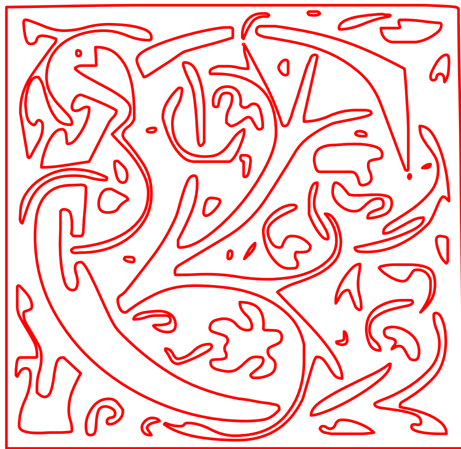
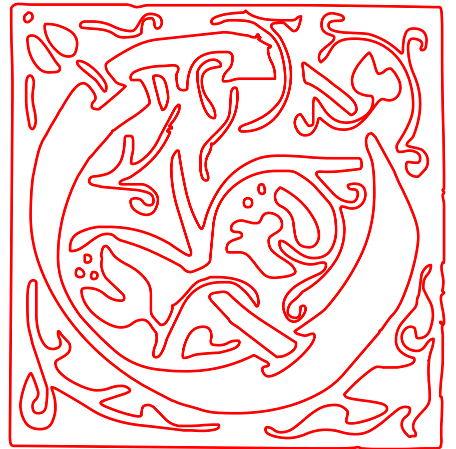
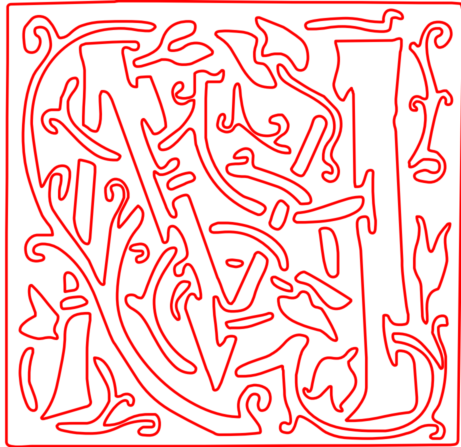
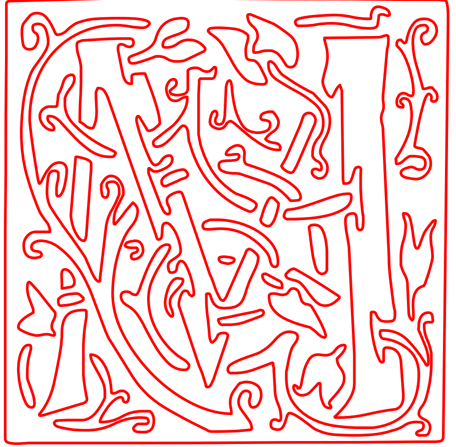
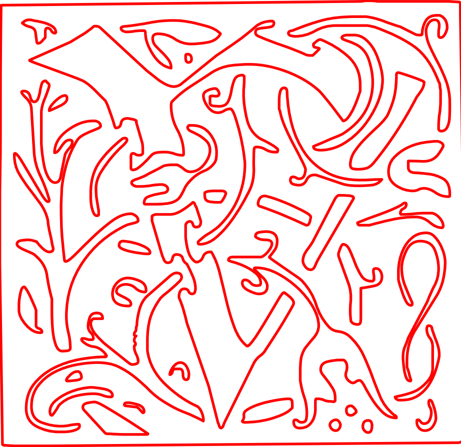
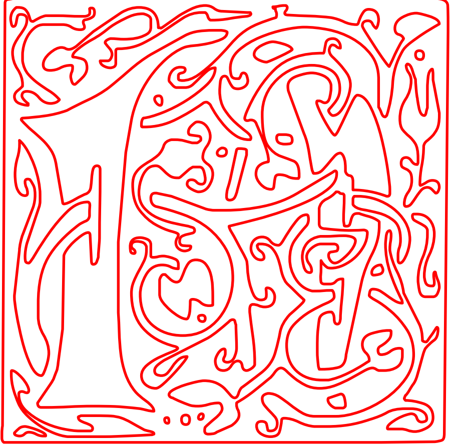
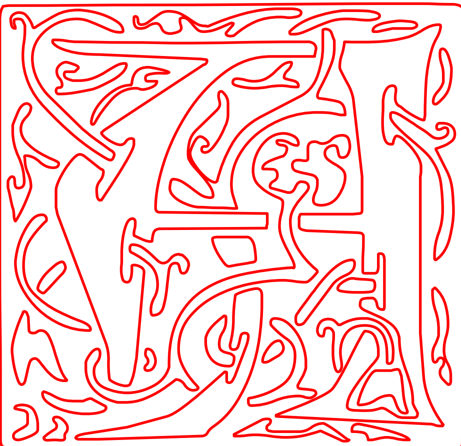
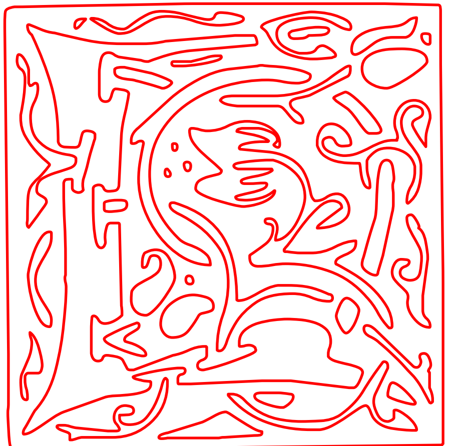

Dear participants,

In this small publication, we include two chapters from Kristin Ross' book *Communal Luxury*, with accompanying photographs and illustrations. Please read the text before the workshop.

Communal Luxury is also the name of our three day intensive workshop, which asks the question: what would truly collaborative filmmaking look like? We will draw on Ross' book, an account of the affective texture, revolutionary praxis and contemporary relevance of the Paris Commune of 1871. She describes "a worker-led insurrection that lasted seventy-two days and transformed Paris into an autonomous Commune whose social life was recalibrated according to principles of cooperation and association."

We have been talking about *Communal Luxury* for a while now. Initially it was as a residency proposal; we thought the short-lived upending of normal life enacted by the communards in 1871 could be a potent metaphor for the imagined function of a residency: to be temporarily outside ourselves, in new daily structures, our practices refreshed.

When the residency was cancelled due to the pandemic, we began to think about other ways to channel our research and the idea for this workshop was conceived. For us, one of the questions of filmmaking is 'how to organise?' in both a practical and political sense. La Commune offers a precedent for the re-thinking of traditional roles, one which we can use to disassemble the assumed hierarchy of a film set. Alongside the more obvious positions (camera, sound, lighting) we must consider how a film set sustains itself—who prepares the food? And, to take it a step further, what roles can we imagine which do not currently exist? What (communal) luxuries could we dream up for each other?

One of the 'recalibrations' Ross describes in *Communal Luxury* is what she calls the polytechnic, a "formation designed to overcome the division between manual and intellectual labor." In our workshop, we will strive towards a polytechnic environment, thinking and making together. We feel a strong affinity between the ideals of the Commune and the moving image works we are interested in, such as those produced by Karrabing Collective, George Kuchar and Ulrike Ottinger.

La Commune lasted for just over two months, but its impact on the lives of the surviving communards and their peers was life-long, and its afterlife in the popular imaginary clearly continues. Similarly, while we don't expect the methods used in the workshop to replace our daily practices, we hope that they can provide inspirational forms of collaboration and communal labour, which we can take forward into other aspects of our work. La Commune asks the fundamental question 'what is emancipation?' and critiques the notion of what was an emergent nation-state, both of which remain salient issues in our contemporary lives. In the book, Ross describes "a worker-led insurrection that lasted seventy-two days and transformed Paris into an autonomous Commune whose social life was recalibrated according to principles of cooperation and association." We don't have seventy-two days, but rather seventy-two hours, in which we will consider historical examples of horizontal organisation and filmmaking, devise our own structures and filmic strategies, and produce a collaborative film.

WET film
Sophie Bates, Marta Hryniuk, Anna Luczak, Erika Roux and Nick Thomas

Excerpts from
Communal Luxury
by Kristin Ross

Introduction

In this book I have tried to piece together the elements of an imaginary that fueled and outlived the event known as the Paris Commune of 1871—an imaginary to which the Communards and I have given the name "communal luxury." For seventy-two days in the spring of 1871, a worker-led insurrection transformed the city of Paris into an autonomous Commune and set about improvising the free organization of its social life according to principles of association and cooperation.

