Readers have choices, and there are things no person or group may do to them (without violating their choices).[1] Around Marx there is a highly developed politics of reading. Readers do not read just as they please in circumstances they choose for themselves; rather they read in present circumstances, given and inherited. There are nightmares weighing on their brains, and disciplinary practices violating their choices. Shifting all the dead generations is really very hard work.[2]

Why would anyone want to? I wouldn't claim that a new, anti-traditional or 'against the grain' reading of Marx will revolutionize him. Nor would I claim that interpreting him will change the world. However, his interventions in politics were based mostly on writing (rather than other forms of so-called direct action), and he clearly thought that readers would change things, or at least try to. We know very little in general, or even specific terms most of the time, about what he thought his relation to his readership was, or should be. What we know for dead and absolute certain is that he wrote a lot; since the Fall of the Wall, MEGA² has been riven with strategies, economic and academic, for coping with the Nachlaß, currently planned for about 120 double volumes.

There are prefaces and letters that get us close to what Marx thought about his writing and his readership, but even they don't really explain who was supposed to do what with whom in relation to him, having read him. If he had been running a group or party in an acknowledged leadership role, then we would be on surer ground. Whether working for newspapers, or advising the International Working Men's Association, he seems rather on the outside, sending messages to those within. When he famously said (or rather is said to have said) that he was 'not a Marxist', even that didn't tell us exactly what he thought a 'Marxist' was, nor what he himself thought he was instead.[3] This political self-characterization was about as unhelpful and enigmatic as his (rare) philosophical characterization that he was not an idealist, but a 'materialist'.[4] Discuss.

Marx was discussed, not least by Engels, and we know rather more about the latter's relationship to his own texts, and to the texts by Marx that he came to own in later life. Engels organized a politics of reading for Marx, saying who he was and why he was important, saying what he said in fewer words, and explaining why he (Engels) was entitled to do this. Engels thus worked to gather a readership for Marx, a followership of Marxists, and therefore some kind of consistent influence or control over thoughts and events. Whether Marx agreed with all of this, or with any of this, has been a question of debate the last 100 years, and is part of the nightmare of reading Marx. It has certainly weighed on my brain.[5]
The *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* is a difficult work. The title alludes to the calendar and events of the French Revolution, and I venture to say that most contemporary readers have to look this up. Louis Bonaparte is not one of the major features of anyone's politics of memory in France, a country in which there is no shortage of collective memorialization. His presidency of the Second Republic (which?), and his reign as Emperor Napoleon III (who?), do not surface as important in the republican tradition even as threats, precisely because the original Napoleon (of which he was a self-conscious copy) occupied the same ambiguous position: the people's dictator who dictates to the people, the republican who destroyed the republic.

Of those in France who would know the story, few would actually disagree with Marx's overall judgement and overweening scorn: Louis Bonaparte was ridiculous and disastrous. All the current websites I have looked at take the same view. Napoleon himself had epic grandeur, and was brilliant at delivering it, but not across the generations. Charles-Louis-Napoleon was the son of a marriage that Napoleon had arranged between his stepdaughter Hortense de Beauharnais (i.e. his first wife Josephine's daughter from her first marriage to a revolutionary general) to Napoleon's own brother Louis Bonaparte, eventually (and briefly) King of Holland. This makes our Louis Bonaparte the nephew or step-grandson of his 'original', depending on which way you construe the relationship.

The major shrines to the man who was Emperor of the French for nearly 20 years (and his Empress Eugénie de Montoja) are in a very grand château at Compiègne, near Paris, and in a small, dusty and utterly obscure former hunting lodge in Les Landes, near the wild Atlantic coast. The tastelessness of the decor and furnishings of the former have to be seen to be believed, and the treasures of the latter can best be left to the imagination--though I was particularly fascinated by a set of crockery depicting the Emperor's triumphs, such as a grand entry by train into Cherbourg. Perhaps his most notable memorialization outside France is the cameo role he plays in Hollywood's romance with Maximilian and Carlotta down Mexico way, tragic characters caught in a mad overseas caricature of the Second Empire.

