
“VIVE LA COMMUNE!”

Feminism, Socialism, and Revolutionary Revival in the Aftermath of the 1871 Paris Commune

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In a week of street battles in 1871, the French army slaughtered approximately 25,000 participants of the revolutionary civil war known as the Paris Commune. Two prominent feminist and socialist activists, Paule Mink and André Léo, managed to escape to safety, each subsequently working to reassert her individual ideological position. Prior to the Commune, both women wrote and spoke publicly, challenging gender and class hierarchies and the power of the Church. In the revolutionary aftermath, Léo continued to champion democratic socialism, whereas Mink began advocating radical, authoritarian revolutionism, abandoning her moderate socialist roots. Léo published literary and theoretical works and participated in internal socialist politics, maintaining such a low public profile that, although she lived and wrote until 1900, the Paris police ceased monitoring her by 1880. In contrast, Mink traveled ceaselessly, speaking publicly, advocating violent revolution. Considering Mink a greater threat, police spies monitored her until her 1901 death. Through different strategies in the aftermath of the Commune, each woman exemplified a strand of the multiple and complex feminist socialisms in the late nineteenth century.

On May Day 1901, a police informant observed the funeral procession held for Paule Mink, revolutionary, socialist, feminist, orator, and former communarde. He reported: “At the moment the cortege left the mortuary, cries of ‘Vive la sociale! Vive la Commune! Vive l’Internationale!’ rose from the crowd. These cries arose again and again along the route.”¹ Thousands of mourners attended her funeral, and over 600 police, 500 foot soldiers, and 100 cavalry patrolled the funeral route. Thirty years after the fall of the Paris Commune, Mink’s interment reflected the significant role that the veterans, ideas, and mythology of the Commune played in the decades following the revolution. The police report of her burial, one of a series of extraordinarily detailed, virtually minute-by-minute accounts of the day’s events, concluded at least thirty years of police surveillance of Mink. (She was most likely under police observation prior to 1871, but the fires of the Commune destroyed the Prefecture of Police and all of its records.) Throughout those years, Mink, as well as André Léo (the pseudonym of the journalist, novelist, and social critic Léodile Béra Champceix), Louise Michel, and other former communardes carried on

socialist and feminist activism, often invoking the legacy of the Commune.² For the left, the Commune stood as a shining moment, its victims as martyrs, its survivors as heroes. For the French “forces of order,” it continued to represent the perpetual possibility of revolutionary resurgence and a perennial threat to both the gender and class orders of French society.³ For women, the insurrection provided a unique political and social juncture during which they had seized the revolutionary moment and attempted to surmount existing gender strictures.

The Paris Commune, a seventy-three-day-long revolution following the Franco-Prussian War, stands as the first “socialistic” insurrection to have a degree of success. Actually a civil war, the Commune was a city-wide Parisian revolt against a French national government widely considered to be reactionary and repressive. During the Commune, activist women seized the revolutionary opportunity to bring about economic, social, and political change. Women formed political clubs, organized a city-wide women’s union, wrote articles, edited a newspaper, marched in the streets, served as battlefield nurses and cooks, sought out and denounced military deserters, and fought on the battlefields and finally on the barricades. Among these revolutionaries, the leadership consisted mainly of radical bourgeois, and the rank-and-file primarily of the working class. For working-class women, revolutionary motivation rested in a combination of their economic exploitation and marginalization in the workplace, subordination in the family, and a palpable revolutionary tradition, resurrected in the crucible of the Commune. The bourgeois leaders, including Mink and Léo, allied themselves with various socialisms of the period, but, considering them all lacking any significant gender critique, they mediated their diverse socialisms with a social and economic feminism. Focusing to different degrees on the integration of feminist issues into their particular socialist programs, these women agreed that socialism could not succeed without including women. This understanding provided a common feminist element among their contrasting feminist socialisms.⁴ Significantly, both Mink and Léo analyzed and theorized socialism beyond specifically feminist issues, ultimately constructing oppositional socialisms.

The experience of the Commune indelibly affected its participants, the French nation, and the European (and American) political climates into the twentieth century. Historians often refer to the years immediately following the Commune as a period of little socialist, labor, or feminist activism in France.⁵ The French national (also known as the Versailles) government’s brutal repression of the Commune and severe retaliation against its participants left the majority of insurrectionists dead, exiled, or imprisoned. As the Versailles-based national troops arrested and slaugh-

tered Parisians in the Commune's final days, a significant number of female and male activists, particularly those with money or international socialist connections, succeeded in escaping France. Many of the former communardes continued both feminist and socialist activism while in exile in Switzerland, England, or Italy.

Paule Mink and André Léo were among those who managed to escape France. These women subsequently spent the 1870s in Switzerland and Italy, each tirelessly critiquing the French government, the capitalist system, and existing gender and class orders. Immediately following the Commune, both Mink and Léo focused their critiques on the mistakes the revolutionary government had made. Deeply affected by the insurrectionary experience, the two women responded in divergent ways. Léo continued on an ideologically and methodologically steady course, taking a literary and philosophical approach and advocating a gradualist socialism. Mink, in contrast, was further radicalized by the event and devoted herself to the propagation of violent revolution. She sought the resurrection of the Commune. In the much-changed post-Commune world, they operated in new contexts, with new constraints, trying to make sense, both personally and politically, of the recent events and their implications. Continuing work each had undertaken prior to the insurrection, Mink and Léo individually strove to formulate workable socialist programs that would address issues of both class and gender. Their respective feminist socialisms evolved in disparate directions over the subsequent decades, and with them, their public profiles and reputations as female revolutionary menaces.

Both Mink and Léo believed that one reason for the failures of socialism, and specifically the Commune, was women's continued marginalization in and alienation from socialist parties and programs. As André Léo wrote during the Commune, "From a certain perspective, one could write our history since [17]89 under the title: 'History of the Revolutionary Party's Inconsistencies.' The woman question would make up the largest chapter, and it would show how this party successfully pushed half of its troops over to the enemy's side, troops who only wanted to march and fight for revolution."⁶ Léo's assertion typified the efforts each made—despite their separate work, disparate approaches, and often differing socialist perspectives—to construct a French revolutionary party inclusive of women. And they were not alone. Other communardes, including the young Russian labor organizer Elisabeth Dmitrieff, the famed iconoclast Louise Michel, and Nathalie Lemel, who established a long-running food cooperative, embodied a strand of the woven, multi-textured cloth of socialist feminisms that enveloped the Commune. Léo's and Mink's ideas and actions exemplify the range and impact of feminist socialisms that emerged from the uprising and evolved through the fin-de-siècle, chal-

lenging the predominant historical contention that if the Commune engendered any feminism at all, it was narrow and short-lived.

The historiography of women in the Commune, begun in the 1950s and 1960s by Eugene Schulkind and Edith Thomas, has experienced a resurgence in recent years.⁷ Works by Gay Gullickson, Martin Johnson, and Kathleen Jones and Françoise Vergès have investigated issues of women's representations, citizenship, and politics, respectively. Some studies address the communardes as part of the history of feminism, but within the context of larger works: Claire Goldberg Moses on nineteenth-century feminism, and more recently, Karen Offen, in her rich study of European feminisms.⁸ None of this scholarship, however, has focused on the import, diversity, and impact of feminist socialisms, and feminist socialists, that emerged from the Commune. As such, a gap exists between the historical understanding of the role of communardes as feminists and the role of communardes as socialists. This has effectively marginalized communarde feminist socialism from the fin-de-siècle European radical ideological landscape while simultaneously minimizing the Commune's significance in the history of feminism.

In 1880, nine years after the Commune's fall, the French government declared a general amnesty, and Mink, Léo, and many other socialist exiles returned to France to continue their efforts. Both during and after the exile years, the Parisian police persisted in spying on these revolutionary veterans, both in France and abroad. Police reports included quoted, "verbatim" accounts of political speeches and meetings, analyses of socialist women's words and influence, descriptions of their appearance, and critiques of their personal and public behaviors. The officers and informants writing these reports reflected the desires of the police hierarchy to remain apprized of every detail of these dangerous women's lives. The results of their efforts provide historians with a rich source that reflects the power of communarde legacies as a threat to the established order and the police as guardians of that order. These veterans simultaneously stood as torchbearers, both basking in the Commune's afterglow and lighting the way to a more equitable society.

After the early 1870s, Léo rarely lectured publicly, expressing her feminism and socialism almost exclusively through her work as a journalist, editor, and novelist. She also actively participated in the International Workingman's Association (the First International), advocating a decentralized, evolutionary socialism and supporting the anarchist Mikhail Bakunin in the internecine, factional battles between himself and Karl Marx. By contrast, Mink agitated for violent revolution, arguing for revolutionary, rather than evolutionary, socialism. She spent her post-Commune years traversing Switzerland and France, giving provocative public

lectures on socialism, feminism, and anti-clericalism. While Léo remained actively engaged in the intellectual and literary life of European socialism, her renown waned following her return to Paris. Conversely, Mink continued to publicly and repeatedly advocate social revolution, maintaining a flamboyant, popular persona. Upon her 1880 return to Paris, she announced to the organization *L'Union des femmes socialistes* (Union of Socialist Women) that "The Versaillais have fooled themselves into believing that the Commune is dead; they do not realize that Paris is revolutionary."⁹ Although both of these women survived thirty years after the Commune's fall, Léo's police surveillance ended in 1880, while Mink's continued to her 1901 death, as evinced by the enormous police presence at her funeral. In the eyes of the forces of order, Mink, not Léo, continued to pose a visible, public threat to gender, class, and religious hierarchies.

