PETER STALLYBRASS

Marx and Heterogeneity: Thinking the Lumpenproletariat

THIS ESSAY BEGINS from a particular critical and political conjuncture, the renewed attempt within Marxism to understand the heterogeneity of political groups and processes. This has come both as a response within the academy to the critiques of poststructuralism and, more importantly, as a response by the Left to rethink the "political" in relation to the emergence of the "new social movements"—the civil rights movement, the women's movement, and the gay and lesbian movements. The very notion of the "political," at least in the British context from which I come, has assumed a much greater importance in the years since the early 1970s, when ideological analysis was dominant within Marxism—an analysis that tended to view politics which addressed the State as at worst a distracting fraud and as at best a necessary but tiresome form of reformism. After Reagan and Thatcher (and now Bush), all that has changed. In retrospect, I see the ideological analyses that many of us were undertaking as too static: while we analyzed what we took to be the frozen and rigid forms of the State, we failed to see the ways in which the Right was itself fractured and mobile, and in the process of massive rearticulation and reformation.[1]

If ideological analysis was powerful as a critique of the naturalizing strategies of the Right, it failed to account for the processes by which the Right was redefining the "natural" and transforming political discourse. The political (even in its narrowest sense) no longer seemed "superstructural," coming in third behind the ideological and the economic. Politics appeared now both as the languages and practices that defined the ideological and as the field within which the economic was articulated—and it was the Right who were doing the defining and articulating. It was in this context that *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* became a central text within Marxist theory,[2] for in it Marx gives renewed attention to the political as the field within which social groups are shaped.[3]

In his early writing Marx had brilliantly argued that the distinctive feature of the liberal bourgeois state was its extension of the political franchise even as it radically reduced the domain that would count as political. In *On the Jewish Question* (1843), he wrote that "the state abolishes, after its fashion, the distinctions established by *birth, social rank, education, occupation,* when it decrees that birth, social rank, education, occupation are *non-political* distinctions; when it proclaims, without regard to these distinctions, that every member of society is an *equal*

partner in popular sovereignty."[4] His point is, of course, that since the political has been emptied of its social content, popular sovereignty is the sovereignty over everything except for the very bases of social differentiation and domination. This is the sense in which the political is a fraud: under the guise of the common interest, the state guarantees a political equality that leaves social inequality untouched. Classes are formed in the sphere of productive relations while the political merely reflects and mystifies the relations of those classes.

But in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* Marx begins to think of bourgeois politics in a quite new way: not as the distorted mirror of social relations but as at least one of the fields in which classes are fashioned. Politics is now seen less as a (superstructural) level than as a formative process. Moreover, that formative process can fashion classes out of radically heterogeneous groups. The political fashioning of class is analyzed in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* through the examination of one particular "class": the lumpenproletariat. There is something very strange about this. Marx is beginning to look at the *contingencies* of class: class as an unstable yoking together, through political rhetoric, of heterogeneous groups; class as shaped and transformed by state processes. Yet he looks at these contingencies under a name that suggests less the volatility of class than its fixed, visible essence. *Lumpen* means "rags and tatters"; *lumpig* means "shabby, paltry"; and then there are derivatives like *lumpen-gesindel*, "rabble," and *lumpen-wolle*, "shabby." The name *lumpenproletariat* thus suggests less the political emergence of a class than a sartorial category. And, what is more, the term had been used by Marx and Engels earlier to suggest a class immune to historical transformation; in *The Peasant War in Germany* (1850), Engels had written that "the lumpenproletariat is, generally speaking, a phenomenon that occurs in a more or less developed form in all the so far known phases of society."[5] Marx and Engels, indeed, sometimes used *lumpenproletariat* as a racial category, and in this they simply repeated one of the commonplaces of bourgeois social analysis in the nineteenth century: the depiction of the poor as a nomadic tribe, innately depraved.

In the first part of this essay, I shall explore the ways in which nineteenth-century commentators, novelists, and painters invented and portrayed these "nomads" as a spectacle of heterogeneity. Yet through this spectacle of heterogeneity they shaped their own specular, homogenizing gaze. I want to suggest here a curious mirroring of this nineteenth-century spectacle in the spectacle of heterogeneity as it emerges in certain forms of critical theory in the late twentieth century. There is, of course, a significant difference: whereas in the nineteenth century the spectacle was viewed overwhelmingly with disgust, in the late twentieth century it has become an object of fascination, even a utopian model of the end of hegemony. But this difference of evaluation conceals an important resemblance: the construction of a privileged gaze that misrecognizes itself in its absorption with a field of "anarchy" (Matthew Arnold) or, in recent critical theory, of "free play." In the second part of the essay, I want to show how Marx attempted

to escape from the antinomies that bourgeois liberal theory established between homogeneity (the fetishization of "community," for instance) and heterogeneity (specularized "difference"). To the extent that he did think through those antinomies, we remain his predecessors and Marx still lies ahead of us.

I

In *Les Misérables* Victor Hugo writes of "that indigent class which begins with the petty bourgeois in embarrassed circumstances and descends through levels of misery past the lowest strata of society until it reaches those two creatures with whom all the things of material civilization end, the sewer sweeper and the ragpicker."[6] But how is one to think of this "indigent class," this class of *Lumpen*? Hugo's own problem in relation to that question is suggested by the uncertainty he had in the naming of his own novel. In 1850 Hugo was calling his book *Les Misères*, and he seems to have thought of the word as suggesting poverty and misfortune rather than crime. Yet the difficulties he had with the concept had already been a topic of debate in the Legislative Assembly. On 9 July 1849, Hugo had raised the possibility in the assembly of getting rid of *la misère*. Gustave de Beaumont had responded, "Certainly there are '*misères*' that can be abolished. But you cannot abolish '*la misère*.' That is reckless talk. Disappointment makes for revolution." Hugo replied:

> "*La misère*" will vanish as leprosy has vanished. "*La misère*" is not suffering; "*la misère*" is not poverty itself [*murmurs*]; "*la misère*" is a nameless thing [*protests*] which I have tried to describe. . . . Suffering cannot disappear; "*la misère*" must disappear. There will always be some unfortunates, but it is possible that there may not always be "*misérables*" [*Hear, hear! on the Left. Ironical laughter elsewhere in the House*].[7]

On the one hand, then, the Right with its claim that the poor are always with us; on the other, the negations and hesitations of Hugo—"not suffering," "not poverty," "a nameless thing."[8]

Again and again, in the writings of the mid nineteenth century we find a curious oscillation between a fixation upon the spectacle of the city's poor (the scavenger, the ragpicker), as if they were somehow given up to the unmediated vision of the bourgeois spectator, and a sense of the unfixing of all categories before a "nameless thing." In *Un Hiver à Paris*, Jules Janin describes the flaneur's voyeuristic wanderings through the most desolate parts of Paris: "In Paris there are places that he alone knows, frightful alleyways, labyrinths, ruins, courtyards inhabited by all the thieves of the city; this is the route our man chooses." But, Janin continues, the spectacle that the flaneur pursues undoes all language:

> Paris at night is terrifying; this is the moment when the subterranean nation comes forth. Shadows are everywhere; but little by little the shadows disperse under the flickering lamp

of the ragpicker, who, basket on back, goes in search of his fortune among these frightful rags that no longer have a name in any language.[9]

For Janin, the ragpickers *are* the dirt that they touch not just because of their contamination by the streets' grime but because they live outside "meaningful" categories: they themselves are seen as the rags that "have no name in any language." This very "unnameability" threatens to subvert the process of social differentiation. For Marx, the distinctions between classes are obscured by "this scum, offal, refuse of all classes"; in the flickering lights of the metropolis, meaning seems to dissolve.