Since then, everything that occurred in Paris that spring—from the shock of ordinary people in a major European capital exercising powers and capacities normally reserved for a ruling elite to the savagery of the state's retaliation against them—has generated controversy and analysis. The historical landscape of the Commune I sketch here is at once lived and conceptual. By "lived," I mean that the materials I have used to compose it are the actual words spoken, attitudes adopted, and physical actions performed by the insurgents and some of their fellow travelers and contemporary supporters nearby. Conceptual, in the sense that these words and actions are themselves productive of a number of logics I have felt compelled to follow through in the pages that follow. I have taken as my starting point the idea that it is only by abiding insistently with the particular nature and context of the actors' words and inventions that we can arrive at the Commune's more centrifugal effects. It is a striking fact that, amidst the voluminous quantity of political analysis the Commune has inspired, Communard thought has historically received little attention, even from writers and scholars politically sympathetic to the event's memory. And yet, much of that thought—what the insurrectionists did, what they thought and said about what they did, the significance they gave to their actions, the names and words they embraced, imported or disputed—has been readily available, reissued, for example, in France by leftist editor François Maspero during the last period of high visibility of the Commune, the 1960s and '70s. I have preferred to linger with those voices and actions, rather than with the long chorus of political commentary or analysis—whether celebratory or critical—that followed. I have not been concerned with weighing the Commune's successes or failures, nor with ascertaining in any direct way the lessons it might have provided or might continue to provide for the movements, insurrections, and revolutions that have come in its wake. It is not at all clear to me that the past actually gives lessons. Like Walter Benjamin, though, I believe that there are moments when a particular event or struggle enters vividly into the figurability of the present, and this seems to me to be the case with the Commune today.

The world political scene of 2011 was dominated by the figure and phenomenology of the encampment or occupation, and it was the return of an occupational form of protest that compelled me, in turn, to go back to the political culture of the Paris Commune with a different set of questions than those that animated the historical poetics of the Commune I wrote in the 1980s.[1] The concerns that dominate today's political agenda—the problem of how to refashion an internationalist conjuncture, the future of education, labor, and the status of art, the commune-form and its relationship to ecological theory and practice—these preoccupations undoubtedly played a role in guiding the way I look now at Commune culture for they form the structuring themes of the book. For the most part, I have not felt the need to make explicit the Commune's resonances with the politics of today, although I believe those resonances do indeed exist—some of them quite humorous, as when the *New York Times* reported unknowingly the name of the young activist they were interviewing in the streets of Oakland, California in November 2011 as Louise Michel.[2] There is little need to spell out in detail how the way people live now under the contemporary form of capitalism—with the collapse of the labor market, the growth of the informal economy, and the undermining of systems of social solidarity throughout the overdeveloped world—bears more than a passing resemblance to the working conditions of the laborers and artisans of the nineteenth century who made the Commune, most of whom spent most of their time not working but looking for work. It has become increasingly apparent, particularly after the unraveling of societies like Greece and Spain, that we are not all destined to be immaterial laborers inhabiting a post-modern creative capitalist techno-utopia the way some futurologists told us we were ten years ago—and continue desperately to try to tell us even today. The way people live now—working part-time, studying and working at the same time, straddling those two worlds or the gap between the work they were trained to do and the work they find themselves doing in order to get by, or negotiating the huge distances they must commute or migrate across in order to find work—all this suggests to me, and to others as well, that the world of the Communards is in fact much closer to us than is the world of our parents. It seems utterly reasonable to me that younger people today, put off by a career trajectory in video-game design, hedge-fund management, or smart-phone bureaucracy, trying to carve out spaces and ways to live on the edges of various informal economies, testing the possibilities and limitations of living differently now within a thriving—if crisis-ridden—global capitalist economy, might well find interesting the debates that took place among Communard refugees and fellow travelers in the Juras in the 1870s that led

to the theorizing of something called "anarchist communism"—debates, that is, about decentralized communities, how they might come into being and flourish, and the way they might become "federated" with each other in relations of solidarity.

If I refrain from harnessing the Commune's reverberations in any more explicit way to the events and political culture of the present, it is in part because what intrigues me most about the event now is the way it has become unmoored—liberated, like Rimbaud's *Drunken Boat* perhaps, especially after 1989—from the two dominant historiographies that had anchored the way it could be represented and understood: official state-communist history, on the one hand, and national French republican history on the other. Having been liberated from these two imposing lineages and narrative structures, I feel no hurry to corral it into another. The end of state-communism freed the Commune from the role it had played in official communist historiography: after 1989 it was untethered from Lenin's apocryphal dance in the snow in front of the Winter Palace on the seventy-third day of the Russian Revolution—the day, that is, that the Revolution had lasted one day longer than the Commune and in so doing turned the latter into the failed revolution of which the new one would be the corrective. And much of my argument in what follows is directed at clarifying the way the Commune never really quite belonged to the French national fiction, to the heroic radical sequence of French republicanism, of which it was purported to be the last nineteenth-century spasm. If we take seriously the statement of one of its better-known participants, Gustave Courbet, to the effect that during the Commune "Paris has renounced being the capital of France,"[3] it becomes difficult to maintain with any great conviction the notion that it was the insurgents who fought and died in great numbers in Paris who somehow "saved the Republic." The imaginary the Paris Commune leaves to us is thus neither that of a national republican middle class nor that of a state-managed collectivism. Communal luxury is neither the (French) bourgeois luxury that surrounds it nor the utilitarian state collectivist experiments that succeeded it and dominated the first half of the twentieth century. Perhaps this is why another of its participants, many years later and in the midst of a highly critical evaluation of its political structure, concluded that

> *the Commune … set up for the future, not through its governors but through its defenders, a more superior ideal to all the revolutions that preceded it … a new society in which there are no masters by birth, title or wealth, and no slaves by origin, caste or salary. Everywhere the word "commune" was understood in the largest sense, as referring to a new humanity, made up of free and equal companions, oblivious to the existence of old boundaries, helping each other in peace from one end of the world to the other.*[4]

In their capacity to think together domains of the social formation that the bourgeoisie devotes itself to keeping apart—city and country, notably, but also theory and practice, mental and manual labor—the Communards tried to restart French history on another basis entirely. That basis and that history, though, could no longer be thought of as exactly "French" or national in its contours. It was at once smaller and far more expansive than that. The Communal imagination operated on the preferred scale of the local autonomous unit within an internationalist horizon. It had little room for the nation, or, for that matter, for the market or the state. This proved to be an extremely potent set of desires in the context in which it was generated—for what better moment to launch such an expansive project than when the French state, and the repressive bourgeois society it supported, had been so roundly defeated?

At the beginning of this introduction, I referred to the Commune as a worker-led insurrection that lasted seventy-two days and transformed Paris into an autonomous Commune whose social life was recalibrated according to principles of cooperation and association. Yet even a simple representation like this one of the facts of the event can become part of the problem. To explore what is meant by "communal luxury" I have had to expand the chronological and geographical frame of the event beyond the seventy-two Parisian days—from the March 18 attempted seizure of the cannons to the final bloody days of the massacre at the end of May—by which it is usually circumscribed. Following Alain Dalotel and others, I begin the event within the fever that erupted in working-class reunions and clubs in the final years of the Empire. And I end it with an extensive examination of the thought that was produced in the 1870s and 1880s when Communard refugees and exiles in England and Switzerland like Elisée Reclus, André Léo, Paul Lafargue, and Gustave Lefrançais, among others, met up with and collaborated with a number of their supporters and fellow travelers—people like Marx, Kropotkin, and William Morris. Though geographically distant from the spring insurrection, these last three of its contemporaries—like another, Arthur Rimbaud, about whom I have written elsewhere—were among the many for whom what had transpired in Paris during those few weeks had become a turning point in their lives and in their thinking.

I have altered the customary temporal and spatial limits of the Commune to include the way it spilled out into these adjacent scenes for two very precise reasons. The expanded temporality allows me to show that the civil war was not, as is usually stated, an outgrowth of the patriotism and circumstantial hardships brought on by the foreign war. It allows me, in fact, to show something like the reverse: the foreign war as a momentary aspect of an ongoing civil war. Secondly, foregrounding the theoretical production that followed and was produced by the movement in exile outside of France (rather than, say, the thinkers that preceded it, he Proudhons or the Blanquis) allows me to trace, in the displacements, intersections, and writings of the survivors, a kind of afterlife that does not exactly come after but in my view is part and parcel of the eventitself. The French word survie evokes this nicely: a life beyond life. Not the memory of the event or its legacy, although some form of these are surely already in the making, but its *prolongation*, every bit as vital to the event's logic as the initial acts of insurrection in the streets of the city. It is a continuation of the combat by other means. In the dialectic of the lived and the conceived—the phrase is Henri Lefebvre's—the thought of a movement is generated only with and after it: unleashed by the creative energies and excess of the movement itself. Actions produce dreams and ideas, and not the reverse.

Thought so intimately tied to the excess of an event does not have the finesse and fine tuning of theory produced at a safe distance, whether geographical or chronological. It bears the traces of its moment—or better, it views itself as still a part of the actual building of that moment, and so it is a rough-hewn, constructive kind of thought. It bears little resemblance to "high theory" in the usual sense of the term. The Civil War in France is not the same kind of book as *Capital*. And if Reclus and Morris, for example, are sometimes thought of as wooly or unsystematic thinkers, it is because they insisted on looking upon thinking as creating and building a context where ideas might be both productive and immediately effective in their moment.

