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University of Glasgow

Faculty of Arts

PhD-Thesis in

Comparative Literature

**Authoring the Revolution, 1819-1848/49:
Radical German and English Literature and
the Shift from Political to Social Revolution**

Submitted by Raphael Hörmann

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Abstract

This thesis addresses, from a comparative perspective, an important lacuna in the research devoted to German and English revolutionary literature in the period from 1819 up to the European revolutions of 1848/49. It illustrates that a major shift from a concept of political revolution to one of social revolution took place within these years which is reflected in radical literature between the 'Peterloo Massacre' (1819) and the failure of the bourgeois political revolution of 1848/49.

During this epoch of European history the entire radical discourse increasingly challenged the republican ideology of political revolution moving towards a social-republican or even socialist notion of social revolution. While the advocates of the former asserted that a mere change in the system of government would be sufficient to achieve decisive change, those who adhered to the latter revolutionary ideology insisted that a transformation of the socio-economic system, the capitalist mode of production and of the distribution of property and capital was necessary genuinely to change contemporary society. The shift from one concept to the other that can be located both in the majority of contemporary revolutionary discourse (both literary and non-fictional) and within the texts of particular writers has to be viewed as a gradual and painful process of transition fraught with strong class anxieties, ideological tensions and contradictions.

Since it encompassed the non-fictional and fictional discourse and revolution alike, this development will be investigated from an interdisciplinary, intertextual and inter-discursive perspective, which decisively questions the validity of the still dominant intra-literary approach to radical literary texts. Theoretically based on selected writings of the early Marx and Engels on ideology, consciousness and political and social

revolution as well as on more recent Marxist theories of cultural studies, this study shows how the contemporary philosophical, socio-political, socio-economic and literary discourse on revolution must be regarded as closely interlinked. This interconnection is not limited to an ideological, but also extends to a rhetorical and even metaphorical level. However, although it foregrounds these shared textual elements, the purpose of this thesis is not to add yet another philological analysis of literary works, but rather to flesh out the shared ideological involvement of the fictional and non-fictional revolutionary discourse.

Texts and authors drawn upon to prove these theses include in the British context of 1819 Percy Bysshe Shelley and British radical journalists such as Richard Carlile as well as working-class pamphleteers. In order to analyse the shift in revolutionary discourse in the years between the French bourgeois July Revolution of 1830 and the early 1840s, texts by the literary revolutionary writers Ludwig Börne, Heinrich Heine, Thomas Lovell Beddoes and Georg Büchner are contextualised with the pamphlets and writings by the most radically socio-revolutionary among the French early socialists, Louis Auguste Blanqui, by rebellious weavers, by the Parisian German early proletarian movement as well as Marx's earliest socio-philosophical justification of a proletarian social revolution, the *"Einleitung Zur Kritik der Hegel'schen Rechts-Philosophie"* (1844). The analysis of the years between the mid-1840s up to 1848/49 focuses on the German Communist writers Georg Weerth, Moses Heß, Engels and Marx and their common project to write a Marxist poetics of revolution.

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Introduction

This thesis engages from a comparative perspective with a seminal but largely neglected aspect of 19th-century revolutionary literature: the transition from a concept of political revolution to one of social revolution. It sets out to prove how literature participated prominently in this pivotal ideological and discursive shift which was gradually taking place during the years between the end of the Napoleonic Empire in 1815 and the failure of the European revolutions of 1848/49. In doing so it will illustrate how the non-fictional and fictional texts of this period that engage with the concepts of political and social revolution are closely interwoven. They interact with each other not only on an inter-ideological, but also on a direct intertextual level up to the point at which they overlap both semantically and rhetorically, employing similar or even the same language, imagery and poetic concepts. Since the boundaries between revolutionary fictional and non-fictional texts were becoming increasingly blurred in this period, this thesis will regard both as forming one and the same discursive system and thus challenge the traditional separation of revolutionary literature into fictional and non-fictional genres. While this distinction has already been largely put in abeyance in respect to those 'literary' revolutionary authors of this period who crossed the borders between fiction and non-fiction, such as Büchner,¹ Heine and Weerth, it has been