The *Eighteenth Brumaire* has not survived, then, because Louis Bonaparte/Napoleon III went on to greater things, and so carried Marx with him. Rather it is the other way around. Similarly, if Marx had memorialized the Second Republic (1848-51), perhaps it would have survived better as an episode in the republican tradition, precisely because he had done so. He did this later with the Paris Commune (1871) in *The Civil War in France*, another work of instant history (written in English) that is near-contemporaneous with events. While it is hardly the case that the Commune survives because of Marx, a strong connection developed over the years, and indeed there was a connection at the time. His advocacy of the cause made him the 'Red Terror Doctor' in England, and this was, indeed, his own entry into mainstream history. Perhaps hanging his politics on Louis Bonaparte was a bit of a mistake for Marx. Bonaparte didn't last, no one was that moved by Marx's scorn (either way) at the time, and hardly anyone wants to know about him now. He seems to have become a justly obscure and Eurotrashy Emperor with terrible clothes who wandered into Marx's life ... briefly.
Introducing a new edition of the *Eighteenth Brumaire* in 1885, Engels said it was, 'in truth a work of genius'. It 'laid bare the whole course of French history since the February days [of 1848] in its inner interconnection, [and] reduced the miracle of [the coup d'état of] December 2 [1851] to a natural, necessary result of this interconnection'. It was a work of science because:

It was precisely Marx who had first discovered the great law of motion of history, the law according to which all historical struggles, whether they proceed in the political, religious, philosophical or some other ideological domain, are in fact only the more or less clear expression of struggles of social classes...This law, which has the same significance for history as the law of the transformation of energy has for natural science--this law gave him here, too, the key to an understanding of the history of the Second French Republic. He put his law to the test on these historical events, and even after thirty-three years we must still say that it has stood the test brilliantly.

It is difficult to square this reading of the *Eighteenth Brumaire* with the discursive character of the text, organized as historical narrative, and famous for personal invective and bitter sarcasm. The closest Engels got to commenting on the language and politics of the text was to say that it is 'concise [and] epigrammatic'. Engels concluded that 'Marx did not even need to treat the hero of the coup d'état otherwise than with the contempt he so well deserved', thus inverting the apparent aim of the text, which was to rubbish the newly proclaimed emperor as thoroughly as possible at the outset of his career.[9]

Presumably Marx intended the text as a political intervention, though as mentioned above, it is difficult to know exactly what this was supposed to mean. It was written in German, published in New York in May 1852, about 6 months after the coup of 2 December 1851. Writing in 1869 Marx commented that a 'few hundred copies found their way into Germany at that time', but did not seem to have an opinion as to what happened to the main print run, or indeed what was supposed to happen to any of this work. The works to which he compared it were not science of any kind but rather contemporary polemics by Victor Hugo and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. The nearest he got to a scientific justification was one that was much fuzzier than the law-governed reductionism Engels had in mind: 'I [Marx]...demonstrate how the class struggle in France created circumstances and relationships that made it possible for a grotesque mediocrity to play a hero's part'.[10]

There is a prediction in the work, but not one that follows deductively from laws of science, nor one that is falsifiable and easy to understand. In 1869 Marx wrote that the concluding words of his work--which he says he has not robbed of its 'peculiar colouring'--have already been fulfilled: 'but when this imperial mantle [of Napoleon] falls at last onto the shoulders of Louis Bonaparte, the bronze of Napoleon, high on the column in the Place Vendôme, will plunge to the ground' (127). The statue, however, was not literally taken down until the spring of 1871 during the Commune. In 1869 Marx was presumably referring to the part of his prediction fulfilled by Louis Bonaparte's assumption of the title Emperor in December 1852, which occurred shortly after Marx had finished writing his text in March.
This sets the stage for the primary way that the Brumaire has been read ever since. Does it confirm a scientific method for Marx in the way its arguments and evidence are constructed, and in its authorial intent? If so, what are the key passages, and why then the invective? If not, what are the implications for the view that Marx was a scientist of history and politics? Moreover, does the text actually state a version of the 'great law of motion' that Engels attributes to Marx? If so, how do those sections of the text relate to other places where Marx (and, additionally, Engels) state these propositions? If not, what do those sections of the text say instead, and what does that imply about the status of other passages in other texts that are thought to state this law?

