

The Spectre of the Commune and French Anarchism in the 1890s

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Abstract

This chapter considers not the influence of the Paris Commune of 1871 on anarchist theory (e.g., on Peter Kropotkin, Élisée Reclus, Michael Bakunin, and Louise Michel) in the decades before the Great War but rather its influence on the reality of anarchist organisation in France, above all, in Paris. The Commune offered a permanent source of inspiration and a practical guide for the anarchist movement. In terms of anarchist ‘organisation’, significant continuities in space were to be found in Paris. Anarchists worked to attract followers in the *quartiers populaires* of the capital that had been bastions of support for the Commune and resistance until the bitter end during Bloody Week. Thus Montmartre, where the Commune had begun and where the basilica of Sacré-Coeur loomed in triumph over People’s Paris, and Belleville, which had suffered horribly in May 1871, remained essential in the mobilisation of anarchists. Anarchists continued to underline the importance of popular, spontaneous action. Here, too, the Commune remained an inevitable frame of reference. The destruction of the Paris Commune remained an essential part of the collective memory of anarchists as they organised against the state.

The Paris Commune of 1871 and particularly the bloody repression of it during Bloody Week, May 21–28, hung over French anarchists throughout the following decades. For this short account of the influence of the Commune on French anarchists in the late nineteenth century, I am more interested in the reality of the mobilisation of militants during the 1890s than in anarchist theory, which has been frequently considered. Joël Delhom considers the case of Michael Bakunin, who was somewhat involved in events in Lyon—five years before his death—and that of Peter Kropotkin. Bakunin, along with Élisée Reclus, insisted that the Commune was the first insurrection that was really of the proletariat. Even if the reality of the Commune was more complicated than that, ordinary people held onto political power in Paris for sixty-six days.¹

However, Bakunin, as others such as Louise Michel—who fought for the Commune—and Kropotkin also sharply criticised the Communards for having left in place capital, property, and particularly the monetary reserves of the Bank of France. Louise Michel would become an anarchist, certainly because of what she saw during Bloody Week—state terror up close. She was also transformed by her life in New Caledonia, to which she was condemned after the Commune, and by her insistence on the importance of helping the poor, and her firm belief in their capacity for insurrection, as had been the case in Paris in 1871. In London, Michel joined the anarchist community of exiles centred on the Autonomy Club, Fitzroy Square, and Charlotte Street. She always dressed in black in honour of the Communards massacred by the forces of Adolphe Thiers and the provisional government in 1871.²

The Commune remained a constant source of inspiration and at the same time offered a practical guide for action for the anarchist movement. The crushing victory of the Versaillais and the accompanying massacres—even if the number of victims still remains debated—remained present in the collective memory of the left and particularly anarchists. Again, Bloody Week brought

¹ J. Delhom, ‘Des anarchistes et la Commune de Paris’, in G. Larguier and J. Quaretti (Eds), *La Commune de 1871: Utopie ou Modernité?* (Perpignan: Presses Universitaires de Perpignan, 2000), 305. See J. Merriman, *Massacre: The Life and Death of the Paris Commune* (New York: Basic Books, 2014).

² See Constance Bantman, *French Anarchists in London, 1880–1914: Exile and Transnationalism in the First Globalization* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013).

state terrorism into the light. Thus anarchist organisations eagerly celebrated the anniversary of the Commune. Delhom reminds us that Kropotkin insisted that the bloody repression increased the gap that already existed between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Anarchists got it right when they insisted that state centralisation (which has for centuries characterised France, since the time of royal absolutism in the seventeenth century) and the power of capitalism were the two dynamic forces that transformed nineteenth-century France (as Charles Tilly insisted in his work, and I am in complete agreement). The power of the state protected capitalism, with its armies and organised religion propping up the edifice.³