Yet in the mid nineteenth century, social heterogeneity was the obsessive site/sight of the representable. The "unnameable thing," the heterogeneity that defied all boundaries, produced a veritable hysteria of naming. The subordinated are, indeed, always *vulnerable* to representation: the lower classes "may at most times be represented almost without restraint."[10] Marx himself was undoubtedly caught up in the hysteria of naming, the oppressive power to represent, even as he sought to analyze it. One of the most famous passages of *The Eighteenth Brumaire* is his description of the lumpenproletariat of Paris:

> Alongside decayed *roués* with dubious means of subsistence and of dubious origin, alongside ruined and adventurous offshoots of the bourgeoisie, were vagabonds, discharged soldiers, discharged jailbirds, escaped galley slaves, swindlers, mountebanks, *lazzaroni*, pickpockets, tricksters, gamblers, *maquereaus*, brothel keepers, porters, *literati*, organ-grinders, ragpickers, knife grinders, tinkers, beggars—in short, the whole indefinite, disintegrated mass, thrown hither and thither, which the French term *la bohème*. (75)

Perhaps the first thing to note about this list is that it seems in many ways to repeat both the structure and the content of the descriptions of the street people of nineteenth-century Paris and London that fill the pages of novelists, journalists, and social analysts. Like Marx, Henry Mayhew in his account of *London Labour and the London Poor* (1861) endlessly proliferates categories to encompass the spectacle of the metropolis.[11] And, as T. J. Clark notes, in Paris "journalists vied for the longest, most unlikely, most indisputable list."[12] Such lists were characterized by their ambivalent celebration of the exotic, their striking juxtapositions of the homely and the grotesque: porters and organ grinders; rag-and-bone men and acrobats; umbrella sellers and prostitutes; dog washers and charlatans; jugglers and chimney-sweeps; flower girls and somnambulists. Like Marx, the journalists ransacked other languages and other cultures to construct a spectacle of multiplicity. And, like Marx, they were torn between contradictory ways of seeing that multiplicity: Was it an overflowing heterogeneity or a coagulating mass? Was it a dazzling display of color or an unrelieved greyness? Was it a carnival of the living or a charnel house of the dying?

In its splendor and its horror, however, the city was above all *depictable*. Indeed, the more it was proclaimed to be unrepresentable, the more it was rep-

resented. Yet the nature of this representation insistently raised the problem of the spectator's own position in relation to it. Was he or she part of it or the neutral observer of it? What was the "correct" perspective to adopt? As Marx raises that problem of perspective in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, so does William Wordsworth in *The Prelude*. Like Marx's depiction of the lumpenproletariat, Wordsworth's depiction of the fair stresses exhilarating profusion, but a profusion that induces nausea in the writer. Everything is "jumbled up," a carnival of monsters, freaks, and "perverted things."[13] So he implores the Muse to waft him on her wings "above the press and danger of the crowd." From this perspective of visionary aloofness, he can attempt to frame the "anarchy and din" of the city dwellers who appear as "slaves . . . of low pursuits,"

> Living amid the same perpetual flow
> Of trivial objects, melted and reduced
> To one identity, by differences
> That have no law, no meaning, and no end.
> (7.700–704)

It is an extraordinary passage, foregrounding the problematic relation between the proliferating categories of the spectator and the collapse of all categories. The process of differentiation, the naming of endless particulars, is itself "melted and reduced" to the "one identity" of lawlessness and meaninglessness without end. Yet such a reduction secures the spectator's identity by positioning him outside and above the throng, at a safe distance from the "flow / Of trivial objects."

The homogeneity of the bourgeois subject is here constituted through the spectacle of heterogeneity. Yet the relation of subject to spectacle remains problematic. To emphasize the subject's "integrity," nineteenth-century writers emphasized the socioeconomic fissures of the city, the irreducible gap of class. And that was to acknowledge a social and political threat, the possibility that what were sometimes called "the dangerous classes" might abolish the distance between subject and spectacle through revolutionary action. An alternative strategy was for the bourgeois spectator to rewrite that social distance in terms of the controlled theatrical performance of the privileged subject. In this scenario, social differentiation was no more than the ability of the bourgeois subject to assume an endless multiplicity of roles. Thus, Jules Janin wrote in *L'Ane mort et la femme guillotinée* (1829):

> One day, I saw a man in rags, a terrible sight, coming into an inn in the rue Saint-Anne: his beard was long, his hair disordered, his whole body filthy. A moment later I saw him come out again well dressed, his chest laden with the crosses of two orders, an august figure, and he went off to dine with a judge. This sudden transformation frightened me, and I thought, trembling, that it was perhaps in this way that the two extremes meet.[14]

It is, of course, *not* thus that "extremes meet." But Janin's encounter opens up the possibility of reducing the social contradictions that separate ragpicker from aris-

tocrat to the masquerades of the bourgeois subject. Whereas Wordsworth attempts to unify the subject by opening up the social fissures of the city, Janin unifies the city at the cost of splitting the subject.

A more complex version of Janin's strategy is suggested in Balzac's "Facino Cane" (1836). In the story, the narrator describes how, when he was a student, the one alleviation of his "monastic life" arose from his "passion" for observing the poor:

> I had already acquired a power of intuitive observation which penetrated to the soul without ignoring the body, or rather it grasped external details so well that it immediately went beyond them. . . . As I listened to these people, I was able to live their lives; I felt their rags on my back, and walked with their worn-out shoes on my feet. Their wants, their needs, all passed into my soul, or perhaps it was my soul that passed into theirs. . . . To discard my own habits, to become someone other than myself by an exaltation of my moral faculties, and to play this game at will, such was my amusement. . . . I had broken up into its elements the heterogeneous mass called "the people," and had analysed it in such a way that I could appraise both its good and its bad qualities. I already knew what use could be made of this district.[15]

Here, the distance between spectator and spectacle is constantly moving. The narrator watches the poor from the perspective of an analyst: it is, he says, "a kind of study." Yet his imaginary donning of rags and worn-out shoes is an escape from his "own habits" that unfixes his identity, infecting him with "an animal happiness" that seems all too close to "madness."[16]

In "Facino Cane," the narrator moves from a depiction of what he calls the "setting" of the Parisian poor to a romantic narrative which he uses that setting to frame. In the carnival atmosphere of a working-class wedding, the narrator meets an old, blind musician whose "abject condition" does not conceal a certain "greatness."[17] This musician recounts his life: he was a Venetian aristocrat until a series of misfortunes led to his incarceration at Bicêtre as a madman. The narrator himself claims that there is no connection between the setting and the tale. And yet, to the reader, each appears as a transformation of the other. Paris, "this suffering town," reappears in the light of "one of those strange tales"; grotesque urban abjection is transmuted into a story of Venice, a city that the narrator describes as being composed of "greatness and nobility," paradoxically registered in its "physical and moral deterioration."[18]

For Balzac's narrator, as for Janin, the squalor of the city is both the occasion for the analysis of the "heterogeneous mass" and an incitement to theatrical impersonation. And yet it is striking how frequently the theatricalization of the bourgeois subject is coextensive with the homogenization of the city's poor as a distinct *race*. It is as if the more the privileged subject can improvise, the more absolutely he needs to fix the city's radical heterogeneity within racial categories. This double movement is constitutive of Arthur Conan Doyle's story "The Man with the Twisted Lip" (1891).[19] The story revolves around the mysterious disap-

pearance of Mr. Neville St. Clair in the East End of London. His wife sees him, agitated and frantic, in the upstairs window of an opium den, but when, escorted by the police, she breaks into the room, all she finds are his clothes. She is told that the man who lives in the room is a beggar, a "sinister cripple" named Hugh Boone (235). As in Janin's story, here too Mr. Neville St. Clair, a wealthy man of leisure, and the crippled beggar are one and the same person. This "refined-looking" man, a "good husband" and "affectionate father" (233), is also the "extremely dirty" Boone, whose grime cannot conceal the "repulsive ugliness" of his face (241). But if poverty is here reinscribed as the masquerade of the respectable citizen, the city is at the same time depicted as a scene of oriental depravity. The opium den, which houses "the dregs of the docks" (230), is run by a "lascar scoundrel," a man, says Holmes, "of the vilest antecedents" (235). If London is the space of bourgeois theatricality, it is also the space of a degradation imagined as foreign—as the drug culture of a lascar and his "sallow Malay attendant" (231). And moving between the respectable domesticity of Dr. Watson and the fantasized corruption of the orient is Holmes himself, consummate actor, drug taker, and orientalist ("He constructed a sort of Eastern divan, upon which he perched himself cross legged"; 240).

The conjunction of theatricality and racial fear is displayed in a famous painting by one of the most distinguished academicians of the nineteenth century: William Mulready's *Train Up a Child in the Way He Should Go; and When He Is Old He Will Not Depart from It* (painted 1841; repainted 1851 and 1853; fig. 1).[20] On the left-hand side of the canvas a young boy stands, his left hand stretched out with a coin in it. On the right-hand side, three lascars are sitting on the ground, the one in the foreground bowed over, his head concealed in his lap, the one behind him with downcast eyes, his hand touching his forehead. The furthest lascar from the viewer, his head raised, is staring at the child, his right hand extended into the middle of the painting (to receive the child's gift? in a gesture of acknowledgment? as a threat?). The child stands beside two well-dressed white women, one standing behind him, the other crouching between the lascars and him, both watching the boy attentively (admiringly? encouragingly?). The figures are depicted in a romantic landscape, trees on either side, an impressive craglike ruin, shadowed down the middle, in the background.