When I first wrote about Communard Elisée Reclus twenty-five years ago, his work was virtually unknown outside of studies by a few pioneering anti-colonial geographers like Béatrice Giblin and Yves Lacoste. Now he is at the center of an enormous amount of international attention directed at rethinking his work as a kind of ecologism *avant la lettre*. His writings on anarchism, like those of Kropotkin, have also been the subject of renewed interest. And, at the same time, William Morris has emerged in the minds of many as a founding voice in the discourse of "socialist ecology." But the focus of current scholarship, as helpful as it has been for my own thinking, refrains from grounding, except in passing, any of the political thinking of Morris, Kropotkin, or Reclus in its historical relationship with what Morris called "the attempt to establish society on the basis of the freedom of labour, which we call the Commune of Paris of 1871."[5] Establishing that connection is part of the work of the last sections of the book. Another focus is a comparison of the profound and interrelated rethinking, in the work of these three writers, of what Reclus called solidarity, Morris called "fellowship," and Kropotkin "mutual aid," not as a moral or ethical sensibility, but as political strategy. As I have attempted to trace the immediate survie of the movement—what occurred in the lifetime of its participants—I have been reminded of an image borrowed from Reclus's favorite book among the many that he authored, L'Histoire d'un ruisseau. In that little book, written for schoolchildren and often given out as a school prize, he evokes the serpentine form of the "tiny system of rivulets that appear on the sand after the ocean's wave has retreated."[6] If, for our purposes, the wave is both the enormity of the Commune's aspiration and accomplishments and the violence of the massacre that crushed it, then in the wake of and in the midst of these two counter-movements of gargantuan force, a tiny system of airholes, the evidence of an unseen world, appears—already—in the sand. That system of rapid exchanges, intersections, and collaborations, of symbolic forms of solidarity and scattered, often ephemeral encounters, may well be momentary but it is also a momentum—and this is what I have tried to convey in the latter part of the book. *L'Histoire d'un ruisseau* is also useful to us here in another way, for it suggests how we might understand the disproportionate historical power of the Commune as event in relation to its relatively small scale. The book was part of a series commissioned by Pierre-Jules Hetzel, publisher of Jules Verne, Proudhon, and Turgenev, who designed the series with a typically mid-nineteenth-century encyclopedic ambition: to provide for adolescents a "literature of histories"—the history of things and elements not usually considered to have a history. Thus, a well-known astronomer was asked to write a history of the sky, and Viollet-le-Duc authored a history of an hôtel-de-ville and a cathedral. Reclus's choice, to write a history of a brook or stream, reflected his predilection for a kind of non-pathological geographic scale that favored the field, for example, or the village, or the quartier. The Commune, we might say, is perhaps best figured as having the qualities Reclus attributes in his book to the mountain stream. Its scale and geography are livable, not sublime. The stream, in his view, was superior to the river because of the unpredictability of its course. The river's torrents of water barrel down a deep furrow pre-carved by the thousands of gallons that have preceded it; the stream, on the other hand, makes its own way. But for that very reason, the relative strength of the waters of any mountain brook is proportionately greater than that of the Amazon.

Notes

1. See Kristin Ross, *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988; London and New York: Verso, 2008).
2. Malia Wollan, "Occupy Oakland Regroups, Calling for a Strike," *New York Times*, November 1, 2011.
3. Gustave Courbet, letter to his parents, April 30, 1871, in Petra Ten-Doesschate Chu, ed., *Correspondance de Courbet* (Paris: Flammarion, 1996), p.366.
4. Elisée Reclus, in *La Revue blanche, 1871: Enquête sur la Commune* [1897] (Paris: Editions de l'amateur, 2011), pp.81–2. Here and elsewhere, translations from the French are mine.
5. William Morris, "The Hopes of Civilization," in A. L. Morton, ed., *The Political Writings of William Morris* (London: Wishart, 1973), p.175.

Communards returning from night duty.

A communard takes her turn on guard duty.

A colonel in the communard army.

Cantinieres who see to it that the communard forces are sustained with food and drink.

A member of the general committee of the commune.

A communard soldier in the last days of the commune when its collapse is imminent.

Chapter II
(Communal Luxury)

We will work cooperatively toward our regeneration, the birth of communal luxury, future splendors and the Universal Republic.
Federation of Artists Manifesto, April 1871

A lived experience of "equality in action," the Commune was primarily a set of dismantling acts directed at the state bureaucracy and performed by ordinary men and women. Many of these dismantling acts were focused, not surprisingly, on that central bureaucracy: the schools. At the same time, artists and art workers undertook the liberation of artistic production from its control by the state. In this chapter I will consider the ideas that circulated in the Commune about education and art and the actions Communards performed in these two realms. I first consider their call for a "polytechnic" or "integral" education. Long a part of a wider working-class set of demands, the idea of an "integral" education that would overcome the division between head and hand lived on after the Commune and would have a forceful resurgence, as we will see, in the thinking of Communard survivors and fellow travelers like Elisée Reclus and Peter Kropotkin. I then turn specifically to the upheavals in the status of the artist under the Commune. In both areas of transformative endeavor Eugène Pottier, who at various points in his life was both a schoolteacher and an artist, played a key role.

Primary education since the 1850s, when the Falloux laws were passed imposing religious education in all the schools, had consisted of nothing, in the opinion of Auguste Blanqui, but catechism, taught by "the black army."[1] The first step taken by Communards engaged in transforming education was to dismantle the stranglehold that the Catholic Church held over schooling in a city where one-third of the students went to religious schools and one-third went to no school at all. For the brief duration of the Commune, free, compulsory, secular public education was instigated for all children. This was essentially the same policy that would be re-embraced ten years after the massacre of the Communards and modeled into the backbone of Third Republic education. It is important to remember, however, that though the free, public education associated in most peoples' minds with the Third Republic had in fact been invented ten years earlier during the Commune, the Communards' own ideas about schooling were considerably more unusual than those instigated under the Republic that came to be – beginning with their internationalist character. How does education change, for example, if the community one is being educated for is not the nation but rather the Universal Republic or the Republic of Workers?

Early in April, a commission headed by Edouard Vaillant, and consisting of songwriter Jean-Baptiste Clément, composer of *Le Temps des cerises*, novelist Jules Vallès, painter Gustave Courbet and schoolteacher Auguste Verdure, set about closing down all of the Church schools and removing all crosses, statues, and religious icons from the premises. Already in 1867 the International, at their Lausanne Congress, had called for secular education and it was the members of the International who played the principal role during the Commune in organizing public instruction in each section of the city. A frenetic and unchecked flurry of activity in all of the arrondissements accompanied the Commune's attempt to reorganize public instruction "on the largest of possible bases."[2] Benoît Malon helped organize in his arrondissement an asylum for orphans and runaways where they could receive the rudiments of schooling. In Saint-Pierre de Montmartre Paule Minck opened one of the first new schools for girls. On May the walls of the city were plastered with the announcement that an establishment in the fifth arrondissement, until then occupied by Jesuits, would become the first professional school for boys over the age of twelve. (Jesuit institutions were preferred targets of appropriation and occupation because of their good laboratories and astronomical instruments). Edouard Vaillant proclaimed the creation of a professional school of industrial art for girls on May 12 in a requisitioned and reoccupied Ecole des Beaux Arts. Having completed their literary and scientific instruction, students would then turn to drawing, sculpture in wood, clay and ivory, and general courses in the application of art and drawing to industry. A striking detail regarding this particular school was the composition of its professors: the job call that went out was made to professors but also to any skilled worker older than the age of forty who wished to apply to become a teacher. On May 15, a "Society for the Friends of Education" – consisting of exactly two women, Marie Verdure and Elie Decoudray – presented their project for the organization of crèches (nurseries) – an initial inspiration that became the model for the institution of daycare still in operation in France today. Beyond simple daycare, under the Commune at least, the crèches were guided by principles taken over from Fourier's phalanstères: care-givers, whose clothing should never be black or dark in color, were shifted around so that they avoided growing bored or tired with one task for too long, "it being important that children should be looked after only by cheerful and young women, whenever possible."[3] Nurseries were to be scattered throughout working-class districts, near factories; everything having to do with religion would be removed and replaced instead with pictures and sculptures of real objects such as animals and trees, and even "an aviary full of birds" to combat boredom, "the greatest malady" of young children. Public libraries, which had been regularly plundered by the elite during the Empire, who availed themselves whenever they wanted of volumes that they never returned, were reorganized to bring an end to all lending privileges. Equality of salaries was established on May 21 for male and female schoolteachers.