In the Panthéon of the Left, the victims of the murderous state repression were saluted as ‘martyrs’ and in a certain sense as immortal. Anarchists who left bombs here and there and who were executed were also considered martyrs. This is certainly the case of Auguste Vaillant, who tossed a tiny bomb into the Chamber of Deputies to call attention to the plight of the poor. His attack caused no serious injuries, yet he became the first person executed in the century. Ravachol, who had killed, was saluted following his demise as a martyr, executed, like Jesus Christ, at age thirty-three. His proud face was framed by a guillotine in a famous and widely diffused image. Like the Communards, Ravachol, Vaillant, Émile Henry, and Sante Geronimo Caserio (who assassinated French president Sadi Carnot in Lyon in 1894) acquired a type of revolutionary immortality by virtue of being perceived of having been victims of the state. They would be avenged, many anarchists believed. Their sacrifice had brought ‘La Belle’ even closer (although such a view certainly ebbed after the turn of the century). As the Commune itself, the repression that struck anarchists (e.g., the ‘Scoundrel Laws’ which the Chamber of Deputies passed in 1893 following Vaillant’s attack) also demonstrated the power of the modern centralised state, the very image of the Third Republic despite the absence of strong executive authority (for fear of ‘Caesarism’ identified with Napoleon I and Napoleon III). Bakunin put it this way: ‘I am a partisan of the Paris Commune because it was an audacious and clear negation of the state itself’.⁴

The mobilisation of former Communards and of anarchists during the 1890s also reveals continuities in space. Above all, the Paris Commune was the work of the *quartiers populaires* of northern and northeastern Paris that had been annexed to Paris only in 1860, above all the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth arrondissements. As I have argued elsewhere, the sense of not belonging to the centre could increase the social and political solidarity of those living on the margins of urban life on Parisian periphery.⁵ These neighbourhoods, too, along with the twelfth and thirteenth arrondissements, resisted the Versaillais onslaught, fighting from behind barricades and defending the narrow streets of their neighbourhoods, on which they had fallen back. These same *quartiers* also played a decisive role in the development of anarchist groups in the last decade of the century. Anarchists privileged organisation by neighbourhood and even by street. One finds the same continuity in the organisation of public meetings, just as was the case

³ For example, C. Tilly, ‘Food Supply and Public Order in Modern Europe’, in C. Tilly (Ed), *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 380–455; C. Tilly, ‘How Protest Modernized in France, 1845–1855’, in W. O. Aydelotte, A. G. Bogu, and R. W. Fogel (Eds), *The Dimensions of Quantitative Research in History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 192–255; C. Tilly, ‘The Changing Place of Collective Violence’, in M. Richter (Ed), *Essays in Theory and History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 139–64.

⁴ J. Delhom, *La Commune* (Perpignan: Presses Universitaires de Perpignan, 2000), 300; A. Dalotel, A. Faure, and J.-C. Freiermuth, *Aux origines de la Commune: le mouvement des réunions publiques à Paris, 1868–70* (Paris: Maspero, 1980).

⁵ J. Merriman, *Aux marges de la ville: faubourgs et banlieues en France, 1815–1870* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1994).

in the very important organisation of public meetings in Paris—above all on the periphery—that followed the Law of June 6, 1868, which permitted public meetings.⁶

Anarchists insisted on the importance of a revolution by ordinary people, one that would be spontaneous. They had no confidence in any kind of Marxist organisation that privileged the role of a revolutionary elite as leaders of such a movement. Indeed as a result of this, Jean Grave, writing in *La Révolte* on March 17, 1888, explained that during the Commune the people had placed too much confidence in their ‘leaders’. The people had not followed its natural instincts to rise up without awaiting a *mot d’ordre*. Moreover, the very existence of a Communard government contradicted the faith of anarchists in localised action and the action of popularly constituted committees, such as the ‘vigilance committees’ that had been organised by arrondissement in Paris in 1871.

In this way, the Commune remained an omnipresent reference for anarchist militants during the 1890s. We can see this, for example, in the life—a very short one, as it turned out—of Émile Henry, about whom I have written elsewhere. The significance of Henry’s attack in February 1894 comes from the fact that his ‘beau geste’ was—along with the attack in the Liceo Theater in Barcelona in 1893—arguably the first attack which took as its target ‘innocents’—ordinary people—and not representatives of the state. When he threw a bomb into the Café Terminus near the Gare Saint-Lazare in Paris, Henry took bourgeois as his target (in this case, *petits bourgeois*). For his part, Léon-Jules Léauthier had written to Sébastien Faure that rather than die of hunger or killing himself, he was going to kill a rich man: ‘I will not be killing an innocent person in attacking the first bourgeois who comes by.’⁷ He plunged a knife into the throat of the Serb ambassador to France, who was dining in a restaurant.

