

# Riot. Strike. Riot

*The New Era of Uprisings*

JOSHUA CLOVER



VERSO  
London • New York

This paperback edition first published by Verso 2019  
First published by Verso 2016  
© Joshua Clover 2016, 2019

The partial or total reproduction of this publication, in electronic form or otherwise, is consented to for noncommercial purposes, provided that the original copyright notice and this notice are included and the publisher and the source are clearly acknowledged. Any reproduction or use of all or a portion of this publication in exchange for financial consideration of any kind is prohibited without permission in writing from the publisher.



The moral rights of the author have been asserted

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

**Verso**

UK: 6 Meard Street, London W1F 0EG  
US: 20 Jay Street, Suite 1010, Brooklyn, NY 11201  
versobooks.com

Verso is the imprint of New Left Books

ISBN-13: 978-1-78478-062-3  
ISBN-13: 978-1-78478-060-9 (US EBK)  
ISBN-13: 978-1-78478-061-6 (UK EBK)

**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress

Typeset in Sabon by MJ & N Gavan, Truro, Cornwall  
Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

## Riot Now: Square, Street, Commune

The riot, the blockade, the barricade, the occupation. The commune. These are what we will see in the next five, fifteen, forty years. The list is not new. It has become a kind of common sense among a few groups that identify themselves with the end of the program. The goal here is not to reiterate the items, nor simply to explicate why they are more likely to be effective now than they were at some previous moment. This is surely the case. This book's argument, nonetheless, is not that circulation struggles name the correct approach for "blocking capital" (or however some might phrase it) so as to bring it to heel. Circulation is value in motion toward realization; it is also a regime of social organization within capital, interlocking with production in a shifting relation whose disequilibrium appears as crisis. We have tried to set forth the theoretical and historical bases for "circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past," for why within these circumstances further circulation struggles are inevitable, and how a fuller understanding of this conceptual framework and material history might mediate between *is* and *ought*. This will require grappling with the limits to the most recent wave of struggles, while at the same time trying to draw forth the practical kernel, as it were, from which forthcoming struggles are certain to bloom.

*The Square and Class Alliance*

The classical Greek *agora* is both marketplace and public assembly, a double character that persists in increasingly ghostly fashion into the first era of riots. The return of *riot prime* to the square recalls the marketplace struggles of the first era of riot, recalls those struggles' social claim conducted through the economy. It cannot but do so. At the same time, it demonstrates the impossibility of such a return.

When the varied iterations of the “movement of the squares” that oriented global struggle in 2010–11 arise in the agora, they present in many regards a clear demonstration of this book’s argument. They go directly to the exemplary site of circulation. Their basis in surplus populations is manifest. One might consider the precipitation of the Arab Spring by the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, one of a rising mass of Tunisians driven into the informal economy and then subjected to ceaseless harassment by the police. Such a precipitation depends on the exceptional nature of the episode, its paroxysm of immiseration. But it depends simultaneously on the paradigmatic nature of Bouazizi’s situation, as one among the many rendered surplus by political-economic transformations, unabsorbable, futureless, pitched up in the public spaces of the cities.

And yet the location of *riot prime* in the modern square is a signal of its confinement to the space of politics. This is more or less the transcendental problem of 2011. Realized capitalism rests on the separation of the political and the economic, the authority of the people able to be conceptualized independently from the supposedly technocratic problems of resource creation and distribution. This separation is expressed in the distance between our leading

*Riot Now: Square, Street, Commune*

riotologies, encountered earlier: on the one hand, Badiou's politics of the idea, and on the other, the mechanical economism of the New England Complex Systems Institute and others. The population of *riot prime*, we might now recognize, achieves a historical order not through a shared idea, not by the deadly fluctuations of food prices, but corresponding to an underlying political-economic unity, a material reorganization of society, which provides them a shared set of problems and a shared arena in which to confront them.

