple languages, and not just English, French and German. In the early 1870s, smaller German celebrations were held in Brooklyn. In 1890, 18 trade unions in Brooklyn’s Jewish quarter celebrated with speeches in Russian and Hebrew. These celebrations allowed different ethnicities to gather, supersede their national affiliations and unify through a radical memory. Often these celebrations were criticised for their internationalist appeal. The New York Herald reported

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387 “Paris Commune Celebrations” 12-March, 1887.
388 “Paris Commune Celebrations” 26-March, 1887.
389 Ibid.
393 “Brief Telegrams” Daily Inter-Ocean 09-March, 1890.
394 Coghlan, Sensational, 83-4.
on the 1872 Chicago celebration: “at the meeting of the Internationals…[n]o American of any standing was present”.\(^395\) In 1893, New York workers celebrated while being watched over by ten concerned police officers. Johann Most gave a speech to “[h]undreds of shaggy-bearded Germans” where he said:

The Commune of 1871 was in Paris, the Commune of the future will be all over the world. In 1871 the red flag waved over city hall. In the coming Commune it shall hang from the churches and palaces.\(^396\)

American celebrations drew large German audiences, but also consisted of native-born Americans and migrants who looked globally. In 1878, the *New York Herald* reported on a celebration where a banner mockingly read:

“Communism is dead” - *New York Herald, July 26, 1877*

The banner continued with a list of active socialist newspapers in different languages.\(^397\) In New York 1881, with 3,000 people in attendance, it was apparent revellers were proud of their multiculturalism, referring to their celebration as a “Festival of the Emigrants.”\(^398\) They discussed the virtues of the assassination of Czar Alexander II with speeches from labour journalist John Swinton, and the Communard Edmond Mégy who was amongst the executioners of the Archbishop.\(^399\) Here we see a community that could have been divided by nationalism, but as the many languages present demonstrated, their class identity united them beyond their nationality.

In 1890 London, the split SL and SDF held separate celebrations. Perhaps compensating for fractures, each event focussed on international cooperation. *Justice* discussed the unity of the crowd while speeches once more expressed an internationalist agenda: “[y]ear after year this Commune celebration is regarded as the day of all others when Socialists from all parts of the country can meet…”\(^400\) Speeches were made about the political successes of the German Social Democrats and issues of Irish Home Rule. When Kropotkin spoke it was of the suffering in Siberia, the wind of revolution blowing towards

\(^{395}\) “Commemoration in Chicago” 18-March, 1872.

\(^{396}\) “The Red Flag Waves Again” *The Sun* 20-March, 1895.

\(^{397}\) “The Commune” 18-March, 1878.


\(^{399}\) Jellinek, *Commune*, 349.

\(^{400}\) “The Commune of Paris” *Justice* 22-March, 1890.
Russia, and he thanked the audience for their protests against the Russian Government. Zéphyrin Camélinat, founder of the French International and head of the Commune’s mint, spoke at the celebration in 1894. His speech highlighted the internationalist nature of the Commune, as was reflected by his presence at an English event. He reasoned that since capitalists were the same the world over, “we must be the same also”.

During this time of increased movement of capital and labour forces across national boundaries, there was also an increased connection between international labour organisations and personal ties. This was a part of a longer history which saw British radicals move to America in the wake of the War of Independence, as well as Chartist emigrants, prefiguring the movement of exiled Communards. The transatlantic connection existed between the socialist organisations of the two countries, established by the International, but developed by the AFL and TUC. The 1891, New York SLP celebration read and published a telegram from Britain’s SDF: “Each anniversary of the establishment of the Paris Commune brings the Socialist parties of all countries into a closer bond of international union.” The internationalism inherent in the Commune was fully acknowledged by those celebrating it.

Celebrations as Palimpsest

Celebrations consistently promoted internationalism, but other lessons were also drawn from the Commune’s memory. Organisations on both sides of the Atlantic adapted the Commune to suit their needs. The Commune was used to educate audiences, but was also manipulated by presenters to form alternate interpretations. Its message was frequently rewritten, making the celebrations a palimpsest, capable of revealing what was important politically to organisations and their working-class audience. Kropotkin said at the 1887 celebration:

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401 Ibid.
402 Gluckstein, Commune, 226.
403 “The Celebration of the Paris Commune” Justice 31-March, 1894.
404 Neville Kirk, Comrades and Cousins: Globalization, Workers and Labour Movements in Britain, the USA and Australia (London: Merlin, 2003) 7.
405 Michael Durey, Transatlantic Radicals and the Early American Republic (Lawrence: U.P. of Kansas, 1997).
408 “The Paris Commune” Workmen’s Advocate 21-March, 1891.
“popular movements are not judged by what they have achieved under given circumstances, but by the aspirations expressed in the movement.” This quote reveals how the Commune’s many aspirations could lend weight to disparate ideals. The Commune could be used to appeal to anarchists or socialists. It educated on oppression, but provided contradictory goals for ending it: some espoused the ballot box, while others looked to a shared revolutionary history to inspire revolution. This central question of revolution or reform, voting or violence, came to shape the attitudes of the celebrating community.

The Commune was used to educate those celebrating on socialist concepts. William Morris’s article ‘Why we Celebrate the Commune of Paris’ stated: “[t]he Commune of Paris is but one link in the struggle which has gone on through all history of the oppressed against the oppressors”. The quote borrows from Marx’s first two lines of The Communist Manifesto: “[t]he history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles… in a word, oppressor and oppressed”. To Morris, both the Commune and The Communist Manifesto are educational and instructional. Morris’s article also described the Commune’s history as in a “poisonous gloom” and that it is “our duty” to raise it so that “those who are not yet touched by socialism may learn”. The Commune was used not only to teach elements of socialism, but to show the audience how they were currently being oppressed in society.

