thereby any more temporally tractable. For one thing, lyric, epic, and drama are all species of poetry in a German Romantic sense. In fact, the word for poetry that Marx uses here is *Poesie* rather than *Dichtung*, a choice that few of the *Brumaire*'s readers have wondered about. *Poesie* is the far more elastic term, so much so that, like a rubber band, it threatens to snap when stretched to its limit. For Schlegel, *Poesie* encompassed not only verse but literature more generally, all the other arts, the creative process, nature, and even the state (Beiser 8–9). Which means that, excessive with respect to its generic identity, *Poesie* is most itself when it loses itself in a confusion of parts and wholes.

What Marx contracts from the Jena Romantics is this advanced case of genre trouble. Sharing with Whitman and Rimbaud a temporal predicament expressed in and as a problem of imitation (can there be a future when it looks just like the past?), Marx pushes even further in dissolving the poetic thing said to have (or be) a future. Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy's conclusion about Romanticism may then be transposed to the question with which this essay began: did poetry have a future in the nineteenth century? This question "does not and cannot have an answer. Or, at least, its answer can only be interminably deferred, continually deceiving, endlessly recalling the question." And that may be why, with respect to its poetry, the nineteenth century "will always have been more than an 'epoch,' or else will never cease, right up to the present, to incomplete the epoch it inaugurated" (83).

Andrew Parker
Amherst College

Note

1. Marx disavows his juvenilia in "Discovering Hegel (Marx to His Father)."

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Response

On the basis of Baudelaire's figure of the North American dandy, Bruno Bosteels "untimes" decadence by extracting it from the historicist paradigm of linear time development that includes moments of progress and decline. He then turns this untimed decadence against periodization tout court, which he unveils as a nineteenth-century ideology of colonial powers intended "to legitimize their rule in the name of universal reason." Bosteels concludes by rephrasing "decadence" (no longer structured by historicism but aligned with a critique of it) as a "last-hour response against the irruption of [the] scandalous truths" of colonial barbarism. I

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wonder about the status of the Baudelaire reference in this argument and the work it is asked to do. To follow the argument of this essay, we would have to agree with Bosteels (inspired perhaps by Badiou) that Baudelaire gives us an outsider dandy "staring back" at the Parisian one with the promise of Europe's "savage future." The preeminently blasé figure of the Baudelairian dandy, however, usually presents himself to be stared at and rarely, if ever, stares back. Furthermore, by turning the North American into a dandy Baudelaire is ironically modernizing the "insider" Romantic figure of the "noble savage," inherited from Rousseau and Chateaubriand. The allusion to Chateaubriand is explicit in "The Painter of Modern Life," where the figure of the North American dandy appears, and we know that in *Atala*, far from staging an intersubjective encounter along the lines of the master-slave dialectic, Chateaubriand sets up an identification of the European narrator with the noble savage as a way of equating the violence of the Terror with colonial genocide. But even leaving these intertextual details aside, we know that literary irony problematizes limits between inside and outside, such that we no longer know when or where we are, or even who we are. Is Baudelaire undermining historicism here? Is he staging a scene in which "radically different temporalities clash in . . . a singular conjuncture"? If so, what does it mean to call this conjuncture (among other names) "decadence"? These questions are significant because it is in their terms that Bosteels both challenges periodization per se and, I think, recuperates it. Shifting to the Latin American perspective ("From the shores of Latin America"), Bosteels suggests that what he calls "decadent untimeliness" risks being misconstrued as uneven development (it risks reinscribing, that is, the problem of originality vs. imitation). In response to this risk, Bosteels links decadent untiming to a global perspective on unequal development, invoking what he calls a "world-historical comparatist frame" that could include "phenomena of decadence and disjointedness." Given Bosteels's ideological critique of periodization (with which I fundamentally agree), I wonder why he does not choose to refuse periodization altogether, instead of recuperating it on a global scale, and to delegitimize the periodizing term *decadence*, instead of rewriting it as a decadent untiming. To retain the term *decadent* is to reinscribe notions of progress and decline. *Decadence*, even untimed, implies before and after. Specifically, it implies here that before European civilization declined into colonial barbarity, it was . . . civilized. But this is too simple a story, one that could be usefully problematized by pursuing more broadly the kind of examination Bosteels has undertaken here in connection with *decadence*. Would this require something like a global perspective? I don't think so, for under terms such as "global scale" and "world-historical . . . frame," we risk finding the mask of yet another figure of what Bosteels calls "universal reason." If there really are different temporalities at play, as Bosteels suggests, then not only is no periodizing comparison possible across temporal frames, but there can be no global frame either, because this too would impose the normative horizon of a "now."