The *Eighteenth Brumaire* lies between *The German Ideology* manuscripts (1845-46) and the 'Preface' (1859) to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. If you read Marx through this lens--the 'law and the propositions' of 'the materialist interpretation of history'--then you can read the 1852 version chronologically as another stage on the way to the 'Preface' (1859), or you can read the 1852 text itself doctrinally through the 'final' version of the 'materialist interpretation of history', as we have it from the 1859 'Preface' and Engels's glosses of that year and later.\footnote{11} However, if you think that the *Eighteenth Brumaire* produces a version of these famous generalizations that is significantly different from either of the other versions, then you can join mainstream commentary which values the work, either because it contains a sociologically more sensitive version than elsewhere, or because it crucially demonstrates that Marx was intellectually confused about the whole issue.

Alternatively, and radically, there may be a way of reading Marx through his 'historical' works, in which he really gets to grips with political analysis. His more abstract generalizations can then be re-interpreted in that light, rather than chopped about in a Procrustean way to fit a pre-conceived notion of science. Some of these generalizations are indeed rather lengthy and worked out to a certain degree; the discussions in *The German Ideology* are a case in point (though there are irresolvable interpretive problems with that text).\footnote{12} Other formulations are much more concise, most famously the rather confused and confusing 'materialist conception of history' passages in the 'Preface' (1859) to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. I sense a certain diffidence and half-heartedness about that text (as well as signs of panic at being late for a publisher's deadline). Why should readers really need a 'guiding thread'? It looks tacked on. This 'Preface' really does not sound like some great law from which a work of science necessarily unfolds from within itself. By the time of *Capital*, vol. 1, this locus classicus of Marxian scientific methodology has shrunk to a footnote.\footnote{13}

The *Eighteenth Brumaire* rehearse a number of ideas very similar to Marx's generalizations of 1859, and these passages suffer from much the same defects. Or rather they seem to, if our expectations as readers tell us that Marx should be writing in clear, testable propositions. If they don't, then he's not in trouble. If he's not in trouble in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, then perhaps the onus is on readers to get to grips with the extensive and problematic character of his critique of political economy (which is what happens after the now famous 'Preface' in the book *A Contribution to the Critique of*
Political Economy), and indeed to make use of the 'Preface', if at all, only in the manner of a 'guiding thread'.

Much the same then applies to the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, in that the now famous 'forerunner' passages (56-7), less than half a page in all, and less than one paragraph, can sink back into the narrative flow and socio-political analysis of class struggle. In that way the interplay between individual characters, groups and factions, and the overarching features of a class-divided economy, will come to the fore, and much more of Marx's technicolor writing will reach the reader. This will have the effect of opening out the issue of class struggle politically, rather than closing it down to an academic problem scientifically. Marx's analysis is sharp and his writing is vivid. Present-day readers will find analogies in contemporary politics. My own was to think of the militarized and authoritarian character of the 'Thatcher years', not to mention the sleaze, and then to gasp, when Marx was thundering through the events of the coup, 'How close we got to it!'

Of all Marx's writings the *Eighteenth Brumaire* has the most extravagant imagery, withering scorn and scathing satire. I am leaving the issues around the 'materialist interpretation of history' aside now, and, contra Engels, taking the view that Marx's invective and sarcasm was the point. These were intended, presumably, to have illocutionary force in international politics, i.e. writing that Louis Bonaparte was rubbish would actually rubbish him. The *Eighteenth Brumaire* is also the victim of the worst translation into English of any of his works; the 'classic' English text dates from 1897-1898, and was done by Daniel de Leon in New York. This is a shame, and clearly detracts from any perlocutionary force that present-day readers might experience, subject to appropriate historical and contextual transference, i.e. they might make judgements and actions about contemporary politics as a result of reading Marx's text. Much of the language in that translation is neither English nor German, and Marx's brilliance as a writer, in this text above all, has been sleeping for about 100 years in the English-speaking world.

Marx advanced his arguments in the *Eighteenth Brumaire* through writing that deploys metaphor on a sliding scale from the literal to the burlesque. There are also ideas in the images and tropes, rather than the other way round, and remarkable levels of irony, even for Marx. Marx wrote about politics in France for a German audience, and employed terms for French institutions in French as well as in Germanized loan words from French. Making this intelligible for contemporary readers of English is something of a challenge, particularly as there are no exact political equivalents in Anglophone history for the institutions Marx was writing about. Getting his highly coordinated choice of terms to work together in a different language, in a different time, and still make him Marx (and not some honorary Victorian Englishman), is tricky. [14]

In the discussion that follows I canvass some of these issues and suggest that rather than stripping away the linguistic extravagance to find the ideas, we reverse the process and find the ideas in the choice of words and imagery. After all, Marx wrote it that way. This strategy displaces the established reading, which is that Marx's texts have to be about science, and about historical materialism, or they are not really worth reading, and
certainly not for the verbal effects. Actually those special effects were the closest Marx could get to the movies.