The idea of the Commune as representative of a clash between oppressor and oppressed was easily expressed and could be translated to the daily existence of American and British workers. Brucker’s opening speech at the 1877 Milwaukee celebration exalted “the noble men and women who rose on that occasion to overthrow the tyranny of capital and ennoble labor.” At the 1879 Chicago celebration Parsons said “[t]he Tyranny of capital must be made to yield to the supremacy of Labor” and “Workingmen should be prepared and arm for the conflict.” In a speech at the Chicago 1885 celebration William Holmes claimed that the Commune was “the protest of the robbed against robbers, of the poor against their oppressors”. In 1886, the London celebration strived for the “overthrow in all countries of the system of class-domination, founded on force and fraud.” This remained a consistent

410 The Commonweal 19-March, 1887.
411 Engels, Selected, 33.
414 “Vive La Commune” Alarm 04-April, 1885.
message, seen again in 1890 when the SL declared: “we will never cease from the struggle which they so nobly sustained until Labour has been freed from the class domination”. Kropotkin’s 1887 speech declared that the Commune was inspirational because it stood for the “abolition of… oppression” and the Communards “masters of [their] own destinies.” For Kropotkin this was the “great principle” that the Commune had “proclaimed.” In New York 1896, an influential member of the SLP, Lucien Sanial, said “[t]he oppressed workingmen of this country cannot better honor the memory of the 35,000 martyrs of the Commune, who died for the cause of humanity, than by working for the same cause – their own cause, the cause of their own posterity.” Through Commune celebrations audiences were reminded of the oppression present in their lives, but given conflicting options on how to end it.

The celebration of an event like the Commune fundamentally highlights oppression within society. When a ritual shows the oppressive nature of a society it can demonstrate to those participating that they too are oppressed. Society at large remembered the Commune with horror. This hegemonic memory was being challenged by socialists who instead remembered the Commune as “the glorious harbinger of a new society.” These celebrations meant this community was opposed to the hegemonic memory, and by extension society. In celebrating the Commune, participants acknowledge an alternative memory to the hegemonic one of society, one which highlighted the oppressive nature of capitalist society.

Organisations like SDF and SLP pushed for reform through existing electoral systems. Electoral reform was a new objective that required change in the ‘collective action

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417 “The Paris Commune” Freedom April 1887.
419 Kertzer, Ritual, 162-3.
420 This horrific memory was established with the Conservative opinion presented in the previous chapter. In the U.S. Katz, Appomattox, has shown that this interpretation survived in the middle-class (118-41) and religious institutions (142-60) throughout the 1870s. Coghlan, Sensational, demonstrated how this continued to the twentieth century in literature and art. Tom Goyens, Beer and Revolution: The German Anarchist Movement in New York City, 1880-1914 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007) 48-9, also highlighted the subversive nature of Commune celebrations. In Britain the Commune did not have the same presence, however, it was also often portrayed negatively in middle-class fiction: Elisabeth Jay, British Writers & Paris: 1930-1875 (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2016) 254. In 1886, Eleanor Marx described the English memory of the Commune as “rapine, fear, and lust”: Lissagaray, Commune, ii.
421 Marx, Cw, 114.
422 Molden, “Resistant,” 125-42.
frame’ of these organisations; new ideas to inspire and legitimate future actions. On 15 March 1874, the Chicago communists celebrated with speeches, dancing, and beer at Arbeiter Hall. A large community of families participated while non-members listened from outside. The first speaker, Herr Zimple, sketched the history of the Commune and its consequences, “the workingmen of Paris, stung into madness by oppression which had been their lot for centuries, arose in their might against the aristocracy.” While his speech started with a revolutionary tone, it ended with a reminder that the workers there need not resort to such measures because they “had only to go to the ballot-box, vote the right ticket, and their rights and liberties would be secured.” The Commune became a symbol of what a workers’ government could achieve, not of working-class rebellion.

On 22 March 1879, the largest transatlantic celebration of the Paris Commune was held in Chicago, as part of a SLP electoral push for Mayor. It was a ‘Grand Anniversary in commemoration of the Dawn of Liberty in 1848 and 1871’. The festival was held by SLP, and included trade unions, orchestras, and speeches. The Chicago Tribune placed the crowd at 30,000, and regional papers at 25,000, however The Socialist’s headline announced that “One Hundred Thousand People Celebrate”, later explaining that there were 40,000 at a time and people circulated. It was held in the Exposition Building on Chicago’s lakefront, the same building used for the Republican presidential nominating convention the next year. The two events had much in common with large crowds forming party unity and hoping for electoral success. Included in the first day was a military drill from a working-class militia, the Lehr- und Wehr-Verein. The show of force was widely covered by the above newspapers. The Socialist considered it reassurance against a Bloody Week massacre in Chicago. A speech was delivered by the SLP nominee for mayor, Dr. Schmidt. This massive celebration was an important part of a campaign to advance the party and elect Schmidt, who placed third.

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424 “The Communists” Inter-Ocean 16-March, 1874.
429 Nelson, Martyrs, 61; Green, Death, 88-9.
The program continued the next day. Fewer people were now in attendance, estimated by *The Socialist* to be 15,000. Here Paul Grottkau said:

> The Socialists demand higher progress and more liberty. If the working classes at the coming election would do their duty, they could make a great step towards their liberation.\(^{430}\)

A clear link was being drawn between liberty and the ballot box. *The Socialist* considered this event irrefutable evidence of the success of the SLP and the power of socialist ideas. While the success of the celebration is a strong indicator of the popularity of the SLP, the message of progress came from looking at the past. The SLP took the past revolutions of 1848 and 1871 to form a message of liberation, which they claimed was close enough that it could be achieved through the right vote. During this immense celebration the workers of Chicago learned of the Commune as a part of their own history of progress.