Paule Mink

As a journalist, activist, and orator, Mink had established herself as a popular speaker in the years preceding the Commune. In the late 1860s, in an effort to create a liberal Empire, France's Emperor Louis Napoleon relaxed restrictions on assembly, speech, and the press.¹⁰ The field of debate and discussion blew wide open, as newspapers and public assemblies proliferated. Both Mink and Léo participated in a series of widely attended Parisian public meetings, lecturing on issues including women's labor and socialism.¹¹ At one such event, Mink had spoken on "Liberty: The Condition of Socialism." She asserted that, "No one loves and desires equality more than I; but it must have liberty for its corollary, the complete opportunity for individual initiative. . . . otherwise, I find equality, practiced alone a shackle to progress . . . I want to be myself, a human being, thinking and active, and not a cog in the great social machine."¹² Prior to the Commune, Mink espoused an anarchist, non-collectivist socialism that included elements which could be termed Proudhonian individualism (purged of Proudhonian misogyny), stressing liberty and a removed governmental force.¹³ During the Commune, this led her to ally with the minority, "moderate" side, which advocated a gradualist and decentralized socialism within the factional schism that developed within the revolutionary government.¹⁴ In "Liberty: The Condition of Socialism," she had explicitly opposed a "communist" system which "suppresses liberty in favor of equality" while concurrently rejecting "The economists [capitalists], who kill equality with liberty." For Mink, the critical imbalance of these forces, and with them society, "will be resolved when we are able to find the means of reuniting . . . liberty and equality, of developing them together."¹⁵ Mink, then, was pursuing the ideological middle ground.

Mink's pre-Commune feminism also emphasized the interrelationship between equality and liberty. At an 1868 Parisian public meeting on "Women's Labor," she directly repudiated a recent declaration by Lausanne's International Congress of Workers, which insisted upon limiting women's roles to the private sphere. She declared, "You can not invoke your peremptory argument regarding the safety of the family, against women's social, civil, and political emancipation. Because fully accomplishing the duties of wife and mother, women will also be able to practice their social and political duties."¹⁶ While arguing for women's liberty, Mink defined women's equality as encompassing "the duties of wife and mother." Mink constructed female freedom in terms of sexual difference. She stated that, "Man is the force, woman the resistance; man is the initiative, woman the perseverance . . . Everywhere and always, it is thus . . . 'equality in difference.' . . . In reclaiming woman's independence, it is not necessary for her to want to become a man . . . it is necessary, above all, to be and remain herself."¹⁷ Espousing what could today be termed a "difference feminism," Mink conceived of sexual difference as natural, and women and men as equals, asserting that "Women have virtues which are their own, and men have qualities particular to themselves."¹⁸ For Mink, woman's liberty rested in her individual rights not only as an embodied female, but as a gendered woman—woman's emancipation would not come at the expense of what Mink understood as her "womanliness."

Mink implicated the Catholic Church in the perpetuation and enforcement of inequality. Speaking on "Marriage and Divorce," Mink expressed a feminist critique of marriage, capitalism, and the Church, arguing that "marriage has been defended by the theologians . . . Never has the Church supported women. As long as the Church has dominated, woman has been subservient . . . woman has never been protected by the Church, which has always preached the concentration of power and wealth."¹⁹ Mink attacked the Church's support of indissoluble marriage as a primary component of its long-term oppression of women along with its support of capitalism. She asserted a hierarchical dichotomy, with women on the bottom and power, wealth, and the Church on the top. Within this framework, Mink accused the Church not only of oppressing women but also of failing in its self-proclaimed paternalistic role as economic and social guardian.

Arguing primarily for legalized divorce in this lecture, Mink sought to ameliorate women's condition through a diminution or eradication of Church authority and a recognition of equivalency, but not identity, between the sexes. While understanding the interrelated powers of sex, class, and religion, Mink presented relatively particular and limited solutions that were compatible with, but not necessarily constitutive of, socialism.

Continuing this approach during the Commune, Mink organized and spoke in political clubs, contributed to newspapers, established a free girls' school in Montmartre, and traveled to the provinces as an unofficial "revolutionary ambassador."²⁰ In line with her advocacy of non-authoritarian, decentralized socialism, Mink allied herself with the Commune government's minority, "moderate" faction, the same coalition with which Léo allied. But Mink's incendiary rhetoric and connection with the popular revolution emerging from the political clubs was by no means moderate. Rather, it foreshadowed the radicalization she experienced in the uprising's wake. During the Commune's final "Bloody Week," Mink successfully avoided arrest (and slaughter) and escaped France by stowing away on a train bound for Switzerland. As her train crossed the Swiss border, she leapt out of her hiding place and shouted back at the French border guards, "*Vive la Commune! Vive la Révolution!*" These cries set the tone for the rest of her life.

André Léo

Like Mink, André Léo was renowned as a social critic, journalist, and orator in the years preceding the Commune. Addressing many of the same audiences as Mink, Léo similarly provided a socialist critique of society, placed women's emancipation as central to that critique, and attacked the Church's complicity in the subjection of women. Both women participated in the 1868 series of Parisian public meetings on women's emancipation. Léo, however, was also a well-received novelist, and her writings reflected her more theoretically and analytically sophisticated framework. Léo's activism and writings overlapped and reinforced those of Mink, both generating a substantial following.

Proposing a plan for a socialist future, Léo strongly emphasized the importance of addressing rural as well as urban issues. In 1870, she and a group of like-minded male socialists founded a short-lived periodical, *L'Agriculteur*, aimed specifically at bringing socialism to rural and provincial laborers.²¹ Just as she asserted women's participation as essential to the success of socialism, she also considered worker/peasant solidarity vital. Léo was traveling in the provinces when the Commune broke out, studying peasants' political and economic attitudes and interests in the wake of the September fall of the Empire, while propagandizing socialism's concern and empathy with the rural poor, disaffected, and dispossessed.²² Immediately after her return to Paris, she composed a manifesto, of which over 100,000 copies were distributed in the provinces.²³ Léo proclaimed that, "One day comes . . . when the voice of the people becomes that of history. It writes no beautiful phrases; it utters no memorable discourse. It

speaks, however, and all of its innumerable voices express the same grievances, the same accusations. And its instinct is not wrong. If its rendering is brutal, it is just."²⁴ Léo's socialism underscored the unity of "the people," their commonality of experiences and circumstances; when they learned to speak as one, their "innumerable voices" would harmonize in decrying their collective suffering. In contradiction to her gradualist, peaceful socialism, Léo excused any "brutal" manifestation by "the people," arguing that "instinct is not wrong."²⁵ She established different standards for Jacobins and Blanquists, whom she condemned for violent rhetoric and action, and peasants, whose potential future political awakening appeared exempt from these principles.²⁶ Idealizing peasant "instinct" reflected a somewhat patronizing acceptance of the "natural" rural, in sharp contrast to the civilized urban activists. In seeking provincial support for revolutionary Paris, Léo asserted an ultimate common goal for peasants and urban and rural workers, but presented differing acceptable routes to this end.

Léo's feminism permeated her socialist critique. In 1869, she had published a series of articles entitled *La femme et les moeurs: Liberté ou monarchie* (Woman and Morality: Liberty or Monarchy) for the journal *Le Droit des femmes*.²⁷ Léo intended this piece as a rebuttal to Proudhon's *De la justice dans la révolution*, in which he alleged to prove women's physical, intellectual, and moral inferiority.²⁸ In *La femme et les moeurs*, Léo questioned the existence of liberty and rights for anyone in a society that denies them to women, charging that "Most of the democrats are the last to understand that all rights are interdependent." She contended that, on the question of women's liberty, "the revolutionaries become conservatives."²⁹ "These so-called lovers of liberty, if they are unable to take part in the direction of the state, at least they will be able to have a little monarchy for their personal use, each in his own home. When divine right was shattered, it was so that each male (Proudhonian-type) could have a piece of it. Order in the family without hierarchy seems impossible to them—well then, what about in the state?"³⁰ Accusing Proudhonian men of rejecting monarchy and hierarchy on the state level, while enforcing it—the rule of the father—on the family level, Léo further rebuked them for "building a fiction . . . on the pretext used by all despots: order."³¹ Referring to the monarchical and imperial states' use of order as justification for repression and reaction, she further implicated Proudhonian men for their appropriation of this despotic rationale. Léo underlined the hypocrisy of defending liberty and individual rights while subjugating one-half of the population to the "free" half in the petty kingdom of the home.

