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'WELL GRUBBED, OLD MOLE': MARX, *HAMLET*, AND THE (UN)FIXING OF REPRESENTATION

Abstract

In the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, Marx pursues a double strategy: history is represented, on the one hand, as a catastrophic decline from Napoleon to Louis Bonaparte; while on the other, this 'debased' repetition is depicted as unsettling the notion of a heroic past. Napoleon I can now be read back through his nephew: his ghost is reawakened, but as a caricature. Yet caricature, parody, satire, and farce were far from negative forms for Marx. They were indeed the necessary forms of representation in a society where 'an epic ... can no longer be written'. In the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, Marx developed a brilliant if unsystematic account of literary and political representation and of repetition as the unsettling of origins. He did this, above all, through a direct and indirect rereading of Hamlet as parody or farce, in which the dead father is rewritten as an 'old mole'.

Keywords Marx; Hamlet; repetition; farce; mole

IN DECEMBER 1851, Louis Bonaparte staged a *coup d'état* in Paris and seized control of the state. Marx immediately set to work to write weekly articles for intended publication by his friend, Joseph Weydemeyer, in a German language publication in New York. The publication history of *The Eighteenth Brumaire* (which Marx himself emphasizes) runs counter to Engels' account in his Preface to its third German edition of 1885. In his Preface, Engels rewrites Marx's journalism within the oeuvre of Marx's earlier theory of the modes of production, outlined in *The German Ideology*. *The Eighteenth Brumaire* merely confirms 'the law according to which all historical struggles, whether they proceed in the political, the religious, philosophical or some other domain, are in fact only the more or less clear expression of struggles of social classes' (14). For Engels, what is most striking about Marx's occasional writing of 1851 is that it overrides all contingency to grasp the 'ephemeral' aspect of political occasion as the indirect

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representation of an already known social conjuncture. On Engels' account, the events of 1851 'never took [Marx] by surprise' (14). Engels was, of course, writing after the fall of the Second Empire, and from that perspective, Marx's narrative could be represented as an omniscient analysis of historical teleology.

But there is an extraordinary disparity between Engels' Preface in 1885 and Marx's Preface to the second edition of 1869. Where Engels claims that Marx was never taken by surprise, Marx's own Preface stages the radical contingencies by which his representation of the events of 1851 came (or rather failed to come) to public attention. Marx's essays were intended for what was to be a German language political weekly, published in New York, beginning on 1 January 1852. But Wedermeyer never won sufficient financial backing for his journal, so the weekly never appeared. Instead, Wedermeyer proposed printing a monthly called *Die Revolution*, although this too ran into financial difficulties and collapsed after the second issue. The first issue of the journal consisted of Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire*. Some 1000 copies of the journal were printed, one-third of which were sent from the US back to Europe. But booksellers refused to handle the journal, and those that circulated at all were distributed by friends and sympathizers (Mehring, 218). The work itself, Marx claims, 'took shape under the immediate pressure of events' (7) and even the republication in 1869 is due to local circumstances: 'in part to the demand of the book trade, in part to the urgent request of my friends in Germany' (7). Marx's text, in other words, far from existing as a stable representation, was itself, as Marx insists, shaped by economic and political contingencies.

One small trace of these contingencies is inscribed in the change to the book's title: when it was printed in 1852 in *Die Revolution*, its title was *Der Achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Napoleon*; in 1869 it is *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. The change is a small one but striking none the less, and itself suggests Marx's acute attention to historical contingency, the uncertainties which Engels attempted to erase. When Marx first published *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, Louis Bonaparte had not yet assumed the official title of Emperor, which he only did in December 1852. As Emperor, he became Napoleon III. To retain the earlier title of the book would be to grant a seeming legitimacy to Louis's claim to the name Napoleon. In this new conjuncture, Marx needed to assert the *illegitimacy* of Louis Bonaparte's assumption of the name, and legacy, of his uncle. He did this by insisting on the family name, Bonaparte, rather than Napoleon. There is a further twist, of which, it seems, Marx was not aware. Even Napoleon I had only a contingent relation to his own name. For his father, Carlo Maria, had decided to name his first three sons after his great-grandfather's sons: the first, Joseph; the second, Napoleon (Nabulion); the third, Lucien. When Napoleon Bonaparte was born, he was christened Lucien. But the eldest brother, Joseph, died. So the father decided to shift the names of the remaining sons up one. Thus, the son who had been christened Napoleon became Joseph; and the son who had been christened Lucien became Napoleon. The Napoleon who ruled France and gave his name to a legal code was first named Lucien and only later Napoleon. The stability of Napoleon I's claim to his own name was no more secure than that of Napoleon III.