What is perhaps most striking about the reception of this work is the way in which critics oscillated between interpreting it as a heroic portrayal of the absorption of the poor into the theater of bourgeois generosity, as an exotic depiction of the Other, or as an alarming juxtaposition of black and white, male and female, lumpen and well-to-do. It is as if the critics ran through the possible strategies through which bourgeois spectators could depict, incorporate, or distance themselves from the outcasts of the city.

Although this painting was titled *Train Up a Child in the Way He Should Go* (a quotation from Proverbs) when it was exhibited, it was variously known as "Integ-

FIGURE 1. William Mulready, *Train Up a Child in the Way He Should Go; and When He Is Old He Will Not Depart from It*, 1841–53. Oil on panel, 25¼″ × 30½″. Photo: The Forbes Magazine Collection, New York.

rity," "Vocation," and "It Is More Blessed To Give." But Mulready himself seems to have usually referred to the painting simply as "Lascars," as he noted in his account book: "Baring Lascars 450 [pounds]" (1841); "Baring retouching Lascars 200 [pounds]" (1853).[21] It was painted on commission for a member of Parliament, Thomas Baring, whose grandfather had been chairman of the East India Company. And it was probably through that company that lascars—a name applied to Indian seamen and probably erroneously derived by Europeans from the Urdu *lashkar*, meaning "army" or "camp"—became a relatively frequent sight in London. For the British crews of the East India Company's ships were depleted in India due both to disease and to the violent engagements of the company with the Indians whom it exploited. Consequently, "It was necessary to recruit [Indian] sailors for the voyage home."[22] Upon arrival in London, the lascars were discharged "and then left for several months without employment before embarking on a return journey."[23] Like the other poor of London, they were the

object of disgust, fascination, and pity. On the one hand, a religious pamphlet of 1814 on "Lascars and Chinese" claimed:

> They are practically and abominably wicked. They are a prey to each other and to the rapacious poor, as well as the most abandoned of our fellow country women. They have none or scarcely any who will associate with them but prostitutes and no house that will receive them except the public house and the apartments of the abandoned.[24]

On the other hand, the *Times* ran two articles on the lascars in December 1841 that drew attention to the lascars' "peculiar habits and religious prejudices," and while it still described them as being "in a most offensive state" and a "nuisance," it was concerned at the "strange impression they must receive of that people [the English] who are said to have HUMANITAS by a moral power."[25]

In Mulready's painting, though, the East End docks are displaced by a romantic rural setting which itself allows for a juxtaposition of idealized English femininity with the ragged figures of the Indian sailors that would have been unimaginable or depictable only as a scene of horror on the streets of London. In many ways, indeed, the painting acts as a taming and domestication of a political and social threat. There is, first of all, the title itself, which asks us to read the work as a religious and educational lesson on charity. And then there is the grouping of the child and the two women which, as Marcia Pointon notes, recalls the Virgin, St. Anne, and the Christ child.[26] Moreover, even the looming quality of the ruins is partially softened by the domesticating figure of the dog standing beside the child and by the avenue of trees receding to the left of the canvas. Mulready, it would seem, "re-enacts the myth of British imperial beneficence, but on English rural soil,"[27] absorbing political conflict into a gesture of charity by an innocent white child to helpless black men.

But such a reading of the painting itself seems to domesticate the threat that critics perceived in it. The critic of *Art Union*, for instance, "marvelled"

> that the fair young maidens did not "make off" as rapidly as their delicate limbs could bear them—following the example of the little boy in their company, who, though he seems a stout lad, shrinks back with instinctive dread from contact with the rascal-looking fellows who are asking charity.[28]

What the critic at least manages to grasp is the curious sexualization of this colonial and class encounter. If the effacement through infantilization of the white male partially effaces political domination, it does so at the cost of generating a sexual threat. Conflicting power systems of gender, age, race, and class are uneasily played off against each other. One of the titles given to the painting, "It Is More Blessed To Give," helps to make sense of the posture of what the *Art Union* critic calls the "stout lad" and of the fact that all the white figures are standing (the child with his full body facing the spectator), whereas the lascars are seated or collapsed on the ground. But Mulready's own repeated reference to the painting as "Lascars" draws attention to a conflicting perspective: the very

size of the lascars, above all the exorbitant contrast between the furthest lascar's large outstretched hand and the diminutive hand of the child, and the striking disparity between the nearest lascar's prominent legs and feet and the small legs and tiny feet of the child. Moreover, it is the lascar's hand, in the center of the painting, which breaks the stark division of black from white, male from female, and if it is reaching out to receive the child's gift, it is at the same time turned palm up immediately beneath the breast of the woman on the right.

The painting, then, seems to solicit the protective gaze of a white male viewer, protective of "his" race and "his" women. But it also insists (despite itself, we might say) upon the *global* dimension of enforced impoverishment and enforced colonization. It is difficult for the viewer to find a naturalizing strategy for *these* beggars, whose mysterious presence can be traced through the less mysterious workings of British imperialism. Paradoxically, if the poverty of whites in London could be, and was, essentialized as originating from a sort of racial depravity, before we can understand the poverty of these lascars we require an explanation of their very presence—which must necessarily be social if one is to make sense of the racial difference that the painting foregrounds. And even the pastoral setting can be seen as unsettling. If the painting displaces urban misery, it can do so only by discovering that the rural idyll is equally the space of colonial encounter. It is as if Mulready's version of the picturesque traces the invisible workings of an economy in which the prettiest of villages and the most sublime of landscapes are dependent upon acts of exploitation thousands of miles away.

Certainly, many critics were disturbed either by the content of the painting or by their inability to make sense of it. The *Art Union*, for instance, found the painting "not easily intelligible," and the *Literary Gazette* observed, "We cannot read the lesson; whether to inculcate charity, or what? The meaning escapes our penetration."[29] And without a "lesson" to secure the relation between black and white, the colonizer and the colonized, the lascars, like the ruins behind them, seemed to loom up threateningly. Frederic Stephens remarked on "the terror of their dusky faces" and claimed that "their strange eyes, motions, attitudes, and costumes are expressed so powerfully as to account for the terror of the child, and almost make us share it."[30] And after Théophile Gautier had seen the painting, he wrote, "Macbeth needed no less daring to approach the witches at their hellish cookery on Dunsinane Heath, and they were certainly no more horrifying."[31] Perhaps this effect of horror was partially produced by the painting's technique of *concealment*. We can see nothing of the face of the lascar in the foreground, and even the lascar whose hand reaches out is swathed in a brown cloak that obscures the bottom half of his face, focusing attention upon the intense but unreadable gaze of a single eye. And the dark ruin in the background, which could easily be mistaken for a cliff, is shadowed darkly to suggest hidden crevices.

This technique of concealment might be said to be part of the way in which, as the *Literary Gazette* commented, "the meaning escapes our penetration." Yet the

hidden is still an enticement to the viewer—less the vertiginous collapse of categories than the stimulus to further analysis, a provocation of the desire to *know*. Insofar as the painting baffles, it simultaneously constructs the viewer as unmasker. In this, it repeats in a rural setting the dominant trope of the bourgeois spectator in the city. The horror of the dissolution of categories generates the desire to survey more fully. In this sense, the appalled accounts of the state of the *lumpen* were directly connected to the 1830 plans to construct "great thoroughfares" through "the ancient citadels of crime and vice" in London and later to Haussmann's rebuilding of Paris. As Gareth Stedman Jones puts it, "*The working class lacked 'civilization' because it was hidden away.*"[32] It would be the work of the bourgeoisie to insist upon the concealment of the urban poor only the more fully to expose them to view. And the notion of an unnameable horror hidden in the dark places of the city added force to the desire to name, the desire to depict, to find in the most hideous poverty—the picturesque. Hugo's "nameless thing" is transformed into the endlessly reproduced spectacle of the grotesque, the exotic, the low. But this spectacle of heterogeneity establishes the homogenizing gaze of the bourgeois spectator.

II

In the coup of Louis Bonaparte, the "nameless thing" appeared to move violently from the social margins onto the center of the political stage. The question that Marx poses in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* is the extent to which the "nameless thing" to which he affixes the name *lumpenproletariat* might both transgress the aesthetico-political categories of the bourgeoisie and, at the same time, undo the imagined progress of history and the historical dialectics that he himself had proposed as the privileged means of understanding history. For in the overwhelming victory of Louis Napoleon in the presidential election of December 1848 and in his subsequent coup of December 1851, the dialectical antagonism of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat seemed to have been bypassed by the emergence of a state that represented no one but itself and yet was able to count upon the support of an extraordinarily diverse constituency. And such a support seemed to violate one of the central tenets of Marx's early writings: that the state represented a specific class interest, even if it could only govern with the support of subordinate classes with whose conflicting interests it was forced to negotiate.