The Commune as palimpsest was visible in Britain 1892 when both the SDF and Anarchist-Communists held conflicting celebrations on 18 March. Each organisation claimed that liberty was near, and used the Commune to inspire either votes or revolution. While these celebrations split the crowd, each hall was reported as being filled near to capacity by an enthusiastic audience. At the SDF celebration, speakers felt that action could be successful through elections: “they had every reason to feel encouraged by the County Council Election. The workers had voted solidly for what was, in the main, a labour programme”.\(^{431}\) However, at their 1895 celebration, the SDF were disappointed in the recent County elections. They lamented that London “lagged so far behind other capitals”\(^{432}\), and criticised so-called “progressive” politicians. These concerns were nothing to the anarchist-communists who in their 1892 Commune celebration queried “[w]hat is the use of replying to them with votes? Do they slay with pieces of paper? No, with brute force.”\(^{433}\) Voting was a pointless act, it was said, “the hour for action has arrived”.\(^{434}\) The palimpsest of the Commune shows how the contradictory ideas of revolution and reform could be discussed simultaneously in one city.

Whether appealing to revolution or the ballot box, history and tradition were given great significance by speakers. To magnify its importance, the relatively young Commune

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431 “Twenty-First anniversary of the Commune of Paris” *Justice* 26-March, 1892.
433 “Commemoration of the Paris Commune” *Freedom* April, 1892.
434 “The Celebration of the Paris Commune” *Commonweal* 26-March, 1892.
was often linked to a grander revolutionary tradition, defined by the revolutions of 1776 and 1789. This is fitting for the annual Commune celebrations because, as David Kertzer contends, the function of many rituals is “linking the past to the present and the present to the future.” Much of the celebratory ritual was consistent, while the meaning was malleable. *Commonweal* printed annual articles on the Commune. These emotive pieces connected the Commune to the revolutions of 1848 and 1789, while celebrating heroes and martyrs. The celebrations were advertised as places where readers could learn the truth after reading the “reptilian” press and begin to agitate, educate and organise. The 1889 Commune celebration in London used the centenary of the French Revolution as a major theme, and paralleled the two revolutions: “one was to the political revolution which led to the emancipation of the bourgeois from obsolete class-laws and oppressive restrictions, so was the [Commune] to the Social Revolution which should free the proletariat, and should not only amend but end class-society altogether.” This quote is indicative of how British speakers elevated the Commune’s status to that of the French Revolution. Chicago’s ‘Dawn of Liberty’ celebration explicitly joined 1848 and 1871 to appeal to a larger crowd. At that celebration, Thomas Morgan said “[t]hey were celebrating the Commune in 1848 and 1871, because their brethren fought for the same principles that they were fighting for to-day” and that “[o]ur forefathers, in 1776, fought for the same end as the Socialists now”. By drawing connections between their revolutionary brethren and forefathers they associated their past, present and future as one of progress towards liberty. This was heightened when Albert Parsons continued “[t]he ruling powers object to the progress of the age, and to retard it they would resort to arms” and “[t]he capitalists were not afraid of...the arms [workers] carried, but of the superior intelligence that has been gathered by the working classes, who were making steady advances for human liberty.” Speakers compared the Commune to past revolutions, giving it greater significance in their present, and forming a vision for the future. By joining in these celebrations, workers shared in a progressive identity, forged in revolutionary tradition.

As a palimpsest, we have seen how the Commune was drawn upon as a symbol of revolutionary tradition, but it was also a source for progressive education. In Sanial’s 1898

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435 Kertzer, Ritual, 9-10.  
438 “The Dawn of Liberty” Socialist 29-March, 1879
speech at the New York celebration he said, “[w]e sing in the Marseillaise, ‘To arm, citizens!’ now we say rather ‘To school, citizens’”.439 At the ‘Dawn of Liberty’ celebration, Parsons laid clear a goal for the future, the same one which had driven the German and French communists of 1848 and 1871: a “[r]epublic, wherein the working classes – the masses – would partake of the civilisation which their industry and skill had created.”440 The London Anarchists in 1894 also focused on ideas for change. Macdonald stated that the “success of a revolution depended upon new ideas”.441 Mowbray observed that it was important to join trade unions “to spread Anarchist ideas”.442 And the article in Freedom ended by saying “[l]et us spread ideas, and time will prove their worth.” These ideas for the future took the Commune as their starting point, but focused on moving forward. At the SDF celebration speeches focused on rediscovering key lessons from the Commune. C.A. Gibson “urged the audience to take to heart the failures and errors of the Commune.” The audience was reminded that meetings were annual because: “[w]e were learning each year more and more of the true history of the Commune”.443 The Commune was the keystone of educational ideas for social progression.

Outside of education and tradition, the Commune was a call to arms for workers. Johann Most said at the 1883 New York celebration that the Commune was “too humane, and the Commune of the future would be established regardless of humanity, and with firm hands to wield the sword of destruction.”444 This quote was printed in many newspapers, including British publications. In the wake of events such as Haymarket, the fear was not of what the bourgeoisie had done to workers in the past, but what the workers were going to do in the future. The 1890 New York commemoration was organised by the SLP. There, Augustus Deiabar “expressed hope that it would not be long until the uprising which they all looked forward so eagerly to should occur.”445 The reporter recalled the second speech by Serguis Schevitch: “[t]he story of rioting, bloodshed and disorder was received with bursts of applause, and especially when he referred to the probability of a revival of the same thing in the United States.”446 Kropotkin in 1887 demanded the workers not to wait to be led, but

441 “Commune Celebrations” Freedom April 1894.
442 Ibid.
445 “The Red Flag in Cooper Union” The Sun 18-March, 1890.
446 Ibid.
rather: “realise that you must trust nobody. Nobody will do as well for you, as yourselves! Rely upon your own initiative!”