The snares of the political are many. The Occupy encampments' requirement of violent repression and accompanying outrage in order to expand parallels its broader orientation toward the state and its institutions. Another snare is seen in the long riot of the Greek crisis: its *antikristos* of antagonists and police, unremitting since 2008, precedes and premises the encampment in Athens' Syntagma Square and the repetitive attacks on the Parliament building. Arguably the most distressing example of the political snare is the discovery that the seeming public coups of the Arab Spring give forth formalist revolutions of fatal incompleteness. *The people want the fall of the regime.* "But this antagonism is in fact endless, circular," as some have noted. "Nothing can make this circularity more plain than the departure of Mohamed Morsi, 30 months after Hosni Mubarak's fall, one year and a week after his own election. It turns out that it was *not* the fall of the regime the people wanted, was not democracy in some abstract sense."<sup>1</sup> Despite the rehabilitation projects undertaken by various philosophers, democracy remains the contrary of absolutization. "If we begin with the state, we end with the

---

1 Research and Destroy, "The Wreck of the Plaza," June 14, 2014, [researchanddestroy.wordpress.com](http://researchanddestroy.wordpress.com). This article previously appeared under the suggestive title "Plaza-Riot-Commune."

state,” remarks Kristin Ross, arguing that to narrate the nativity of the Paris Commune as a confrontation between a population and its government is to limit our understanding of the event to one of a contest for control over a state that remains the state.<sup>2</sup> This is a limit for both theory and practice, not least for our grasp of all the ways that the modern state evolves from and requires the structures of capital.

This issueless democratic urge will be nowhere more present than in the U.S., where deliberation becomes an end in and of itself. The practical goals of Occupy Wall Street (OWS) are swiftly bracketed. Originally it declares its intent (somewhat implausibly) to block the stock exchange, to interrupt the virtualized whooshing of financial capital itself. Pushed swiftly into the square it would make famous, enclosed by barricades and police, it streams periodically into the streets or onto the Brooklyn Bridge. Its other stated purpose is to develop a single demand against the financial oligarchy understood to have delivered the financial crisis, and against the austerity politics delivered in turn. It becomes clear quickly if tacitly that any specific demand will fracture the fragile gathering. And so the camp becomes “its own demand,” at once a call for recognition of the lived misery of austerity and an imagined prefiguration of future self-management. It is telling that the most famous innovation of OWS will be the “human microphone,” a way of communicating.

Occupy Oakland will share generic similarities with OWS, and no shortage of deliberation. Its differences will be more telling. The most militant of the encampments, it bodies forth the idea of riot as modality, not only because it regularly leaps into the city streets and into open riot.

<sup>2</sup> Kristin Ross, *Communal Luxury: The Political Imaginary of the Paris Commune*, Verso: London, 2015, 14.

*Riot Now: Square, Street, Commune*

Understood according to the intense condensation of wealth, gentrification, and rising inequality peculiar (but not unique) to Oakland and the Bay Area, the Occupy Oakland's regular destruction of property is a kind of price-setting: an attempt to depress climbing property values by undermining bourgeois standards of habitability. At the same time, it goes directly to the economy. Twice the occupiers close the vast Port of Oakland (both times in uncomfortable collaboration with the longshore and warehouse union), once within an attempted general strike—the first in the United States since 1946. Alongside these classic circulation struggles, it can be no surprise that Occupy Oakland centered on a communal kitchen, signaling the centrality of surplus population to the encampment.

Despite its role within the national web of encampments in autumn 2011, the formation of Occupy Oakland should be equally registered in the light of other histories. One of these is the “double riot,” a misrecognized commonplace at a systemic level. In France, the 2005 riots leap from banlieue to banlieue, particularly those with heavily informalized and immigrant populations, following the deaths of Zyed Benna and Bouna Traoré while fleeing the police; in 2006, the so-called CPE riots respond to attempts to restructure youth labor markets and feature university occupations. The pattern repeats in the U.K. in reverse order: first the 2010 student struggles, including both university occupations and the sacking of Tory headquarters; then the Tottenham riots of 2011, after the killing of Mark Duggan. In Oakland, riots at the outset of 2009 follow the police murder of Oscar Grant; 2009–10 sees a series of university occupations drawing militarized repression across California (and the nation), but centered in neighboring Berkeley.

The shape of the double riot is clear enough. One riot arises from youth discovering that the routes that once promised a minimally secure formal integration into the economy are now foreclosed. The other arises from racialized surplus populations and the violent state management thereof. The holders of empty promissory notes, and the holders of nothing at all. When this contemporary pairing is recognized, the two sides are purported to be in opposition, the abjection of one betraying the relative privilege of this other. This is itself a one-sided understanding of crisis and its populations, of the modes and temporalities through which exclusion unfolds. The task is not to discover new sociological categories that can supersede the stale classifications of a previous era, replacing one reified set of actors with another. Rather, it is to bring forward the real movement within which these social categories develop, change, elaborate themselves internally and in relation to other social forces. The Oakland encampment, which briefly named itself the Oakland Commune, might be understood as an impossible attempt to synthesize the two constituencies of the double riot—and as a lived instance of these populations’ increasingly shared terrain of struggle, their unfinished motion toward each other.