The most general formulation of the goals of Communal education can be found in a poster pasted on walls in the fourth arrondissement and signed by Gustave Lefrançais and Arthur Arnould among others. "To teach the child to love and respect others; to inspire in him the love of justice; to teach him as well that his instruction is undertaken in view of the interests of everyone: these are the moral principles on which henceforth communal education will be based."[4] But underlying much of the Commune's ideas about schooling at a more pragmatic as well as a more theoretical level was the notion of "integral education" – professional schools where the child, girl or boy, would become capable of both working intellectually and earning a livelihood. Education, in the words of Fourier, should be "unitaire et intégralecomposée" (unitary and integrally composed), with "composed" indicating the simultaneous development of mind and body, and "integral" emphasizing anything that enriched the relationship of mind and body to promote the harmonious development of the individual.[5] The call for such a harmonious development, as well as the claim to a right to intellectual life, can be found throughout the documents of the First International. A kind of polytechnic formation designed to overcome the division between manual and intellectual labor was envisioned for all children, regardless of class or gender. In the course of such training, practical work would alternate with the study of scientific theories and industrial art as well as physical education – a mixed or integral education long called for by working-class journals like *L'Atelier*, to which Eugène Pottier had been a contributor. One such journal demanded that "beginning at a young age, the child should pass back and forth between the school and the workshop… He who wields a tool should be able to write a book, write it with passion and talent… The artisan must be able to take a break from his daily work through artistic, literary or scientific culture, without ceasing for all that to be a producer."[6] The idea was to develop all of the aptitudes of children at once, in order that they become "complete men, that is to say, capable of using their faculties to produce not only with their hands but with the intelligence."[7]

"Integral" or polytechnic education answered the desire to learn a useful trade and at one and the same time escape the enforced specialization caused by the division of labor that resulted in separating educated from uneducated. In this sense it was directed against the harnessing of a child or adolescent prematurely and fatally to a particular trade. But beyond that it was less about integrating a specialization or a métier with general studies than it was about integrating general study for all children regardless of class, with a professional orientation. One of the foremost partisans of polytechnic education was Eugène Pottier, a follower of Fourier's notion of "attractive work," fabric designer, member of the International, and poet, who in 1885 composed an ode to a kind of schooling inspired by Fourier:

> *Fourier qui voulait tout en fête*
> *Sur l'école absurde et baîllant*
> *Sema, de sa main de Prophète*
> *Le grain de Travail attrayant.*
> *L'institutrice intelligente*
> *Associe étude et plaisir:*
> *Venez à l'école attrayante,*
> *Venez, enfants de l'avenir.*[8]

Pottier's name appeared affixed at the head of a poster hanging on the walls of the second arrondissement inearly May:

> *That each child of either sex, having completed the cycle of primary studies, may leave school possessing theserious elements of one or two manual professions: this is our goal. All of our efforts tend toward attaining this result because the last word in human progress is entirely summed up by the simple phrase: Work by everyone, for everyone. Humanity must arrive at the strict realization of this precept, which is old as primitive societies, and is the basis of all equality.*[9]

The son of a box-maker who apprenticed in his father's workshop, Eugène Pottier is best remembered today as the author of the *Internationale*, written in June 1871 in the midst of the ongoing savage executions of the defeated Communards. The song, which he dedicated to his friend and comrade in the Commune, Gustave Lefrançais, was not to reach any widespread diffusion until it was set to music in 1888 by Pierre De Geyter, sometime after its author returned from exile in the United States. Pottier's activities in the Commune were not limited to his efforts in transforming primary education. He was also a founding member of the Artists' Federation and the principal author of its manifesto.

Pottier's activities and perspectives on the question of art and art education in the context of the Artists' Federation have been overshadowed in most of the literature about the Commune by a scholarly fixation on the Federation's much better known President, Gustave Courbet. Elected to the Federation along with other well-known painters – Corot, Manet, Daumier – Courbet was the only one of this group to serve in what was in fact a general headlong flight from Paris by wellknown painters like Cézanne, Pissarro, and Degas in the course of the Prussian Siege preceding the Commune and the Commune itself. Courbet's drama as the President of the Artists' Federation, which consisted mostly in his having been held financially responsible for the destruction of the Vendôme Tower, followed by his exile in Switzerland, has been well documented. During the Commune Courbet had become an artist in the sense that Marx gave to being an artist in The German Ideology – someone who, amongst other things, paints. As such, the man to whom Alexandre Dumas referred as "that thing we call M. Gustave Courbet" was considered by many bourgeois artists and writers to have usurped public functions and stepped outside of his supposed sphere of competence by participating in the political debates and public discussions of the Commune.[10] A statement like this by Emile Zola is fairly typical:

> *Certainly this is no time to laugh, but really there are certain spectacles that can't help but make you laugh…Courbet, the great Courbet is a member of the Paris Commune! He is going to legislate! He has answered his charge as president of the artists! And, God help us, he has been named a delegate to the commission on Public Instruction! One hundred years from now, the workshops and studios will still be laughing.*[11]

We need now to reframe our view of the Artists' Federation in such a way that Courbet recedes and Pottier comes into focus. If we do so, I believe that a sharper sense of the precise emancipation envisioned and enacted by the federation, to which Pottier gave the name "communal luxury," will be allowed to emerge. On the eve of the Commune, Pottier ran a large workshop producing "toutes productions artistiques" – fabric designs, wall paper, lace, painted ceramics, painting on fabric. The internationalism avant la lettre of a workshop like Pottier's, where skilled artists and designers tary tasks, derived in part from the mobility of that set of métiers – art workers moved freely from workshop to workshop, from city to city and even country to country; itinerary, polytechnic in nature unlike that of Courbet, might well have figured in the pages of Jacques Rancière's study of the worker poets, *La Nuit des prolétaires*. In an 1884 letter addressed to fellow Communard Paul Lafargue, he recounts his early years as the tale of an autodidact, apprenticed at the age of thirteen to his father to train to become a box-maker: "A l'établi d'un emballeur/ Lourd, endormi, rêveur et gauche/Comme un bras brut et sans valeur."[12] The point of departure for emancipation in his case may well have been an old grammar book he discovered in the back of an abandoned armoire he was refinishing and a Béranger poem that he copied out and recited over and over until he had learned it by heart. The adolescent Pottier began writing poetry of his own late at night – a strenuous and tiring affair since even though his father was his boss, he was still expected to be in the workshop at 5:00 a.m. He sent his first poem to the high priest of the worker-poets, Pierre-Jean de Béranger, who sends back this reply:

> *I thank you for the lovely song you sent me. If you are only fifteen, it is a completely remarkable work and I am very grateful that you chose to honor me with it. You do well to use the free time that your apprenticeship grants you in such a pursuit, as long as the verses don't cause you to forget that the most modest artisan is more useful to his country than are most makers of verse.*[13]

The resemblance between Pottier's initiation into the world of letters and the itineraries of intellectual emancipation Rancière traces in *La Nuit des prolétaires* is not limited to his (perhaps apocryphal) autodidactic childhood, his appropriation of the language of poets, and the obligatory epistolary approval he seeks as an adolescent from the established writer. (The young Louise Michel sent her poems to Victor Hugo.) Pottier, who was fifty-five years old at the time of the Commune, was of a generation much closer to the artisans of the 1830s and 1840s Rancière studied – for a younger worker-artist like Gaillard fils, for example, already a skilled draftsman, the role played by aesthetic capacity in emancipation would perhaps have been less dramatic. Like so many of the artisans Rancière describes in his study, Pottier was of an age to have encountered early on the pedagogical methods of the great illuminé, Joseph Jacotot, and in an unpublished text Pottier in fact recounts using Jacotot's methods for forty years to teach his own children and "little French children raised in the United States" how to read. "A book of Jacotot's universal teaching method filled me with a vague synthesis," he wrote in 1856. "'Everything is in everything' became my motto. It was the first truth for which I took up the cudgel."[15]

Pottier's own trajectory was to bear a curious resemblance to that of Jacotot's: both men underwent the contingency and upheaval of political exile in the wake of revolution – Pottier to Boston after the Commune and Jacotot to Louvain after the return of the Bourbons. And both survived their exiles by teaching French language. It was in Louvain that Jacotot conceived of Universal Education and, in so doing, introduced a sharper problematic into the question of popular education. The whole of Jacotot's "method" derives from a few simple precepts, of which the simplest is the one Pottier made into his guiding maxim: "Everything is in everything." Other Jacotot precepts derive – naturally – from the first: "Everyone is capable of connecting the knowledge they already have to new knowledge." "Everyone is of an equal intelligence." "The sexes are perfectly equal in terms of intelligence." "Learn something and relate everything else to it."[16] Thought, for Jacotot, is not divided into specific competences and domains for specialists – it is similar in all of its exercises and can be shared by all. The something that one learns and to which one relates everything else can very well be a literal thing. Presumably, this "leçon de choses" resonated profoundly in the minds of the skilled workers and artisans like Pottier to whom Jacotot spoke. The thing, the point of departure, does not matter; it may be a letter, a poem, a carved bit of wood, a mother's song. Anything that can be laid hold of can become the starting point for emancipation. You can start anywhere – you do not have to start at the beginning. For floorlayer Gabriel Gauny, it was the torn fragments of lentil sacks that could be arranged into peculiar encyclopedias. The only model Jacotot gives is the one provided by maternal language and the

child's capacity to learn it without any explanations. By referring to the mother tongue he is not privileging orality – the thing, the starting point, the "something" that is learned is anything that can be constituted as a writing, a thing raised to the level of writing, a thing that can be translated. Emancipation occurs when the universe of daily experience becomes translatable into writing, and a material thing becomes the bridge of translation between two minds.