¹ This shift in the image of Büchner as a revolutionary author is paradigmatically reflected in two exhibition catalogues from the mid 1980s. The contributions to the catalogue for the exhibition (1984-1987) marking the 50th anniversary of the publication of Büchner and Weidig's socio-revolutionary pamphlet *Der Hessische Landbote* (Mayer 1987b) and the essays in the catalogue of the Büchner exhibition in Darmstadt and Weimar in 1987 and 1988 (Georg-Büchner-Austellungsgesellschaft 1987) clearly aim to portray Büchner as a writer who transcended in his revolutionary writings the borders between fiction and non-fiction, between literature and politics. The later catalogue's subtitle "Revolutionär, Dichter, Wissenschaftler" programmatically foregrounds this trans-discursive dimension to Büchner's oeuvre, an aspect that Georg Lukács already recognised in 1937 in his paper against the fascist appropriation of Büchner. Lukács praised him at once as "plebejisch-demokratischer Revolutionär in seiner politischen Tätigkeit, als philosophischer Materialist in seiner Weltanschauung, als Nachfolger Shakespeares und Goethes im großen Realismus" (1990, 198). A pioneering work – as exceptional in its contemporary context as Lukács' talk – that crucially anticipated the later tendencies in Büchner

vigourously upheld in respect to revolutionary authors of non-fiction such as Marx, Engels and the English radical journalists writing at the time of the Romantic revolutionary poets.

In respect of the non-fictional discourse, the crucial development in revolutionary theory and practice from political to social revolution has been extensively discussed by historians, political theorists and even by the occasional literary critic, with scholars within the last 30 years proving how, besides bourgeois intellectuals such as Marx and Engels, sub-bourgeois and proletarian associations were instrumental in bringing about this transition in the German and British context.² While it is impossible here to list the considerable number of specialised studies that deal with this transition or those that investigate particular historical figures, there are surprisingly few studies which investigate this transition of revolutionary ideology and practice during this period from a wider trans-national, European perspective. The few historians who have looked at it from a Pan-European angle have proved through their studies how

scholarship was Hans Mayer's Marxist study (1972) of Büchner's life and work which first appeared in 1946. By placing both Büchner's biography and oeuvre in their contemporary socio-political context Mayer illustrates how Büchner's work in its revolutionary concern crossed the borders of fiction and non-fiction.

² Hans-Joachim Ruckhäberle discusses this shift in his studies of revolutionary pamphlets in Germany during the 1830s (1975) and in pamphlets published by the German early proletarian movement in Paris in the 1830s (1977). There is a substantial number of other studies by historians and political theorists who investigated how in the 1830s and 1840s, sub-bourgeois associations of workers, artisans and journeymen (mainly in exile in France, Switzerland and London) had prepared the shift in German discourse towards social revolution (see for instance Seidel-Höppner 2000 & 2002, Grandjonc, König & Roy-Jacquemart 1979, Lattek 1987).

Regarding the British context, which in contrast to the German largely lacked bourgeois theorists of this transformation in revolutionary ideology, scholars have also shown how especially craftsmen and artisans – the sub-bourgeois classes – were most instrumental in bringing about this shift during the period in question. For seminal contributions that deal in the wider sense with the key contribution of these classes toward this change in revolutionary ideology in Britain, see besides E. P. Thompson's epochal study *The Making of the English Working Class* (1980; first published 1963), Prothero 1979 and Worrall 1992. For an overview of evolution of ideology in British 19th Century radicalism and socialism, see for instance, Claeys 1987a, 1987b and Belchem 1996. For a seminal study of the strong – often socio-revolutionary – tensions in Britain in the period from the French Revolution to the Europeans revolutions of 1848/49, see Royle 2000.

this shift from a concept of political to one of social revolution formed the hallmark of the European revolutionary developments between 1815 and 1848/49.³