The camp’s composition was its strength and weakness: the basis of its militancy and the terms of its unsustainable class alliance between the excluded and foreclosed. The camp composition captures “a central contradiction embedded in contemporary manifestations of tent city ... between the abjection of the refugee camp and the activism of the political camp” as Sasha X names matters.<sup>3</sup> This description, however, misses the ongoing subsumption of “the political camp” within political-economic conditions.

<sup>3</sup> Sasha X, “Occupy Nothing: Utopia, History, and the Common Subject,” *Mediations* 28: 1, Fall 2014, 62.



*Riot Now: Square, Street, Commune*

It would be equally accurate to describe Occupy Oakland as an instance of incomplete proletarianization. In its moment it is not yet quite possible to unify the double riot in a single camp. This manifests most clearly in the contradiction between ideology and practice. The dominant discourse of Occupy—“we are the 99 percent,” and so deserving of an equivalent share of social wealth and class power—is unable to represent those whose lives are already beyond the promises of institutional betterment and redistributive politics. There is little recognition within that formulation of the material relation between the Occupy movement and the planet of slums, even as that planet increasingly features places like Oakland. At the same time, however, Oakland’s forms of struggle (riot, general strike, port shut-down) comport more clearly with the politics of surplus populations, politics without program.

Such politics, tending toward absolutization, would not go unopposed. Those still able to project, from within their social circumstance, an image of redistribution and restoration to some previous moment of social equilibrium (always resembling the dispensation of the Long Boom and a nostalgic Keynesianism) were often willing to enforce this view via passive and active collaboration with police. This would prove an obstruction equal to the police themselves.

For all that, the encampment was singular. Certainly it stood out from the national map of Occupy encampments: all black blocs and bad blood, portions of it engaging a qualitatively different politics, confronting the austerity state as antagonist rather than betrayed partner, a Society of Enemies for whom fighting the police was less a goal than an inevitability of position. It is more continuous with an international narrative, a red thread that winds from the banlieue riots to all tomorrow’s tear gas parties. The ongoing alliance or indistinction between encampments

of surplus population and other political aggregates that cannot be appropriated to a partnership with the state is a basic characteristic of *riot prime*—and one certain to expand and intensify as it continues to mutate along with increasing production of nonproduction and global political volatility.

*The Street and the Rift*

The logic of circulation struggles has seen no more spectacular instance than that of November 24–25, 2014, when riot spread to city after city from a suburb of St. Louis, following a moment of intolerable violence, of the fatal management of racialized populations, beginning in the way riots begin in the age of *riot prime*, not out of nowhere but out of everywhere. The place of this riot is the street, the street where Michael Brown was murdered, the street where people gathered to await the news that his killer would not be indicted, the street where people met up afterward. The street where anti-police violence cleared space for the looting of commercial venues, and allowed for evasions toward other targets. And eventually the freeways, on a continental scale, shutting down junction after spur throughout the Interstate Highway System, the built landscape of circulation, once the largest public works project known to history. And yet this should not be reduced to spectacle, to representation. The blocking of traffic, the interruption of circulation as an immediate and concrete project, registered nothing so much as the unquenchable desire to *make it all stop*. The freeways and thoroughfares were the closest matter to hand of *it all*, of the antihuman totalization and thingification of the world.

The matching scenes from around the nation convey an uncanny sense of coordination, of organization without an

*Riot Now: Square, Street, Commune*

organization. The riots would be driven to national expansion not just by the impunity of the police officer but by a series of intervening killings across the country, cop on person, links on an endless chain. Even more remarkable and more suggestive than these riots' spatial leap, however, is their initial duration. It is in this that the true novelty of Ferguson lies.