It is worth emphasizing that, even in the early writings, Marx gives considerable flexibility to the state: at times it will be dominated by a single class, while at other times it can defend its interests only by leaning upon the support of subaltern classes.[33] In *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, Marx gives a deliberately schematic account of the relation between the state and conflicting classes from the French Revolution to Louis Bonaparte's coup d'état. In the French Revolution, Marx

argues, the succession of the Constitutionalists by the Girondists and of the Girondists by the Jacobins was one in which each of the parties relied "on the more progressive party for support." "As soon as [each party] has brought the revolution far enough to be unable to follow it further . . . it is thrust aside by the bolder ally" (42). The Revolution of 1848 enacts a farcical reversal of this process. After the revolution, the petit-bourgeois democratic party drops its proletarian allies. The petite bourgeoisie are in turn cast off by the bourgeois republicans, who in due course are cast off by the party of Order (the bourgeois and aristocratic monarchists), which, in its turn, is booted out by Louis Bonaparte with the support of the army. But however complex the nature of class alliances, Marx tends to argue that any particular party *represents* a specific social class. Thus the democratic Montagnards represent the petite bourgeoisie; the Orleanists represent "the aristocrats of finance and the big industrialists"; the Legitimists represent "the large landowners." But whom does Bonaparte represent?

To save the thesis that the state *must* represent a particular class or alliance of classes, Marx notoriously argues that "state power is not suspended in midair. Bonaparte represents a class, and the most numerous class of French society at that, the *small-holding [Parzellen] peasants*" (123). But no sooner has Marx made this claim than he is qualifying it. Insofar as peasants endure specific economic conditions, they are a class; but because they have no communal, national, or political organization "they do not form a class" at all but are a simple aggregation, "much as potatoes in a sack form a sack of potatoes" (124). But Marx questions even the role of this class-which-is-not-a-class when he maintains that the Napoleonic idealizations of the peasantry are "only the hallucinations of its death struggle, . . . spirits transformed into ghosts" (130). Marx thus subverts his own declaration of the determining role of the peasantry.[34] It is scarcely surprising that, after the Paris Commune, Marx was to reject his earlier suggestion that Bonaparte's state depended upon the peasantry,[35] for in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* he had already characterized Bonaparte's regime as a "confused groping about which seeks now to win, now to humiliate first one class and then another" (132). The problem of just whom Bonaparte represents initiates a crisis in Marx's theory.

Jeffrey Mehlman addresses this crisis in his short but brilliant book, *Revolution and Repetition*, arguing that "the piquancy of Bonapartism lies entirely in the emergence of a State which has been emptied of its class content."[36] This emergence thus marks a "scandal" within Marxism because "it entails a break with the notion of class representation." At the same time, the grotesque repetition of Napoleon I by Napoleon III is marked "by the repetitive insistence of a specific structure":

> A specular—or reversible—relation is exceeded by a heterogeneous, negatively charged instance whose situation is one of deviation or displacement in relation to one of the poles

of the initial opposition. The dialectic between *bourgeoisie* and proletariat is congealed to the advantage of the sub-proletariat.[37]

In other words, the binarism of Marx's theory of class struggle is interrupted by a third term, the lumpenproletariat, a term that resists the totalizing and teleological pretensions of the dialectic.

Much can be learned from Mehlman's analysis, but here I want to note some of its problematic features. First, Mehlman can only comprehend Marx by setting up his own implicit binarism between textual practice (the domain of slippages and the *unheimlich*) and social practice (the domain of binarisms and representation) and displacing the latter by the former. Second, what disappears in this binarism of the textual and the social is precisely the disturbance caused by the third term in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*: namely, the disturbance of the *political*, a category that is surprisingly absent not only from Mehlman's analysis but also from much of Marx's work.[38] But the main point I want to develop here is that the notion of "heterogeneity" that Mehlman sees as disrupting the imagined totality of Marx's dialectic can scarcely be the "solution" to *The Eighteenth Brumaire* since "heterogeneity" is precisely the problem that the book addresses.

Indeed, Marx interrogates any simple opposition between homogeneity and heterogeneity, openness and closure. Nor, as Marx suggests, does heterogeneity necessarily disrupt unity; on the contrary, it can ensure it. This is precisely the uncomfortable lesson of Louis Bonaparte, and if Bonapartism unsettles Marx's concept of the dialectic, it should be equally unsettling for any hasty attempt to elide the presence of the heterogeneous with the collapse of representation. Georges Bataille's extraordinary essay on "The Psychological Structure of Fascism" develops both Mehlman's sense of the subversive potential of the heterogeneous and the potential complicity between the heterogeneous and hegemony. For Bataille, the "heterogeneous" includes everything "resulting from *unproductive* expenditure," everything that "homogeneous" society defines as "waste" or that it is "powerless to assimilate."[39] At the same time, "social heterogeneity does not exist in a formless and disoriented state" (140) but is itself structured through its relation to the dominant homogeneous forces.

There is, Bataille argues, a ceaseless process of conflict and negotiation between the homogeneous and the heterogeneous. The army, for instance, has historically seized upon "formless and impoverished elements" and negated their heterogeneity "with a kind of rage (a sadism) manifest in each command" (150). Through uniforms, parades, "the geometric regularity of cadenced movements," "heterogeneity explicitly undergoes a thorough alteration, completing the realization of intense homogeneity without a decrease of the fundamental heterogeneity" (151). It is this persistence of the heterogeneous that allows for political rearticulation through, for example, Bonapartism or Fascism ("which etymologically signifies *uniting, concentration*"; 149). Fascism, for Bataille, thus depends as

much upon the dissolution of previous homogeneities as upon a new concentration and homogenization. But equally any challenge to that new concentration cannot come from heterogeneity in and of itself. The radical potential of the proletariat emerges from its being "a *point of concentration* [my italics] for every dissociated social element that has been banished to *heterogeneity*" (157). The political, then, whether it be fascist, liberal, or revolutionary, depends upon the interplay of the homogeneous and the heterogeneous. But fascist and liberal forms depend upon the aestheticization of the heterogeneous (in the demonized form of the "chaos" of the streets or in the valorized form of the military parade). But for Bataille, as for Marx, a radical politics requires "a profound alteration" of the nature of the heterogeneous in which "the lower classes must pass from a passive and diffuse state to a form of conscious activity" (157). And that alteration necessitates breaking with aestheticization and the *spectacle* of heterogeneity.

It was, though, this spectacle that Marx and Engels, in their very labor to construct a new category of the proletariat, reproduced in the form of a residue, the lumpenproletariat, turning upon this category much of the fear and loathing, and the voyeuristic fascination, that the bourgeoisie had turned upon the previously less specific category of the proletariat. In the lumpenproletariat the spectacle of exotic heterogeneity returned with a vengeance. Mehlman is surely right to note the "almost Rabelaisian verve" and "the proliferating energy" of Marx's depiction of the lumpen in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*.[40] But whereas Mehlman argues that in Marx's lumpen we find a "heterogeneity" that, "in all its unassimilability to every dialectical totalization, is *affirmed*" (13) and that destroys a specular economy, I would suggest that it is precisely this kind of imaginary heterogeneity that establishes specularity. Another way of putting this would be to say that Mehlman implies that the lumpen is the "hidden" truth that undoes the dialectic, whereas I would see it as a tactical maneuver to *establish* the dialectic. What is at stake here is a conflict in our interpretations of how the gaze is constituted. It is as if Mehlman understood the mirror phase as the moment in which the truly "dispersed" body is stabilized through an imaginary unity, whereas Lacan argues that unity and dispersal are mutually constitutive. For Lacan, the fantasy of the body-in-pieces (*le corps morcelé*) is formed *retroactively* in the mirror phase.[41] Similarly, the lumpen is constructed retroactively in Marx's radically new constitution of the "proletariat."

And in that retroactive construction, even as the picturesque seems about to collapse into an indecipherable horror, the horror of fragmentation is domesticated and made picturesque. For if one is struck by the "verve" and "energy" of Marx's description of the lumpen, one is also struck by its *literariness*, its unconscious swerve into the exoticism of nineteenth-century children's tales of *banditti* and gypsies (an exoticism that permeates the paintings of Mulready, for instance). And even the horror is formulated apotropaically: it belongs to another language, another country. It can be owned the more easily because it can be dis-

owned. Hence, the curious way in which Marx ransacks French, Latin, and Italian to conjure up the nameless. They are *roués*, *maquereaus* (pimps), what "the French term *la bohème*"; they are *literati*; they are *lazzaroni*.