To better understand the eccentricity of Jacotot's methods and their appeal to someone like Pottier, it is important to situate them in the context of the form taken generally by the nineteenth-century preoccupation with the education of the masses. For the mid- nineteenth century, when Jacotot conceived of Universal Education, was the dawning of the great crusades to educate the masses, the protracted programs of "interior" cultural colonization designed in France to harness every last peasant in Brittany, every itinerant artisan, every wayward vagabond, to the national project. It was at this time that the ruling elites began to think that the barbarians – whether at the gates, in the workshops, or out plowing the fields – must be given a little instruction, if only to reduce social tensions. Instruction might serve to both enlighten the people and keep them in their place. Barbarians, peasants, and laborers, enclosed in their terroirs and operating within their distinct regional and cultural habitus, must be brought into a shared knowledge, a common culture. But that common culture must in turn be divided up according to an economic model so that each child is taught his or her own set of specific knowledges and skills: all these separate skills added together may create a harmony of different interests, but only to the extent that each interest and competence is carefully delineated. It was against this powerful institutional reiteration of the division of labor that Jacotot's methods were directed.

His methods attacked the underlying principles of French republicanism as it was being consolidated at the time. *A pedagogical vision of politics* underwrites all of French republicanism, from the end of the eighteenth century through its consolidation after the demise of the Commune in the Third Republic, all the way up to its panicked reiterations in recent years in the face of schoolgirls in scary head-scarves. The pedagogical vision of politics works, broadly speaking,in two ways: first, it conceives of teaching as forming the society of the future. And second, it conceives of politics as the way to instruct the world (parts of which, as we are repeatedly told, "are not ready for democracy"). The right to education is thought throughout to be the condition for the formation of political judgment. One learns to become a citizen. A system of education must be established whose task is essentially one of uplift and integration through knowledge: the worker or peasant is raised to the status of a sovereign citizen – raised, that is, to a dignity he or she possesses by right but not in fact. The peasant must be uprooted from his provincial soil just as in our own time the new arrivals, the immigrants or the newly poor, must be separated from their social or cultural difference by offering them the keys to the country: political access through education. Modern society demands that inequalities be a little reduced, and that there be a minimum of community between those at the top and those at the bottom. Education puts everyone in their place while assuring that some minimal community of shared knowledge exists. Inequality is a slow, lagging start from which, with a little effort and the right instruction, one can certainly catch up.

For Jacotot, though, equality was not abstract, or a topic of discussion, or a reward for good performance in the classroom. Jacotot's great accomplishment, as 79 Rancière makes clear, was to separate the logic of emancipation from the logic of the institution. Emancipating oneself was an individual affair; there could be no mass institutional application of his "method." The logic of emancipation concerned concrete relations between individuals. The logic of the institution, on the other hand, is always nothing more than the indefinite reproduction of itself. Emancipation is not the result but the condition for instruction.

In one of his earliest essays, Rancière suggests that the poetry written by workers like Pottier, stealing time in the late night hours their schedules allowed them, was not a means of revindication – neither the form nor the thematic content of the poetry were what mattered. "It is not through its descriptive content nor its revindications that worker poetry becomes a social oeuvre, but rather through its pure act of existing."[17] The poetry illustrates neither the misery of the worker's conditions nor the heroism of his struggle – what it says, rather, is aesthetic capacity, the transgression of the division that assigns to some manual work and to others the activity of thinking. It is the proof that one participates in another life. When Marx says that the greatest accomplishment of the Paris Commune was "its own working existence" he is saying much the same thing. More important than any laws the Communards were able to enact was simply the way in which their daily workings inverted entrenched hierarchies and divisions – first and foremost among these the division between manual and artistic or 80 intellectual labor. The world is divided between those who can and those who cannot afford the luxury of playing with words or images. When that division is overcome, as it was under the Commune, or as it is conveyed in the phrase "communal luxury," what matters more than any images conveyed, laws passed, or institutions founded are the capacities set in motion. You do not have to start at the beginning – you can start anywhere.

It was Courbet who started things off by issuing on April 6 an open "Call to Artists" to come to a political meeting the following week. There, in the Sorbonne's Medical School Amphitheater – the faculty of the medical school having all fled to Versailles – Eugène Pottier read aloud the Manifesto for an Artists' Federation developed by a preparatory committee and written by Pottier. Courbet's contribution to the manifesto seems to have been the essentially corporatist insistence that artists be allowed to administer the arts themselves – that they assume control of the museums and art collections. Artists must be entrusted to manage their own interests. The first basis for the Federation's existence was "the free expression of art, released from all government supervision and all privilege."[18] The Federation envisaged liberty for the arts as the autonomy of art and artists vis-à-vis state power: it instituted total freedom from state subsidy, which had been used throughout the Second Empire as a means of promoting a particular artist or a particular theater over another. Any subsidy was understood by the Commune 81 as a form of enslavement, a means of restricting that "freedom of the individual" the bourgeoisie claimed to promote but instead undermined. Abolition of the subsidy – essentially a kind of state bribery of artists – brought an end to the idea of an "official" style, or of the state's approval of academic or "safe" painters. In the place of state subsidies, the Federation looked to cooperation among the artists themselves as a way forward, rather like a trade union whereby each artist's dignity was protected by all the others: "Equality between members of the Federation that all artists adhering to the communal Republic constitute... the independence and dignity of each artist is placed under the safeguard of all." Association meant a reconfiguration of alliances: artists were linked to each other and to their self-management in complete independence from the state. And all would share equally among themselves the ordinary tasks and requisitions commissioned by the Commune. Traces of Fourier can be detected in the educational mission the federation undertook for itself. To "regenerate the future through education," members of the committee would found and oversee the teaching of drawing in the schools, "favoring instruction according to attractive and logical methods." The federation also established a tribune, *L'Officiel des Arts*, open to everyone, where anyone who desired could discuss aesthetic questions, or issues concerning the relation between the artist and the public: "The Committee invites any citizen to communicate any proposition, project, thesis or opinion whose aim is artistic progress, the moral or intellectual emancipation of artists, or the material amelioration of their condition."

Liberty for the arts was thus in part a demand for artists' control over museum administrations, curators, and the organization of the local, national, and international exhibits taking place in Paris – events in which, the Federation's manifesto stipulated, no awards would be given. But it was also a reaction to the fiercely repressive conditions of cultural production generally under the Second Empire, when laws covering the censorship and sale of literature, and affecting every sphere of culture production and distribution were soldered into place, executed under a complex system of surveillance and repression, and performed by layered tiers of state commissions, ministries, police, and police spies. Yet within the system of state censorship blanketing the arts under the Empire, Adrian Rifkin notes this important distinction pertaining to the status of the painter and sculptor:

> *While every type of printed matter was subject to censorship, painting and sculpture enjoyed a more privileged position. A painter or sculptor did not have to establish any copyright through the system of the "dépôt légal," but was automatically assured full ownership of his or her work. It might be difficult for an artist to get a political or "immoral" work into the salon, and, in an exceptional case, such as Manet's "Execution of the 83 Emperor Maximilian" he might be forced to remove the lithograph from circulation. However, the principal problem thus imposed on him was one of access to the market, not one of absolute loss of control over the distribution of his work. That Manet's "Olympia" was abused when it was shown in the 1865 salon did not result in its prosecution for immorality nor put an end to his career. An artist's relative immunity from censorship was enjoyed neither by the print-maker, the songwriter nor the performer.*[19]

The legal determination of who counted as an artist meant not merely a difference in status – it had economic repercussions as well. "Whereas 'sculptors' had a legal right to sign, reproduce, and dispose of their work (and pocket the profits), a designer of sculptures for one of the bronze or iron foundries employing more than ten workers had no similar privilege."[20]

Over 400 people – a full house, according to the Official Journal of the Commune – answered the "Call for Artists" and attended the April 14 meeting where they listened to the manifesto Pottier read aloud. They were not just painters and sculptors. The gathering was instead, as the manifesto proclaimed, a "rallying of all artistic intelligences" – "toutes les intelligences artistiques," all the different kinds of artistic intelligence together thought of as one. Among those attending and electing their forty-seven representatives were all the plastic arts from painters and sculptors to architects, lithographers, and industrial designers, as well as peripheral actors in the world of art, especially critics. *The Official Journal of the Commune* reports the presence of "many architects and ornamentalists." The name designating this last group – ornamentalists, designers, industrial artists – was a matter of some contention, as the text read aloud by Pottier underscores: "forty-seven representative members were elected [revocable, like all Commune representatives], including ten from the decorative arts, improperly called industrial arts." Here Pottier corrects Courbet's usage of the term "industrial arts" with a pointed clarification, enhancing the importance ascribed to this

group and to the presence of its members under the name of "artist," under the name, that is, if we return to the distinction made by Rifkin, of someone, like a painter or sculptor, who is able to sign his or her work. In fact, the vocabulary of the manifesto exhibits a strong concern with the question of artistic proprietorship, undoubtedly a major preoccupation of those members in the group previously excluded from the right to sign their works and thus control its distribution, who are now claiming the name of artist.