A conjunctural understanding of history necessarily emphasizes the contingencies which are dressed up as historical inevitability. But in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, while Marx proposes such a conjunctural interpretation, he also suggests that the present necessarily works through the assumption of the *magics* of the past: the names (Napoleon), the ideas (empire), the clothes and emblems. Hence, the much quoted opening to *The Eighteenth Brumaire*:

> Hegel remarks somewhere that all facts and all personages of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce. (15)

Any synchronic view of history, in other words, must attend to the ways in which the past haunts the present. Representation itself depends upon *belatedness*, a coming after. We dress ourselves, whether we want to or not, in the clothes of the past:

> The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionizing themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language. (15)

The contingencies of the new are represented through the 'borrowed languages' of the past: Luther clothes himself as the Apostle Paul; Cromwell assumes the guise of Old Testament prophet; the Revolution of 1789 to 1814 drapes itself alternately as the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire.

Marx appears at first to raise the problem of the repetition of the past to distinguish between the 'heroic' bourgeois revolutions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the reactionary *coup d'état* of Louis Bonaparte. In contrast, the 'revolution' of Louis Bonaparte is a farcical repetition, a mere parody of the past, an awakening of the dead only to travesty them. In place of Danton and Robespierre, Caussidière and Louis Blanc; in place of the Montagne of 1793, the Montagne of 1848; in place of *The Eighteenth Brumaire* of Napoleon I, the *coup d'état* of his nephew, an adventurer 'who hides his commonplace repulsive features under the iron death mask of Napoleon' (17).

But this opposition between the 'tragedies' of early bourgeois upheavals and the 'farce' of their later simulations is unsettled by Marx's acknowledgement that even those early upheavals only *used* tragedy as one of 'the ideals and the art forms, the self deceptions that they needed in order to conceal from themselves the bourgeois limitations of the content of their struggles' (16). '[T]he high plane of the great historical tragedy' is *itself*, then, a repetition in which a society as 'unheroic as bourgeois society' dresses itself up (16–17). Only after the revolution can bourgeois society assume its 'true' guise: not Habakkuk but Locke. To put it another way, the classical hierarchy of genres, in which tragedy was considered the most elevated and farce the most debased of genres, can no longer retain its unquestioned status within a bourgeois society that pursues the 'novel'. Tragedy must now itself be understood as farce. From this perspective, Louis Bonaparte is the most appropriate of performers upon the stage of bourgeois society, for he unintentionally unmasks the self-deceptions of the elevated genres through which an earlier bourgeois society imagined itself. In Marx's words, Louis Bonaparte produces 'not only a caricature of the old Napoleon,' but also 'the old Napoleon himself, caricatured as he must appear in the middle of the nineteenth century' (18). And Marx's Preface to the second edition makes clear his own desire to submit the cult of the first Napoleon to 'the weapons of historical research, of criticism, of satire and of wit' (8).

Marx thus pursues a double strategy in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*. Through the first strategy, history is represented as a catastrophic decline from Napoleon to Louis Bonaparte. But in the second strategy, the effect of this 'debased' repetition is to unsettle the status of the origin. Napoleon I can now only be read back through his nephew: his ghost is awakened but as a caricature. Yet caricature, parody, satire and farce were far from negative forms for Marx. They were indeed the necessary forms of representation in a society where 'an epic . . . can no longer be written' (Prawer, 15). Marx, in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, developed a brilliant if unsystematic account of literary and political representation and of repetition and the settling and unsettling of origins. He did this above all through an indirect rereading of *Hamlet* as parody or farce.

Let me begin by emphasizing Marx's profound interest both in Shakespeare and in parodic forms. In 1837, as a young man of 19, Marx began work on *Scorpion und Felix*, a comic novel. Its structure and techniques were based not upon the *bildungsroman* of Goethe but upon Sterne's 'anti-novel', *Tristram Shandy*, for which Marx had the highest admiration. Like Sterne, Marx delighted in 'sudden, deliberate let-downs' and in 'verbal cartoons' (Prawer, 15). Like Sterne, Marx developed a range of parodies: of The Bible, of Ovid, of Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*, but above all of Shakespeare. Not only does Marx parody Shakespeare, and in particular *Richard III*, but he also pays particular attention to parody *in* Shakespeare, and to the bitter fool Thersites in *Troilus and Cressida*, a fool whom Marx would continue to quote and to appropriate throughout his life.