At the risk of repeating myself, I want to insist on the significance of the Commune in the evolution of Émile Henry. He was born into political militancy, but not into terrorism. His father, Fortuné Henry, had been an important personage in the Commune. Elected as a representative of the tenth arrondissement, Fortuné was one of the men who signed the order leading to the taking of hostages to be taken from the clergy, army, magistrature, or the ‘bourgeoisie’. The order warned that executions could follow for each Parisian civilian killed or wounded by the assailant’s ‘projectiles’.

While the troops of Versailles were shooting Parisians, Fortuné managed to escape, disguised as a painter. He went to Zaragoza, and then to Barcelona, where his wife had already found refuge. The government in May 1873 condemned him to death in absentia for ‘insurrection’.⁸ Fortuné first found work in a copper mine and then in a coal mine. Émile, the second son, was born in Barcelona in 1872, followed by a younger brother, Jules, born in 1879. Fortuné Henry was accused of having participated in the Catalan anarchist movement. After the amnesty for the Communards, the Henry family returned to France, setting up in Brévannes, twelve miles southeast of Paris, where Fortuné wife owned a small property. However, Fortuné Henry had returned from Spain with mercury poisoning. He died in 1882 when Émile was ten years of age.

⁶ A. Dalotel, A. Faure, and J.-C. Friermuth, *Origines de la Commune*; John Merriman, *Dynamite Club: L’invention du terrorisme à Paris* (Paris: Tallandier, 2009).

⁷ M. Garçon, *Histoire de la Justice sous la IIIe République. Vol. 1* (Paris: Fayard), 233; R. D. Sonn, *Anarchism and Cultural Politics in fin de siècle France* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1989), 121–122, quoting *L’Éclair*, December 18, 1893.

⁸ Archives Nationales, BB24 853. The amnesty was signed January 9, 1879. Reports on his ‘conduct’ since his condemnation were noted as ‘basically satisfactory’, but they provide no information on his ‘behaviour’ in Spain.

Émile became a 'pupil of the city of Paris', receiving a scholarship. He took the examination to enter one of the *écoles supérieures* in Paris. He could be admitted to the prestigious École Polytechnique after a year of preparation in 1888–1889. But after having passed the written exam, Émile failed the oral examination.

When he was nineteen, Émile briefly became interested in spiritism, trying to contact the spirit of his father. Given his strong attachment to the memory of his father, the Communard, we can understand this. But he soon abandoned spiritism, which he believed lacked the precision of the sciences he had discovered.⁹ At the same time, a profound feeling of injustice obsessed the extremely sensible young man. Every hour of every day, the bourgeois state demonstrated contempt and, more than this, treated ordinary people badly, including the poor and the weak, as the Versaillais had mistreated and even executed the poor. The contrast between rich and poor in Paris was truly striking. Towards the end of 1891 or, at the latest, the beginning of 1892, Émile Henry became an anarchist.¹⁰ For the moment he did nothing, but Henry clearly was overwhelmed by the electric atmosphere in fin-de-siècle Paris. The misery of the people was becoming even more accentuated. Henry had read Proudhon and Bakunin and remained obsessed with the Paris Commune. When his younger brother Jules received a school prize in 1892 for his work, he shouted, 'Long live the Commune!'¹¹

In the late 1870s and at the beginning of the 1880s, anarchist groups began to form in Paris. In 1893, the police counted 2400 anarchists in France, of whom 852 were considered dangerous. Many of these anarchists were ordinary workers, such as metallurgical workers, masons, and printers.¹² In Paris, these groups tended to be found in specific quarters, and were influenced by the anarchist idea that the revolution would ultimately emerge from neighbourhood insurrections. They set up shop street by street. Here, again, the influence of the Commune can be clearly seen.