The Commune was a demand, an inspiration to revolt and not to wait for reform from above.

Notwithstanding the revolutionary enthusiasm, the Commune was also a cautionary tale, making workers aware of the risks of insurrection. The London 1889 celebration was tempered by an air of trepidation. A speech was given by A.S. Headingley, a regular speaker at events, who was a SDF member and had served in the Commune’s ambulance department. His speech, published in multiple newspapers, concentrated on the massacre in May, and made all the workers in the room aware of the absolute brutality of the bourgeoisie.

There were cries of “shame!” from the crowd. Justice headlined certain quotes, including “Butcher unarmed men and women”, “Massacred our comrades” and “Cannons with explosives”. These quotes painted an inhuman picture of the Versailles forces in May, mirroring the image of Communards presented by mainstream publications. Again, we see two contradictory images of the Commune, one focused on heroism and action, the second on risk and danger.

Celebrations show the changing ambitions of radical British and American organisations. The SDF in 1894 said “[w]e must give ourselves to the Socialist movement to be used; not as we desire, but as the movement desires.” The movement’s desires were transitory in nature, sometimes pushing for representation, then revolution. The concept of a palimpsest is important for understanding the shifting nature of Commune celebrations. The event was grounded in ritual, but its message was rewritten each year by groups who needed a new moral from the story. Audiences were told of the event for often contradictory purposes: revolution or reform, visions of past and future, both inspiring and horrifying. The Commune was an educational tool for yesterday’s revolutions, and a manipulation for tomorrow’s revolution.

447 “The Paris Commune” Freedom April, 1887.
450 Ibid.
Community Formation expressed through the Ritual of Commune Celebrations

The role of Commune celebrations within the working-class community is defined by their collective memory. Annual celebrations both reaffirmed connection to the narrative of the Commune, and formed a community ritual. As we have seen, the message changed, but the commemorative process was highly ritualised: its date, the familiar story, red flags, greetings from similar celebrations, singing of the *Marseillaise*, and a shared resolution all became ritualised. This annual ritual was performed in both countries and was instrumental in forming solidarity. The narrative was intended to foster a class-based community which could draw on a shared past and values. By celebrating the Commune, workers created a group identity, that was defined by class and which permeated their self-perception. 452 This story created a collective identity formed through shared oppression, and in the wake of the Haymarket Affair became increasingly aggressive. This section will first examine the burgeoning socialist communities in London and their first celebrations, before considering the American context and the changes in their community caused by the Haymarket Affair.

London’s socialist organisations began in 1883, and their growth can be traced through Commune celebrations. Karl Marx died on 14 March 1883, which meant that Sunday 16 March 1884 was an ideal time to celebrate both his life and the Commune. The SDF’s intention was to march to Highgate Cemetery, where at Marx’s grave there would be several speeches and songs. 453 Instead the cemetery’s gates were locked and approximately 40 policemen emerged, stopping the socialists from entering. The speeches were given at a nearby clearing, before police showed up as the demonstration reached its close. 454 Included in this crowd was William Morris, who wrote in a letter that the procession included 3,000-4,000 people and that “I was loth to go, but did not dislike it when I did go” 455. Beginning in 1885 he gave annual speeches at Commune celebrations and spoke of it frequently in his newspaper. 456 These gatherings were the first stirrings of the SDF. As socialist organisations

452 This key function of rituals to create solidarity is highlighted in: Kertzer, *Ritual*, 45, 62. Similarly, the importance of creating these shared identities, and their power in: Assmann, *Memory*, 3, 17, 38.
454 “The Demonstration at Highgate” *Justice* 22-March, 1884.
came together into identifiable movements, they gained what Elizabeth Armstrong and Suzanna Crage termed ‘mnemonic capacity’.\(^{457}\) This capacity refers to their ability to develop a commemoration and ritualise it within a growing community. The same happened for the IWPA in Chicago and SLP across the U.S.

In 1885, *Justice* published an announcement for a Commune celebration that was the first of many to appear in newspapers over the next decade.\(^ {458}\) In 1886, both *Commonweal* and *Justice* published articles recounting the celebration which occurred 18 March at South Place Chapel. The chapel became reminiscent of churches filled by workers during the Commune. While a coincidence, the objective of meetings in both instances was to educate and revolutionise through the Commune, thereby forming their respective communities.\(^ {459}\) In 1886, speeches from representatives of over ten organisations were read in many languages. Of the crowd *Justice* said, “the most important feature was the manifest earnestness of the crowded audience” and “[what] seemed to produce most effect upon the audience was beyond question the evidence given of the capacity of the working men of Paris to reorganise the administration of the city after they obtained control”.\(^ {460}\) Though the SDF and SL were young organisations, the large, rapturous audience is evidence of the growth of the Commune’s myth and the community.

Both newspapers included the declaration made by these joint organisations in 1886, which included the phrases “commemorate the heroic devotion of the Parisian working-classes”, “forerunner of socialised administration”, “gratitude to those who fell”, “fully recognises that the lessons to be learnt from the events”, and “it calls upon the wage workers of the world to unite”.\(^ {461}\) These phrases demonstrate a connection to the Communards and a desire from British organisations to form a community orientated toward international unity. The week before the celebration, advertisements for three different meetings appeared in *The Commonweal*,\(^ {462}\) amidst news for Dublin and Glasgow celebrations. These celebrations were not just limited to a chapel in London, but occurred all over the country.