There are a number of controlling, analytical ideas in Marx's text, to which he adapted his metaphors, some of which are extraordinarily visual and dramatic. Within the register of the visual and dramatic, he was equally at ease with images from Greek and Roman literature, the Bible and Church doctrine, and a huge range of other ideas from magic to masquerade. The introductory section set a very tight framework, which the succeeding six sections filled out. No doubt there are other ways of analyzing what Marx was doing when he selected and manipulated his imagery, but in terms of controlling ideas I would choose the following: hero/fool, original/caricature, masquerade/parody, downward slope/upward slope, progress/reversion, construction/destruction.

At the outset the overall trope is repetition, captured in the opening line: 'Hegel observes somewhere that all the great events and characters of world history occur twice, so to speak' (31). The corresponding footnotes in Marx and Engels, Collected Works, and in MEGA², trace the origins of this to Hegel's Philosophy of History, where the idea is that the same thing simply happens twice, or more specifically, that a transformation in state power must occur twice before it is sanctioned by the opinion of the people. Hegel wrote that those wanting to undo a coup (such as the conspirators against Julius Caesar) needed to do more to restore the Roman Republic than merely kill him. Repetition creates realities seems to be Hegel's message: 'Thus, Napoleon was defeated twice and twice the Bourbons were driven out'.

Marx was possibly recalling a letter from Engels (of 3 December 1851) in which historical events are described as 'the first time high tragedy and the second time low farce'. Engels was possibly recalling earlier works by Marx in which world historical events culminate in comedy or in the rule of a comedian. Both were recalling the intellectual fireworks of their youthful days as Young Hegelians.[15] Marx thus developed the notion of repetition, making the first and second occurrences different, and eventually substituting a much more dynamic idea as to what is required to produce a revolutionary overthrow of state and society.

Marx's notion of repetition with difference was thus enriched by the notion of a decline from heroism to foolishness: '... the London constable [Louis Bonaparte]...after the little corporal [Napoleon Bonaparte]...The Eighteenth Brumaire of the fool after the Eighteenth Brumaire of the genius!' (31). Not content with denigration Marx moved on to the cartoon send-up, and the notion of the second imprint or bad copy. This is a realm of living satire and reductio ad absurdum: 'The first time France was on the verge of bankruptcy, this time [Louis] Bonaparte is on the brink of debtors' prison' (31).

The most famous passage in the Eighteenth Brumaire also occurs in the introductory section: 'Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please in circumstances they choose for themselves; rather they make it in present circumstances, given and inherited'. The most astonishingly original and egregiously underestimated of Marx's devices in the Eighteenth Brumaire is not the idea that people make history albeit
under constraints. The novelty is rather the identification of 'circumstances, given and inherited'--not with economic conditions or relations of production or any such 'material' feature of experience--but with something quite different: 'tradition from all the dead generations' weighing 'like a nightmare on the brain of the living' (32).

The next shock for the contemporary reader is finding out that this nightmare world of tradition is, in Marx's view, politically productive. From 'things happening twice', to 'the second time as low farce', Marx moved on to a notion of doing something once and once only, but in the guise of a previous event, thus making masquerade the opposite of farce.[16] Farce as cartoon reductio is embarrassing; performing revolution in the costumes of a prior age is enabiling. The repetition here is in the clothes and set dressing, rather than in the events. Indeed the revolutionary events that Marx was interested in were described by him as 'creating something unprecedented' (32).

Substantively Marx declared that there have been 'epochs of revolutionary crises', in which 'spirits of the past' are 'nervously' summoned up, not just in the minds and language of those participating but in uniforms, guise and art forms (32-3). The fusion here of the nightmare in the individual brain with collective recollection enacted in ritual is intellectually forward-looking, to say the least.

Thus Luther masqueraded as the Apostle Paul, the [French] revolution of 1789-1814 draped itself alternately as Roman republic and Roman empire, and the revolution of 1848 could come up with nothing better than to parody 1789 at one point, the revolutionary inheritance of 1793-5 at another (32).