When it comes to tracing this transition of revolutionary ideology in fictional revolutionary literature, the state of research is considerably poorer. No study exists that explicitly investigates this shift from political to social revolution in the period in question in fictional texts, neither in German nor in English literature, let alone from a comparative angle. The existing research is limited to a small number of studies of critical contributions that deal with a particular, mostly canonical, author.⁴ This lacuna is all the more astounding since this ideological change constitutes one of the key characteristics of revolutionary fiction in this period. As this thesis sets out to prove, this paradigm shift was in no respect limited to the non-fictional revolutionary discourse, but manifested itself equally in socio-political and socio-philosophical essays by seminal political theorists, revolutionary pamphlets, revolutionary speeches, newspaper and journal articles and in fictional literature by both highly canonical (e.g. Percy Bysshe Shelley and Heinrich Heine) and less canonical revolutionary authors such as Thomas Lovell Beddoes, Ludwig Börne and Georg Weerth. Not only did this shift ubiquitously cross the traditionally-held boundaries between fictional and non-fictional discourse, between 'literature' and other forms of texts, but it also constituted a

³ Besides Eric Hobsbawm's seminal work on Europe between the French Revolution and the 1848 Revolutions (1977, first published 1967), as far as I can see, only two major two major studies have appeared that investigate the revolutionary development in the period from 1815 to 1848 from a pan-European perspective: Droz 1967 and Langewiesche 1985. David S. Mason's slim recent book (2005) that deals with the changing face of revolutions in Europe from 1789 to 1989 is severely flawed mainly due to its vast historic scope which leads to superficiality and frequent oversimplifications. These tendencies also mar his simplistic and tendentious account (67-78) of Marx's sophisticated socio-revolutionary theoretical system.

⁴ For studies investigating in how far Büchner adhered to a concept of a proletarian social revolution see, for instance, Mayer 1979a & 1987a and Holmes 1995b. For discussions of Heine's shift and his relationship towards social revolution see, for instance, Lukács 1978, Koßek 1982 and Mende 1991. Hans-Joachim Ruckhäberle (1988) investigates how far Börne, when he engaged with early French socialists and the German early proletarian movement, shifted towards a concept of social revolution in the 1830s. Although not as the main subject of her investigation, Doris Köster-Bunselmayer also touches on the shift towards social revolution in her study of early German socialism and its relationship to literature from 1843 to 1848, for instance in her comparison of Engels' and Weerth's 1840s texts on English proletarians (1981, 120-133).

pan-European phenomenon. The comparative angle of this thesis, on German and English writing, takes into account the latter aspect and further aims to flesh out seminal characteristics of this transition.

This trans-national, European and trans-discursive dimension to the evolution of revolutionary ideology in the period in question calls for an approach to the topic that radically transcends the boundaries of traditional literary criticism. In investigating the shifting revolutionary ideology of fictional and non-fictional texts, one must leave behind the essentially bourgeois definition of what literature and the study of it should constitute and what not. As Raymond Williams has persuasively argued, the narrow sense of 'literature' denoting solely "'creative' or 'imaginative' works" (1977, 48) only developed with the rise of the bourgeoisie and its socio-economic system of capitalism. Along with introducing prescriptive limitations of what qualified as 'literature' and what did not, this class with its intellectuals and its academic institutions developed the equally ideologically loaded and exclusive concepts of a 'national literature' as well as of a qualitative distinction between 'major' and 'minor' literature (cf. Williams 1977, 46-52). As Williams further maintains, these class-based ideological divisions have negatively shaped literary criticism up to the present day. Dismissing them as minor, qualitatively inferior, works, critics aim effectively to exclude those texts that question and threaten the bourgeois-capitalist ideology from being a serious object of analysis:

[...] *criticism* [...] retained these founding class concepts, alongside attempts to establish new abstractly objective criteria. More seriously, criticism was taken to be a natural definition of literary studies, themselves by the specializing category (printed works of a certain quality) of *literature*. Thus these forms of the concepts of *literature* and *criticism* are, in the perspective of historical social development, forms of a class specialization and control of a general social practice, and of a class limitation of the questions which it might raise. (Williams 1977, 49; Williams' italics)

On the basis of this unmasking of the elitist class politics of academia, Williams calls for a "crucial theoretical break" in cultural studies with the need to regard and analyse literature i.e. *all* textual utterances "as a specialising social and historical category" that partakes in the same social and ideological struggles as other discourses (cf. 1977, 53).