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\(^{458}\) *Justice* 14-March, 1885.

\(^{459}\) Johnson, *Association*, 3-5.

\(^{460}\) “The Anniversary of the Paris Commune.” 21-March, 1886.

\(^{461}\) Ibid & “Celebration of the Commune” *Commonweal April*, 1886.

\(^{462}\) “Meeting of Other Societies” *Commonweal March*, 1886.
1891 was the twentieth anniversary of the Commune and there were many celebrations across Britain. Celebrations continued the rituals of past years, but speeches also focused on the growth of their community. At the SDF celebration organisers rejoiced: “nothing gives a better idea of the spread of Socialism in Great Britain and Ireland than the rapid increase in the number of meetings held to celebrate the anniversary in all parts of the kingdom.” They felt their perceived growth meant proportional power: “if there was a similar uprising now in Paris the [English] middle classes would feel that the Revolution was at their own doors.” The nature of the audience was also applauded: “nothing shows how great a change has taken place among the English workers more clearly than the marked attention with which they now listen to foreign Socialist speakers whose language they can barely understand.” In a short time the socialists of London had come together and used the Commune as both an educational source and cause to come together as a community.

*Justice*, on 27 March 1886, showed how their community was being actively formed: “let us, therefore, if we wish to see an ordered Social Revolution in our own day remember on each successive anniversary that victory against the organised forces ever against us can only be gained by absolute solidarity among the peoples.” The collective language of “we”, “our”, “us” created a shared identity between the organisation and audience. The community’s shared identity is a crucial element in advancing growth. The importance of the ritual in forming solidarity is demonstrated in the act of remembering each anniversary. The Commune’s narrative provided both a shared class history, or “anniversary”, and future “Social Revolution”. The quote finally emphasises the community’s need for “solidarity” if they wanted to succeed.

Bruce Nelson has discussed how the anarchist community of Chicago grew in the early 1880s, with Commune celebrations that formed a festive set of rituals; singing, dancing, and speeches. Similar celebrations occurred in other parts of the country, which reflected the growing influence of anarchist ideals. In 1885 and 1886, celebrations from the SLP and

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464 “Celebration of the Commune of Paris” *Commonweal* April 1891.
466 “The Anniversary of the Paris Commune.”
468 Ibid. 156.
IWPA occurred in Pennsylvania and St. Louis. Celebrations were held in honour of the Commune’s martyrs. Speakers referred to “the honored dead” who “were martyrs of a glorious cause.” However, there were more graphic examples, “[r]emember the women who were ravished and disembowelled; their unborn babies torn from their bodies and carried aloft upon the bayonets of their murderers.” In 1886 a speaker at a Denver celebration announced: “we have nothing left but the right to revolt against oppression.” The growth of these celebrations and the more inflammatory tone of the speakers is indicative of a shift towards active revolt, seen in the Commune was becoming more appealing.

The Haymarket Affair caused a dramatic change in tone at Commune celebrations, which further accentuated martyrdom and violent action. The 1886 IWPA celebration in Chicago included singing, dancing, poetry, and after a brief retelling of the Commune, the crowd cried “Vive la Commune”. This idyllic celebration was juxtaposed against the Haymarket affair which occurred in the same city six weeks later. The increased calls for violence are symptomatic of communities with a cultural memory of oppression which are often aggressive. With newly vivid oppression within their community, Haymarket caused the Commune’s narrative to change. Elements of martyrdom and resistance were amplified. The shared themes between the Commune and Haymarket were easily adapted to celebrate both the martyrs of 1871 and 1886. This community was built upon a story of overcoming oppression against a threat they needed to collectively defeat. The Commune showed a pathway of resistance. A community formed around such a memory may act on its example when given a similar struggle.

Haymarket had a similarly radicalising effect on the 1888 London Commune celebration that honoured the martyrs of not just the Commune, but Haymarket and Trafalgar Square too. These new martyrs were quickly added to the bloody history of the worker’s
movement. At London’s next Commune celebration, a large banner hung in the hall reading “Remember Chicago” and speeches from the Chicagoans sold in great numbers. The tone of the speeches glorified the recent martyrdom of workers, forcing the audience to consider the risk of what they may be asked to do, and the rewards it promised. Eleanor Marx-Aveling said “[t]he reward of those who gave their lives for Socialism lies in the certainty of its eventual success.”

The role of martyrdom and honouring martyrdom has been of great significance when forming a collective memory for Catholic and other religious communities. At the same 1888 London celebration, H. Sparling said:

The Christian martyr was undoubtedly a brave man but…[t]he Communists died for human society. Only a few months ago the whole world had their eyes fixed upon the death of a few men in a city in the United States.

The celebration endorsed a message which included the phrase “so many workers have sacrificed their lives” for the lofty goal of the abolition of class distinctions. The socialist martyrs were elevated from traditional Christian martyrs. Socialists were depicted as having died in service of humanity, the glorification of which extolled the virtues of martyrdom within their community. This produced an idealised version of the ‘Communist’, much like Christian Martyrdom created the ideal Christian. Their community was to be defined by those who gave their lives at moments like the Commune and Haymarket.