Anarchists had little problem in finding recruits in northeastern Paris. Here again we find continuities in space with the Commune—thus Montmartre and Belleville. Strong local identities had been formed with the Commune's presence in neighbourhood collective memory, one very sensitive to their overwhelming rejection by the fancy neighbourhoods of central and western Paris, many of whose residents detested and feared the poor of the periphery, they, too, remembering the Commune which they associated with the uppity men and women of the arrondissements that had been annexed in 1860.¹³ Belleville had suffered disproportionately the violent repression that accompanied and followed the destruction of the Commune. For their part, the police also had a memory of the events of spring, 1871, in Belleville. As with Parisian elites, the identification of Belleville with the 'dangerous classes' sealed the reputation of Belleville as the scene of endemic crime.¹⁴

⁹ *L'Intransigeant*, 16 février 1894.

¹⁰ See above all the 'Déclaration' d'Émile; H. Varennes, *De Ravachol à Caserio* (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1894), 235–241.

¹¹ Archives de la Préfecture de Police, Ba 1115, police reports of March 12 and 14, 1894.

¹² F7 12506, décembre 1893; G. Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (New York: Meridian Books, 1962), 295–296.

¹³ G. Jacquemet, 'Belleville ouvrier à la belle époque', *Le Mouvement social*, 118 (January 1982), 61–77; A. Varias, *Paris and the Anarchists: Aesthetes and Subversives During the Fin de Siècle* (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1996), 25–29; J.-J. Lefrère et P. Oriol, *Zo d'Axax: un patricien de l'anarchie* (Paris: P. Oriol, 2002), 14.

¹⁴ Jacquemet, *ibid.*, 61–77.

Anarchist groups often took the names of militants they wanted to celebrate. Thus among the anarchist groups in Belleville and the twentieth arrondissement during the late 1890s was 'The Avengers of Ravachol'. The Commune continued to influence anarchist propaganda. Émile Pouget's *Le Père Duchesne* was inspired by the newspaper of the same name during the Commune. Anarchists added new words to the song written in 1866 by Jean-Baptiste Clément, which was henceforth closely associated with the memory of the Commune. In the new version, Clément dedicated in 1871 'Au temps des cerises' to an *une ambulancière* named Louise. Clément is buried near the Wall of the Fédérés in Père Lachaise Cemetery, where much of the last fighting during Bloody Week took place among the tombs.¹⁵

During the Commune, Masses still went on in many of the churches of Paris, although some of the latter had been closed. Thus Masses continued in some churches despite the vigorous anti-clericalism of many Communards. Many of the clubs during that heady spring of 1871 met in churches, which provided the largest spaces in which meetings could be held. More than twenty years later, anarchist meetings were certainly not held in religious establishments. Rather, halls and café back rooms were rented to bring militants together to discuss abstention in elections, organising propaganda to encourage conscripts to avoid military service, and to plan gatherings to commemorate the anniversary of the Commune.

Anarchist newspapers provided a centre for the anarchist cause, while underlining the international nature of anarchism in a time of rapidly expanding travel for political refugees (above all, to London). At the same time, anarchist newspapers reinforced the informal anarchist network, announcing events, while keeping anarchists informed of debates about theory and tactics.¹⁶ Here, too, the memory of the Commune remained quite present. *Père Peinard* could be purchased for a few cents (*cinq ronds*). Eight pages in length, 8000 copies, or even more were turned out. *L'almanach pour l'année 107 (Année 1899 du Calendrier crétin)* offered a short account of each month of the original revolutionary calendar (Brumaire, Messidor, Germinal, etc.), as had newspapers during the Commune. *Père Peinard* insisted that the Communards had missed the occasion 'burn down all the old pads where the bandits who govern us live, as all as all the edifices of brutalization: churches, prisons, ministries ... all that junk. It's easy ... a thousand bombs! ... We will again await our deliverance.'¹⁷

It was during this time that Émile became friends with the writer Charles Malato. Here was another link for the young man with the Commune. Malato's father had subsequently been sent in exile to New Caledonia. Fascinated by the experience of Louise Michel in New Caledonia, at age fourteen Malato became an anarchist.¹⁸ When Henry met him, Malato was already obsessed with the power of the state that he saw around him: a power represented by the army and the police, so detested by the poor, those whose Parisian predecessors had been massacred during and following Bloody Week. Now, the Third Republic had replaced the Second Empire and the Versaillais provisional government as the enemy of anarchists.¹⁹

¹⁵ Delhom, 'Des anarchistes', 396.