Whereas Bruno Bosteels responds to anxieties concerning imitation and originality associated with periodization by deconstructing (or "untiming") the periodizing term, Andrew Parker reinforces these anxieties in "The Poetry of the Future." With reference to Whitman and Rimbaud, he asks, "Did poetry have a future in the nineteenth century?" only to conclude, recalling Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, that a break between past and future poetry is impossible, since "breaking with the past entails imitating it." Parker not only works within the "conundrum" of imitation and originality as formulated by Lacoue-Labarthe; he extends its reach to Marx, interpreting Marx's allusion to a "poetry of the future" in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* from this perspective. Whereas Marx invokes the metaphor of theater—tragedy and farce—to stage the idea that Lacoue-Labarthe formulated so succinctly with respect to poetry, it seems to me that Marx invokes the figure of poetry to contest the inevitability of this dynamic of imitation and to present the possibility of a social revolution to come.

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When Marx writes that "the social revolution of the nineteenth century cannot draw its poetry from the past, but only from the future," is he talking about "a poetry of the future" ? Is he even talking about poetry at all? Or is he talking about the poetry of revolution, which can only be drawn from the future, not the past? *Poesie*, as Parker notes, is not the same as *Dichtung*. If in *Poesie*'s broader reference ("not only verse but literature more generally, all the other arts, the creative process, nature, and even the state"), the term signifies "creative process," might not the figure of *Poesie* stand for the originality that Parker calls into question through Lacoue-Labarthe? Instead of reading *Poesie* as poetry, I would take it as a figure for the radical alterity of time. Time, wrote Bergson, "is invention or it is nothing at all" (Guerlac 213). If *Poesie* includes poetry in the narrower sense here, it is as a figure that motivates the distinction Marx deploys between form and content. Parker suggests that this distinction "seems to do little to distinguish past from future . . . imitation from original." I disagree. The excess of content over form presents a logic of the new, and poetry, in the narrow sense, would figure this logic. When content exceeds form, it is necessary to invent a new language, new forms. Victor Hugo understood this well. In "Réponse à un acte d'accusation," he articulates poetry and revolution by proposing poetry as an intervention in language and an alteration of it that solicits new social practices. The figure of poetry stands for such an invention of new forms in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*. Marx does not propose this, however, in a language of invention but rather through a trope of forgetting: open to what comes to us from the future, he explains, we forget to translate back into the mother tongue. "Thus does the beginner, who has acquired a new language, keep on translating it back into his own mother tongue," he writes, affirming that we only "grasp the spirit of the new language" when we speak "without recollections of the old [language] and [have] forgotten in its use [our] own hereditary tongue" (1). Parker reads Marx's meditation on revolution as a meditation on poetry and situates it in the periodizing frame of Romanticism—a "speculative tradition linking genre to periodization." But by framing his discussion with the question "Is there a future of poetry?" and by answering this question with a reference to Lacoue-Labarthe, Parker situates his own discourse in this same frame. As Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy put it in *L'absolu littéraire*, speaking of the insistent legacy of German Romanticism, "Today, most of the great themes of our 'modernity' reveal a veritable romantic *unconscious*" (26; my trans.).[1] This raises the question of the periodizing inscription of the discourses we turn to when we speak of issues of genre and period. The question is: do we still want to set our own reflections (about poetry, about time, about revolution) in the periodizing frame of early German Romanticism? Or do we want to work through this unconscious material, to historicize the conundrum, if you will, and to explore ways of thinking outside this frame? This might require not only bracketing our concerns about imitation and originality, laid out for us by Romanticism, but also shifting our perspective concerning time.