Strikingly Marx conceptualized the performative side of revolution-making in emotional terms. Referring to the pre-history of the 1848 revolution--the heroic events of 1789-1814-Marx noted that the unheroic outcome had required an evocation of antique heroism, a world of 'antediluvian colossi, and...resurrected Romans--the Brutuses, the Gracchuses, the Publicolas, the tribunes, the senators and Caesar himself':

But unheroic as bourgeois society is, it nevertheless required heroism, sacrifice, terror, civil war and national conflict to bring it into the world. And in the strict classical traditions of the Roman republic its gladiators found the ideals and art forms, the self-deceptions that they needed, in order to hide from themselves the constrained, bourgeois character of their struggles, and to keep themselves emotionally at the level of high historical tragedy (32-3).

The complication here is that the latter stage of bourgeois revolution (1848) evoked only the 'antiquity' of the revolution of 1789-1814, which was itself conducted in Roman dress. Bourgeois revolutions, Marx seems to say, require this historical evocation for emotional reasons, as otherwise the revolution will not be satisfactorily performed. Nonetheless the sequence of revolutionary crises (1789-1814, 1830, 1848) evidently required to enact this kind of revolution, and the substantive goal of bourgeois society itself (a 'dreary realism' antithetical to the 'classical traditions of the Roman republic') meant that productive masquerade attenuated into evasive parody and immaterial spectrality:
Thus the resurrection of the dead in those revolutions [1789-1814] served to glorify new struggles, not to parody the old [1848-51]; to magnify fantastically the given task, not to evade a real resolution; to recover the spirit of revolution, not to relaunch its spectre (33).

Just to reinforce his point Marx added that at an even earlier stage (pre-1789) in this historical development, 'Cromwell and the English had borrowed Old Testament language, passions and delusions for their bourgeois revolution'. This extends Marx's revolutionary sequence back to the 1640s and 1650s, and his line of productive, parodic counterparts further back to pre-Roman Old Testament political dramaturgy (33).

The performative aspect of this conceptualization of what it takes to get progressive political change (towards this particular goal, bourgeois society) was explained by Marx in psychological terms as a theory of language-learning, or rather second language-learning:

[A] beginner studying a new language always translates it back into his mother tongue; but only when he can use it without referring back, and thus forsake his native language for the new, only then has he entered into the spirit of the new language, and gained the ability to speak it fluently (32).

Thus the new must come into being through a process of imaginative anachronism that gives a comforting illusion of familiarity, an emotional high of heroism and a collective act of performative inter-communication that actually enacts the requisite changes:

Camille Desmoulins, Danton, Robespierre, Saint-Just, Napoleon -- these heroes of the former French revolution, as well as the political parties and massed crowds alike -- accomplished the business of the day in Roman costumes and with Roman phrases: the unleashing and consolidation of modern bourgeois society (32).

What, then, is the connection between antedeluvian colossi, whether of the Old Testament or of classical Rome, and the making of bourgeois society? Marx seems to say that the work of political parties, massed crowds and heroes--that is, the dramatis personae of the sequential revolutionary crises, working in masquerade and thus resurrecting the dead--were destroying feudalism as a system of authority and property relationships. In that way they were creating the conditions for free competition and so unfettering 'the industrial productive power of the nation' (32). Whether this was an unfettering of pre-existing 'forces of production' or an unfettering of the ability to create such forces is rather a moot point. It is worth considering that in Marx's scheme of things--a certain kind of jerky linearity in historical development--it really doesn't matter. Change happens. The added value here is Marx's emotionally, psychologically and performatively perceptive account of how progressive politics takes place.

Given Marx's self-proclaimed goal (in the Communist Manifesto of 1848) of moving history on to the next phase, proletarian revolution and communist society, it is perhaps surprising, yet again, that his sequential view of this historical process is remarkably different from his etiology of bourgeois revolution:
The social revolution of the nineteenth century cannot create its poetry from the past but only from the future. It cannot begin till it has stripped off all superstition from the past. Previous revolutions required recollections of world history in order to dull themselves to their own content. The revolution of the nineteenth century must let the dead bury the dead in order to realize its own content. There phrase transcended content, here content transcends phrase.