Léo, like Mink, viewed the Church as central to women's oppression. In an 1867 anti-clerical piece in the socialist journal *La Cooperation*, she attacked convent-run workshops both for their exploitation of lay women's

labor and for underselling their competitors, effectively driving down wages in the competing workshops. Focusing particularly on the provincial context, Léo wrote that "what is certain is that the establishment of a convent of women in a locality will inevitably result in reduced wages for laborers."³² In both rural and urban contexts, Léo strove to eradicate the Church's economic, social, and intellectual influence on women's lives.

Léo advocated an inclusionary socialist program, involving men and women, workers and peasants. She viewed each of these groups as essential to socialism's ultimate triumph and as potentially able to participate in its attainment. However, she considered their lack of education, class consciousness, and/or religious and political enlightenment to be a substantial detriment and threat. Rather than seeking their ideas and cooperation in developing a socialist program, Léo endeavored to supply them with top-down enlightenment. She clearly desired to open their minds and expand their options by advocating and struggling for an egalitarian society. She embraced a form of compassionate, benevolent elitism. Believing that true socialism required democratic, broad-based participation, Léo perceived herself as one of the "honest and serious individuals of the lettered class"³³ and duty-bound to raise the consciousness of female and male workers and peasants.

With the outbreak of the Commune, Léo returned to Paris from the provinces, redoubling her efforts to bring women and men, workers and peasants, to the revolution. During the Commune, Léo established and edited the revolutionary newspaper *La Sociale*, continued as an orator and polemicist, joined Louise Michel's Montmartre Vigilance Committee, and persisted in her advocacy of decentralized, anti-authoritarian socialism.

Divergent Politics

In the wake of the Commune's loss, Mink's and Léo's socialisms diverged. Within a year, Mink radically altered her ideological stance, rejecting the idea that socialism would best be attained through a gradual, non-authoritarian approach. Instead, she advocated a centrally planned, radical, violent revolution. Mink's feminism and anti-clericalism thus became subordinated to her primary goal of social revolution, the triumph of which, she believed, constituted the necessary precondition to attaining all forms of equity. Still a strong partisan of women's emancipation and the suppression of the Church, she now saw these goals as attainable only through a successful social revolution. Léo, in sharp contrast, remained firmly committed to moderate, collectivist socialism. In the insurrectionary aftermath, she championed a gradual, non-violent social transformation to the cooperative control of property and production.

Both Léo and Mink constructed analyses of the Commune's defeat and suppression, each assigning blame to opposing sides within the revolutionary government. Mink's newly conceptualized socialist authoritarianism led her to celebrate the Blanquist majority's radical emergency actions. She retrospectively condemned the minority faction for attempting to moderate the majority's extra-governmental revolutionary measures, such as confiscating property, appropriating funds, and limiting rights and freedoms during the insurrection, acts which she now believed could have enabled the Commune's triumph. Léo embraced an antithetical position. Consistent with her opposition to anti-democratic, authoritarian socialism, she denounced the Blanquist majority for disregarding the minority's temporizing efforts.

Six months after the Commune's overthrow, Léo pilloried the revolutionary government's Blanquist/Jacobin majority faction in her critique, *La Guerre sociale*, (The Social War), which she delivered at a meeting of the Ligue de la paix et de la liberte (League of Peace and Freedom) in Geneva. Labeling Blanqui "the most detestable of politicians," Léo declared, "More than anyone, I have deplored, I have cursed the blindness of these men—I speak of the majority—whose stupid ineptitude has lost the most beautiful cause."³⁴ Disappointed and frustrated by the Blanquist majority's anti-democratic decisions and actions during the uprising, she blamed them for the Commune's fall. The majority in the Commune government also faced accusations of terror from both revolutionary supporters and critics. Léo defended them against these indictments. In the process, however, she underlined the Blanquist/Jacobin majority's ineffectiveness.

Léo proceeded to relativize the Jacobin Terror of 1793 by comparing it with the Versailles government's repression of the Commune. Léo questioned, "what was this red terror of the past century . . . in comparison to the tricolor terrors, of which the terror of [18]71 is the most horrible . . . What month of [17]93 equaled this bloody week, when 12,000 cadavers . . . littered Parisian soil?"³⁵ Comparing the guillotine of the "red terror" to the machine guns of the bourgeois "tricolor terror," Léo attempted to minimize the violence of the socialists' revolutionary legacy while vilifying the newly installed reactionary republican government and its bourgeois supporters. She dramatically clarified and contextualized the concept of "terror," emphasizing the random and rabid nature of the rampant repression of 1871. In this piece, delivered immediately after the Commune's fall, Léo seriously underestimated the number of dead in "the terror of '71."³⁶ The Terror of 1793 killed about 20,000 people (2,627 in Paris, and roughly 17,000 in the rest of France) over eighteen months, while approximately 25,000 Parisians died in one week at the hands of France's National Army.³⁷

Further distancing socialism from any perceived negatives, Léo finally tightened its definition dramatically, declaring that, "the revolution of March 18 [the Commune] was not in the hands of socialism . . . but . . . in the hands of Jacobinism, of bourgeois Jacobinism, by its majority . . . The minority, worker and socialist . . . protested nearly constantly, but never successfully influenced affairs."³⁸ Léo thus defined the Commune's majority Blanquist/Jacobins as bourgeois. In labeling them "bourgeois," she endeavored to strip the majority group of the moral "socialist" label. By defining the minority as "worker and socialist," she anointed them the true inheritors of the socialist mantle in the Commune's wake. Her placement of Jacobinism outside of socialism implicitly resurrected the narrow, class-based definition of the 1793 Jacobin. In *La Guerre sociale*, she wove an intricately accusatory pattern of Blanquist/Jacobin weakness and culpability, ultimately revealing them tucked within the enemy fabric.

As much as Léo decried Blanquist authoritarianism, Mink came to embrace it in the Commune's aftermath. Advocating a conspiratorial, highly centralized revolutionism, Mink tirelessly devoted herself to resurrecting and reforming the Commune—to bringing about violent social revolution in order to rebuild "*la république sociale*." The following 18 March, at a meeting celebrating the first anniversary of the uprising, Mink attacked the revolutionary government's minority, moderate faction, charging that, "The Commune . . . lacked the courage to deliver a great blow because of its lack of logic. It impeded the movement . . . it deliberated when it should have fought."³⁹ Completing her speech with a "toast to the new Commune," she blamed the 1871 failure on the minority faction's caution and moderation. In diametrical opposition to Léo's condemnation of the Blanquist majority, Mink pilloried the Proudhonian minority. The experience of the Commune government's inaction and confusion, the brutality of the bourgeoisie's defense of the status quo, and the frustration of the revolutionary loss apparently led Mink to reevaluate her political stance. Rejecting her previous anarchistic, individualist position, she now advocated direct and authoritative action, an approach well suited to her dramatic and flamboyant sense of self. She became an avid supporter of centralized, conspiratorial Blanquist socialism.

The International

Although Mink and Léo embraced distinctly divergent socialisms, each woman remained an adherent and proponent of the International Workingman's Association, the international socialist organization formed to unite "the workers of the world." Socialist factions competed for influence within branches in cities across Europe, and within the organi-

zation as a whole. After the Commune, Mink supported the Blanquist/Marxist faction, while Léo backed their opposition, the anarchist Bakunin's coalition, whose position most nearly reflected her own. Bakunin sought a collectivist anarchism that would replace central authority with localized control in a federation of communes.⁴⁰ To attain this goal, he planned a network of secret societies to overthrow the government. While Léo had consistently advocated collectivism and decentralized authority, she held a more democratic, open model for change. Léo retained her ideological convictions, and although she continually clashed with Bakunin, she supported his power struggle against Marx, whom she despised.

Léo retrospectively championed the International's acts in the 1860s when "it chose the peaceful way and the weapon of ideas," establishing itself as "superior in intelligence, in morality, and in democratic truth to the old Revolutionary party," the Jacobins.⁴¹ She described the International as having "a totally new character of realism and action . . . its core was composed of workers, joined by a great number of honest and serious individuals of the lettered class."⁴² Conceptualizing the International as the new and relevant socialist party, she integrated the positive aspects of intellectual production with those of the working class. Léo believed that a substantial program of education and propaganda would expedite the development of a strongly working-class socialist party. In her memoirs, she explained how the "politics of the past . . . shamefully and criminally exploited the passions and credulity of the masses."⁴³ "Unhappily, thanks to the intellectual darkness into which the majority of humanity remains plunged, and to the false and superficial instruction received by the rest, shrewdness succeeds there more than the truth."⁴⁴

Reiterating her earlier perceptions of the working class and the peasantry as unconscious and falsely informed historical actors, Léo emphasized the importance of bringing the International's socialist program to the masses in a top-down educational effort. Her socialism of "realism and action" required an enlightened and class conscious populous to create a "serious, skillful . . . and generous politics . . . a politics of the present and of the future," with "human hope put to the service of progress."⁴⁵ Léo's socialist vision continued to rest upon the prerequisite preparation of the people, whom she understood as potentially receptive and ready. A gradualist approach would enable those she termed "the honest and serious individuals of the lettered class" to collaborate with urban and rural laborers and peasants to develop a political program. Based upon the International's extant policies, programs, and power struggles, the extent of workers' contributions unavoidably came into question.