Shakespeare was Marx's favourite author, as he was to become his daughters'. Marx had learned his love for Shakespeare in the 1830s from Ludwig von Westphalen, soon to be his father-in-law. Eleanor, Marx's daughter, later wrote that 'whereas [Marx's] father read Voltaire and Racine with him, the Baron [von Westphalen] read him Homer and Shakespeare – who remained his favourite authors all his life' (McLellan, 1973: 15). But it was particularly when he moved to England in 1849, and in his earlier visits, that Marx devoted himself to Shakespeare, whom he read every day. As Franz Mehring wrote in his memoir of Marx:

> After Marx had become permanently domiciled in London, English literature took first place, and the tremendous figure of Shakespeare dominated the field; in fact the whole family practiced what amounted practically to a Shakespearean cult.
>
> (*Literature and Art*, 143)

When they moved to London, the Marxes would frequently take a picnic to Hampstead Heath on Sundays. On the way out, according to their fellow exile, Wilhelm Liebkneckt, they would sing African-American spirituals; on their return, Karl and his wife Jenny would recite whole scenes from Shakespeare. Eleanor Marx, in her recollections of her father, wrote:

> As to Shakespeare he was the Bible of our house, seldom out of our hands or mouths. By the time I was six I knew scene upon scene of Shakespeare by heart.
>
> (Baxandall and Morawski, 149)

Eleanor aspired to being a Shakespearean actor, and later became a keen member of Furnivall's New Shakespeare Society. She and her sister Jenny also wrote a series of articles on Shakespeare for the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. Towards the end of Marx's life, Shakespeare play readings were held at Marx's house by a group who called themselves the Dogberry Club (Fedoseyev, 518).

But this devotion to Shakespeare scarcely suggests just *what* Marx admired in him, which was precisely the hybridity that had led Voltaire to call Shakespeare a drunken savage. In opposition to Voltaire, Marx praised Shakespearean drama for 'its peculiar mixture of the sublime and the base, the terrible and the ridiculous, the heroic and the burlesque' (Prawer, 241). After 1848, according to Paul Lafargue, Marx 'sought out . . . all the peculiar expressions used by Shakespeare', and if this was in part to extend his command of English, it was also because he took particular pleasure in the Shakespearean grotesque: in Falstaff, in Thersites, in the base and the farcical. He was, as Lafargue remarks, interested in 'the *peculiar* expressions', as he was interested in the '*peculiar* mixture' of Shakespearean drama. It was, in other words, the very *im*purities of Shakespearean drama, its resistance to a classical theory of representation, which interested Marx. It was a similar fascination with the hybrid which led Marx to call his book in response to the libels of Karl Vogt, *Da-Da Vogt*. Da-Da was the name given to a translator of Bonapartist pamphlets circulating in Algeria. Although Marx's family and friends persuaded him to discard the title as too obscure, he did so reluctantly. The name 'Da-Da', he wrote, 'puzzles the philistine and is comical'; it 'fits well into my system of mockery and contempt' (Prawer, 265). Marx thus pre-empted the dadaists' subversion of representation by more than half a century.

The farcical in Marx, though, is not only used as part of his 'system of mockery and contempt'; it is equally central to his system of celebration. And it is here that Marx works against the pathos of decline ('then, they were giants;

now, we are dwarves') which would be one way of reading the opening sentences of *The Eighteenth Brumaire*: history repeats itself, the first time as tragedy, the realm of heroes, the second time as farce, the realm of buffoons and scoundrels. For Marx, though, if Da-Da Vogt can only be represented through the grotesque, proletarian revolution must be represented equally unheroically:

> proletarian revolutions . . . criticize themselves constantly, interrupt themselves continuously in their own course, come back to the apparently accomplished in order to begin it afresh, deride with unmerciful thoroughness the inadequacies, weaknesses and paltrinesses of their first attempts, seem to throw down their adversary only in order that he may draw new strength from the earth and rise again, more gigantic, before them, recoil ever and anon from the indefinite prodigiousness of their own aims, until a situation has been created which makes all turning back impossible, and the conditions themselves cry out:
>
> *Hic Rhodus, hic salta!*
> *Here is the rose, here dance!*