> *[The Federation] will admit only works signed by their authors, either original works or translations of one art into another, such as an engraved rendering of a painting. It will absolutely reject any mercenary exhibition that tends to substitute the name of a publisher or manufacturer for that of a true creator.*

The mid-nineteenth century and the years preceding the Commune was a moment not unlike our own, when artists feared increasingly for their livelihood. Admissions to the Ecole des Beaux Arts had remained constant from 1800 to 1860, but more than two-thirds of its graduates were unsuccessful at making a career; it was that overflow, in part, that went to fueling the growing decorative arts industries.[21] Other decorative artists had, like Pottier, emerged from the ranks of skilled artisans. Many cabinetmakers and other artisans were as much concerned with their position as artists as they were with their position as skilled workers.[22] The realm of skilled artisan-designers was thus occupied by a decidedly "mixed" population made up of the proletarianization of "failed" artists and the aspiration of artisans. Fallen artists became the new workers for the arts industries. "Form" and "design" acted to bridge or merge fine and decorative arts, art and industry. At a moment when artists, menaced by the precariousness of their situation, might well have attempted to protect their status, the Federation instead chooses to address the issue directly and subvert the hierarchical relation between art and industry, welcoming Pottier and his colleagues into their ranks from which they proceeded to make demands in the name of all artists, "toutes les intelligences artistiques" grouped together, in complete independence from the state. As one sculptor who participated in the federation would recall twenty years later, "The results of the manifesto's propositions were enormous, not because they elevated the artistic level 86... but because they spread art everywhere."[23]

To be recognized as an artist or as someone in fact "signing" his creation seems to be what shoemaker Napoléon Gaillard, as Adrian Rifkin once suggested, had in mind when he had himself photographed standing in front of the barricade he designed on the Place de la Concorde, in effect "signing" his creation, appropriating for himself the status of author or artist. Here is how one anti-Communard recalled the director of barricade construction under the Commune:

> *Gaillard père, the head of barricade construction, appeared so proud of his creation that on the morning of May 20, we saw him in full commandant's Uniform, four gold braids on the sleeve and cap, red lapels on his tunic, great riding boots, long, flowing hair, a steady gaze. While national guards prevented the public from walking about on one side of the square, the barricade maker posed proudly some twenty feet in front of his creation, and with his hand on his hip, had himself photographed.*[24]

The barricade Gaillard constructed barring access to the rue de Rivoli, nicknamed by many the "Château Gaillard," reached a height of two stories and was complete with bastions, gable steps, and a façade flanked with pavilions. His claim to the status of artist was recalled with some ridicule by another anti- Communard, who refers contemptuously to Gaillard as a "vain shoemaker" and the "père des barricades": "He 87 considers the enormous barricades that he had constructed on the Place Vendôme, the place de la Concorde, etc., etc., as both works of art and luxury; he only speaks of them with a love and admiration that he transfers back, obviously, onto his own person."[25] Member of the International, author of a philosophical treatise on the foot, inventor of rubber galoshes and a famous shoemaker, Gaillard, unlike many of his fellow tradesmen, survived the Commune, and resurfaced along with his son, worker-painter Gaillard fils, running a tavern for exiled Communards in Geneva.[26] "The Art of the Shoe," he wrote from exile, "is, no matter what one says, of all the arts the most difficult, the most useful, and above all the least understood."[27] Already, in letters to the editor written before the Commune, Gaillard had made it clear that social rehabilitation is first of all a battle over names and that the name Gaillard wanted for himself, in addition to that of "worker," was that of "artist-shoemaker": "I believe myself to be a worker, an 'artist-shoemaker,' and though making shoes, I have the right to as much respect from men as those who think themselves workers while wielding a pen."[28] At issue, of course, was the familiar opposition between the useful and the beautiful. Gaillard's "Art of the Shoe" sets out to make the case that the profession of shoemaker transcended any such opposition, and in so doing should be accorded the dignity and remuneration it deserved. Inspired by the ancient statuary that he used to illustrate 88 his text, Gaillard envisioned resurrecting the beauty of the "well-proportioned" foot of classical representations, long lost due to having been imprisoned in a narrow, pointed, deforming instrument of torture – the modern shoe. The public, he urged, should take the initiative of demanding a shoe made at last "not for the foot as it is, but for the foot as it should be." In an earlier pamphlet he advised shoemakers to adopt his methods for making boots out of latex or gutta-percha; by so doing they would avoid the mental and physical fatigue of the usual shoe-making methods, develop their intelligence, and "achieve the status of a sculptor."[29] In addition, he noted, latex has the advantage of being recyclable – unlike leather shoes, which wear out, latex shoes can be melted down and remade into new pairs. In Lucien Descaves's 1913 historical novel about Communard exiles, Philémon, vieux de la vieille, Gaillard père is fondly recalled by the main character, Colome, a jewelry worker who, some twenty years later, still refuses to wear any but the shoes designed according to Gaillard's philosophy of the foot:

> *My companion extended to shoes his repugnance for any form of constraint. He did not allow his feet to be constrained any more than he would his head or body...I had never before seen the likes of the extraordinary barges in which he launched his feet. Colome would not tolerate the ends of the shoes being rounded off, even a little they had to be cut straight across, so much so that they looked less like shoes than like the box they come in... "I have them made," he responded, "by a shoemaker to whom I gave the models designed for me by the père Gaillard... conservative and classic in his métier, a skilled cobbler, or rather, 'artist-shoemaker' as he insisted on being called, rightly considered himself as having brought his noble métier back to the anatomical principles and rules of hygiene it had drifted away from. He wanted the shoe to be rational, which is to say, made for the foot, as opposed to the barbarian fashion of adjusting the foot to the shoe..."*[30]

The Commune's overcoming of the division between fine and decorative artists – the principal dimension of its revolutionary arts program – proved to be as shortlived as the insurrection itself. Professional artists and crafts workers were to draw apart once again after this period. But, during the Commune, the objective basis in social and economic life for their rapprochement is understood, and their equality is seen not as a goal to attain but rather posited from the outset and reposited again and again in the course of the Commune's brief existence. It is worth noting that the Federation's members exhibited no concern whatsoever over what was to be counted as a work of art, nor over any aesthetic criteria for judging the worthiness of an artisanal product. They did not presume to act as judge or evaluator from an artistic point of view, acting rather 90 as the driving force of a mechanism capable of assuring the liberty of all. This is particularly important since it shifts value away from any market evaluation, and even from the art object itself, and onto the process of making and onto the artist, whose labor generates value. All art, in their view, was artisanal and skilled in its production and in the socialization of its makers. The making of art, in this sense, was like Jacotot's version of thinking: it was a set of gestures, similar in all of its exercises. The Federation was largely indifferent to what had been the primary duty of previous art commissions, namely the preservation of artistic patrimony – its members were more focused, as they put it, on "bringing to life and into the light all the elements of the present." Nor did they advocate any particular aesthetic direction, breakthrough, or movement as we might expect on the basis of any number of subsequent avant-gardist art manifestoes, though they saw themselves as a source of artistic regeneration. They simply went about increasing the number of those who counted as an artist.