Léo's recollection of the International of the late 1860s idealized the organization's democratic nature, at least in terms of gender. The Proud-

honian-dominated Paris International had overtly opposed gender equity. Portraying themselves as defenders of the family, they sought to restrict women's roles to the domestic, private sphere, a subjugation Léo had specifically attacked in 1869 in *La femme et les moeurs*.⁴⁶ Elisée Reclus, an egalitarian, anarchist member of the International, had informed Léo that "[Henri] Tolain presented a resolution declaring that women should exclusively devote themselves to their husbands and children."⁴⁷ Tolain, a founder of the Paris International, espoused intensely misogynist attitudes, blaming women's work for rising prostitution and female hysteria.⁴⁸ In language reminiscent of the French Revolution, the Internationalist Gondouville termed the family "the safeguard of liberty" and protection against "luxury and debauchery." The Internationalist Mathé, in comparison, argued that women's political equality would create a "catastrophe that would set us back several centuries."⁴⁹ Their Proudhonian socialist positions reflect complex influences and anxieties—they associated women's economic, social, and political equity with the "decadence" of Empire, and particularly of the pre-Revolutionary *Ancien Regime*; they accepted and perpetuated the bourgeois ideology of separate spheres; and, in an era of the de-skilling of labor, they feared women's competition for "men's" jobs.

Léo's post-Commune analysis emerged from her anti-authoritarian socialist position, which led her to palliate retrospectively the Proudhonian-dominated socialist organization of the late Empire. This faction had evolved into the (decidedly more authoritarian) anarcho-socialist Bakuninist group within the International with whom Léo allied. The Bakuninists competed with the Marxists for control of the International. Léo's vehement opposition to centralized socialism segued from her enmity toward the Blanquist/Jacobin Communards to their ideological successors, the London-based Blanquist/Marxist faction of the International. From her post-Commune exile in Geneva, on 21 October 1871, Léo wrote to her friend Mathilde Roederer about the "dissension in the International, as elsewhere in the world," blaming it on "Marx, who brings centralization, despotism, and false unity."⁵⁰ One month later, she followed up with intensified rancor: "We are conducting a campaign against the resolutions of the London Conference, which are monolithic and authoritarian, and against Karl Marx, the evil genius, the Bismarck of the International."⁵¹

These personal letters, with their accusations of autocracy, clearly demonstrate an antipathy toward Marx and Marxian socialism consistent with her anti-centrist, anti-Blanquist/Jacobin stance. In writing her memoirs, she thus "forgot" the misogyny of the Proudhonian-dominated Paris International of the late 1860s, choosing rather to emphasize their "democratic," associationist socialism, and contrasting it favorably with their

undemocratic, Blanquist opponents. This pragmatic politics reflects her willingness to adapt, but not abandon, ideals to political realities.

Although Mink radically shifted her socialist affiliation in the Commune's aftermath, she, too, remained a loyal member and advocate, as well as critic, of the International. Adamant that socialism's ultimate success required women's inclusion, immediately following the Commune Mink admonished the International for having "forgotten women": "this is a great wrong, and it is perhaps because of denying justice to women that the International has not prospered more rapidly."⁵² Mink understood women's continued oppression and marginalization as seriously impeding the socialist agenda. She contended that by "denying justice to women," the International may have hampered its own progress, and with it, the advancement toward socioeconomic and political change.

While a vocal critic of the International, Mink simultaneously strove to revive the organization and resuscitate socialism by integrating women into its membership, thereby creating a base of support for an egalitarian agenda. Writing for the International's Geneva-based newspaper *L'Égalité* in the Commune's wake, she encouraged women that "the future belongs to us, but you must give everything to aid our triumph . . . bring your enthusiasm to the social revolution . . . embrace a noble cause!"⁵³ Mink appealed to both women and men as citizens, touting the International as the post-Commune route to emancipation. "*Citoyens et citoyennes!* It is in the name of women that I speak, in the name of women to whom the International has given the rights and duties equal to those of men. . . . only socialism will be able to emancipate women materially and morally, as it will be able to emancipate all those who suffer."⁵⁴ Defining socialism as the key to women's emancipation, Mink demonstrated the logic behind her prioritizing socialism over feminism: she understood the former to be a necessary prerequisite to the latter. Mink, consistent with her feminism of difference, also appealed to women as mothers, calling them to "come to us, not for the present alone, but especially for the future of your children, come to us so that your children can have a better life than you do."⁵⁵ She advocated the International as the revolutionary vehicle for equality and freedom. Mink saw the potential for the International to become truly egalitarian and liberatory and worked to alter both its membership and its agenda.⁵⁶

Founded in London in 1864, the International sought a common ground for "communication and cooperation between workers of different countries, aspiring to the same goal."⁵⁷ The International intended to unite all workers and socialists and to overcome national borders and divisions. The recognition of multiple socialist paths theoretically allowed activists with opposing views to coexist within the International.⁵⁸ In 1869,

Léo wrote, "Those who adopt the same goal as we do, who search for justice in the equality of social conditions for every human being. . . . if we fight them and turn them away because their means are different than ours, we are hurting ourselves, combating our own forces, playing our enemy's game."⁵⁹

But in reality, these different approaches did not always peacefully coexist. Léo's advocacy of accepting various routes to socialism clearly contradicted the authoritarian ideologies of particular members of the International. Following the publication of this 1869 letter, Bakunin charged Léo with being "anti-revolutionary" because she endorsed gradualist or reformist socialisms, and he removed her from the editorial board of the weekly *L'Égalité*.⁶⁰ Prior to the September 1870 fall of the Empire, most Blanquists had boycotted the Parisian sections of the International, arguing that their heavily trade-unionist membership had been "co-opted" for accepting the Emperors' limited toleration of unions.⁶¹ The organization's new openness to Blanquists may have contributed to Paule Mink's desire not only to remain affiliated with the International following her ideological shift, but also to see in it the potential for what she would have considered further positive change. Léo simultaneously viewed the organization as a contested terrain over which she would engage in intellectual battle through the next decade. The definition of the association as a whole, as well as its regional sections, seemed perpetually open to change as internecine battles occurred among the Blanquists and Proudhonists, as well as between Marx and Bakunin, as they struggled for the organization's control.⁶²

In the Commune's Aftermath

In the decades following the Commune, Mink traveled to cities and towns, agitating and advocating social revolution. Reflecting her shift away from a more balanced critique, she now primarily propagandized socialism, subsuming, though never forsaking, her feminism and anti-clericalism. A controversial, flamboyant, popular figure, Mink spoke publicly to groups of men and women, working to incite social unrest. In contrast, Léo rarely lectured publicly beyond the early 1870s. For the duration of her decade in exile, she participated in the International, wrote for socialist journals, and composed a comedic polemical play.⁶³ Upon her return to Paris in 1880, she settled into a private life. Although she continued to publish novels and the occasional journal article, Léo disappeared from the public eye. Mink and Léo's dramatically divergent popular profiles are reflected in their police dossiers: Léo's file ends with her return from exile, and Mink's continues for twenty more years.

The Parisian police closely monitored both Mink and Léo during their decade of exile. Following the Commune's fall in late May, Mink, Léo, and hundreds of other fortunate revolutionaries escaped France.⁶⁴ Mink and Léo each arrived in Geneva during the summer of 1871. Through these months, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, under Jules Favre, pressed the Swiss government to extradite all Communards as common criminals. Favre argued that "the abominable work of the scoundrels . . . cannot be confused with a political act. It is made up of a series of crimes punished by all civilized people." Rather than dignifying the insurgency as political, and thus embodying a potential moral legitimacy, France's forces of order defined the primarily working-class uprising as the perpetration of the "criminal class." Yet, in spite of France's extensive diplomatic efforts, the Swiss honored the traditional right of asylum and refused to extradite former Communards.⁶⁵ Paris reacted by maintaining police surveillance of the revolutionaries without regard for national borders.

The Paris police represented France's forces of order. Reeling with the memory of the Commune's dramatic social upheaval, those deeply invested in the status quo—the members of the national government, the military, the Church, and the bourgeoisie—relied upon the police to ensure the maintenance of order. And as demonstrated by France's national troops during the Bloody Week, they sought order at any cost. The role of the police spies at this time involved monitoring and reporting the words and actions of all revolutionary veterans. Communardes posed a double menace in this context as they threatened not only class but also gender hierarchies. Their police files reflect the efforts of agents striving to protect France from these societal perils.