¹⁶ C. Bantman 'Anarchismes et anarchistes en France et en Grande-Bretagne, 1880–1914: échanges, représentations, transferts', unpublished dissertation, Université de Paris XIII, 2007, 15.

¹⁷ R. Langlais (Ed), *Père Peinard, Le Père peinard/par Émile Pouget: textes choisis et présentés par Roger Langlais* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1976), 14, 89–91, 262, *Père Peinard*, December 15 and 22, 1889, March 16, 1890; E. P. Fitzgerald, 'Émile Pouget. The Anarchist Movement, and the Origins of Revolutionary Trade Unionism in France (1880–1901), unpublished dissertation, Yale University 1973, 173, 198.

¹⁸ Varias, *Paris and the Anarchists*, 52–53.

¹⁹ Ba 1115, 13 mars 1894.

Confronted with the power and commitment to repression of the state, in the wake of the Commune, anarchists debated strategies of resistance and of revolution. In about 1876, Peter Kropotkin, Paul Brousse (a former Communard living in exile in Geneva), and Errico Malatesta began to speak of ‘propaganda of the deed’. Brousse began to organise militant anarchists ‘under the beloved flag of the Commune’.²⁰ In order to bring about revolution, acts or ‘deeds’ were required.²¹ The anarchist congress held in London in 1881 officially adopted the strategy of ‘propaganda by the deed’.²² Given the fact that European states had become increasingly centralised, there seemed no other choice. Moreover, the savage repression during and after the Commune had clearly demonstrated the power of the state, protector of capitalism, to which it was so closely tied. The result was the continued poverty of ordinary people. States were fully capable of and prepared to perpetuate further massacres.²³

In Paris, Émile Henry lived in *quartiers populaires* in the eighteenth and then the twentieth arrondissement. Here he saw up close the misery in which many if not most ordinary people lived. He also witnessed the repressive power of the state, with its sudden *rafles*—police roundups—in working-class neighbourhoods, again a continuity with the Commune. An English newspaper would later remind readers that

no anarchist could forget the savage repression [that accompanied and followed the Commune] ... Henry was the son of a man who saw thousands of workers brutalized—men, women, and children—while well-dressed Parisian men and women struck the [Communard] prisoners who were chained together with their canes and umbrellas, shouting “Kill them all!”²⁴

Only a new form of revolution could save humanity—‘propaganda by the deed’.

Other former Communards also influenced Henry, including the anarchist Elisée Reclus, who had also been condemned after the Commune. And like his father, Constant Martin, Émile’s friend, a Blanquiste and member of the International, had been forced into exile following the Commune—he had been a member of the Committee of the Twenty Arrondissements—and had returned only after the amnesty.

The tragic events of Haymarket in Chicago in 1886 also served to reinforce the Commune in the collective memory of anarchists. The image of four bodies swinging in the wind after being hanged in the United States, supposedly a progressive state, was burned into the anarchist psyche.²⁵ Following the discovery of dynamite in the late 1860s, the Commune was brought into debates on regulating its production and transport. Did not the possibility exist that ‘cartridges of dynamite could be added to incendiary or even murderous devices and these should be banned’?²⁶

²⁰ Varias, *Paris and the Anarchists*, 11.

²¹ D. C. Rapoport, ‘The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism’, in A. Cronin and J. Ludes (Eds), *Attacking Terrorism: Elements of a Grand Strategy* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2004), 50.

²² M. Fleming, ‘Propaganda by the Deed: Terrorism and Anarchist Theory in Late Nineteenth-Century Europe’, in Y. Alexander and K. A. Meyers (Eds), *Terrorism in Europe* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), 18.