Within the space of the thirty years that have passed since Williams voiced his revolutionary claim new critical approaches such as Cultural Materialism⁵ (initiated by Williams), New Historicism and Discourse Analysis inspired by Michel Foucault's project of an 'archaeology of knowledge'⁶ have gone some way to weakening the primacy of the literary text over other discursive forms and social and ideological practices. Programmatically, one of the founding fathers of New Historicism, Stephen Greenblatt, has called for an intertextual approach to textual analysis that must be marked by "an intensified willingness to read all of the textual traces of the past with the attention traditionally conferred only on literary texts" (1990. 14). However, what is advertised as a major reevaluation of the status of the text within critical practice often turns out be just another reaffirmation of the hegemony of the textual over the ideological, the socio-political and the socio-historical. For instance, the second pivotal figure from the early days of this school, Louis Montrose, seems to go even further than Greenblatt and call for a major socio-ideological contextualisation of the texts to be analysed, when he defines the critical project of New Historicism as "resituating [literary works] not only in relationship to other genres and modes of discourse but also in relationship to contemporaneous social institutions and non-discursive practices"

⁵ For accounts of Cultural Materialism and the way it differs from New Historicism see for instance Felperin 1990, Dollimore 1994, Hawthorn 1996, Wilson 1995 and Brannigan 1998.

⁶ For a collection of seminal theoretical essays on Discourse Analysis and literary studies see Fohrmann & Müller 1992. For a study of this interrelationship, see also Paskoski 2003. For a recent concise summary of Foucault's notions of discourse and their reflection in literary theory, see Schößler 2006, 37-52. For an elucidation of how Foucault's understanding of discourse is unstable in itself, fundamentally shifting from work to work, see Frank 2004. For a critical assessment of Foucault's influence on New Historicism, see for instance Lentricchia 1989.

(1989, 17). However, such an apparent extension of the scope of literary studies has in fact often just led to perpetuating the traditionally privileged status of the literary text and the cultural over the socio-political, when all social practices are indiscriminately considered as mere text, a critical dogma that Montrose puts forward in the following seminal statement:

In effect, this project [of New Historicism] reorients the axis of inter-textuality, substituting for the diachronic text of an autonomous literary history the synchronic *text* of a *cultural* system. (Montrose 1989, 17; my emphasis)

Montrose's definition deliberately obscures the crucial, problematic relationship which links literary texts and the entire category of culture to ideology and class, as well as to their contemporary socio-political and socio-economic context. Both in the theory and practice of New Historicism these latter social and political aspects are wrongly subsumed under the categories of 'text' and the 'cultural system'. By privileging this latter realm, culture, which has traditionally been the domain of literary and cultural critics, over the social and economic, this school effectively contains the challenge to develop a novel socio-historical criticism; a textual analysis that foregrounds the *ideological* rather than the *rhetorical* and *linguistic*, the 'textual', aspects of literature. Hence, one might go as far as to argue that New Historicism's textual and cultural centrism constitutes a veiled attempt to preserve the hegemony of traditional bourgeois literary criticism. This accusation is for instance raised by the historian Hayden White in his essentially Marxist critique of New Historicism, when he asserts that this school commits a "culturalist" and "textualist fallacy", since it is the "'text'" of a "cultural system" that is to be substituted for the "text" of "an autonomous literary history" (cf. 1989, 294):

Consequently, what was originally represented as an interest in studying the relation between literary works and their socio-cultural contexts is suddenly revealed as a radical reconceptualization of literary works, their socio-cultural contexts, the relations between them, and therefore of "history" itself – all are now considered as kinds of "texts". (White 1989, 294)