The overall trajectory here has more jerkiness than linearity. The trajectory from feudalism through to bourgeois society is both upward sloping, towards eventual proletarian revolution, and downward sloping, towards the immediate 'content' of bourgeois society. This content seems to be the 'revolutionary starting point, the situation, the relationships, the exclusive conditions for the development of a real modern revolution'. Politically this is described as a 'situation'...which makes impossible any reversion, and circumstances themselves cry out:

Hic Rhodus, hic salta!
Hier ist die Rose, hier tanze!

[There's no time like the present!] (35)[17]

Marx's depiction of these circumstances was again highly imaginative, including allusions to death, dementia, dejection, and demolition. The bourgeois republic must be destroyed, he said, before the conditions for successful proletarian revolution are in place, but the agent of destruction is not the proletariat:

The constitution, the national assembly, the dynastic parties, the blue [right-wing] and the red [left-wing] republicans, the heroes of [the Algerian wars in] Africa, the thunder from the grandstand, the sheet-lightning of the daily press, all the literature, political names and intellectual reputations, the civil law and the penal code, liberty, equality and fraternity, and the ninth of May 1852 [when Bonaparte's presidency was supposed to expire, but didn't] -- all that has magically vanished under the spell of a man whom even his enemies would deny was a sorcerer. Universal manhood suffrage seems to have lasted just long enough to make its own testament in the eyes of the world and to declare in the very name of the people: 'What's worth building is worth demolishing' [Goethe, Faust, I].

Moreover (ultimately) successful proletarian revolutions progress in an almost backwards way, according to Marx, so he did not conceive of proletarian victory until, paradoxically, the revolutionary class had reached a dead-end in a sequence of defeats:

[Proletarian revolutions, such as those of the nineteenth century, engage in perpetual self-criticism, always stopping in their own tracks; they return to what is apparently complete in order to begin it anew, and deride with savage brutality the inadequacies, weak points and pitiful aspects of their first attempts; they seem to strike down their adversary, only to have him draw new powers from the earth and rise against them once more with the strength of a giant...](35)
Marx seems to see the proletariat victorious only when stripped of illusions and superstition, unlike the bourgeoisie, who, through productive masquerade, were actually rather used to these things. What buoyed them up (in getting rid of feudalism) then dragged them down, not as victims of the proletariat, but as victims of authoritarian militarism of a very low sort. Marx identified Louis Bonaparte and his thuggish associates and hangers-on with cheats, crooks, con-men etc. As the story unfolds towards the coup d’etat Marx painted the supposed saviours of the Republic (from working-class insurrection) as more and more nakedly criminal and enemies, in fact, of the bourgeoisie and their ideas of ‘order’:

Finally the high priests of the ‘religion of order’ are kicked off their Pythian tripods, hauled from their beds in the dead of night, flung into prison vans, thrown into gaols or sent into exile; their temple is razed to the ground, their mouths are sealed, their pens broken, their laws torn to shreds in the name of religion, property, family, order. Bourgeois fanatics for order are shot on their balconies by mobs of drunken soldiers, their family gods are profaned, their houses are bombarded for amusement—in the name of property, family, religion and order. Finally the scum of bourgeois society forms the holy phalanx of order and the hero Crapulinski [Louis Bonaparte] seizes the [Palace of the] Tuileries as 'saviour of society' (40).

Marx was scathing about the elements of bourgeois society that fooled themselves that this campaign against working-class interests was being run for the benefit of the republican bourgeoisie:

[T]hey packed up their things, donned their laurel wreaths in advance of the games, and busied themselves on the financial exchanges...The [coup d'état] of the second of December [1851] struck them like a bolt from the blue, and the peoples that were willing enough to allow their innermost fears—in an era of cowardly dejection—to be assuaged by the most vociferous loudmouths will perhaps have convinced themselves that cackling geese can no longer save the Capitol (36).

The drama here is the dissolution of the bourgeois republic, supposedly the vehicle for the development of industrial wealth within a competitive economy, as it collapses into an authoritarian and decidedly unbourgeois regime of banditry:

Society is saved as often as its circle of rulers contracts, as a more exclusive interest is maintained against the wider one. Even the simplest demand for bourgeois financial reform, for the most ordinary liberalism, for the most formal republicanism, for the most basic democracy, is simultaneously castigated as an 'outrage to society' and stigmatized as 'socialism' (40).