For Marx, the features of the coming revolution will be hesitancy, an awareness of inadequacy, and it is imagined in the realm of fairy-tale (the giant who is knocked down only to gain more power) and of *Aesop's Fables*. ('Here is Rhodes, leap here!' is taken from Aesop's tale 'The Swaggerer', in which a boaster who claims that he made an enormous leap in Rhodes is mockingly asked to repeat the leap from where he is right now.)

Just as Marx adopts contradictory techniques to represent Louis Bonaparte as simultaneously a shrunken parody of his heroic uncle *and* as the unmasking of the impossibility of any heroism (whether Napoleon I's or Napoleon III's) within the categories of bourgeois society, so Marx adopts contradictory techniques to represent revolution. On the one hand, it is, he claims, unrepresentable ('the social revolution of the nineteenth century cannot draw its poetry from the past'; 'the content goes beyond the phrase'); on the other, he himself represents it through two odd appropriations of 'poetry from the past': the revolution is Puck or Robin Goodfellow from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; it is the ghost of Hamlet's father. These two latter images are combined by Marx in a speech he delivered on 14 April 1856, on the anniversary of the Chartist *People's Paper*. Here he stages a curious paradox: what he calls 'the new-fangled forces of society' create people who are so novel that they can no longer be grasped through prior systems of representation. The working men and women of the nineteenth century are, Marx declares, 'as much the invention of modern times as machinery itself' (Prawer, 246). Yet Marx himself immediately defines this revolutionary moment through those very past languages which he has implicitly rejected:

> In the signs that bewilder the middle class, the aristocracy and the poor prophets of regression, we recognize our brave friend, Robin Goodfellow,

> the old mole that can work in the earth so fast, that worthy pioneer – the Revolution.
>
> (*Articles on Britain*, 262–3)

Marx, in other words, imagines revolution both as an epistemic break which, having 'stripped off all superstition in regard to the past', turns its back upon the past so as to constitute itself in and through the future; and as parodic repetition, a repetition presided over by the ghosts of the past.

The Eighteenth Brumaire, indeed, is not only a reworking of *Hamlet* but also of Marx's own attitude towards ghosts and haunting. Much of his earlier writing had been dedicated to the exorcism of ghosts, whether conjured up by religion or by Hegel. In the first section of *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, Marx retains a distinction between 'mere' ghosts and 'true' spirits: the awakening of the dead in earlier revolutions 'served the purpose of glorifying the new struggles, not of parodying the old; of magnifying the given task in imagination, not of fleeing from its solution in reality; of finding once more the spirit of revolution, not of making its ghost walk about again' (17). Ghosts are a superstition, a drug (18); the dead must be left to bury the dead. Yet in the final section of *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, as in the opening of *The Communist Manifesto*, the radicalized proletariat itself erupts as a ghost: 'A spectre is haunting Europe'; 'Well grubbed, old mole!'. In the imagined proletarian revolution, as in the February Revolution which Marx denounces, a 'prophecy' 'haunts the subsequent acts of the drama like a ghost' (118).

But the ghosts which Marx invokes are not heroic. Indeed, when he invokes them, they are as parodic as Louis Bonaparte. Marx's prophetic ghosts are Robin Goodfellow or Puck; the ghost of Hamlet's father but in the form of 'the old mole that can work in the earth so fast, that worthy pioneer'. It is the latter figure upon whom I shall concentrate here. In his speech of 1856, Marx is himself repeating his writing of 1852. In *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, he had written of the seeming defeat of socialism by Louis Bonaparte's *coup*:

> The struggle seems to be settled in such a way that all classes, equally impotent and equally mute, fall on their knees before the rifle butt.
>
> But the revolution is thoroughgoing. It is still journeying through purgatory. It does its work methodically. . . . And when it has done this second half of its preliminary work, Europe will leap from its seat and exultantly exclaim: Well grubbed, old mole! (*Brav gewühlt, alter Maulwurf!*)
>
> (121; vol. 11, 178)

But why does Marx represent the revolution through the ghost of Hamlet's father? And, even more to the point, why does he invoke that ghost (and the revolution) in Hamlet's grotesque and debasing image of his father as a *mole*?