The manifesto concludes with the sentence that serves as an epigraph to this chapter and that gives us this book's title: "We will work cooperatively toward our regeneration, the birth of communal luxury, future splendors and the Universal Republic." At its most expansive level, the "communal luxury" whose inauguration the committee worked to ensure entails transforming the aesthetic coordinates of the entire community. More literally, though, Pottier and the Federation members were calling for something like "public art" at the municipal level: the decoration and artistic enhancement of public buildings in all of the mairies across France. But to understand this project as expressing only a limited or secondary demand is to miss the profoundly democratizing and expansive reach of its scope. The demand that beauty flourish in spaces shared in common and not just in special privatized preserves means reconfiguring art to be fully integrated into everyday life and not just the endpoint of special excursions to what Elisée Reclus called "the habitual museum where there is shut up temporarily that which is called the 'beaux arts'."[31] It means an art that will no longer live "this poor thin life among a few exceptional men."[32] Some of the exhilaration of the project of making art lived – not superfluous or trivial, but vital and indispensable to the community – is captured in Reclus's short text entitled "Art and the People":

> Ah, if the painters and sculptors were free, there would be no need for them to shut themselves up in Salons. They would have but to reconstruct our cities, first demolishing these ignoble cubes of stone where human beings are piled up, rich and poor, the beggar and the pompous millionaire, starvelings and satiated, victims and hangmen. They would burn all the old barracks of the time of misery in an immense fire of joy, and I imagine that in the museums of works to be preserved, they would not leave very much of the pretended artistic work of our time.[33]

Reclus's immense fire of joy cannot help but recall the destruction of the Vendôme Column at the height of the Commune and the powerful emotions this act elicited – equal parts Communard joy and panic among the elites. For both the demolition of the column and the manifesto's call for public, communal art that would transfer creative initiative from an isolated elite to the people as a whole succeed in bypassing national space. By creating lived art at the level of autonomous municipalities, communal luxury works against the centralizing organization of monumental

(nationalist) space, and against the creation of monumental space generally. Bypassing the nation, though, does not in their terms imply hugging the narrow contours of the municipality: the Federation, as the final words of its manifesto reiterate, saw itself as working at the same time for both communal luxury and the Universal Republic.

Indeed, we might think of the demolition of the column as an initial clearing of the terrain for communal luxury. In an earlier work, I discussed the way in which the Communards' willingness to destroy the monument built to glorify Napoleon and his imperialistic conquests is regularly compared by commentators to the hesitation and reserve the insurgents showed toward breaching that other imposing edifice: the Bank of France.[34] The disparaging implication, of course, is that time was wasted in a playful or symbolic act while the "real stakes"—the money lying waiting to be expropriated were ignored. But to make that comparison is already to ignore the significance Communards themselves attached to the demolition of a monument so enshrined in the national imagination that even Victor Hugo had written a glorifying hymn to it and to the exploits it commemorated. Reclus's assessment of the demolition is worth remembering: "In this century there has not been a sign of the times that has a more imposing meaning than the collapse of the imperial Column onto a pile of rubble."[35]

Reclus's assessment would not have appeared exaggerated to William Morris:

> *Though in itself the destruction of the Vendôme Column may seem but a small matter, yet considering the importance attached generally, and in France particularly, to such symbols, the dismounting of that base piece of Napoleonic upholstery was another mark of the determination to hold no parley with the old jingoistic legends.*[36]

No one could appreciate more how the dead furniture of imperialism weighs on the minds of the living than that champion of the lesser arts and "poet-upholsterer" (as he was called by his enemies after he became a socialist), William Morris. He was to prove it in his 1890 novel, *News from Nowhere*. There the Communards' symbolic act of spectacular demolition is revisioned speculatively by transforming Trafalgar Square, cleansed of its own imperialist monumentality, the statue to Admiral Nelson, into an apricot orchard. In this symbolic revisioning both the Place Vendôme and Trafalgar Square, replete with their aesthetics of nationalistic and timeless monumentality, become supra-national space, as the imperialist organization of abstract space is transformed into an orchard. Morris is, in effect, tearing down the Vendôme Column once again, several years after it had been painstakingly rebuilt in Paris. But beyond merely reiterating the empty space of potentiality achieved by the Communards, he goes one step further and creates a new space/time of seasonal rhythms and luxurious bounty. The orchard is the future, but it is one that hearkens back to the chronotope of a society of simple reproduction and the cyclical nature of its processes, whose rhythms come from nature. This is at once an arresting presiding figure for the practices and thought of the period to which the Communards gave the name "communal luxury," a prefiguration of the ecological direction of Morris's own thought, and the proof, as Owen Holland has argued, that without these "merely symbolic" gestures of relationality and correspondence the possibility of solidarity or of refashioning an internationalist conjuncture at any moment in the near future is increasingly remote.[37]

Today, Morris is perhaps best known for his wallpaper designs, designs whose incorporation into the National Heritage industry in Britain have had the effect of making their designer appear a "Little Englander" par excellence. In the 1880s, however, as we will discuss in the next chapter, Morris emerged as one of the foremost British supporters of the memory of the Paris Commune. This should not, perhaps, surprise us—the Commune, after all, as Lissagaray remarked in passing many years after its demise, was an insurrection that counted such a vast quantity of arts and crafts workers in its ranks.[38] The radical orientation of that community of worker/artists did not originate with the Commune. Over a third of the signatories of the Manifeste des soixante, for example, the 1864 charter that was the founding text of the Parisian section of the International, were workers in the arts industries: bronze workers, engravers, lace-makers, wood-workers. And if the Commune was, as Jellinek put it, "a cobbler's revolution," it was also one where skilled artisans and design workers, some ten thousand of whom were among the convicted, played a significant role.[39] Like the Communards Morris was less interested in art than in creating and expanding the conditions for art. And like Napoléon Gaillard, he valued highly the ability, as he put it, of knowing how to "make a goodfitting boot."[40] But such a crucial skill was in his view being rendered impossible not by industrialism per se but by capitalism's creation of a society based on cash and self-interest. What Morris called "this so-called society" was not a society at all in his opinion but a state of war: the war of commerce.

Like Pottier, Morris was preoccupied by the question of the "lesser" arts—both their quality and their status in society. The late nineteenth-century system of commercialism and profit mongering had laid waste, in his view, to the decorative arts. This may seem to be a very minor woe in the long list of horrors besetting Victorian society. Yet from deep within his perception of the causes and effects of that degradation on the possibility of fellowship, creativity, and human happiness, Morris would derive the entirety of his political analysis. Despair for art fueled his desire for a full systemic socialist transformation and his decision to work for the end of class society. Everything is in everything, as Jacotot would say: from his own artistic practices Morris had learned something, and he would now relate everything else to it. Only recently, he wrote in one of the many lectures he devoted to the topic of the status of decorative art in the late 1870s, had the lesser arts been divided off from their higher counterparts, impoverishing both irrevocably, rendering the decorative arts "trivial, mechanical, and unintelligent" and the higher ones "dull adjuncts to unmeaning pomp, or ingenious toys for a few idle and rich men."[41] The divided state of art mirrored the division, driven by a system based on the overproduction of goods for profit, between useless luxury articles for the rich and "the mass of things which no sane man could desire"—the shoddy, cheap, makeshift utilitarian goods overproduced for the rest of us. Abundance under the current system could only mean the useless luxury of the wealthy, on the one hand, and what Communard Paul Lafargue, writing at roughly the same time, called "the mountains of products heaped up higher and more enormous than the pyramids of Egypt," on the other.[42] Were we to rid ourselves of the "tax of waste" financing the current class system, we would bring an end to poverty amidst overproduction and an end to all the false dichotomies between the practical and the beautiful, the utilitarian and the poetic, what is used and what is treasured, at the same time. Senseless luxury, which Morris knew cannot exist without slavery of some kind, would be replaced by communal luxury, or equality in abundance.

In the cooperative social framework surrounding the production of medieval crafts, Morris saw a world where not only were the "lesser arts" part and parcel of the higher ones, but everyday life itself was not separate from what was "highest" or most elaborated in culture and ideas, and where "works" were understood in the broadest possible sense: cathedrals and festivals, permanent and transitory productions alike. Those who continue today to accuse Morris of a musty or romanticized medievalism view both the art of premodern times and Morris's relationship to that art very differently than he himself did. Where his critics see a nostalgic entrancement on his part with art objects from the past, Morris saw an art that was not external to the everyday or, as is supposed, elevated above it and trying vainly to enter into it. Morris saw a style of life in the sense that Henri Lefebvre was later to give the word when discussing everyday life in pre-capitalist societies. Ending class-based luxury opens up on an entirely new vista of social wealth:

> *First I must ask you to extend the word art beyond those matters which are conscious works of art, to take in not only painting and sculpture, and architecture, but the shapes and colours of all household goods, nay, even the arrangement of the fields for tillage and pasture, the management of towns and of our highways of all kinds; in a word, to extend it to the aspect of all the externals of our life.*[43]

Extending the aesthetic dimension into everyday life as the Artists' Federation under the Commune demanded not only makes art common to all people but it also makes it an integral part of the process of making. It brings a transformed and sensuous relationship to the materials—their texture, density, pliability, and resistance—and to one's own processes and labor, to the steps taken in making itself and to the remaking, in turn, of one's own capacities. Morris and Reclus had both learned from John Ruskin that Art is man's expression of his joy in labor. "As soon as labor impassions, as soon as it gives joy, the toiler becomes an artist."[44]

The apricot orchard flourishing in the middle of "that preposterous piece of folly once called London,"[45] is one figure—at once from the past and from the future—of the kind of transvaluation of the very idea of art and of abundance Morris and the members of the Artists' Federation under the Commune had in mind. Finding criteria for wealth that was distinct from the quantitative race toward growth and overproduction was the key to imagining and bringing about social transformation. We can see that understanding already manifest in the strategy governing Pottier's choice of the words "communal luxury" in his text. At the moment in mid- April when the manifesto was composed, the phrase served to expressly counteract and defy the abject "misérabilisme" of Versaillais depictions of Parisian life under the Commune. Versaillais propaganda, directed against those whom they called the "partageux" who had seized Paris, and projected out onto provincial France, was mobilized to convince peasants in the countryside that the Commune, were it not defeated, would seize their land and divide it up among themselves. But it also had a second, no less important, goal: that of creating, more generally, the certainty that sharing could only mean the sharing of misery. "Communal luxury" countered any notion of the sharing of misery with a distinctly different kind of world: one where everyone, instead, would have his or her share of the best.

