

Special issue of Nineteenth-Century French Studies

Deadline: Sep 4, 2018

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"la Commune n'est pas morte...": a special issue of Nineteenth-Century French Studies
edited by Robert St. Clair and Seth Whidden
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Partout des égorgés! des massacrés partout!
Le cadavre est à terre et l'idée est debout.
– Victor Hugo

C'qui prouve en tous cas, Nicolas
Qu'la Commune n'est pas morte...
– Eugène Pottier

Toi qui ne possèdes rien, tu n'as que deux routes à choisir, être dupe ou fripon, rien entre les deux,
rien au-delà, pas plus qu'avant – rien que la révolte.
– Louise Michel

What is the Commune, that sphinx so tantalizing to the bourgeois mind? – Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France*

150 years on, in a context of environmental, economic, and socio-political crises spanning the planet, the legacy of the Paris Commune demands our attention as a model, a horizon, and perhaps an alternative to the on-going emergencies of everyday life in capitalist post-modernity, in the so-called aftermath of the "end of History." Indeed, what remains of the post-War geopolitical consensus in the West finds itself strained to a breaking point: apparatuses of liberal democracy appear discredited as they increasingly resemble regimes of governance accountable to private interests rather than forms of representational government, and as discourses and sites of identity and community are reduced to the zero-sum horrors of ethno-nationalism.

By urgently calling on us to imagine a different world, the Paris Commune retains in its enduring, unsettling timeliness. As historical episode, the Commune figures as a political and historical parenthesis, emerging from the breakdowns of national and local order of the Année terrible and lasting all of 73 days. But as revolutionary event, it leaves in its wake an enduring image of history as an incomplete struggle, and of politics as the immanent possibility of the autrement contained within the socio-political structures and hierarchies of other forms of community, daily life, and sociability; other modes of agency and of political practices; and other ways of being and of thinking human history.

But just what was—or is—the Paris Commune, and how can we articulate its pertinence for our time? Was it a dramatic historical singularity, or the result of the long rhythms of the geo-political, economic, and cultural history of the city of Paris? Image of the People self-consciously reclaiming a “right to the city” (Lefebvre, Harvey), or hopelessly disorganized revolt whose bloody dénouement was all but inevitable? The final form of class-struggle in which the dispossessed demonstrated the reality of their “equaliberty” (Balibar), or yet another episode of civil war whose roots reach back to 1789? Challenge to the nation-state qua political form, or the tragic example of the power of the state in its most unsophisticated guise? Poetry of the past or enigma of the future (Marx) whose experimental form, spirit, and political legacy can be found in October 1917, Shanghai in 1967, Paris in May ’68, Zuccotti Park and Tahrir Square in 2011, La Nuit debout in 2016?

It is to rethink and reassess these questions, problems, narratives, and horizons that Nineteenth-Century French Studies welcomes proposals for contributions to a special issue to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Paris Commune.

The editors invite contributions from the broadest set of critical perspectives, frameworks, approaches, and disciplines. No particular format is prescribed: the primary criteria for selection will be scholarly rigor and depth of inquiry. Potential topics may include but are not limited to:

Actors and figures

Affect, Trauma (representing the non-narrative)

The animal, the (in)human, the (non-)human

Biopolitics/Necropolitics

Cinema/Moving Image

Citoyens/citoyennes

Class, Race, and Gender

Colonial spaces of the Commune

Communard Art/Art History and the Commune

The Commune and Historiography

The Commune and Literature/Literary Communes

The Commune and the French Revolution (1792, 1793)

Cultural Genealogies of the Nineteenth Century

Economic/Political History

Everyday life and/in the state of exception

Fashion

Gastronomy

Journalism: Reporting the Commune

Labor, Leisure, Revolution (movements, forms and modes of testing and contesting solidarity and collective identity)

Materialisms, old and new

Political Geography

Revolutions, conceptualized (revolution and history, revolution and event, revolution and social justice, revolution and democracy)

Urban History/Urban Studies

Visual Cultures and Media

Other Communes: the Lyon Commune; the Prussian point-of-view; the provincial view; the view of the bourgeoisie; the Commune and England; the Commune and Spain

20th/21st-century returns of the Commune: October 1917, the Shanghai Commune, May ’68, Zuccotti Park, Tahrir Square, La Nuit debout

We welcome submissions written in French or in English before the deadlines indicated below. Following the journal’s policy, all submissions will be blind reviewed by two experts and the journal’s editorial board before publication.

Please send initial expressions of interest of no more than 250 words before 4 September 2018 to ncfscommune2021@gmail.com

Deadline for final contributions (MLA style, less than 7000 words, list of works cited and notes included): 18 March 2019

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