²³ Delhom, ‘Des anarchists’, 306–308.

²⁴ R. Kedward, *The Men Who Shocked an Era* (New York: American Heritage Press, 1971), 59.

²⁵ F. Dubois, *Le Pêril Anarchiste* (Paris: E. Flammarion, 1894), 55–59; G. Esenwein, ‘Sources of anarchist Terrorism in late-nineteenth century Spain’, unpublished paper, 4; Ba 77, 14 février 1892. J. Green, *Death in the Haymarket* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2006), 141, 169–172, 203–208. Bantman, ‘Anarchismes et anarchistes’, 57–60.

²⁶ F7 12832, June 25, 1892; Minister of Interior, March 23, 1892; *Le Moniteur*, March 7, 1894; report of M. Vian, deputy, on behalf of the commission in 1893 to examine the law of 1875; Int. to prefects, March 1892 and report annexed to minutes of September 6, 1894.

In 1892, after Ravachol had struck, Henry condemned his ‘deeds’. ‘A “real anarchist” battles the enemy, but he does not dynamite houses in which ordinary people—workers, women, children, and domestics—might be living’.²⁷ Yet he was converted quickly to Ravachol’s tactic, with the ultimate goal of bringing about the revolution. This had become even more urgent as the state reinforced its authority, in order to defend the interests of the rich while the underprivileged struggled to survive. After all, the Commune had demonstrated this truth. And so more recently had the repressive campaign undertaken by the police following Ravachol’s bombs. Police ‘descents’ into working-class neighbourhoods had become more frequent. For Henry, the revolution now required strong, violent acts, to impress ordinary people. Life in the neighbourhoods in which he lived (rue Marcadet and rue Veron in the eighteenth arrondissement) had contributed to transform his vague love for humanity into a ferocious hatred of the rich. As he put it, ‘it’s love that begets hate ... the right of insurrection ... is a right that trumps all the others’, thus ‘the real autonomy’.²⁸ Besides an extremely brief period living in a room on the boulevard Morland near Bastille, in Paris Henry lived only in the eighteenth and later the twentieth arrondissement, besides—later—a police holding cell, the prison of the Conciergerie, and then La Roquette prison.²⁹ In the eighteenth arrondissement, the Basilica of Sacré-Coeur, still under construction as a monument celebrating the destruction of the Commune, towered over him as he walked through his neighbourhoods.

Like Belleville, Montmartre remained essential in the memory of the brutal repression of the Commune. The butte also symbolised the alliance between anarchism and the artistic avant-garde. Maximilien Luce, another Commune, witnessed the repression and thirty years later painted what he remembered (e.g., *Une rue à Paris en mai 1871 ou la Commune*). The anarchist critic Paul Adam described in his memoirs the horrible memories of the events in 1871.³⁰ The symbolists, in particular, but also the impressionists and post-impressionists—a term that the anarchist Félix Fénéon was the first to use—rejected the conventions of the salons, which they judged as ‘bourgeois’. They wanted to express their individuality aesthetically in total revolt. Camille Pissarro supported the Commune and became an anarchist. *La Gazette du Baigneur* in 1885 proudly placed Louise Michel on the cover. For his part, Maxime Lisbonne insisted on the link between the avant-garde and the Commune; literary anarchists frequented his bar (see the excellent study by Richard Sonn³¹) and thus the police closely watched his establishment.

The looming presence of Sacré-Coeur on the butte of Montmartre tormented anarchists, who, again, considered religion and the clergy as pillars supporting the state and capitalism, along with the army. Indeed Sacré-Coeur stood as a symbol of counter-revolutionary repression. Again, it was at Montmartre that the Commune began early in the morning on March 18. And it was there that the Versaillais executed Varlin and orchestrated a particularly bloody repression during Bloody Week. The ‘forces of order’ also have a long memory. Now in Montmartre’s cabaret ‘Le Chat Noir’ the public sang, ‘Since a temple has been standing to brutalize us, our old Montmartre has changed, because of that construction on our butte’.³² In 1891, several *compagnons* made it

²⁷ P. Miquel, *Les anarchistes* (Paris: A Michel, 2003), 206.