Paule Mink holds the dubious honor of having a police dossier far larger than any other communarde, with the exception of the legendary Louise Michel, who was arrested during the Bloody Week, tried, convicted, and deported to a prison colony in the South Pacific. Following her 1880 return, she and Mink frequently gave joint lecture tours.⁶⁶ Resuming her post-Commune activism in November 1871, Mink presented a series of seven lectures in Geneva.⁶⁷ In the first half of 1872, Mink slipped in and out of France, accused in police documents of smuggling "prohibited publications, munitions, and other objects . . . to be used in the revolutionary cause."⁶⁸ They also suspected her in a possible "conspiracy against the life of Thiers."⁶⁹ During the same months, agents reported that she gave public orations and French lessons, the latter undoubtedly for economic reasons.⁷⁰ In March, she also joined the staff of *L'Espérance*, a women's journal, described by informers as "up to this point moderate, but now Mme. Mink is involved."⁷¹ The police considered her "an enormous influence" and clearly a serious threat.⁷² This continued after her return to France. When-

ever she spoke alone, with fellow socialists, or with other Commune veterans, especially the famed Louise Michel, Mink played upon her appeal as a former *communarde* and drew crowds in Paris and the provinces.⁷³

Calling for the new Commune, Mink consistently invoked the heritage of France's violent revolutionary past and prepared for its perpetuation in the future. Mink avowed the need for class war.⁷⁴ She ridiculed those who believed that "the next revolution could be made without shooting guns." She asked, "will it be sufficient to present yourselves at the Palais Bourbon, armed with economic theories, to chase away the Deputies?"⁷⁵ Continuing this theme at a public lecture two days later, she argued that "a prompt, energetic solution is necessary, which will conclude with the suppression of the execrable bourgeoisie."⁷⁶ Rejecting the usefulness of a gradualist socialism and arguing publicly that "the word revolution is not evolution,"⁷⁷ she took fellow socialists to task.

In her lectures, Mink promoted unity among revolutionary factions, striving to expedite the next revolution.⁷⁸ Her enthusiastic response to the assassination of Czar Alexander II exemplified her celebration of direct revolutionary action over theoretical debate. In March 1881, Mink declared, "As a revolutionary, as a Pole, I cry out 'Bravo!' Teach the people to rid themselves of their tyrants, to annihilate the despots: Thus you will make the Social Revolution."⁷⁹ While consistent with an advocacy of violent social revolution, in this statement, Mink espoused an anarchist approach to instigating governmental overthrow by one violent action. Not only did she laud the act, but she also supported one of the actors, Jessa Helfmann, one of the six young Russian nihilists (two were women) charged with the Czar's assassination. Mink organized a large demonstration in her honor in Marseille on 10 May. Announcing this action, Mink wrote that she "supported the protest in favor of Jessa Helfmann as a woman, mother, and revolutionary."⁸⁰ Here Mink appropriated the era's dominant ideas of woman and mother, applying them to one who embraces and celebrates a female assassin, although one who has killed a tyrant, an act both Mink and Helfmann hoped would bring about social revolution. Thus both she and Helfmann remained within Mink's conception of womanhood—Helfmann selflessly undertaking an act to benefit her people, and Mink supporting her efforts in the hope of bringing about the revolution, and thus a better future. Helfmann was the only defendant to escape execution, and only because she was pregnant.⁸¹ The Russian state's conception of motherhood ironically protected this regicide, whom Mink defended in protest and in the press for her maternal selflessness, from execution. The mother murdered the Czar, known as "The Little Father," to save the children.

Arrested at the pro-Helfmann rally in Marseilles, Mink was tried and

subsequently jailed for one month, charged with carrying a red flag, and with making "seditious cries" for shouting "*Vive la Révolution Sociale*." At her trial, she defended herself, explaining that "several years ago the cry '*Vive la République*' was considered to be seditious. Today it no longer is. Soon, neither will '*Vive la Révolution Sociale*.'"⁸² The authorities also threatened Mink with deportation. Born in Clermont-Ferrand of a Polish father, and formerly married to a Russian man, Mink was considered a "foreigner." Upon her release from prison, she responded to the deportation threat by writing to the Minister of the Interior, announcing that "In France, the women do not exist before the law. They have only the nationality of their husbands. I am thus going to marry a Frenchman, to finally have all the rights of a Frenchwoman."⁸³ And she did—the then-forty-one-year-old Mink married the thirty-one-year-old worker and fellow Blanquist, Maxime Négro.

In 1881, the year of Blanqui's death, Mink championed his proactive revolutionary program, praising him for "understanding that the triumph of the people will not be obtained by compromise and attenuations: he went right for the goal, and implanted the principal of revolutionary force in ideas and actions."⁸⁴ As an avid partisan of violent insurgency, she lauded direct action, or "the principal of revolutionary force." Indicative of her devotion to Blanqui, Mink named her two sons in his memory and in honor of the radical, revolutionary tradition: Lucifer Blanqui Vercingétorix was born in 1882 and Spartacus Blanqui Révolution followed two years later. The municipality refused to record these names officially.⁸⁵

Mink's demands for women's emancipation focused primarily on marriage and on the Church. Her feminist speeches critiqued contemporary gender relations, attacking the existence of the civil, commercial, and penal codes which institutionalized women's subservience. Speaking on May Day 1895, Mink challenged women to "rise up . . . you who are doubly exploited as women and as workers." Beseeking women to join with the socialists, she announced that "we want women to have total possession of themselves, the right to love and to dignity."⁸⁶ Recognizing their subordinated position, she sought to empower women, but to do so by way of socialism.

Mink similarly argued that socialist revolution provided the primary path to freedom from the dominion of the Catholic Church. Assailing the Church for economically and intellectually exploiting both French men and women, she announced at a December 1880 meeting of the Society of Freethinkers that "Yes, people, you have been fooled too much, it is you alone who can emancipate yourselves."⁸⁷ Calling on women to abandon the Church, she proclaimed that, "It is you alone, *citoyenne*, who can bring the Social Revolution."⁸⁸ For Mink, women needed socialism for their

emancipation, and socialism needed women to succeed, but the Church stood as a principal impediment to this process. While she urged women to work toward their own liberation by abandoning the Church, that would still not suffice; only socialism would fully free them. Her understanding of the intertwined powers of capital and the Church had remained consistent since prior to the Commune. Yet her analysis of how best to challenge them had changed dramatically.

In the late 1880s and early 1890s, Mink had been living in Montpellier with her husband and children, focusing her efforts on the provinces, and thus had slipped somewhat from the Parisian public eye. By this time, many of her former allies had abandoned revolutionary socialism for electoral socialism. Dispirited and frustrated by this and her personal situation, she took steps to alter her life and regain her public presence. Mink left her husband and moved back to Paris with her two daughters. Her move was precipitated by what on the surface appeared to be a dramatic political shift: she accepted the feminist organization *Solidarité des femmes'* offer to nominate and support her as a candidate in the 1893 Parisian municipal elections.⁸⁹

Mink's embrace of women's suffrage and political rights, while obviously a notable shift, contained more continuities than dramatic changes. In a piece entitled "Why I Have Posed My Candidacy," published in the newspaper *L'Eclair*, she clarified her position: "Claiming women's political and civil rights will not be sufficient to emancipate them and to end their suffering. I do not believe, oh, no! not at all, that granting women the vote will annihilate all of the abuses. . . . That is why . . . all the women who seek rights and justice for all . . . must become socialist."⁹⁰ Mink never saw suffrage as the key to women's emancipation; she considered it ameliorative to women's immediate condition.⁹¹ Similarly, Mink had traversed France and Switzerland, lecturing on marriage and divorce, and on women's work, addressing issues including the inequity of the Napoleonic Code and capitalists' particular exploitation of women's workers, but she never believed legal and employment reform would free women. Socialism, and particularly revolutionary socialism, remained, in her perspective, the sole means to eradicate gender and class oppression as well as the influence and power of the church. When *Solidarité des femmes'* offered to nominate Mink, she seized the opportunity to regain the Parisian political stage. A woman's legislative candidacy—illegal, radical, and guaranteed to draw attention and controversy—appealed to Mink's flair for the theatrical and the shocking. Mink readily (and permanently) left her husband in Montpellier, hoping to escape a life of poverty and increasing obscurity. *Solidarité des femmes'* proposal provided her a means of personal and political escape.

André Léo, in contrast, remained constant in her ideology and approach after the Commune. Upon her arrival in Switzerland in August 1871, Léo undertook a series of public lectures, intent on telling the world of France's brutal repression of the Commune. In a letter from Chaux-de-Fonds, the site of her first lecture, Léo wrote to a friend, "What scenes! . . . What horrors! The sole thought of . . . denouncing them to the human conscience consoles me as a survivor when so many were martyred. I will begin to tell the tale here, tomorrow. I will then carry the story to everywhere . . . that I will be heard."⁹²

Léo denounced Versailles' atrocities in speeches, conferences, and journals. As witnesses, she and other surviving Communards vowed to preserve and publicize the memory of the national army's savagery. Within a year, however, Léo had effectively ceased lecturing. Believing that she would be more successful in the socialist literary and intellectual world than in the popular public eye, she traded the podium for the more familiar pen. In keeping with her activist history, Léo wrote and edited socialist journals and became deeply involved in the internal ideological struggles within the International. Shifting her vision forward, she focused less on memorializing the Commune and more on developing a workable, gradualist feminist socialism.⁹³

In 1872, Léo married her companion and political ally, Commune veteran Benoît Malon.⁹⁴ During their six-year marriage, Léo and Malon moved from city to city across Switzerland and Italy, living and working in Geneva, Como, Milan, and Lugano. In Geneva, they both wrote for the journal *La Revolution Sociale*, and in Lugano they founded and edited *Le Socialisme Progressive* while working closely with Bakunin on issues involving the International.⁹⁵ Although a Bakunin supporter, Léo continued to conflict with him on ideological matters, as she had since prior to the Commune, leading ultimately to her break with the organization. Léo rejected Bakunin's belief in the viability of completely abolishing the state. Simultaneously, and in keeping with her long years of moderate, collectivist socialism, she asserted the right of every person to own property, which was to be worked cooperatively. She contended that "it is by the suffering and poverty that result from its [property's] absence, that the people finally understand that this natural right was the first right of all!"⁹⁶ In a twist on typical collectivism, Léo supported individual property ownership, but only in the sense that every person would own "an equal part of the common property," devoid of any physical enclosure.⁹⁷ The question of private property remained a point of contention among socialists of the era. Although Léo formed political alliances during these years, she consistently retained her ideological independence.