The terms themselves are notoriously slippery: if *la bohème* was originally applied to gypsies and, by extension, to vagabonds, it had by the time Marx was writing acquired many of its romantic associations. Similarly with *lazzaroni*, which, like *lascar*, moved between being a category of ethnic or racial horror and of fascination at the exotic. The *OED* defines the *lazzaroni* as "the lowest class in Naples, living by odd jobs or begging." In the seventeenth century, the *lazzari* had been defined as "the scum of the Neapolitan people," and in the late eighteenth century *lazzaroni* was being used as a more extended term of social abuse. In Charlotte Smith's epistolary novel *Desmond* (1792), Lionel Desmond describes a reactionary young aristocrat, "a miracle of elegance and erudition," who refuses to read a response to Burke because

> it seems to me from the account other people have given me, to be very seditious; I wonder they don't punish the author, who, they say, is quite a low sort of fellow—What does he mean by his Rights of Man, and his equality?—What wretched and dangerous doctrine to disseminate among the *Lazzaroni* of England, where they are always ready enough to murmur against their betters.[42]

The aristocrat proceeds to advocate the silencing of such "demagogues" before they influence "the heads of *les gens sans culotes* [*sic*]" in England as they have in France. But if *lazzaroni* could describe potential revolutionaries, by the mid nineteenth century at least in England the term was associated with what was least threatening: the literary rogue. In George Eliot's *Adam Bede* (1859), the "common labourer" is contrasted with "picturesque lazzaroni" and "romantic criminals."[43]

Certainly, there is little of the picturesque or romantic about Engels's description in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* of the alliance between the Bourbon monarchy and the *lazzaroni* in Naples against the revolutionaries, and the subsequent murderous activities of the forces of reaction.[44] Yet in the carnivalesque proliferation of names in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, the *lazzaroni* seem to reassume their romantic aura. It is as if the bourgeois fantasy of a nameless other that must be obsessively named, expelled from Marx's concept of the proletariat, finds a new home for itself in the concept of the lumpenproletariat.

On such a reading, Marx divides the bourgeois spectacle of the decaying "proletariat" into two: the purified subject of the working class, Marx's "proletariat," and the lumpenproletariat, the "rotting mass" of paupers and criminals. Certainly, such a crude division is not absent from Marx's work. Yet if such a division does not constitute two comparable entities, neither can the lumpenproletariat, despite its name, be seen as a part of the proletariat (Marx and Engels go to great pains to labor the point that it *is not*). To begin with, Marx's category of the proletariat emerges from the relations of production: in this sense, even as a

class-for-itself it is necessarily a *relational* category. A class can only be defined by its relations to other classes: the proletariat and the bourgeoisie are mutually constitutive.

But there is at least a tendency in Marx, even in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, to abstract the lumpenproletariat from any specifiable historical relation and to treat them (as most bourgeois commentators did) as a distinct race. There is something of this racial definition in Marx's description of the Mobile Guards in Paris after the February Revolution. The guards, Marx claims,

> belonged for the most part to the *lumpenproletariat*, which in all big towns forms a mass sharply differentiated from the industrial proletariat, a recruiting ground for thieves and criminals of all kinds, living on the crumbs of society, people without a definite trade, vagabonds, *gens sans feu et sans aveu*, varying according to the degree of civilization of the nation to which they belong, but never renouncing their *lazzaroni* character.[45]

It is true that the lumpen are said to vary "according to the degree of civilization of the nation to which they belong," yet their main features are givens: their propensity to engage in crime, their shiftlessness, their "*lazzaroni* character." The lumpen seem to emerge as the very negation of historicity.

But the tendency to remove the lumpen from history was reversed through Marx's rewriting of the concept of the "proletariat." Before Marx, *proletarian* (*prolétaire*) was one of the central signifiers of the passive spectacle of poverty. In England, Dr. Johnson had defined *proletarian* in his *Dictionary* (1755) as "mean; wretched; vile; vulgar," and the word seems to have had a similar meaning in France in the early nineteenth century, where it was used virtually interchangeably with *nomade*.[46] Thus Honoré Frégier wrote in *Des classes dangereuses de la population dans les grandes villes*, published in 1840:

> When the proletarian—for we are wholly justified in using this term in speaking of the ragpicker and the nomad—when the proletarian, I repeat, aspires to quaff the cup of pleasure reserved for the wealthy and well-to-do class . . . his degradation is the deeper for his desire to rise above himself.[47]

The proletariat, in other words, was not the working class: it was the poor, the ragpickers, the nomads. And even when, in 1838, A. G. de Cassagnac defined the proletariat as including workers, they were only one of four groups, of which the other three were beggars, thieves, and prostitutes.[48] Throughout the nineteenth century, the Academy refused to recognize any other implication for *prolétaire* than that of poverty. In the 1835 *Dictionnaire* of the *Académie française*, the proletariat was defined as "the sixth and lowest class [in ancient Rome] who, being very poor and exempt from taxation, were only of use to the Republic for the offspring they produced. By extension in modern states, those without capital or sufficiently lucrative occupation." By the end of the century, *proletarian* was still defined as a term for "pauper."[49]

It was precisely such an elision of the difference between proletarian and

pauper that Marx and Engels attacked in *The German Ideology*.[50] The whole second part of the book is taken up with a critique of *The Ego and His Own* by Max Stirner (the pseudonym of Kaspar Schmidt).[51] Marx and Engels reject Stirner's identification of the proletarian with the pauper who "lacks settlement" and has "nothing to lose."[52] While Stirner interestingly argued that the "proletariat" (meaning paupers and criminals) were supported by the respectable classes so as to conform and justify their own moral position, he also argued that "individual uniqueness" was only to be found among the dispossessed. Marx and Engels, though, criticized this romanticization of pauperism and the way in which the concept of the "proletarian" tended to be associated with *passivity*, even if it was a passivity that threatened to erupt in sporadic violence. In the writings of Stirner, as paradoxically in the writings both of reactionary analysts and of anarchists like Mikhail Bakunin, the proletariat was imagined as a "passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of old society."

That last sentence is a quotation from the Moore-Engels translation of *The Communist Manifesto*, but it is there a description not of the proletariat but of the lumpenproletariat (translated as "the 'dangerous class,' the social scum").[53] But before we return to the lumpenproletariat, I want to emphasize the extraordinary rhetorical (and political) labor through which Marx and Engels transvalued the term *proletarian*. Whereas they found it as the mark of "a passively rotting mass," they made it into the label of a collective agency. Moreover, they inverted the meaning of the term, so that it meant not a parasite upon the social body but the body upon which the rest of society was a parasite. In his preface to the second edition of *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, Marx wrote: "People forget Sismondi's significant saying: The Roman proletariat lived at the expense of society, while modern society lives at the expense of the proletariat" (9). Marx and Engels were not, of course, working in a vacuum, and after the revolution of 1830 the definition of *proletarian* as "wage worker" was probably emerging in the workers' clubs of Paris. By the Second Empire, some workers were firmly defining themselves as "proletarians" on the electoral rolls.[54] But Marx had a crucial impact upon the articulation of the concept within a political project.

If Marx rewrote the concept of the "proletariat," he also tried in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* to rewrite the notion of the lumpen that he himself had developed. In the earlier writing, Marx tended to split the bourgeois notion of the "proletariat" (meaning passive sufferers or malingerers) into two: the active agents of struggle (the proletariat proper) and the "rotting mass" in the "lowest strata" of society. But even in some of his earliest uses of "lumpenproletariat" as a category, Marx is referring *not* just to the "lowest strata" but, as he puts it in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, to "the refuse *of all classes*" (54). This has created a problem for even so fine an analyst of the lumpenproletariat as Hal Draper. After a scrupulously exact and often brilliant examination of the term, Draper concludes his essay with a section on "the upper-class lumpenproletariat" in which he writes that Marx and

Engels sometimes used the term in what "seems to involve a metaphorical and an extended meaning. We are interested in it because of the light it throws on the base meaning."[55] A strange slippage takes place in Draper's argument: *lumpenproletariat* means the "base" class, and that definition is, in turn, the base meaning. Yet Draper himself notes the curious fact that Engels translates *lumpenproletariat* not only as "the dangerous class" and "the mob" but also as "the social scum," and he goes on to observe that the latter term suggests "a process of separation." "But," he concludes, "scum separates by floating upward," whereas "these waste-products of society fall to the bottom."[56]

"Scum separates by floating upward": it is the perfect metaphor for Marx's own rhetorical use of "lumpenproletariat," the scum that is reborn "*on the heights of bourgeois society*" (51, original emphasis). Marx wrote this in *The Class Struggles in France* more than a year before Louis Bonaparte's coup d'état. And he was writing not of Bonaparte but of Louis Philippe and the July Monarchy. The passage is worth quoting in full:

> Since the finance aristocracy made the laws, was at the head of the administration of the state, had command of all the organized public authorities, dominated public opinion through the actual state of affairs and through the press, the same prostitution, the same shameless cheating, the same mania to get rich was repeated in every sphere, from the Court to the Café Borgne [a low dive], to get rich not by production, but by pocketing the already available wealth of others. Clashing every moment with the bourgeois laws themselves, an unbridled assertion of unhealthy and dissolute appetites manifested itself, particularly at the top of bourgeois society—lusts wherein wealth derived from gambling naturally seeks its satisfaction, where pleasure becomes *crapuleux* [debauch], where money, filth and blood commingle. The finance aristocracy, in its mode of acquisition as well as in its pleasures, is nothing but the *rebirth of the lumpenproletariat on the heights of bourgeois society*.[57]

The passage is a kind of doubling of the carnivalesque. Under the July Monarchy, the low has become high and, in the rhetoric of Marx, the high is brought low again. But what is most striking is that the concept of the lumpenproletariat is itself carnivalized. "Filth and blood," the ascribed features of the slum, are rewritten as the characteristics of the court and the financial aristocracy. (Here, "blood" commingles notions of violence, murder, even perhaps sexual assault with aristocratic breeding; similarly, "filth" commingles the suggestion of animality and low dives with the idea of "filthy lucre.") The term *lumpenproletariat*, in other words, characterizes the lies and cheating by which the financial aristocracy lives, the moral pauperism of the rich.