Post Haymarket, mainstream American newspapers began to cover Commune celebrations with more derision. In 1887, Lucy Parsons gave a speech at Cincinnati’s largest Commune celebration, organised by the anarchist Anti-National Society with 1,000 people in attendance. This speech was one of many given while securing funding for the appeal of

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marginers were assaulted: more than 200 requiring treatment at the nearby hospital. A follow-up demonstration occurred on 20 November which was quickly suppressed by police and resulted in the death of radical Alfred Linnell.; Thompson, Morris, 490-2.

481 Ibid.
482 Elizabeth Castelli, Martyrdom and Memory (New York: Columbia U.P., 2004) 3-5.
484 Assmann, Memory, 59.
Albert Parsons, her husband. A scathing article was circulated by newspapers. Milwaukee’s celebration was similarly covered. The speaker, Grottkau, was criticised by the Milwaukee Daily Sentinel for painting the Commune “in a rosy light, making scarcely any reference to the horrors which it perpetrated”. The paper described the celebration as “a glorious event, which Anarchists everywhere celebrate – there was the killing of thousands of inoffensive people by the blood-drunk assassins of Paris; there was the murder of the archbishop, the destruction of property and the sacking of wine shops; there was the unrestrained brutality of inflamed ignorance.” The author went on to say that these celebrations were dangerous because the “Reds” have a political party (SLP) which could build support. Discussing the 1887 New York celebration, conservative newspaper, The Sun, mocked Schevitch’s speech:

“The only way to show yourselves worthy disciples of those who died on the barricades of Paris is to die for the great cause as they did.” There can be no objection to an Anarchist’s dying.

Conservative commentators became increasingly disparaging of the celebrations, stating that those participating were dangerous, especially anarchists and socialists. Such articles served to reinforce the radical narrative of an oppressed community.

Before the 1888 Chicago Commune celebration, Holmes in Alarm asked “[h]as the Element of Mercy a Place When in the Claws of a Wild Beast?” while looking to the Commune for an answer. Speeches made at the 1888 celebration in Chicago brought rumors of radicals “plotting against the life and property of citizens.” These rumors were widely published and led to police investigation. The hatred of anarchists was reaching its zenith in the wake of the Haymarket Affair. Chicago workers called their celebration “[a] Commune Festival” where people proudly proclaimed “I am an Anarchist” the quote itself a headline in the Washington Post. The celebration drew on the Commune’s red imagery and had the date “November 11, 1887” (Haymarket conspirators’ execution date) inscribed on bunting.

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487 “Anarchists Demonstration” Fort Worth Daily Gazette 08-March, 1887; Stark-County Democrat 17-March, 1887.
488 “A Day in the City” 21-March, 1887.
489 “Celebrating the Feast of Assassins” 22-March, 1887.
490 “Fraternization and Anarchy” 16-March, 1887.
493 20-March, 1888.
Busts of the martyred anarchists were lined with red ribbon and a wreath of myrtle, honouring them as champions. Albert Currlin addressed an estimated 1,500 people:

Vive la Commune… The world trembled at the sound…Did they kill Anarchism at the stamping out of the Commune? (“No.” “No,” and ironical laughter from all parts of the hall.)… Anarchy and Socialism have marched right onward.

He continued to goad the audience, “[a]re there no longer Anarchists in Chicago? There is one. I am an Anarchist. Let them strangle me if they dare.” A two-minute applause followed. Currlin demanded that the audience come to action as for too long they had “talked and danced”. He finished by exclaiming “[o]ur martyrs live in our midst. Long live Anarchy. Long live Socialism. Vive la Commune.” These reporters show that the community being formed in this time appeared increasingly dangerous to outsiders. Reactions to celebrations reveal how polarising the nature of events like Haymarket and the Commune had become. Orators like Currlin solidified the identity of a martyred and oppressed working class, and facilitate identification with the collective memory.

Haymarket continued to radicalise American socialist and anarchist organisations. In 1889, Lucy Parsons had just finished a string of debates with the SLP that had resulted in the organisation deciding not to run in the Chicago city elections; the ballot box was now seen as inefficacious.\footnote{Ashbaugh, Parsons, 173-4.}

The Central Labor Union, an organisation of multiple unions, held a Commune celebration where 2,500 listened to Parsons’ speech. It received coverage across the country, however, articles were typically short, and featured caustic headlines: “Lucy Parsons’ Ranting Speech”\footnote{Evening Bulletin 26-March, 1889.} or “Mrs. Parsons Seems to Learn Nothing from Experience”,\footnote{Pittsburg Dispatch 25-March, 1889.} and “A Raving Widow”.\footnote{Monday Morning The Los Angeles Daily Herald 25-March, 1889 (for a full list, see: Coghlan, Sensational, 182-3.)}

We want a revolution; whether peaceful or bloody, makes no difference, a revolution must come…I have but one object in life, that is to make you discontented, to make rebels of you all…Those who fell [in the Commune]
were martyrs and the path we tread is overstrewn with martyrs. But all the blood should not fall on one side.\textsuperscript{498}

The national press reprinted her call to revolution and gave it a far greater audience than it could ever have received otherwise.\textsuperscript{499} The \textit{Inter-Ocean} of Chicago commented that Parsons considered the leaders of the Commune too humanitarian, that more blood should have been shed and homes of the rich should have been pillaged.\textsuperscript{500} Parsons believed the audience needed to be more radical, violent and willing to sacrifice. During this period, the Commune had become increasingly associated with the anarchists rather than the socialists in America. This was seen through larger celebrations with more radical association, while the mainstream press was eager to disparage those involved. Socialists were also more radical during this time. In 1890 the SLP’s New York celebration had similarly inflammatory speeches.\textsuperscript{501} As newspaper rhetoric against radicals had increased, speeches such as Parsons, revealed that radicals were primed for violence and advocating for their community to act.