What brings this on is a temporary collusion between forces uniting themselves against the massed working class, that is, bourgeois republicans and armed criminals. Marx memorialized the working class in its 'June days' insurrection of 1848, in which it was defeated, and after which it went down to further defeats:
As soon as one of the higher social strata plots a revolutionary trajectory, the proletariat enters into an alliance with it and thus shares all the defeats which successive parties suffer. But these further blows are of ever diminishing force the more they are distributed over the whole surface of society. Its more important leaders in the assembly and in the press are sacrificed one after another in the courts, and ever more ambiguous figures take up leadership ...It seems unable to rediscover revolutionary prowess or to renew its energy from fresh alliances, until all the classes it struggled with in June are lying flat out beside it. But at least it was defeated with the honours of a great world historical struggle; not only France but all Europe trembles at the June earthquake ...(38-9).

The truth of these circumstances, for Marx, was that 'bourgeois republic means the unlimited despotism of one class over another' (39). This seems to be excellent Hegelianism - progressive development arising, phoenix-like, from the ashes of irreconcilable contradictions--but rather poor sociology and politics, not to mention strategy and tactics for armed revolutionary conflict. However, Marx's portrayal of bourgeois democrats as weak and therefore vulnerable to authoritarians, who can manipulate the politics of class, was prescient. Further, Marx's short treatise on the performative power of anachronistic allusions and invocations is startling. The Eighteenth Brumaire represents a politics of imagination done through writing with extraordinary imagery. It isn't everything, but it’s a tremendous start.

ENDNOTES


[6] Napoleon's *coup d'état* of 9 November 1799 (18 Brumaire VIII by the revolutionary calendar) overthrew the ruling Directory of the (First) Republic.


[12] I discuss problems in and about *The German Ideology in Carver, Postmodern Marx*, chs 5, 8, 10.


[14] I have aired some of these issues in Terrell Carver, 'Translating Marx', *Alternatives*, vol. 22 (1997), pp. 191-204, and *Postmodern Marx*, ch. 7.


[17] This quotation derives from Hegel's 'Preface' to his Philosophy of Right, and consists of a Greek passage from Aesop, followed by a Latin translation. The quotation comes from a story in which a braggart boasts that he once made a stupendous jump in Rhodes, and then a bystander says, in effect, 'if so, you can do it here'. Hegel constructs a German version, punning first on the Greek (Rhodos=Rhodes, rhodon=rose) and then on the Latin (saltus=jump, salta=dance!), alluding obscurely to Rosicrucianism, which finds the rose in the cross, and joy in tragedy--or at least that is what Hegel seems to think. See G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 303, nn. 31, 33, 34. Given that the Latin line from Aesop was something of an adage, I
have given an English 'drift' of this in square brackets. Warm thanks and grateful
acknowledgement to Henry Hardy, Wolfson College, Oxford, for his scholarly work on
this widely misinterpreted conundrum.
The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte is one of Karl Marx™ most profound and most brilliant monographs. It may be considered the best work extant on the philosophy of history, with an eye especially upon the history of the Movement of the Proletariat, together with the bourgeois and other manifestations that accompany the same, and the tactics that such conditions dictate. The best information acquirable, the best mental training obtainable are requisite to steer through the existing chaos that the death-tainted social system of today creates all around us. To aid in this needed information and mental training, this instructive work is now made accessible to English readers, and is commended to the serious study of the serious. The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. Written: December 1851-March 1852; Source: Chapters 1 & 7 are translated by Saul K. Padover from the German edition of 1869; Chapters 2 through 6 are based on the third edition, prepared by Engels (1885), as translated and published by Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1937; First Published: First issue of Die Revolution, 1852, New York; Transcription/Markup: Zodiac and Brian Baggins for Marx/Engels Internet Archive 1995, 1999 Other articles where The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte is discussed: Karl Marx: Early years in London: Brumaire des Louis Napoleon (The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte), with its acute analysis of the formation of a bureaucratic absolutist state with the support of the peasant class. In other respects the next 12 years were, in Marx™s words, years of isolation both for him and for Engels. Alternative Title: Achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte. Learn about this topic in these articles: discussed in biography. In Karl Marx: Early years in London. Brumaire des Louis Napoleon ( The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte ), with its acute analysis of the formation of a bureaucratic absolutist state with the support of the peasant class.