Here, Marx reinflects the distinction that Adam Smith drew in *The Wealth of Nations* (1776–78) between productive and unproductive labor. What is striking in Smith is not the distinction itself but the way in which it drastically cuts across social hierarchy. For Marx, the lumpen includes the inhabitants of court and café;

for Smith, the unproductive are not only "menial servants" but also "some of the most respectable orders in society." Smith writes:

> In the same class must be ranked some both of the gravest and most important, and some of the most frivolous professions: churchmen, lawyers, physicians, men of letters of all kinds; players, buffoons, musicians, opera-singers, opera-dancers, etc. The labour of the meanest of these has a certain value, regulated by the very same principles which regulate that of every other sort of labour; and that of the noblest and most useful, produces nothing which could afterwards procure an equal quantity of labour. Like the declamation of the actor, the harangue of the orator, or the tune of the musician, the work of all of them perishes in the very instant of its production.[58]

Here, as in Marx, theatricality both defines the fraudulent and unproductive and is the means for unmasking them. For if, in Smith's work, the theater provides (like farce in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*) a supposedly known standard of the grotesque against which, by antithesis, to measure the productive, it is the theatrical mingling of high and low, the hodgepodge of Smith's own recategorization, that uncrowns "the sovereign," "with all the officers of justice and war who serve under him," leveling them with the actor and the buffoon (295). Paying taxes to support monarchs and armies is, from the perspective of the accumulation of capital, no different from maintaining "a menial servant" or going to "a play or a puppet-show."[59]

This mingling of kings and clowns is reinscribed as one of the dominant tropes of *The Eighteenth Brumaire*. For that book is an analysis of the reemergence of the bottom at the top of society. Under Louis Bonaparte, "the scum of bourgeois society forms the *holy phalanx of order* and the hero Crapulinski installs himself in the Tuilleries as the '*saviour of society*'" (26). And if in one guise Louis is the rebirth of the imperial grandeur of his uncle, in another he is the "king of buffoons" (135), leading a grotesque carnival of the State:

> The Uncle remembered the campaigns of Alexander in Asia, the Nephew the triumphal marches of Bacchus in the same land. Alexander was a demigod to be sure, but Bacchus was a god. (78)

It was to this god that, on 10 October 1850, a section of the cavalry cried out "Vive Napoléon! Vivent les saucissons!" It was this god that Marx satirized as "an adventurer blown in from abroad, raised on the shield by a drunken soldiery, which he has bought with liquor and sausages, and which he must continually ply with sausages anew" (123).

From this perspective, the hegemony of Louis Bonaparte was a farce (from the French *farce*, meaning "stuffing or force-meat" as well as "low comedy," a word combining the culinary and the theatrical). And one strategy in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* is to treat the spectacle of politics as a farce or "masquerade" that, if it is merely exposed as such, will, like Prospero's masque, vanish "into air, into thin

air." For Bonapartist politics appear at first like a "baseless fabric," "suspended in midair" (123). That last point is specifically denied by Marx, and yet his denial seems like a response to his own depiction of Louis Bonaparte not only as unrepresentative of any specific class but as the name for a crisis in representation itself. In *The Class Struggles in France*, Marx had written that Bonaparte, although he was "the most simple-minded [*einfältig*] man in France," had "acquired the most multiplex [*vielfältig*] significance. Just because he was nothing, he could signify everything."[60] He *was* nothing; he *signified* everything. And if from one perspective the nullity of Bonaparte suggested the imminent dissolution of his hegemony, from another perspective that nullity appeared as another name for the power of political articulation. From this latter perspective, the political farce of Bonapartism was indeed like stuffing (*farce*) in that it ground up heterogeneous elements to form a new substance, a substance to fill out (*farcir*) the empty shell or sausage skin of Louis Napoleon.

For Marx, in other words, as for Bataille, heterogeneity is not the *antithesis* of political unification but the very condition of possibility of that unification. I suspect that that is the real scandal of the lumpenproletariat in Marxist theory: namely, that it figures the political itself. (I mean by that a notion of politics which is not always already a *reflection* of the social even if the relations of social classes will necessarily set limits to the field of political action.)[61] For the lumpen seems to figure less a class in any sense that one usually understands that term in Marxism than a group that is amenable to political articulation. And what group is not? Hence, the dizzying variety of social classes that, at one moment or another, seem to collaborate in Bonapartism and to give allegiance to the "chief of the lumpenproletariat." Even in his earlier writings on *The Class Struggles in France* where, as in the passage I quoted previously, Marx seems to come closest to understanding the lumpen in terms of race, such a definition is partially undone by the sense of the lumpen as defining those who are most open to historical transformation. Writing of the lumpen who composed the Mobile Guard in Paris, Marx wrote that they could never renounce "their *lazzaroni* character"; but, he continued, those same guards were "thoroughly malleable, as capable of the most heroic deeds and the most exalted sacrifices as of the basest banditry and the foulest corruption."[62]

But if the lumpenproletariat can as easily be exalted as base, its identity cannot be given in advance of the moment of political articulation. Hence, the curious ambivalence toward it in Marxist theory. Insofar as the lumpenproletariat disarticulated the one-way determination between social class and political action, it threatened to subvert Marxism as a *science*. Thus, we find Engels fulminating in the preface to the second edition of *The Peasant War in Germany* (1870):

> The *lumpenproletariat*, this scum of depraved elements from all classes, with headquarters in the big cities, is the worst of all possible allies. This rabble is absolutely venal and abso-

lutely brazen. . . . Every leader of the workers who uses these scoundrels as guards or relies on them for support proves himself by this action alone a traitor to the movement.[63]

It is as if Engels collapses the possibility of political articulation with the notion that any such articulation can only be for the worst.

Paradoxically, Engels's views on the lumpenproletariat have probably been less influential in twentieth-century Marxism than those of the Russian anarchist Bakunin, who believed that the lumpen were the vanguard of revolutionary action. Bakunin lost his early interest in the revolutionary potential of peasants and workers when he came to believe that they were irredeemably tainted with "science," "theory," and "dogma."[64] In their place he put the outlaw, the criminal, the bandit. Yet in his *Confessions* Bakunin was to criticize himself for his literary romanticization of the outcast, for his "love of the fantastic, of extraordinary and unheard of adventures, of undertakings revealing unlimited horizons."[65] Engels derided Bakunin as a lumpen-prince whose proper sphere was Naples, the home of the *lazzaroni*: "The worst Bakuninists in the whole of Italy," Engels wrote, "are in Naples."[66] But a less romantic version of the Bakuninist vision was developed by Frantz Fanon. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon wrote that the lumpenproletariat is "like a horde of rats: you may kick them and throw stones at them, but despite your efforts they'll go on gnawing at the roots of the tree." The very notion of a rat is transvalued here because the tree that will be destroyed is the gallows tree of the colonizer. Fanon continues:

The *lumpenproletariat*, once it is constituted, brings all its forces to endanger the "security" of the town, and is the sign of the irrevocable decay, the gangrene ever present at the heart of colonial domination. So the pimps, the hooligans, the unemployed, and the petty criminals . . . throw themselves into the struggle like stout working men. These classless idlers will by militant and decisive action discover the path that leads to nationhood. . . . The prostitutes too, and the maids who are paid two pounds a month, all who turn in circles between suicide and madness, will recover their balance, once more go forward, and march proudly in the great procession of the awakened nation.[67]

In this passage, Fanon's politics seem surprisingly close to the politics that Marx attributes to Louis Bonaparte: the heterogeneity of the lumpen is the very precondition for political articulation. But for Fanon, politics is not the organization of a passive heterogeneity from above. It is the self-organization of the heterogeneous in the formation of a nationalism of the oppressed.