As the wave of radicalism subsided, celebrations remained a unifying concept for communities, particularly under state suppression. By 1890, Chicago’s radical movements were severely weakened, their ranks thinned by trials, arrests, and public repression.\textsuperscript{502} Additionally, the SLP had returned to the ballot box with abysmal returns.\textsuperscript{503} In New York, the labour movement faced similar disarray.\textsuperscript{504} So in 1891, many celebrations had returned to their format of singing, dancing and moderate speeches. Most newspaper coverage briefly went over the Chicago celebration, while others discussed celebrations in Manhattan, New Jersey, and Brooklyn.\textsuperscript{505} Unexpectedly, the Chicago Police attempted to suppress the city’s 1892 celebration. Police Chief Mc Claughry, also chief during the Haymarket Affair, sent a letter to the organisers stating no red flags at the celebration, and if there were speakers, no beer. To enforce this, police officers were stationed by the armoury.\textsuperscript{506} In response, at the celebration in Milwaukee, the speaker, “Chicago socialistic agitator” Robert Steiner, proclaimed the Communards and \textit{petroleuses} heroes and said of Mc Claughry’s suppression

\textsuperscript{498} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{499} Coghlan, \textit{Sensational}, 97.
\textsuperscript{500} “Beer Guzzling and Bombast” \textit{The Daily Inter-Ocean} 24-March, 1889.
\textsuperscript{501} “Local Notes” \textit{Workmen’s Advocate} 29-March, 1890.
\textsuperscript{502} Nelson, \textit{Martyrs}, 234.
\textsuperscript{503} Ibid. 227.
\textsuperscript{504} Goyens, \textit{Beer}, 164.
\textsuperscript{506} “Chicago Anarchists” \textit{Morning Call} 20-March, 1892.
that without being able “to give utterances to the great sorrow which consumes our hearts…It will force us into action”. Steiner finished by saying “[w]e do not want to take lives, but neither do we want ours taken from us by starvation and persecution.”

Chicago’s radicals were incapable of defeating their suppression by force. However, Commune celebrations continued to provide community cohesion and platforms for orators like Steiner to verbally attack the state.

Commune celebrations were used in community formation on both sides of the Atlantic from 1871 to the end of the eighteenth century. In Britain, the burgeoning SDF and SL used Commune celebrations to create identities for their organisations and members. London’s 1895 SDF celebration ended with a powerful image of martyrdom: “[a]s the massacre of Saint Bartholomew had caused the spread of Protestantism so had the massacre of the Commune spread the truth of Socialism”. Narratives of death were used to create solidarity. Workers understood they were oppressed, and that only through a shared struggle could they be free. In 1893, London’s anarchists considered their celebration an “[a]narchist parade, whereat we meet comrades”. The celebration of the Commune was always directed toward organisation and solidarity. This solidarity was formed through ritual, it filled the hall with “blood-red banners. The well-known faces of steadfast comrades, the interested outsiders”. The collective memory formed in these organisations relied on the ritual of annual celebrations and a shared narrative of oppression and martyrdom. The Haymarket Affair led to a radical community which further embraced the Commune as a symbol of these concepts. The Commune was an ideal catalyst for community formation because it perfectly encapsulated these motifs.

End of Commune, rise of May Day

London’s celebrations of the Commune continued, however their size, coverage and significance shrank. At the 1897 celebration Justice conceded that “[t]he meeting was… not so crowded …[and] there was not the wild enthusiasm which characterised the gatherings of a

507 “Used Violent Speech” Milwaukee Sentinel 21-March, 1892.
508 A Catholic Massacre of Protestants in France 1572 [the Huguenots].
few years ago” In 1895, the ILP’s Labour Leader explained why the Commune was being less commemorated in a short article:

Thousands of men and women who have joined the Socialist movement during the last two years have but a dim notion of the traditions of the earlier days of Socialism at home and abroad… To them not merely is the Commune of Paris an almost unknown event…and many other incidents that have powerfully influenced the growth of Socialism in Britain, are hardly recollected by them…

The growth of British socialist movements resulted in an influx of new members who no longer had an emotional connection to the Commune.

May Day developed at the end of the nineteenth century as a day intended to unify workers in support of an 8-hour work day, international solidarity and peace. In Britain, and across Europe, demonstrations began in 1890 after a decree from the Second IWA. On May Day 1892, the demonstration in Hyde Park had over 500,000 people, an event dwarfing even the largest Commune events. Justice began printing an annual May Day special edition in 1895. These editions did not discuss the Commune or Haymarket, instead they focussed on the present nature of socialist movements across Europe, and their future. This reinforces Eric Hobsbawm’s claim that May Day “was about nothing but the future.” May Day celebrations had an ominous beginning in America, considering Haymarket. However, in 1890 the AFL and Knights of Labor began striking for 8-hour days on May Day again. During this time the U.S. press associated May Day with radical European labour movements but the AFL’s continued efforts meant May Day was associated with them and the 8-hour movement, and made it an important date on millions of workers’ calendars. Commune celebrations provided a frame-work organisers could use to facilitate larger events; this is evidence of their growing mnemonic capacity. Internationalism which had been fostered

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511 “Commemoration of the Commune” Labour Leader 23-March, 1895.
513 Ibid. 1.
514 “The May Day Demonstration” Justice 07-May, 1892.
515 Justice 1-May, 1896; Justice 1-May, 1897; Justice 1-May, 1898.
517 Foner, May, 40-1.
518 Ibid. 56-7, 75-6.
519 Armstrong and Crage, “Stonewall,” 738-9
by Commune celebrations, transferred to May Day. Both events espoused internationalist ideals, but May Day was not about revolution and martyrdom, it represented the 8-hour movement and reform. The Commune’s violent origins appealed to socialist and anarchist workers, however May Day was a vision for the future.