The Parisian police monitored Léo's whereabouts, activism, and per-

sonal behavior throughout the 1870s. Reports vary from a few brief lines in August 1872, relating that she was in Locarno, Italy, planning the next congress of the International with Bakunin, to multi-paged, detailed summaries of her life and work.⁹⁸ For example, a January 1873 communiqué briefly outlined her personal life, listed the seven political novels she had published and the newspapers she had edited, and discussed her role in the Commune and its immediate aftermath. Throughout the decade, police reports mentioned her publications and newspaper affiliations, but they never described their content. This presents a clear contrast to Mink's dossier, which is replete with transcriptions of her lectures. Mink's lectures appealed to a broad, working-class audience, were frequently open to the public, and overtly intended as propaganda. The police agents likely viewed most of Léo's writings as rarified and more narrowly received. While holding true for a number of her political articles and tracts, her novels, in particular, were popular and held obviously didactic and moralizing aims.⁹⁹ In all of her writings, Léo lacked Mink's incendiary, provocative style and content. And, in the eyes of the police, Mink's traveling alone and presenting these lectures across Switzerland and France constituted an additional, dangerous refutation of women's proper role.

Part of the police informants' reporting duties involved efforts to portray physically their subjects. A detailed account of Léo's activities and interactions concluded with an extended physical description of her, excerpted from the September 1871 issue of *La Liberté*, an anti-Commune newspaper. The quote he chose reflects the police agent's fascination with the appearance of the female insurgents, as though presenting the messenger as repugnant would guarantee the repulsiveness of the message. Léo is depicted as a, "fat gossip, brunette, pimply, red-faced, bulging forehead, grey and watery eyes, hoarse voice. One could easily take her for a tobacco merchant."¹⁰⁰

The contrast could not be more stark between the dry and factual tone used to describe her work and the embellished "portrait" to describe her physical attributes. While an extreme example, this pattern remains consistent throughout the surveillance documents. Police spies reported women's actions and undertakings in a straightforward, journalistic manner, but used significant editorial license for the occasional physical descriptions. Such derogatory portraits reflected the disdain the police agents felt for the lives and ideas of these women who not only challenged but also actively strove to subvert the dominant class and gender hierarchies. In another example, an agent portrayed Paule Mink as having a "medium nose, rather large mouth . . . deathly complexion . . . very bad teeth . . . neglected hygiene."¹⁰¹ A second informant, responding to a request for a photograph of Mink, wrote that he was unable to find one, and was send-

ing a description in its place. He then listed her characteristics as "pale and thin face marked with several freckles; sickly appearance; black hair; long nose slightly turned up; large mouth . . . [and] right shoulder higher than the left."¹⁰² Even when attempting to make the most literal description possible, the informant used only negative terms, removing any hint of attractiveness or femininity from his subject.

Léo's police dossier ends with her return to Paris following the 1880 General Amnesty. To France's forces of order, Léo, as an intellectual, party politician, and novelist, had no real potential impact on either the working class or the government. From their perspective, her ideas lacked an effective means by which to reach a significant target—the power to impact a consequential group, and were intrinsically unthreatening to the existing order. This once-perilous revolutionary woman had become benign in their eyes. Unlike Mink, who spoke publicly, frequently, and flamboyantly, Léo kept a low public profile. She advocated no violence or appropriation of private property. Particularly in the context of a fin-de-siècle French republic, with socialists holding elected positions, Léo's politics appeared increasingly less radical.

Conclusion

The experience of the Commune deeply affected both Léo and Mink, influencing their political and personal lives over the ensuing decades. The women, once ideologically similar, took divergent paths toward their desired goals of bringing about political, economic, and social change. Léo retained her feminist, gradualist socialism. She initially worked within organized socialism, but abandoned it, disillusioned and dispirited, and turned her focus solely to publishing polemical novels and writing articles for socialist journals. Increasingly retreating into a private life, she remained known only within European socialist circles. In contrast, Mink's embrace of revolutionary socialism ultimately led to her split with organized socialism, yet she continued her efforts to push the party toward greater feminism and radicalism. Mink used her theatrical style, adapted her methodology, and made her personal life politically public as she struggled to keep the revolutionary socialist alternative alive, keep herself in the limelight, and keep herself from destitution. Léo and Mink died within a year of each other. The symbolic markings of each woman's death reflect the trajectories of their work and lives.

In 1879, Léo had written to a friend, "I carry all the weight of fifty-five years on myself: fatigue, sadness, lost illusions."¹⁰³ Politically and personally disappointed and frustrated, she nonetheless persevered with her work on her return to Paris, but increasingly isolated herself. Although

she remained known to socialists throughout Europe, outside of that circle, her renown had dwindled.¹⁰⁴ Léo emerged from the 1870s single, both personally and politically, having separated both from Malon and from the International. She retained her independence for the final twenty years of her life, never again marrying or allying herself with a socialist or feminist faction. She remained intellectually productive and committed to her feminist socialist vision, continuing her literary and intellectual approach. During the final two decades of her life, Léo wrote two serialized novels for the socialist paper *La Siècle* in the early 1880s and published several more novels and a political treatise in the 1890s, addressing feminist and socialist topics including education, marriage, child rearing, and justice.¹⁰⁵ To the forces of order, Léo's gradualist socialist model appeared less threatening within the context of an increasingly acceptable parliamentary socialism. And yet Léo rejected this model, affirming her continued alienation from the organized parties.

By the time of her death in 1900, André Léo had also faced personal tragedy: in 1885, one of her sons, Léo, died at the age of thirty-two, and eight years later, his twin followed him to an early death.¹⁰⁶ Benoît Malon preceded her in death by two years, as well.¹⁰⁷ Consistent with her life-long commitment to collectivist socialism, she left "a small annuity" for "the first community in France to attempt a collectivist system, purchasing land communally, and working together and sharing its fruits."¹⁰⁸ She chose a solitary and private path; she was buried in the Champseix family plot, but her grave bore no name.¹⁰⁹

Mink's public profile overshadowed Léo's less popular successes. Embodying the grassroots violence and power of the Commune, Mink perpetuated the authorities' fears of gender and class disorder. Her revolutionary critique dovetailed with her radical activism. Mink's perpetual poverty pushed her activism both politically and personally.¹¹⁰ As a single mother, she lived the economic realities of interwoven gender and class subordination, leaving her constantly on the brink of destitution, thus contributing not only to her radical stance but also her ongoing need to earn money through public appearances. Traveling alone, speaking publicly, running for office, advocating violence, supporting regicide, crossing boundaries, flouting norms—Mink's dramatic life and words kept her and her politics in the public eye.

For radical socialists and feminist socialists, Mink presented an alternative to the de-radicalized fin-de-siècle French socialist parties. By this era, socialism had developed increasingly bureaucratic and exclusionary forms, further diminishing the space and opportunities for a new generation of feminist socialists to influence its structures and agendas. Mink relentlessly challenged socialist organizations to greater feminism and

radicalism. Long opposed to parliamentary socialism, she ultimately agreed to stand for legislative election, yet persisted in arguing that political rights constituted merely a step on the revolutionary road to women's and workers' emancipation. Mink held true to her ideological position while adapting her methods, a strategy that effectively perpetuated her influence and fame over the decades. Speaking regularly in a variety of fora, she continued to commemorate and exalt the Commune. Her devotion to revolutionary change, her flamboyant personality, and her multiply-othered social position—as an ethnically Polish, impoverished, radical woman—pushed her to maintain a cutting-edge politics. Within the context of an increasingly reformist French socialism, Mink's popularity and influence reflected the ongoing presence of dissatisfied leftists, seeking more dramatic and fundamental change. The thousands of mourners filling the streets at Mink's May Day 1901 funeral, waving red flags and calling for the Commune's rebirth, attested to her role in keeping the revolutionary spark alive.¹¹

Léo's and Mink's differing political, intellectual, and personal reactions to the Commune, and approaches to feminist socialism in its aftermath, illustrate the complexity of feminist socialisms in the late nineteenth century, while demonstrating the insurrection's formative role in their development. The Commune provided radical women with a political opening unlike any other in this era, and they seized the opportunity to challenge sex roles and gender, class, and religious hierarchies. Whether in person or on the page, Léo and Mink altered and complicated the intellectual and popular radical political landscape through their chosen activist approaches in the Commune and in its wake.

NOTES

I would like to thank Keenan Ferguson, Karen Offen, Marilyn Boxer, Ed Berenson, and Laura Frader, as well as Mieke Ijzermans at the International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam, and the staff at the *Archives de la Préfecture de la Police*, Paris.