Let me first outline as clearly as possible my major suppositions in my understanding of the relation between Marx's analysis of Louis Bonaparte and his reading of *Hamlet*. To repeat what I have already argued: the period from

1848 52 saw Marx engaged both in a detailed analysis of French politics and the rise of Louise Bonaparte and in an intense reading of Shakespeare. These two concerns, I believe, complexly converge in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, which is, like *Hamlet*, an analysis of repetition. While the nephew, Napoleon III-to-be, farcically repeats his uncle, Napoleon I, Hamlet, the son, assumes an 'antic disposition' and farcically repeats his father, Hamlet. Both narratives depend upon the repetition of a name (Napoleon, Hamlet); both, at least temporarily, conjure up a previously tragic world which has been displaced by a farcical one. Both texts explore how the past haunts the present, and how the past is trans

But if the past haunts the present, it is also *re*-presented, transformed by the remaking of its presence. Nowhere is this more striking than in *Hamlet*. Hamlet, the son, obsessively idealizes his father, comparing him as Hyperion, the sun-god, to the satyr of his uncle, Claudius. And when Hamlet, the father, returns, it is in his most heroic form, dressed in armour; and not just any armour, but 'the very armour [he] had on' when he fought and defeated Fortinbras. The father returns, we might say, as the material trace which has survived him: the armour which was a typical legacy from father to son, surviving the father's death to mould, whether literally or ideologically, the son's identity. It was, for instance, 'the remainder of two rich armours which were my father's' which Lady Anne Clifford left to her grandchildren 'to remaine to them and their posterity . . . as a remembrance of him'. Such physical remembrances powerfully fix representation, and it is precisely such a fixing (of his father's memory, of his own assumption of his father's name) that Hamlet desires, as Napoleon III attempted to fix and appropriate the legacy of his uncle.

What Marx takes from *Hamlet*, though, is not Hamlet's attempt to *be* his father but the radical unsettling of this revenance in the son's (un)naming of the paternal legacy. For Hamlet, as for his friends Marcellus, Barnardo and Horatio, the Ghost is at first not 'he' but 'it'. The Ghost is only transformed from 'it' by Hamlet's own act of naming: 'I'll *call* thee Hamlet,/King, father, royal Dane.' And yet, having named his father in the full majesty of his authority, Hamlet proceeds to strip him of those very titles, addressing him with an increasingly mocking familiarity:

> Ah ha, boy, say'st thou so? Art thou there, truepenny?
> Come on, you hear this fellow in the cellarage.

'Boy', 'truepenny', 'fellow': each word debases the father, dethrones the monarch. 'Boy': a male child before puberty; also, in the Renaissance, a servant or slave, and, as a term of contempt, a rogue or knave. 'Truepenny': an honest fellow but a term commonly used patronizingly of an inferior ('Truepenny' is the name of a servant in *Ralph Roister Doister*). 'Fellow': a companion or comrade; but also the customary address of a servant, and with the contemptuous sense of a person of no worth. The King and father no longer enthroned but 'in the cellarage' – beneath the ground but also, in the technical language of the theatre, underneath the stage – literally subordinated, even in his terrifying return.

> The father finally as mole:
> Well said, old mole. Canst work i' th' earth so fast?
> A worthy pioneer!

Hamlet, the dead father, no longer King and royal Dane but mole and pioneer. In appropriating 'old mole' as a figure of revolution, Marx brilliantly illuminates, even as he transforms the politics of the Renaissance play from which he appropriates. For while *Hamlet* seems to contrast the supposed legitimacy of primogeniture – the chain of father and son, Hamlet and Hamlet – with the illegitimate usurpation of the brother/uncle, Claudius, the play, as Marx's appropriation suggests, stages something more unsettling: the transformation of the principle of legitimacy – the father and King – into the principle of subversion. One should take subversion quite literally here. The modern German for subversive activity – *Maulwurfsarbeit* – means literally the work of the mole. In figuring his father as mole, Hamlet enacts a radical metamorphosis: from human to animal; from omnipotent monarch to blind burrower; from ideological figurehead to a worker in the ground. It is a literal humbling, a bringing of the ideological superstructure down to earth (*humus*, the etymological root for 'humble', is the Latin for 'earth').