²⁸ Merriman, *Dynamite Club*, 66.

²⁹ Ba 1115, Préfet de police, 4 août et rapport de police, 26 octobre 1892.

³⁰ Sonn, *Cultural Politics*, 182.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² R. A. Jonas, ‘Sacred Tourism and Secular Pilgrimage: Montmartre and the Basilica of Sacré-Coeur’, in G. P. Weisberg (Ed), *Montmartre and the Making of Mass Culture* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 110,

known during a meeting that dynamite would be distributed by the anarchist group ‘The Revenge of the Miners’ with the goal of blowing up Sacré-Cœur.³³

In Émile Zola’s *Paris* (1898), Guillaume Froment wants to undertake an attack on behalf of anarchism. He decides to make Sacré-Cœur his target. He hates the basilica and savours the scene of its destruction: ‘And suddenly, it is lightning and an earthquake which opens it up and engulfs in a torrent of smoke and flames the entire basilica, with its faithful and its believers’.³⁴

In anarchist circles in the 1890s, a passionate debate went on regarding the effectiveness of terrorist attacks. After all, one of the principal originators of the concept of ‘propaganda by the deed’ had been Kropotkin, who himself turned away from the idea, repulsed by its violence. Émile had become obsessed with Ravachol and his courage in face of the guillotine. Henry broke with Malatesta, an ‘associationalist’, to sing the praises of anarchist individualism. On November 8, 1892, Émile left his first bomb at the door of the Carmaux Mining Company, 11, avenue de l’Opéra. After having come upon the bomb, which had been placed in a package, two policemen had the very bad idea of carrying it to the nearest police station, located on the rue des Bons-Enfants.³⁵ Two minutes later, the bomb exploded when placed on a counter, killing five people. The next day, Henry took a train to Dieppe, then a boat to Newhaven in England.

Malato, who had lived in London since his judicial condemnation in France, noted that a dramatic change had suddenly come over Émile. He had been hypnotised by the bomb that had exploded at the Liceo Theater in Barcelona in 1893. He could only think about undertaking a ‘coup’ and then dying. ‘Today is the anniversary of the “dancing lesson”’, making an allusion to the murderous explosion at the police station.³⁶ When Henry left for the last time his room on Rue des Envierges in the twentieth arrondissement in February 1894, on a clear day he could easily see the Eiffel Tower, which had been constructed only four years earlier, as well as the Panthéon, where the remains of the “great men” of France could be found, the cathedral of Notre Dame, and Charles Garnier’s Opera, four symbols of the enemy that he had vowed to destroy. He then went down into the elegant eighth arrondissement and threw his bomb into the Café Terminus.

At the same time, ‘scandalous scenes’ took place at the tomb of Vaillant in the cemetery of Ivry. Demonstrators saluted the Paris Commune. The conservative newspaper *Le Siècle* demanded harsh state action: ‘Confronted by those miserable people who have declared war on society and who kill without paying any attention to the victims they are taking, repression is necessary’.³⁷ The last edition of *Libérraire* in 1896 was devoted to Émile Henry, four years after his execution, in Place de la Roquette, and to the Paris Commune.

112; R. D. Sonn, ‘Marginality and Transgression: Anarchy’s Subversive Allure’, in Weisberg, *Montmartre*; Ba 77, 18 juin et 24 juillet 1891.

³³ Ba 77, 18 juin et 24 juillet 1891.

³⁴ Emile Zola, *Paris* (Paris: Poche, 2002), 591–593.

³⁵ M. Pentelow and M. Row, *Characters of Fitzrovia* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2001), 50; H. Oliver, *The International Anarchist Movement in Late Victorian Londres* (London: Croom Helm, 1983), 64–65; Bantman, ‘Anarchismes et anarchistes’, 334.

³⁶ C. Malato, ‘Some Anarchist Portraits’, *Fortnightly Review*, 333, September 1, 1894, 331–332.

³⁷ *Le Siècle*, 15 février 1894.

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