Yet Fanon, like Marx, is aware of the dangerous tendency of even a radical politics to become specular. It is precisely because the political is so often articulated in relation to a demonized Other that it can so easily be formulated around a nationalist ideology. But nationalism, although crucial in the struggle against colonial domination, does not in and of itself touch the relations of economic exploitation between classes and between nations. Fanon's chapter on "Spontaneity," in which he emphasizes the role of the lumpen, is followed by a chapter

on "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness," in which he casts a cold eye on one possible aftermath of decolonization when "the popular leader," under the pressure of foreign companies and foreign capital, takes on "the dual role of stabilizing the regime and of perpetuating the domination of the bourgeoisie" (165). The leader now preaches "a forward march, heroic and unmitigated" (169) in an attempt at ideological pacification, even as the police and army are strengthened in the name of "stabilization," i.e., repression. We seem to have returned to the world of Louis Bonaparte who, under the watchword of liberty, equality, and fraternity, pursued a policy of infantry, cavalry, and artillery and the unconstrained economic hegemony of the bourgeoisie.

Fanon, though, was surely right in his sense that any analysis of the lumpen should be organized less around the question of social representation than around that of political articulation. He thus challenges the view that became dominant in Marxism after the rise of fascism which saw the heterogeneity or "disintegrated" nature of the lumpen in terms of a necessary predisposition to reactionary reintegration. This latter view is clearly stated in *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, where the term *lumpenproletariat* is glossed first through *The Eighteenth Brumaire* and then through Otto Bauer's observation in 1936 that "the whole lumpenproletariat" moved toward fascism. The entry concludes:

> The main significance of the term *lumpenproletariat* is not so much its reference to any clearly defined social group which has a major socio-political role, as drawing attention to the fact that in extreme conditions of crisis and social distintegration in a capitalist society large numbers of people may become separated from their class and come to form a "free floating" mass which is particularly vulnerable to reactionary ideologies and movements.[68]

What this analysis rightly emphasizes is the sense of the lumpen more as a political *process* than as a specific social group. But Fanon is right too in suggesting that that process is "vulnerable to reactionary ideologies and movements" only to the extent that *all* politics is so vulnerable. There is no given vector to politics, for politics is itself the conflictual field of disarticulation and rearticulation.

If heterogeneity is not in itself the problem, though, neither is the "homogeneity" of the revolutionary process. Thus, Fanon argues that "the primitive Manicheism of the settler—Blacks and Whites, Arabs and Christians" (144) is a principle that radicals must adopt and invert as a first means to challenge the hierarchical binaries of colonialism. (It is worth noting that Jacques Derrida, who has been assimilated in the United States as the apostle of heterogeneity, also stresses that inversion is an important tool in the displacement of binaries.)[69] But, as Fanon remarks, that early Manicheism breaks down in the revolutionary process. Some blacks benefit from the colonial situation and will not "give up their interests and privileges"; some whites support the struggle against colonialism (although Fanon warns that "emotional over-valuation" may lead to a mistaken "absolute confidence in them"; 144–45). The complexity of the process of re-

articulation requires the dismantling of "the barriers of blood and race-prejudice": "Consciousness slowly dawns upon truths that are only partial, limited, and unstable" (146).

It is those "truths"—partial, limited, unstable—that Marx explored in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*. As Jerrold Seigel writes:

> Bonaparte's *coup* had caused the republic Marx had described as the open and unveiled form of bourgeois rule to disappear from view. What replaced it was a form of government that claimed to be independent of mere class interests, and to represent the welfare of society as a whole.[70]

Bonapartism, in other words, opened up the domain of politics and the state as something other than reflection—as, in fact, a play (an often violent play) between heterogeneity and homogeneity. It is the problem of that play which Marx figures under the name of the lumpenproletariat. And if the relation between the political and the social and economic cannot be one of reflection, as in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* it cannot, neither does the displacement of social determination by political articulation open up the "free" play of heterogeneity.[71] Such a notion of "free play," in its guise of liberal pluralism, reproduces the aestheticization of the heterogeneous that, as Marx wrote, was the precondition for *Imperialismus* (126). Thus, Marx's concept of the lumpenproletariat, as of the work of politics, requires an analysis of the complicities as well as the contradictions between the spectacle of heterogeneity and the formation of the bourgeois state. But *The Eighteenth Brumaire* also suggests that a radical politics cannot start from the imagined fixities of a pre-Bonapartist society. For in France in 1851, as in the United States and Britain today, the state was the terrain in which the languages of class were being shaped and transformed.

Notes

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1. On the British situation, see *The Politics of Thatcherism*, ed. Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques (London, 1983); Beatrix Campbell, *Wigan Pier Revisited: Poverty and Politics in the 80s* (London, 1984); Eric Hobsbawm, *Politics for a Rational Left: Political Writing, 1977–1988* (London, 1989).
2. See particularly the following, to which I am indebted: Hal Draper, "The Concept of

the 'Lumpenproletariat' in Marx and Engels," *Economies et sociétés* 6, no. 12 (1972): 2285–2312; Terry Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Aesthetics* (London, 1976), 182–84; and *Walter Benjamin; or, Towards a Revolutionary Criticism* (London, 1981), 162–70; Stuart Hall et al., eds., *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order* (London, 1978), particularly 348–97; John Paul Riquelme, "*The Eighteenth Brumaire* of Karl Marx as Symbolic Action," *History and Theory* 19, no. 1 (1980): 58–72; Edward Said, "On Repetition," in *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), 111–25; Dominick LaCapra, "Reading Marx: The Case of *The Eighteenth Brumaire*," in *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Context, Language* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1983); Hayden White, "The Problem of Style in Realistic Representation: Marx and Flaubert," in *The Concept of Style*, ed. Berel Lang, rev. ed. (Ithaca, N.Y., 1987), 279–98; Robert L. Bussard, "The 'Dangerous Class' of Marx and Engels: The Rise of the Idea of the *Lumpenproletariat*," *History of European Ideas* 8, no. 6 (1987): 675–92; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana, Ill., 1988), 271–313; Sandy Petrey, "The Reality of Representation: Between Marx and Balzac," *Critical Inquiry* 14 (1988): 448–68. I am grateful to Sandy Petrey for sharing his ideas with me and for his perceptive criticisms. My indebtedness to and disagreements with Jeffrey Mehlman's *Revolution and Repetition* are discussed below.

3. Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, ed. C. P. Dutt (New York, 1975), 75. Subsequent references are given in the text.
4. *Karl Marx: Early Writings*, ed. Tom Bottomore (London, 1964), 10.
5. Frederick Engels, *The Peasant War in Germany*, in Karl Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 10 (New York, 1978), 408.
6. Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables*, trans. Lee Fahnestock and Norman MacAfee (New York, 1987), 594–95.
7. Quoted in Louis Chevalier, *Laboring Classes and Dangerous Classes in Paris During the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Frank Jellinek (Princeton, N.J., 1973), 96–97. I am indebted throughout to Chevalier's work, although I do not accept his biological reading of the materials.
8. It is worth noting that the problem of defining "la misère" extended to English translations of Hugo's novel, which have simply reproduced his French title, *Les Misérables*. Perhaps the nearest to a translation of Hugo's title is Constance Farrington's translation of Frantz Fanon's *Les Damnés de la terre* as *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York, 1968).
9. Jules Janin, *Un Hiver à Paris* (Paris, n.d.), 139 (my translation).
10. Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* (Berkeley, 1988), 9.
11. Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, vol. 1 (London, 1861). For a fine account of Mayhew's vision of "the excessively hardy bodies of the nomads" and "the enfeebled bodies of productive workers," see Catherine Gallagher, "The Body Versus the Social Body in the Works of Thomas Malthus and Henry Mayhew," *Representations* 14 (1986): 83–106.
12. T. J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers* (New York, 1985), 51.
13. William Wordsworth, *The Prelude (1805)*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt (Oxford, 1959). Allon White and I have given an account of the responses of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century poets to the city in *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1986), 80–124.
14. Jules Janin, *L'Ane mort et la femme guillotinée* (Paris, 1973), 70 (my translation).