¹*Obseques de Paule Mink*, 2 May 1901, Dossier Paule Mink (Mekarska), Ba 1178, Archives de la Préfecture de la Police (hereafter APP), Paris.

²André Léo took her pseudonym from the names of her twin sons, André and Léo.

³"Forces of order" is a common French term for police, military, and/or governmental authorities.

⁴Karen Offen explains that the word feminism, which originated in the French *féminisme*, emerged from uncertain origins in the 1880s, and came into

wide use in the early 1890s, primarily due to the feminist Hubertine Auclert. Karen Offen, "Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach," *Signs* 14, no. 1 (1988), 119–57, esp. 126. I define feminism as the recognition and condemnation of power inequities between men and women, and the desire and efforts to rectify them. While the term (or any synonym) did not exist before the 1880s, the people, ideas, and actions that fit this definition certainly did. Thus, following Offen, I employ "a careful definition of terms, grounded in historical evidence" in my use of "feminism" for the pre-1880 period. Karen Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700–1950: A Political History* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000), 19–21.

⁵In the immediate post-Commune years, bourgeois feminism reemerged prior to socialist feminism because the majority of socialist feminists remained in prison or exile before the General Amnesty of 1880. See, for example, Claire Goldberg Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (Albany: State University of New York, 1984), 193–96; Steven C. Hause, *Women's Suffrage and Social Politics in the French Third Republic* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1984), 8; David Barry, *Women and Political Insurgency: France in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 152–54. See also Roger Magraw, *Workers and the Bourgeois Republic* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 21; Martin Johnson, *The Paradise of Association: Political Culture and Popular Organizations in the Paris Commune of 1871* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 284–85; Stewart Edwards, *The Paris Commune 1871* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1971), 351–52; and Michelle Perrot, *Workers on Strike: France, 1871–1890* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1987), 33.

⁶André Léo, *La Sociale* (Paris), 8 May 1871.

⁷Eugene Schulkind, "Le Role des femmes dans la Commune de Paris," 1848. *Revue des revolutions contemporaines* XLII, no. 185 (February 1950); Eugene Schulkind, "Socialist Women During the 1871 Paris Commune," *Past and Present* 106 (February 1985), 124–163; and Edith Thomas, *The Women Incendiaries*, trans. Starr Atkinson (NY: George Braziller, 1966).

⁸Gay L. Gullickson, *The Unruly Women of Paris: Images of the Commune* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996); Johnson, *Paradise of Association*; Kathleen B. Jones and Françoise Vergès, "Women of the Paris Commune," *Women's Studies International Forum* 14, no. 5 (1991), 491–503; Kathleen B. Jones and Françoise Vergès, "'Aux Citoyennes!': Women, Politics, and the Paris Commune of 1871," *History of European Ideas* 13, no. 6 (1991), 711–32; Moses, *French Feminism*; and Offen, *European Feminisms*. Marilyn J. Boxer's unpublished dissertation, "Socialism Faces Feminism in France: 1879–1913," (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Riverside, 1975), is extremely useful for the interrelation of feminisms and socialisms, and for Paule Mink, in the Commune's aftermath.

⁹*Paris 2 Octobre 1880*, Dossier Paule Mink, APP.

¹⁰Pamela M. Pilbeam, *Republicanism in Nineteenth-Century France, 1814–1871* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 243–44.

¹¹Paule Mink, "Le travail des femmes," quoted in Alain Dalotel, ed., *Paule Mink: communarde et féministe* (Paris: Syros, 1968), 120–22; Dalotel, preface to *Paule*

Mink, 14–18; and Alain Dalotel, Alain Faure, and Jean-Claude Freiermuth, *Aux Origines de la Commune: Le mouvement des réunions publiques à Paris 1868–1970* (Paris: François Maspero, 1980), 168–78.

¹²Mink, “*La liberté: condition du socialisme*,” in *Paule Mink*, 80–81.

¹³Mink opposed collectivism, the shared ownership and control of property and the means of production. Rather, she supported the individual’s right to be free from both centralized and collective authority.

¹⁴The two sides, the minority, moderate “Proudhonians,” and the majority, radical “Blanquists” or “Jacobins,” are both broadly and imprecisely labeled groups. The terms “Blanquist” and “Jacobin” frequently appeared interchangeably. By 1871, the term “Jacobin” had expanded beyond specific reference to its namesake club and members. This broadly defined Jacobinism, or neo-Jacobinism, encompassed most socialisms advocating military insurgency, or class warfare, undertaken and enforced by a centralized revolutionary authority. This essentially included any of the non-associationist, non-federalist socialisms. On the opposing side, terming the moderate faction Proudhonian is ultimately contradictory. Proudhon opposed associations, strikes, and political action, considering them violations of individual liberty. Paradoxically, he pronounced that “property is theft,” while supporting private ownership. The majority of its adherents espoused a gradualist socialism and opposition to strong or centralized rule, yet they embraced differing perspectives regarding property and association. In terms of gender equity, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon vehemently argued for women’s absolute restriction to the private sphere. For the Proudhonian faction, see *Benoît Malon à André Léo, St. Péloque*, 16 July 1868, Descaves Collection, International Institute for Social History (IISH); Benoît Malon, *La Troisième défaite du prolétariat français* (Neuchâtel: G. Guillaume fils, 1871), 272–280; K. Steven Vincent, *Between Marxism and Anarchism: Benoît Malon and French Reformist Socialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 15; For the Jacobin faction, see Patrick H. Hutton, *The Cult of Revolutionary Tradition: The Blanquists in French Politics, 1864–1893* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 1–8; G. D. H. Cole, *Socialist Thought: The Forerunners, 1789–1850* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1953), 6–7, 162–165; Vincent, *Between Marxism*, 37–8.

¹⁵Mink, “*La liberté*,” quoted in *Paule Mink*, 82.

¹⁶Mink, “*Le Travail des femmes*,” 13 July 1868, in *Paule Mink*, 113–14, 135.

¹⁷Mink cites Ernest Legouvé as the source of the phrase “equality in difference.” *Ibid.*, 131–32.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 132; and Offen “*Defining Feminism*,” 119–57.

¹⁹Mink, “*Le Mariage et le divorce*,” 3 November 1868, in *Paule Mink*, 142–43.

²⁰Dalotel, preface to *Paule Mink*, 18–19; Thomas, *The Women Incendiaries*, 96, 101, 115–16; Paul Fontoulieu, *Les Églises des Paris sous la Commune* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1873), 49–50; and Boxer, “*Socialism Faces Feminism in France*,” 87.

²¹Her co-editors were Elisée Reclus, Paul Lacombe, and J. Toussaint. *L’Agriculteur* (Paris), 1870.

²²André Léo, "La Province," 8–15, *Memoires*, Descaves Collection, IISH.

²³Malon, *La Troisième défaite*, 169.

²⁴Léo, "La Province," 13.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶André Léo, "Signes précurseurs," *Notes et impressions, 1870–1871*, *Memoires*, Descaves Collection, IISH, 9–10.

²⁷The articles were subsequently collected and published, under the same title, as a book. André Léo, *La femme et les moeurs: Liberté ou monarchie* (Paris: Le Droit des Femmes, 1869).

²⁸Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *De la justice dans la revolution et dans l'église* (Paris: Fayard, 1988 [1860]).

²⁹Léo, *La femme et les moeurs*, 126–127.

³⁰Ibid., 128.

³¹Ibid., 137.

³²André Léo, *La Cooperation*, 10 Feb. 1867, quoted in Fernanda Gastaldello, *André Léo: Quel Socialisme?* (Ph.D. diss., University of Padua, Italy, 1979), 81–83.

³³Léo, "Signes précurseurs," *Notes et impressions, 1870–1871*, *Mémoires*, Descaves Collection, IISH, 9–10.

³⁴André Léo, *La Guerre Sociale: Discours prononcé au Congrès de la Paix à Lausanne (1871)* (Neuchatel: G. Guillaume Fils, 1871), 5.

³⁵Ibid., 14–15.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Leo Gershoy, *The French Revolution, 1789–1799* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, (1932), 63; and Edwards, *Paris Commune*, 346.

³⁸Léo, *La Guerre Sociale*, 33.

³⁹*Extrait d'un Rapport de Genève, 18 Mars 1872*, Dossier Paule Mink (PM), Ba 1178, APP.

⁴⁰Collectivism had the accepted meaning of the cooperative ownership and control of property and the means of production. For Bakunin, it meant the absence of any centralized authority. It was, however, also used more loosely and generally as a euphemism for socialism. I thank Marilyn Boxer for this point.

⁴¹André Léo, "Signes précurseurs," 9–10, *Notes et impressions 1870–1871*, *Mémoires*, Descaves Collection, IISH.

⁴²Ibid., 9–10.

⁴³Léo, "Signes précurseurs," Descaves Collection, IISH, 14.

⁴⁴Ibid., 13.

⁴⁵Ibid., 14.

⁴⁶Dalotel, Faure, and Freiermuth, *Aux Origines de la Commune*, 171–73; and Léo, *La femme et les moeurs*, 125–40.