Notes

1. Auguste Blanqui, Critique sociale, vol. 1 (Paris: 100 1885), pp. 181–2.
2. *Journal Officiel*, May 12, 1871, p. 536.
3. *Journal Officiel*, May 15, 17, 1871, cited in Edwards, *The Paris Commune: 1871*, p. 271.
4. *Journal Officiel*, May 12, 1871, p. 537.
5. Charles Fourier, *Oeuvres complètes*, tome V (Paris, 1845), p. 2.
6. Henri Bellenger, in *Le Vengeur*, 10, April 8, 1871, pp. 1–2.
7. *Le Père Duchène*, on the opening of the first professional school under the Commune, cited in Solomon Froumov, *La Commune de Paris et la democratisation de l'école* (Moscow: Editions de Progrès, 1958), p. 194.
8. Eugène Pottier, *L'Ecole Professionelle* (also called "L'Ecole attrayante"), *Oeuvres complètes*, tome 3 (Paris: Maspero, 1966), pp. 158–9.
9. Poster reproduced in Jean Bruhat, Jean Dautry, and Emile Tersen, *La Commune de 1871* (Paris: Editions sociales, 1960), p. 202.
10. Alexandre Dumas fils, *Lettre sur les choses du jour*, cited in Georges Coulonges, *La Commune en chantant* (Paris: Les Editeurs français réunis, 1970), p. 159.
11. Emile Zola, May 28, 1871, cited in Rodolphe Walter, "Un Dossier delicat: Courbet et la colonne Vendôme," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, March 1973, p. 176.
12. *Letter to Paul Lafargue*, in Lucien Descaves, preface, Alexandre Zévaès, ed. Eugène Pottier, *Chants Révolutionnaires* (Paris: Editions Sociales Internationales, 1937).
13. Béranger, letter to Eugène Pottier, November 1, 1831, 101 cited in Maurice Dommanget, *Eugène Pottier, membre de la commune et chanteur de l'Internationale* (Paris: EDI, 1971), p. 18.
14. Pottier, "Les crimes de l'alphabet," cited in Pierre Brochon, *Eugène Pottier, Naissance de l'Internationale* (St. Cyr-sur-Loire: Christian Pirot, 1997), p. 22.
15. Pottier, letter to Adrien Lelioux, 1856, cited in Brochon, *Eugène Pottier*, p. 22.
16. See Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, trans. Kristin Ross (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991). See also his *The Nights of Labor*, trans. John Drury, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981).
17. Jacques Rancière, "Ronds de fumé (Les poètes ouvriers dans la France de Louis-Philippe)," *Revue des sciences humaines*, 41:190 (April–June 1983), p. 46. His emphasis.
18. Manifesto of the Artists' Federation of Paris, April 15, 1871, in *Journal Officiel*, tome 2, pp. 273–4.
19. Adrian Rifkin, "Cultural Movement and the Paris Commune," *Art History*, 2 (1979), p. 206.
20. Gonzalo J. Sanchez, *Organizing Independence* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), p. 64. Sanchez's book offers the most thorough analysis of the Artists' Manifesto in the context of a study of subsequent Artists' Associations in France.
21. Ibid., p. 65.
22. See Lee Shai Weissbach, "Artisanal Responses to Artistic Decline: The Cabinetmakers of Paris in the Era of Industrialization," *Journal of Social History*, 16:2 (Winter 1982): "by the second half of the nineteenth century, large 102 numbers of workers in cabinetmaking had lost their status as artist-craftsmen" (p. 72).
23. M. Marquet de Vasselot, cited in *La Revue blanche*, 1871: *Enquête sur la Commune*, p. 144.
24. Le Comte d'Hérisson, *Nouveau journal d'un officier d'ordonnance: La Commune* (Paris: Ollendorff, 1889), pp. 295–6. See my *Emergence of Social Space*, pp. 17–19.
25. Anonymous, *Sous la Commune: Récits et souvenirs d'un Parisien* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1873), p. 60.
26. Workers who suffered the highest number of deportations after the defeat were "of course, as always, the shoemakers." Jacques Rougerie, Paris libre 1871 (Paris: Seuil, 1971), p. 263. Noting the high proportion of shoemakers among the Commune's dead, deported and exiled, Frank Jellinek notes, "it was curiously a cobbler's revolution." Frank Jellinek, *The Paris Commune of 1871* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1937), p. 381.
27. Gaillard père (Napoléon Gaillaid), *L'Art de la Chaussure ou Moyen Pratique de chausser le pied humain d'après les règles de l'hygiène et de l'anatomie* (Geneva: Imprimerie Ziegler et Compagnie, 1876).
28. Gaillard, letter to Vermorel, Le Réveil, January 20, 1869.
29. Gaillard père, *Mémoire descriptive de la chaussure française en guttapercha* (Neuilly: A. Poilleux, 1858), p. 57.
30. Lucien Descaves, *Philémon, vieux de la vieille* (Paris: Editions G. Cres et Compagnie, 1922), p. 45.
31. Elisée Reclus, "Art and the People," in Joseph Ishill, ed., *Elisée and Elie Reclus: In Memoriam* (Berkeley Heights, New Jersey: Oriole Press, 1927), p. 325. Translation 103 modified.
32. William Morris, "The Lesser Arts," in Morton, ed., *Political Writings*, p. 54.
33. Reclus, "Art and the People," pp. 326–7.
34. See Ross, *The Emergence of Social Space*, pp. 5–8, 38–9.
35. Elisée Reclus, epigraph to Lucien Descaves, *La Colonne* (Paris: Stock, 1901).
36. Ernest Belfort Bax and William Morris, "Socialism from the Root Up," *Commonweal*, October 2, 1886, p. 210.
37. Building on my discussion of social space in my first book, Owen Holland developed this very suggestive internationalist transversal between Morris and the Commune in a talk given in London in 2011.
38. Lissagaray, *La Revue blanche, 1871: Enquête sur la Commune*, p. 67.
39. Jellinek, *Paris Commune*, p. 381.
40. Morris, cited in E. P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (Oakland: PM Press, 2011), p. 251.
41. Morris, "The Lesser Arts," Morton, ed., *Political Writings*, p. 32. Reclus's analysis starts from the same division: "Society being divided into enemy classes, art has become, of necessity, false … With the rich it is changed into ostentation. With the poor it can be nothing but imitation." "Art and the People," p. 327.
42. Paul Lafargue, *The Right to Laziness* [1880], in The Right to Be Lazy and Other Studies (Chicago: Charles Kerr, 1907), p. 42.
43. Morris, "Art Under Plutocracy," in Morton, ed., 104 *Political Writings*, p. 58.
44. Reclus, "Art and the People," p. 328. Ruskin was initially very supportive of the Commune and of the "glistering and freshly minted idea … the Parisian notion of Communism." John Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera* (New York: Wiley, 1872), p. 2. His support wavered when he received the false information that the Louvre had been set afire.
45. William Morris, "The Society of the Future," in May Morris, ed., *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist* (New York: Russel and Russel, 1966), p. 462.

The tearing down of the Vendôme Column

THIS IS THE PICTURE OF THE OLD HOUSE BY THE THAMES TO WHICH THE PEOPLE OF THIS STORY WENT HEREAFTER FOLLOWS THE BOOK IT-SELF WHICH IS CALLED NEWS FROM NOWHERE OR AN EPOCH OF REST & IS WRITTEN BY WILLIAM MORRIS

'View of the entrance to Kelmscott Manor', wood engaving 11.4 x 10.5 cm, from *News From Nowhere (Or, An Epoch of Rest),* William Morris, Kelmscott press, 1893.

WET is a Rotterdam-based production and distribution cooperative for film, video and artists' moving image founded by Anna Maria Łuczak, Erika Roux, Marta Hryniuk, Nick Thomas and Sophie Bates.

We work within a spectrum of contemporary moving image practices and come together to pursue a mode of production based on collaboration and mutual support. WET assists in the production of works through the exchange of labour, equipment and expertise.

WET is also a platform for distribution, curating and programming, with a focus on works which question existing film orthodoxies, and which propose alternative (social, historical, political and aesthetic) perspectives on the medium.

This edition has been produced for educational purpose only. All texts have been extracted from *Communal Luxury*, Kristin Ross, Verso Books, 2015. Designed by Rudy Guedj and printed in an edition of 50 copies at the Jan van Eyck Academie in October 2020.

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