Conclusion

“Year after year, I say, we have traversed the ground, taking one point of view or another, finding everywhere warning and hope.” 520 This 1879 quote from leading labour journalist John Swinton 521 after Chicago’s ‘Dawn of Liberty’ celebration epitomises much of the experience surrounding Commune celebrations. This chapter has shown the Commune celebrations to be a barometer for the attitudes of the radical, working-class organisations and communities in the U.S. and Britain. There were changing points of view but most important was the question of the Commune as a working-class government or revolution. After Haymarket, the communities felt more oppressed, including the internationally aware British organisations, which meant violence was more often alluded to. Ultimately, the Commune’s bloody origin and association with violent anarchists post Haymarket made it a radical symbol. As labour movements again sought democratic reform the Commune was tainted and instead May Day was embraced.

Socialist and anarchist groups existed amidst growing trade unions and strikes. These groups attempted to foster larger working-class movements and used the Commune to come together and espouse their ideas. They drew on the Commune as an example of international cooperation, drawing on their shared class identity. The Commune was rewritten annually, creating a palimpsest. Speakers drew on the Commune as a symbol of working-class government, or of revolution, a symbol of warning and hope, of past, present and future, something to learn from, and revere. The community formed around this image felt further oppressed by events such as Haymarket, and drew on the morals and images of the Commune to further honour martyrdom. Memory, narrative, and ritual surrounding the Commune were all vital elements in forming this community. Over time, the radical symbol of the Commune

520 “The Paris Commune” Socialist 05-April, 1879
521 Fink, Workingmen’s, xiii.
was supplanted by more moderate events, such as May Day. Though upsurped, the Commune was of crucial importance in the formation of radical working-class communities in the late nineteenth century.

These annual events were an opportunity for workers to come together, but had the Commune never happened, would these workers simply have celebrated something else? It is very possible that any number of other revolutionary dates could have defined workers calendars as the Commune did. However, the Commune’s easily developed themes of oppression, internationalism, and martyrdom made it ideal for developing communities around these themes. Without any such annual events to rally around, working-class communities would have been less defined and less capable of reacting, either with violence or voting.
Conclusion

*The Paris Commune: A Story in Pictures* was printed for the Commune’s sixtieth anniversary, by International Publishers in New York. The book’s pictures retell the events in Paris, 1871. Page 28 showed Karl Marx at his desk, illuminated by a lamp writing *The Civil War in France*. Page 29 then showed a procession of workers as they marched under red flags. It was captioned:

March 18th, anniversary of the Paris Commune, is one of the milestones of the advancing working class. Since 1871, it has been a day of celebration and rededication of the workers in every country. 522

This pamphlet is more than anecdotal, these two pages encapsulate the essence of this thesis’ two chapters.

The first image, Marx at his study, portrays the development of a socialist canon for the Commune. Marx’s interpretation competed with others, alternative narratives came from conservative and working-class newspapers. However, Marx’s status, victorious narrative, and the proliferation of his work made CWF dominant. Bax and Lissagaray built on his interpretation and created a series of texts presented to workers as all they needed to know on the Commune. CWF was made widely available and advertised to workers as the Commune’s key text. The adoption of Marx’s interpretation by Lenin and its role in Bolshevik mythology are indicative of the enduring socialist canon.

The second image illustrates how this canon filtered into working-class communities and became a part of their calendar. Organisations in both Britain and the U.S. used the Commune for community formation and orientation through annual celebrations. These communities were formed around the Commune’s themes of oppression, internationalism, and martyrdom. Annual celebration reflected first the desire for electoral reform, and then the increased violence surrounding these communities in the late 1880s from events like the Haymarket Affair. The Commune was rewritten, a palimpsest, showing older values, but also reflecting the needs of a more radical community. As violence subsided the now radical image of the Commune was less popular and May Day, an alternative event more closely

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associated with reform, became far more popular. However, as the above pamphlet shows, the Commune continued to be a day of reflection.

The transnational approach taken within this thesis has allowed for analysis of the connections between Britain and the U.S. in relation to the Paris Commune of France. Literature and celebratory memos were shared by organisations on both sides of the Atlantic. Celebrations pridefully acknowledged their position as one part of an international movement. These themes could not have been as fully explored without the focus on sources from both countries and discussing their evolution with shared focus. Key themes, such as reform and revolution, were apparent in both countries and become clearer when discussed together. Memory and labour history further informed this approach which aimed to reveal how these working-class communities were formed and changed in the Commune’s wake. The influence of the Commune was not limited to Paris, but appeared in newspapers and books across the globe, as such, to gain a full understanding of its impact, other countries must be considered.

As was discussed in Chapter Two, the end of the nineteenth century was a transformative period for workers in both the U.S. and Britain. Unions grew in number and power, strikes were more frequent, workers were increasingly urban, and more organisations orientated toward serving their needs. This thesis has demonstrated the way a recent failed revolution from continental Europe fit into this dynamic environment. The Commune as a revolutionary symbol had less power in the relatively stable countries of the U.S. or Britain. However, organisations still adopted the Commune as symbol of working class power, at a time when workers were becoming more powerful themselves.

Ultimately this thesis has shown how a socialist interpretation of the Commune was formed, how it was presented to the working-class, and how it was evoked in their communities. This demonstrates that the Commune did have an impact on the working-class of Britain and the U.S. from its inception, to beyond the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. This analysis of the Commune is just one case study of an increasingly globally aware working class at the end of the nineteenth century, of workers who looked internationally to answer their problems.
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