The transformation of the father into mole has a further unsettling implication. For the word occurs only one other time in *Hamlet*, and that is in the preceding scene, where Hamlet derides the Danish wassails:

> So, oft it chances in particular men
> That for some vicious mole of nature in them,
> As in their birth, wherein they are not guilty
> (Since nature cannot choose his origin),
> By their o'ergrowth of some complexion,
> Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason,
> Or by some habit, that too much o'erleavens
> The form of plausive manners – that these men,
> Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,
> Being Nature's livery or Fortunes star,
> His virtues else, be they as pure as grace,
> As infinite as any man may undergo,
> Shall in the general censure take corruption
> From that particular fault.
>
> (1. 4: 23–36)

The mole, then, not only as burrowing animal, but as defect, taint, a 'particular fault' which can corrupt the whole. For 'mole' also signifies a discoloured spot on linen ('one iron mole defaceth the whole piece of lawn') and a blemish on the skin ('one mole staineth the whole face'). In *King John*, a mother talks of a child who is 'sland'rous to [his] mother's womb' as one who is '[p]atch'd with foul moles and eye-offending marks' (3. 1: 43), and when Oberon concludes *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with a blessing upon the betrothed couples, he says:

> So shall all the couples three
> Ever true in loving be;
> And the blots of Nature's hand
> Shall not in their issue stand;
> Never mole, hare-lip, nor scar,
> Nor mark prodigious, such as are
> Despised in nativity,
> Shall upon their children be.
>
> (5. 1: 407)

In figuring his father as 'old mole', Hamlet associates him with the 'blots of Nature' which subvert legitimacy and unfix the patrilineal bond, and he begins the process by which he will, despite his repeated promises to 'remember' his father, reject the suit of armour which would remake him in his father's image.

For if Hamlet takes upon himself the Ghost's demand, if he is buried as a soldier with '[t]he soldier's music, and the rites of war', he never becomes his armoured father. Indeed, when Hamlet returns from England, he writes to Claudius in a curiously ambiguous phrase that he is '*set naked on your kingdom*'. His farcical representation of his father as mole precedes his putting on of an 'antic disposition', the disposition of the fool or court jester. And it is the court jester, Yorick, not his father, whom Hamlet most fondly recalls: 'he hath born me on his back a thousand times, and now – how abhorred in my imagination it is. My gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft.' The lips that he has kissed: the lips not of the father but of the jester. Though Yorick is dead, his skull memorializes the legacy he leaves, a legacy which includes the 'antic disposition'. In striking contrast to *The Spanish Tragedy*, where the Ghost returns gloatingly to conclude the plot, the Ghost of *Hamlet* simply disappears after Act 3. One might say that the Ghost of the jester displaces the Ghost of the soldier-king.

However, if we are to believe the so-called 'bad' first quarto of *Hamlet*, the soldier-king had been displaced even before Act 3. In the bedchamber scene, as Hamlet berates his mother, the stage direction reads, 'Enter the ghost in his night gowne.' A king no longer clad in complete steel but in the robes of undress, ready for bed. A supposedly heroic past subverted by this revelation of domestic vulnerability. It is not clear to whom Hamlet refers when he says 'a king of shreds and patches': to his usurping uncle or to his father, stripped of the trappings of power – boy, truepenny, fellow, old mole. Marx himself opens the way for such an absorption of the legitimating father/King into the delegitimating fool and jester in his own reworking of the 'old mole' for his speech of 1856, quoted above:

> In the signs that bewilder the middle class, the aristocracy and the poor prophets of regression, we recognize our brave friend, Robin Goodfellow,

> the old mole that can work in the earth so fast, that worthy pioneer – the Revolution.
>
> (*Articles on Britain*, 262–3)

Hamlet, the father/King, as Puck; Puck, like 'Da-Da', as the bewilderer of the bourgeoisie.