15. Honoré de Balzac, "Facino Cane," in *Selected Short Stories*, trans. Sylvia Raphael (Harmondsworth, Eng., 1977), 235–36.
16. Ibid., 235, 237. 17. Ibid., 239. 18. Ibid., 241
19. Arthur Conan Doyle, "The Man with the Twisted Lip," in *The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes* (Harmondsworth, Eng., 1981), 229–44. Subsequent references are given in the text.
20. William Mulready's *Train Up a Child in the Way He Should Go . . .* is owned by the Forbes Magazine, New York. I am grateful to Marcia Pointon for drawing this picture to my attention.
21. Quoted in Kathryn Moore Heleniak, *William Mulready* (New Haven, 1980), 215.
22. Marcia Pointon, *Mulready* (London, 1986), 121.
23. Heleniak, *Mulready*, 102. 24. Ibid.
25. Pointon, *Mulready*, 123, 125. 26. Ibid., 126.
27. Heleniak, *Mulready*, 100. 28. Quoted in ibid., 102. 29. Quoted in ibid., 215.
30. Quoted in ibid., 215–16. 31. Quoted in ibid., 102.
32. Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History, 1832–1982* (Cambridge, 1983), 184 (his emphasis).
33. On the relation between the State and the subaltern classes, see particularly Antonio Gramsci, *The Modern Prince and Other Writings*, trans. Louis Marks (New York, 1957), 135–88; and *Selections from Cultural Writings*, ed. David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, trans. William Boelhower (London, 1985), 164–286; Nicos Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes*, trans. Timothy O'Hagan (London, 1973), and *State, Power, and Socialism*, trans. Patrick Camiller (London, 1978).
34. The problem of the peasantry in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* is finely analyzed by Petrey, "Reality of Representation," 458–62.
35. See Jerrold Seigel, *Marx's Fate: The Shape of a Life* (Princeton, N.J., 1978), 213.
36. Jeffrey Mehlman, *Revolution and Repetition: Marx/Hugo/Balzac* (Berkeley, 1977), 15.
37. Ibid., 14.
38. For an analysis and critique of the role of politics within Marxism see Ernesto Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory* (London, 1979); and Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London, 1985).
39. Georges Bataille, "The Psychological Structure of Fascism," in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927–1939*, ed. Allan Stoekl, trans. Stoekl, Carl Lovitt, and Donald Leslie (Minneapolis, 1985), 142. Subsequent references are given in the text.
40. Mehlman, *Revolution and Repetition*, 13.
41. See Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," in *Ecrits*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London, 1977), 1–7. See also Jean Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, "Mirror Phase (or Stage)," in *The Language of Psycho-analysis* (New York, 1973), 250–52. My reading of Lacan is particularly indebted to Jacqueline Rose. See her *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London, 1986).
42. Charlotte Smith, *Desmond*, vol. 2 (London, 1792), 120–21.
43. George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, vol. 1 (New York, 1970), 258.
44. Frederick Engels, "The Latest Heroic Deed of the House of Bourbon," in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, 7:142–43.
45. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Class Struggles in France, 1840 to 1850*, in *Collected Works*, 10:62.
46. This point is noted in Bussard, "'Dangerous Class,'" 678.
47. Quoted in Chevalier, *Laboring Classes*, 364.

48. See Draper, "Concept of 'Lumpenproletariat,'" 2289.
49. Chevalier, *Laboring Classes*, 363.
50. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, in *Collected Works*, vol. 5 (New York, 1976), 202. For an important analysis of the relation between the concepts of the "proletariat" and of the "working class" in Marx's work, see Etienne Balibar, "The Notion of Class Politics in Marx," trans. Dominique Parent-Ruccio and Frank R. Annunziato, *Rethinking Marxism* 1, no. 2 (1988): 18–51. Balibar notes that the word *proletariat* "*almost never appears* in *Capital* (vol. 1)" (18), and he argues that whereas the "working class" is the dominant concept in Marx's economic and historical analyses, the term *proletariat* refers to "the political sense of his analyses" (24) and connotes "*the 'transitional' nature of the working class*" (20).
51. In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels attack Stirner for having defined the "dangerous proletariat" as "rogues, prostitutes, thieves, robbers and murderers, gamblers, propertyless people with no occupation and frivolous individuals." Marx and Engels are specifically concerned to distinguish between the proletariat and pauperism; *Collected Works*, 5:202–3. On Max Stirner, see *The Ego and His Own*, trans. Steven T. Byington, ed. James J. Martin (New York, 1973). And for accounts of his work and of Marx's relation to it, see David McLellan, *The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx* (New York, 1969); C. J. Arthur's introduction to *The German Ideology: Part One* (London, 1970), 23–33; and Paul Thomas, *Karl Marx and the Anarchists* (London, 1980), 144ff.
52. See Thomas, *Marx and the Anarchists*, 144.
53. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, trans. Samuel Moore and Engels (Harmondsworth, Eng., 1967), 92.
54. See Draper, "Concept of 'Lumpenproletariat,'" 2286; and Chevalier, *Laboring Classes*, 363.
55. Draper, "Concept of 'Lumpenproletariat,'" 2304.
56. Ibid., 2290, 2296.
57. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, 10:50–51.
58. Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (London, 1910), book 2, chap. 3, pp. 295–96. I am indebted to Catherine Gallagher for this reference.
59. Ibid., 295, 297.
60. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, 10:81.
61. On the problems of reflection and determination in Marxist theory, see Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford, 1977), 75–100; and "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory," in *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London, 1980), 31–49. The relation of the "social" and the "political" is at the center of the argument between Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony*, and Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class*, on the one hand, and, on the other, Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Retreat from Class: A New "True" Socialism* (London, 1986), 47–115. Wood argues that in the work of Laclau, Mouffe, and Stedman Jones, "not only is there no absolute determination, there are no determinate *conditions*, *possibilities*, *relations*, *limits*, *pressures*" (85, her emphasis). While I have some sympathy with her attention to limits and pressures, I would argue (with Laclau, Mouffe, and Stedman Jones) that "interests" are not reflections of preexistent social positions but that on the contrary it is the work of politics to *constitute* interests. For more on this debate, see David Forgacs, "Dethroning the Working Class?" *Marxism Today*, May 1985; Norman Geras, "Post-Marxism?" *New Left Review* 166 (1987): 79–106; and Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, "Post-Marxism Without Apologies," *New Left Review* 166 (1987): 79–106.
62. Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, 10:62.

63. Ibid., 21:99.
64. On Mikhail Bakunin and the lumpenproletariat, see *Bakunin on Anarchy: Selected Works*, ed. and trans. Sam Dolgoff (New York, 1972), 334.
65. *The Confessions of Michael Bakunin*, trans. Robert C. Howes (Ithaca, N.Y., 1977), 92. Quoted in Thomas, *Marx and the Anarchists*, 161.
66. Quoted in Draper, "Concept of 'Lumpenproletariat,'" 2291.
67. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington, preface by Jean-Paul Sartre (New York, 1968), 130. The heterogeneity of the lumpen is matched by the mobility of the guerilla tactics that the anticolonialist forces employ: "Each fighter carries his warring country between his bare toes. The national army of liberation is not an army which engages once and for all with the enemy. . . . The various groups move about, changing their ground. The people of the north move toward the west; the people of the plains go up into the mountains. There is absolutely no strategically privileged position" (135). Subsequent references to Fanon are given in the text.
68. Tom Bottomore, ed., *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), 292–93.
69. Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago, 1981), 41–42. I am indebted to Jonathan Dollimore for this reference.
70. Seigel, *Marx's Fate*, 201. Paul Thomas notes that, in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, "we find that the degree of internal cohesion, the type and the extent of unity within a class . . . is not at all a categorical postulate, but something that varies"; *Marx and the Anarchists*, 86.
71. As Marion Hobson notes,

> A good many writings on Derrida . . . talk of the "free play of the signifier," or of sense. There is a lot wrong with this: first and foremost "*free* play" doesn't seem to occur in Derrida at all. No wonder. The phrase, which refers to Kant's *freies Spiel*, the free play of the power of judgement, brings with it notions of spontaneity which are inappropriate, to put it mildly. "Free" is in fact an addition by the first translator of the paper read by Derrida in the U.S. in 1966, "La structure, le signe et le jeu." "Jeu" *tout court* is not much used after *Grammatology* in 1967, though it appears in *Eperons*. Even if *jeu* is understood as "play" or "game" and not as "play" in a machine, that is the necessary wobble in a tautly set-up structure, it seems wrong to privilege it instead of relating it to, for instance, Eugen Fink (*Le Jeu comme symbole du monde*) and the circle round *Kantstudien*. And it is because "free play" has been privileged that there has been a neglect of some of the most important—politically important—elements of deconstruction: the concern with hierarchies of forces, with the changes that can be wrought in an intellectual set-up by such practices as "reinscription." It is to render undifferentiated and thus probably ineffective the unstabling effect of deconstruction.

See "History Traces," in Derek Attridge, Geoff Bennington, and Robert Young, eds., *Post-structuralism and the Question of History* (Cambridge, 1987), 103–4.