⁴⁷Reclus refers to Tolain's action at an 1868 Vauxhall public meeting on the *Travail des Femmes*. *Elisée Reclus à André Léo*, n.d., André Léo, Descaves Collection, IISH.

⁴⁸Dalotel, Faure, and Freiermuth, *Aux Origines de la Commune*, 172–73.

⁴⁹Quoted in Dalotel, Faure, and Freiermuth, *Aux origines de la Commune*, 173.

⁵⁰André Léo à Mathilde Roederer, 21 Oct. 1871, quoted in James Guillaume, *L'Internationale: Documents et Souvenirs (1864–1878)* v. II (1905; reprint, Paris: Société nouvelle de librairie et d'édition 1969), 219.

⁵¹Léo à Roederer, 12 Nov. 1871, quoted in Ibid., vol. II, 222.

⁵²Mink, *Discours prononcé le 27 septembre 1871 au Congrès de la Paix et de la Liberté*, in *Paule Mink*, 83.

⁵³Paule Mink, *L'Égalité*, Geneva.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.; and Mink, *Congrès de la Paix*, in *Paule Mink*, 82–86.

⁵⁷Article 1er, Statuts, in *Le Livre Noir de la Commune de Paris: L'Internationale dévoilée* (Brussels: Office de Publicité, 1871), 31.

⁵⁸Guillaume, *L'Internationale* v. II, 61–64; Roger Magraw, *A History of the French Working Class*, vol. I: *The Age of Artisan Revolution, 1815–1871* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 264–65; and Vincent, *Marxism and Anarchism*, 24–25.

⁵⁹André Léo, *L'Égalité*, (Geneva), 2 March 1869.

⁶⁰Gastaldello, *André Léo*, 99–106. She and Bakunin continued to have a contentious relationship, even after the Commune, when she supported Bakunin's faction of the International. His advocacy of decentralized, anarchist socialism much more closely approached Léo's ideology than did that of Marx, his opponent.

⁶¹This was part of the late Empire's wider reforms. Magraw, *Artisan Revolution*, 264; and Cole, *Socialist Thought*, 166–67.

⁶²Woodford McClellan, *Revolutionary Exiles: The Russians in the First Inter-*

national and the Paris Commune (London: Frank Cass, 1979), 48–51; William Serman, *La Commune de Paris* (Paris: Fayard, 1986), 62–65; and Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, 6–24.

⁶³The play was entitled *Marianne* (Paris: Bureaux du "Siècle, 1877), 155–365.

⁶⁴Vuilleumier estimates that over 250 exiles were in Switzerland at the end of 1871. Marc Vuilleumier, "Les Proscrits de la Commune en Suisse (1871)," *Revue Suisse d'Histoire* (1962), 501.

⁶⁵Jules Favre, quoted in Martin R. Waldman, "The Revolutionary as Criminal in 19th-Century France," *Science and Society*, 7 (September 1973): 31–55.

⁶⁶Michel, undoubtedly the best known and most studied communarde, spent the majority of her life after the 1880 General Amnesty in England. She did periodically return to France, as for example when she and Mink gave lecture tours during the 1880s. The literature on Michel is voluminous.

⁶⁷Vuilleumier, "Les Proscrits de la Commune en Suisse," 503.

⁶⁸*A Monsieur le Ministre du l'Intérieur*, Paris, May 20, 1872, PM; See also *Genève 16 Mars 1872*, PM; *Genève le 21 Mars 1872*, PM; *Genève le 9 Août 1872*, PM, APP.

⁶⁹*Genève 9 Août 1872*, PM, APP.

⁷⁰*Paris 5 Fevrier 1872*, PM, APP.

⁷¹*Vevey 1 Mars 1872*, PM, APP. Adolphe Thiers headed the French government both during and after the Commune's repression.

⁷²*Genève 9 Fevrier 1872*, PM, APP.

⁷³*Ibid.*; and Boxer, "Socialism Faces Feminism in France," 94–97.

⁷⁴*L'Intransigeant*, 7 April 1884.

⁷⁵*Paris 15 Avril 1883*, PM, APP.

⁷⁶*Paris 17 Avril 1883*, PM, APP.

⁷⁷*Bataille 4 March 1883*.

⁷⁸Boxer, "Socialism Faces Feminism in France."

⁷⁹*Toulon 23 Mars 1881*, PM, APP. Mink was born in Clermont-Ferrand, France, of Polish parents. They left Poland in 1831 (eight years before Mink's birth), following her father's participation in a revolutionary movement. Mink remained strongly identified as a Pole. Jean Maitron, ed., *La Première Internationale et La Commune*, vol. 5 of *Dictionnaire Biographique de Mouvement Ouvrier Français, 1864–1871* (Paris: Les Éditions Ouvrières, 1968).

⁸⁰Jessa Helfmann's name, transliterated from the Russian, occasionally appears as Gesya Helfman (Boxer), Guessia Helfman (Dalotel), or Gessa Gelfman (Stites). *L'Intransigeant* (Paris), 10 May 1881.

⁸¹Stites, *Women's Liberation*, 148.

⁸²*Le Procès de Marseille*, 20 June 1881. Marilyn Boxer cites Charles Vérecque's recollection that Mink was the first woman to brandish the revolutionary red flag in France after the Commune. Boxer, "Socialism Faces Feminism in France," 118.

⁸³"*Un Mariage obligatoire*," *Le Petit Provençal*, 19 July 1881.

⁸⁴Paule Mink, "Ni Dieu, ni Maître," 1881, in *Paule Mink*, 104.

⁸⁵Marie-Louise Néron, "Les Morts d'hier," *La Fronde*, 29 April 1901, Dossier Paule Mink, Bibliothèque Marguerite Durand (BMD), Paris; *Bataille*, 1 March 1884.

⁸⁶*Petite République*, 2 May 1895.

⁸⁷*Paris 7 Decembre 1880*, PM, APP.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*

⁸⁹Charles Sowerwine, *Sisters or Citizens? Women and Socialism in France Since 1876* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 70–71; Dalotel, *Paule Mink*, 29–30.

⁹⁰*L'Eclair*, 1 May 1893.

⁹¹*Germinal*, 7 April 1893; and *La Petite République*, 19 August 1893.

⁹²Guillaume, *L'Internationale*, vol. II, 171.

⁹³Dossier Champceix (André Léo) (AL), Ba 1008, APP; Gastaldello, *André Léo*, 61–76; and Vuilleumier, "Les Proscrits de la Commune en Suisse."

⁹⁴Her first husband, Grégoire Champceix, had died in 1863. Léo was seventeen years Malon's senior, and she never felt completely comfortable with their age difference. Terming it "unnatural," she eventually attributed their separation to the disparity. Lucien Descaves, "*Sur Benoît Malon et André Léo*" n.d.; André Léo to Elise Grimm, 13 March 1878; André Léo to Mathilde Roederer, 6 (or 7) April 1878, Descaves Collection, IISH.

⁹⁵*Bruxelles 2 Avril*, and *Genève 3 Août 1872*, Dossier Champceix (André Léo), Ba 1008, APP; Maitron, ed., *La Première Internationale*, 52; and Gastaldello, *André Léo*, 65–73.

⁹⁶André Léo, *En chemin de fer*, quoted in Gastaldello, *André Léo*, 71–72.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*

⁹⁸*Genève 3 Août 1872*, and *Summaire: Leonie Béra Vve. Champceix*, AL, APP.

⁹⁹Gastaldello, *André Léo*, 250–51.

¹⁰⁰*Summaire*, AL, APP.

¹⁰¹*Signalement de Paule Mink*, PM, APP.

¹⁰²28 *Juin 1872*, PM, APP.

¹⁰³André Léo to unknown, quoted in Lucien Descaves, "Cahier Noir," Descaves Collection, IISH. The "Cahier Noir" is a notebook of Descaves' notes on Léo, as well as letters he copied.

¹⁰⁴J. Engell-Gunther to André Léo, December 1886, Descaves Collection; Augusto Mazzuchetti to André Léo, December 1891, Descaves Collection; P. Bonnaud to André Léo, n.d., Descaves Collection.

¹⁰⁵Lucien Descaves, "Une socialiste d'autrefois," *Le Petit Provençal* (Marseille), 25 March 1935, Descaves Collection, IISH; Gastaldello, *André Léo*, 372–379.

¹⁰⁶Lucien Descaves, "Sur Benoît Malon et André Léo," Descaves Collection, IISH.

¹⁰⁷It is unclear whether or not they had remained in contact. Vincent, *Beyond Marxism*, 135.

¹⁰⁸Descaves, "Sur Benoît Malon," Dossier André Léo, IISH; Dombasle, "Une expérience collectiviste," *Le Siècle* (Paris), 27 October 1900.

¹⁰⁹Fernanda Gastaldello, ed., preface to *André Léo, une journaliste de la Commune* (Paris: Éditions du lérot, 1987), 3.

¹¹⁰Dalotel, *Paule Mink*, 29; and Boxer, "Socialism Faces Feminism in France," 172–74.

¹¹¹*Obseques de Paule Mink*, 2 May 1901, PM, APP.