After Michael Brown was shot to death by Darren Wilson, the local riots began almost immediately and lasted for more than two weeks. The measuring of riot is an inexact science; nonetheless, this sequence would seem to have outlasted any of the similar cases already discussed, from Detroit, Newark, and Chicago through to the present. Anyone who has been to Ferguson will recognize how extraordinary is this fact. A small incorporated city just north of St. Louis, its population is about 20,000, down from a peak of 30,000 around 1970 before deindustrialization had its way. There is not a fortnight's worth of things to burn. There is no plaza to be occupied, but the complicity between street and square persists. On the commercial strip of West Florissant Avenue, epicenter of the riots, people burned down the QuikTrip market and used the lot as their plaza until it was sealed off by the state.

The racial transformation of the city has been striking even as it has followed an increasingly common course, going from about three-quarters white and one-quarter black in 1990 to nearly the inverse by 2010. The traditional U.S. structure of white flight that once rendered inner cities holding areas for surplus population has mutated to resemble the European and global model of banlieues and bidonvilles that gather surplus populations in rings around cities.

Phil A. Neel offers a clear account of how these demographic shifts and the geography of the attenuated landscape

provide the terms for the “suburban riot,” whose locus classicus is in the decentralized and demandless uprising of Los Angeles in 1992.<sup>4</sup> Neel locates an additional coordinate toward explaining the difficulty of containing the riot: the absence of a mediating class of black leaders dedicated to order in the name of community. This is a telling expression of what is in truth a much larger structural shift.

It is a nearly universal convention of *riot prime*, of the rebellion, the uprising, that shortly after it bursts forth and experiences a victory either substantial or apparent, it divides into two impulses. These are sometimes openly antagonistic, sometimes overlapping and colluding. The first impulse is toward a kind of populism, an attempt to swell the ranks by mobilizing public sympathies, using to its advantage media coverage and other discursive apparatuses. It is drawn ineluctably toward some version of respectability politics and generally toward the moral suasion of passive civil disobedience and nonviolence in general. It intends to develop a political force, sway opinion, win concessions. Eventually it will be drawn without fail into the electoral arena, subordinated as plank or caucus of party politics. If this political fraction is early on called upon to justify the disorder of riot, it takes up the affirmation of Martin Luther King Jr. that “a riot is the language of the unheard.” This has an immediate appeal; it would be difficult not to hear in any uprising the wail of the immiserated. And yet it presents an underexamined symptomology, presupposing that the inchoate cry of riot must in truth have some as yet undeciphered meaning beyond itself, and moreover that this meaning-making is its primary aspect—those other unfortunate aspects one sees on the news are disavowed in the universal humanist

---

<sup>4</sup> Phil A. Neel, “New Ghettos Burning,” August 17, 2014, [ultra.com.org](http://ultra.com.org).

*Riot Now: Square, Street, Commune*

appeal to recognize the suffering of the other and even forgive the excesses in its expression. Within this understanding, even the demandless riot is transcoded into *being itself a demand*, something that could be satisfied by the current order if it could just be understood. Negotiation becomes a transhistorical truth.

The second impulse finds in the riot something beyond or before communication. It turns less toward a polity than toward practicalities, turns toward the material in both low and high senses. These practicalities might include looting, controlling space, eroding the power of the police, rendering an area unwelcoming to intruders, and destroying property understood to constitute the rioters' exclusion from the world they see always before them and which they may not enter.

This division is as old as riot itself and is not clean-edged. There are practical aspects to discursive acts, and conversely the broken window or burned shop is inevitably a kind of communication. Nonetheless the rift is evident, socially lived by participants, and repeated largely without fail. This would also prove the case in Ferguson, where each night of the riots would feature both peaceful marches that largely followed police prescriptions, and less orderly actions that included arson and firing on police officers. While the factions worked in collaboration during the first few days, or perhaps had not yet fully formed, they came to be increasingly at odds, particularly after a large number of national clergy arrived in Ferguson to amplify what they took to be the lessons of Dr. King.

But it is here that a historical shift lurches into view, one of primary importance. Since the Civil Rights movement (and before it the "first generation" of the feminist movement), the side of legal frameworks, moral suasion, and respectability politics has effectively hegemonized the

debate fairly swiftly after each uprising. This has been the case in no small part because said approach could offer real, if limited, gains. Such outcomes no longer seem plausible. The success of the discursive strategy was premised upon a certain degree of social wealth, taut labor markets, a continuity of profit worth preserving even if it meant relative sacrifices for capital.