This is the possibility Peter Fenves considers in "An Idea in Combat with Itself: Benjamin, Hölderlin, and 'Temporal Plasticity'" but, in the end, draws back from. As an alternative to conventional linear time, Fenves proposes a notion of "plastic" time, which he finds in Benjamin and subjects to a rigorous conceptual analysis. He concludes that plastic time is an "idea in combat with itself" to the extent that it derives from two irreconcilable philosophical traditions, neo-Kantian on the one hand and Bergsonian on the other. The concept of an idea in combat with itself remains aporetic, not to say illegitimate, and can easily be dismissed. As Fenves makes clear, however, Benjamin speaks of "temporal plasticity" (which may or may not be the same thing as plastic time) in an "aesthetic commentary" on a poem by Hölderlin, in which Benjamin identifies temporal plasticity as the "poetized" of Hölderlin's poem. (As Fenves explains, Benjamin invokes the "poetized" to convey the "a priori" meaning of a poem that aesthetic com-

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mentary reveals, a meaning that cannot be reduced to assumed authorial intent). Here Fenves's analysis implicitly confronts a question of genre: is the poetized of a poem to be read philosophically, as a concept, or poetically, as an image—or in terms of something in between, proposed by literary criticism? Perhaps plastic time is an idea in combat with itself only if we construe it philosophically (i.e., as a concept), whereas the tension it carries might exist not between two irreconcilable philosophical currents but (to simplify) between philosophy and literature. Indeed, this might be its opportunity. Benjamin has perhaps already found a solution to the problem Fenves analyzes, by presenting the notion of temporal plasticity not as a concept but rather as the poetized of a poem. The neo-Kantian feature of this elaboration would then not adhere to the notion of time per se (which Benjamin endows with features of Bergsonian duration) but would attach to the inscription of this idea in a register of "pure aesthetics." This would be both a philosophical and a poetic gesture (that is to say, perhaps, a literary-critical one). In any case, Benjamin does not contradict Bergson philosophically, as Fenves maintains, by taking his distance from "lived" time. For in Bergson ordinary experience does not give us duration but only spatialized, or homogeneous, time, which Bergson characterizes as merely the "symbolic image of real duration" (*Œuvres* 83; my trans.). Without the practice of philosophical intuition, the experience of duration presented in *Time and Free Will* (or, perhaps, the opportunity of dream where, Bergson argues, we get a feel for what the experience of duration might be) is merely virtual. Instead of having given us a concept in combat with itself, then, Benjamin has refracted the question of time through a difference of genre—that is, through the difference that separates poetry and philosophy. Fenves's rigorous analysis invites us to ask what kind of meaning the poetized of a poem would carry (according to Benjamin) and what we can legitimately do with the notion of temporal plasticity. If we freeze temporal plasticity as an aporetic concept, it informs questions of periodicity (of timing and untiming) only minimally—indeed, as a kind of missed opportunity. If we read it more poetically, we might put it into play with Nietzsche's "plastic power within" and his "plastic force of life," through which, in the *Untimely Meditations*, a certain vitalism directly informs a discourse of untiming (chs. 4 and 10). Another possibility would be to radicalize the Bergsonian moment that Fenves identifies in Benjamin and to deploy duration in resistance to the entire project of periodization, thereby committing ourselves to trying to imagine events in their emergence, instead of placing them retroactively in existing frames. Bergson has this answer to the conundrum of imitation and originality and to the logic of philosophy: "Our ordinary logic," he writes, "is a logic of retrospection. . . . It will not admit that things spring up, that something is created and that time is efficacious. It sees in a new form or quality only a rearrangement of the old and nothing absolutely new" (Guerlac 2). Thinking time as duration, Bergson maintains, requires breaking many frames. Of course, in challenging periodization we would not escape framings in time and space. We might, however, better appreciate the strategic nature of all framings and even, perhaps, succeed in breaking a few of the old ones.

Suzanne Guerlac
University of California, Berkeley

Note

1. "Il y a aujourd'hui, décelable dans la plupart des grands motifs de notre 'modernity,' un veritable *inconscient* romantique."

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