In his 1856 speech, Marx extends his previous quotation of *Hamlet*: it is the 'old mole', he continues, 'that can work in the earth so fast, that worthy pioneer'. *This* mole, the 'spectre [which] is haunting Europe' in the opening sentence of *The Communist Manifesto* is 'a pioneer', a word which ironically combines both the sense of a rupture with the past and the sense of the historical conditions 'which weigh like a nightmare on the brain of the living'. By the 1830s, the metaphorical sense of a pioneer as explorer or initiator had taken on a specific reference in the United States. In 1836, Irving wrote: 'As one wave of emigration after another rolls into the vast regions of the waste, the eager eyes of our pioneers will pry beyond.' In this sense, the Revolution is imagined as opening up an unforeseen future. But such a future, for Marx, could only be constructed upon the specific labours of the past and the present. A 'pioneer' in the older sense is less glamorous, more a mole, 'one of a body of foot-soldiers who march with or in advance of an army or regiment, having spaces, pickaxes etc. to dig trenches, repair roads, and perform other labours in clearing and preparing the way for the main body'; also, by extension, a miner.

The Eighteenth Brumaire reads *Hamlet* as a staging of the unfixing of representation. Yet that unfixing itself depends upon repetition. Marx's 'mole', indeed, repeats not only *Hamlet* but the conclusion of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, where Hegel argued that 'the latest philosophy contains therefore those which went before . . . it is the product and result of all that preceded it' (Hegel, 552–3; 690–1). 'Individuals', though, cannot stand outside that process so as to grasp it; they are themselves 'like blind men, who are driven forward by the indwelling spirit of the whole'. But the spirit can only emerge 'into the light of day' if we 'give ear to its urgency – when the mole that is within forces its way on – and we have to make it a reality' (553; 691). But Marx's mole, unlike Hegel's, is not working towards the light; it is working in the earth. Its labour is one of uprooting. Indeed, in Marx's rematerialization of the work of the Ghost, he *mis*quotes *Hamlet*. In F1, the lines are:

> Well said old Mole, can'st worke i'th'ground so fast? A worthy Pioneer.

Or, in the Schlegel/Tieck translation which Marx also knew:

> Brav, alter Maulwurf! Wühlst so hurtig fort? O trefflicher Minierer!
>
> (*Hamlet*, Prinz von Dänemark in *Shakspeare: Dramatische Werke*, trans. August Wilhelm von Schlegel and Ludwig Tieck (Berlin: Reimer, 1841, vol. 6: 35))

In *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, though, 'Well *said*, old mole' becomes 'well *grubbed*, old mole' (Brav *gewühlt, alter Maulwurf*): the mouth as organ of speech becomes the mouth as organ of eating. Hamlet, the father, no longer as *paterfamilias*, no longer even as absent command ('well said') but as grubber-up, as delegitimator.

For Marx, the repetition of the name 'Hamlet' itself covers a double dislocation: the dislocation of the father from palace to cellarage; the dislocation of the father's legacy and its displacement by that of Yorick and Puck. Yet unfixing itself depends upon repetition, a repetition which can never be totally detached from fixation. Fixation cannot be erased; it is itself the site of transformation. Marx stages both fixation and transformation in his own repetitive rereadings of Shakespeare, in his development of Hamlet's transformation of monarch into mole into miner into Puck. In the unnaming of the patriarch, Marx perhaps found intimations for his radically incomplete interrogation of his own paternal position. When Eleanor, his daughter, wrote her memoir of him, she called it *Recollections of Mohr [the Moor]*. Mohr, Challey, Old Nick, were the names by which his family called him, names which dislocate the comic Marx from the tragedy of his frozen legacy. The title 'Old Mole' was reserved not for kings and patriarchs, but for the Revolution – and for a woman, an intimate family friend named Lina Schüler (E. Marx, 634).

I want to conclude with a more recent reworking of the 'old mole' – that of Hélène Cixous in *Sorties*:

> So all the history, all the stories would be there to retell differently; the future would be incalculable; the historic forces would and will change hands and change body – another thought which is as yet unthinkable – will transform the functioning of all society. We are living in an age where the conceptual foundations of an ancient culture is in the process of being undermined by millions of a species of mole (Topoi, ground mines) never known before. When they wake up from among the dead, from among words, from among laws. (65)

The mole itself has changed hands, has changed bodies: from Shakespeare's ungendered 'mole' to Marx's masculine *Maulwurf* to Cixous's feminine *taupe* – the French for mole, landmine, but also, historically, for prostitute and old hag (*vieille taupe*). But the moles which will unfix representation are also, in Cixous's lexicon, *topoi*, commonplaces – like the mole itself, the site simultaneously of cultural repetition and of social dislocation. We make history in our reworking of borrowed names, borrowed cities, borrowed costumes (65).

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