One could perhaps imagine demands in the present that would, if met, alter in substance the circumstances of the excluded. But the swelling ranks of the excluded is the same fact as the inability to meet such demands—the two faces of crisis. Just as the U.S. can no longer deliver accumulation at a global level, and thus must order the world-system by coercion rather than consent, the state can no longer provide the kinds of concessions won by the Civil Rights movement, can no longer purchase the social peace. It is all sticks and no carrots. The Baltimore riots following the murder of Freddie Gray in 2015, whose duration and intensity would be met by the National Guard and a nine-day state of emergency, only affirm this situation.

Because of this, the rift can no longer be so easily closed. The prolongation of the riots and of their fury is doubtless a measure of social pressures building around racialized policing and around the immanent violence applied to the management of surplus populations in general. It is also a measure of the fading appeal of moderation and optimistic compliance. This approach still retains some charisma, as the ongoing institutionalization of the Ferguson and Baltimore uprisings within the containment of Non-Governmental Organizations attests. At the same time, the argument that the bottomless violence and subordination is structural, and cannot be resolved either practically or theoretically through redistributive participation, grows ever harder to refute.

## *Riot Now: Square, Street, Commune*

Barring unforeseeable changes in underlying social organization, the rift will grow wider and stay open longer. This is how the drive toward absolutization appears at a practical level. If we understand each like instance as a rift of increasing duration, the number of rifts open at any given time will increase as well. It is foreseeable that a cascading series of them—initially but not exclusively oriented by racialized struggles—will succeed in preserving their own existences while drawing forth other struggles to take their main chance against a spreading disorder, a disorder that now seems to belong not to riot but to the state, to what had previously been itself a violent order. Against this great disorder, a necessary self-organization, survival in a different key. One need not think this likely to think it more likely than a renewed socialist program, even one given new trappings for a purportedly new economy.

### *Commune and Catastrophe*

If the square and the street have been the two places of *riot prime*, they both open onto the commune. The commune, however, is not a place in that sense, not a “territorial agglomeration,” as Kropotkin expressed it.<sup>5</sup> Its history has been to escape that designation, even while specific instances take on the names of their sites. One might say it is instead a social relation, a political form, an event. It has been called all of these. We have also suggested that it is a tactic, understandable within this book’s development of Tilly’s repertoires of collective action. This may seem a curious holding for such a sustained and elaborate endeavor as the commune. A last diversion, then, to make sense of such a claim, and gather it into something else altogether.

---

5 Ross, *Communal Luxury*, 123–4.

Bruno Bosteels, in dislocating the commune from the all-encompassing exemplarity of Paris, provides a pivotal insight. In his study of what historian Adolfo Gilly named the Morelos Commune (peaking in 1914–15), he concedes,

At the level of organizational forms of appearance, anarchism is accused of favoring spontaneous uprisings and attacks as part of its ideology of direct action, to which only a socialist class-consciousness, aimed at the seizure of state power, is said to lend the necessary organization of an enduring political movement.<sup>6</sup>

This antinomy, with its already ideological conjoining of political identification and forms of action, is precisely what the commune dissolves: “However, there is one political form in which anarchists and socialists—even in Mexico—seem able to find common ground: the form of the commune.”<sup>7</sup> This multiplicity of the commune is noted by Marx about Paris, from which he abstracts a more univocal lesson:

Its true secret was this. It was essentially a working-class government, the product of the struggle of the producing against the appropriating class, the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economic emancipation of labor.<sup>8</sup>

This conclusion is ambiguous if one takes Morelos as a case study against Paris, given its provisional continuity of

<sup>6</sup> Bruno Bosteels, “The Mexican Commune,” in *Communism in the Twenty-First Century*, vol. 2, ed. Shannon Brincat, Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2014, 168.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Karl Marx and V. I. Lenin, *The Civil War in France: The Paris Commune*, New York: International Publishers, 1968, 60.



*Riot Now: Square, Street, Commune*

peasant and worker, agrarian reform alongside anticapitalist struggles in the swiftly industrializing sugar mills (an ambiguity Bosteels extends throughout the subterranean history of the “Mexican Commune,” through the Zapatista uprising of 1994 and the Oaxaca Commune of 2006). That is to say, from this perspective it does not seem at all clear that the compositional secret of the commune is a singular “working-class government” so much as the communality of various social fractions.

And this is exactly the point. Within the transformations of the present, the form of the commune is unthinkable without the modulation from traditional working class to an expanded proletariat. That is to say, it is not oriented by productive laborers, but rather by the heterogeneous population of those without reserves. Like the riot, the commune may feature workers but not necessarily as workers. Ross argues that the commune is defined in part by the fullness of its relation.

What the commune as political and social medium offered that the factory did not was a broader social scope—one that included women, children, the peasantry, the aged, the unemployed. It comprised not merely the realm of production but both production and consumption.<sup>9</sup>

This is at first a curious claim, as it is capitalism itself that is founded on the interlocking circuits of production and consumption, a pairing that has provided us with the two ur-forms of modern struggle: strike and riot, wage- and price-setting. The implication must be that the commune offers production and consumption of needs (and of pleasures!—“communal luxuries,” as Ross has it) beyond the measures

---

<sup>9</sup> Ross, *Communal Luxury*, 112.

of capital. Which is to say, beyond wage and price. Just so, in theory. Communism in the present, no longer able to be conflated with worker command over production and distribution in the socialist mode, is the breaking of the index between one's labor input and one's access to necessities—the twin social activities regulated by wage and price respectively. It may preserve production and consumption in a general sense. But it does away with the mediations that bind production to consumption. Only then are the compulsions of value that organize social relations broken.

But, lurking in the shadows cast by the abstract light of the ideal, there is equally a practical and concrete sense of this recognition that the commune is beyond capitalist production and consumption. If we turn at the last moment to material histories, it is because we set out from nowhere else. Neither the Paris nor Morelos communes can be understood independently from the social catastrophes—the *overturnings*—that preceded them.<sup>10</sup> The commune appears beyond wage and price because those struggles cease to be possible in any practical sense, because human reproduction in that moment is not to be found in either the workplace or the marketplace. To the degree that the commune is a historical opening, it is as well a foreclosure, and this foreclosure is inseparable from its working existence. As Marx reminds us, “The great social measure of the Commune was its own working existence.”<sup>11</sup>

The commune, then, has a continuity with the riot. It presupposes the impossibility of wage-setting as a means

---

10 For a survey of the political-economic conditions of Morelos in advance of the Commune, see Paul Hart, *Bitter Harvest: The Social Transformation of Morelos, Mexico, and the Origins of the Zapatista Revolution, 1840–1910*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 2005, 149, 191–2.

11 Marx, *Civil War*, 65.

## *Riot Now: Square, Street, Commune*

to secure any manner of emancipation. It is likely to be inaugurated, like many struggles in the first era of riots, by those for whom the question of reproduction beyond the wage has long been posed—those who have been socially forged as the bearers of that crisis. “The women were the first to act,” we are reminded by Lissagaray about the Paris Commune, “hardened by the siege—they had had a double ration of misery.”<sup>12</sup> That siege which is gender has never ended.

At the same time, the commune also ruptures from the riot’s basis in price-setting, because provisioning toward subsistence is no longer to be found in such action. It is beyond strike and riot both. In such a situation, the commune emerges not as an “event” but as a tactic of social reproduction. It is critical to understand the commune first as a tactic, as *a practice to which theory is adequate*. Beyond strike and riot, what distinguishes the problems and possibilities of reproduction from those of production and consumption is this: the commune is a tactic that is also a form of life.

The coming communes will develop where both production and circulation struggles have exhausted themselves. The coming communes are likely to emerge first not in walled cities or in communities of retreat, but in open cities where those excluded from the formal economy and left adrift in circulation now stand watch over the failure of the market to provide their needs. The *glacis* around Thiers’s Wall is now the *Boulevard Périphérique*; surplus population gathers now on the ring roads around Lima, Dhaka, and Dar es Salaam. But not just there.

Things fall apart, core and periphery cannot hold. We turn round and round in the night and are consumed by

---

<sup>12</sup> Prosper-Olivier Lissagaray, *History of the Paris Commune of 1871*, trans. Eleanor Marx Aveling, London: Verso, 2012, 65.

## RIOT PRIME

fire. Perhaps the Long Crisis of capital may reverse; it is a dangerous wager on either side. Within the persistence of crisis, however, the reproduction of capital through the circuit of production and circulation—wage and market—appears increasingly not as possibility for, but limit to, proletarian reproduction. A dead and burning circuit. Here riot returns late and appears early, both too much and too little. The commune is nothing but the name for the attempt to overcome this limit, a peculiar catastrophe still to come.