New Historicism, White further alleges, perpetuates the bourgeois idealist notion that the 'cultural text' which is permeated by ideology could have an autonomous history, a delusion that Marx and Engels famously exposed in *Die deutsche Ideologie* (probably written 1845-46), when they radically assert that ideological forms (among them literature) do not possess any form of autonomous history and must not be regarded in isolation from the historical societal process that generated them. Their semblance of autonomy merely constitutes an idealist ideological distortion. In reality, Marx and Engels assert, their development is inextricably linked to the socio-historical and socio-economic process:

Sie haben keine Geschichte, sie haben keine Entwicklung, sondern die ihre materielle Produktion und ihren materiellen Verkehr entwickelnden Menschen ändern mit dieser ihrer Wirklichkeit auch ihr Denken und die Produkte ihres Denkens. (Marx & Engels 1956 ff. II, 27)⁷

It is from this materialist angle that White accuses New Historicism of a naïvely idealist understanding of culture, society and history. In spite of paying lip service to Marx, its proponents blatantly ignore Marx and Engels' devastating critique of ideological delusions by perpetuating the illusion of privileging the superstructure over its socio-economic base. As White alleges, for the New Historicists from their idealist perspective "[s]ocial institutions and practices, including politics" (and one might add, the socio-economic relations as well) merely constitute secondary effects of the cultural

⁷ For all subsequent references to this first edition of Marx and Engels' works I will use the established acronym *MEW*.

system, rather than taking into account its socio-political basis (cf. 1989, 294). As becomes obvious not least through White's astute critique of New Historicism's severe shortcomings as far the ideological and socio-historical context of literature is concerned, this school's inter-discursive approach is not suitable for my project. Since my study aims precisely to investigate the interrelationship between the shifting revolutionary ideology in both fictional and non-fictional texts and the transformation on the social and socio-historic level, a more radical Marxist materialist approach is needed that views the cultural product, the texts, in close interrelation to its socio-political basis.

However, the majority of recent literary criticism on revolutionary literature has not even taken on board the extension of the object of textual criticism to non-fictional, non-literary texts, in the way that New Historicism proposes. As far as recent criticism of German revolutionary literature of the period is concerned such a trend cannot be detected at all. In the English context in regard to Shelley and his proto-socio-revolutionary 1819 poems one can at least notice a tendency towards a socio-political, inter-discursive approach (e.g. Wolfson 1997, Janowitz 1998, Chandler 1998, Redfield 2002, Cross 2004) with some authors also discussing on the margins Shelley's attitude towards proletarian social revolution (Foot 1980, Scrivener 1982, Gardner 2002). Yet this trend towards an inter-discursive, socio-political approach is still fiercely contested by some established critics. For instance Richard Cronin as late as 2000 concludes his political analysis of Shelley's *The Mask of Anarchy* (1819), in which he pays some lip service to an inter-discursive approach to literary texts, with the thinly veiled appeal to re-direct critical attention to the aesthetic qualities of Shelley's 'better' poems, of "his major verse", rather than to the revolutionary ideology of his 'minor verse':

[...] it would surely be wrong to claim that the success of *The Mask of Anarchy* is achieved without cost. It proves impossible to incorporate within the ballad form that Shelley chooses much of what characterizes his major verse: its metrical delicacy, its eroticism, its ability to render the "minute gradations of the human heart". (Cronin 2000, 180)

Here the bourgeois ideology of aesthetics that, according to Williams, excludes from literature and its criticism not only all non fictional, 'non-creative' texts but also "'bad writing', 'popular writing', 'mass culture'" and "'minor works'" (cf. 1977, 51) is stealthily re-established. While writing about Romantic literature, Cronin tries to resurrect the elitist Romantic ideology of the aesthetics as a paradigm of 21st-century criticism, whose stranglehold on academia Williams depicted in *Marxism and Literature* nearly thirty years ago. Appealing to "the domain of 'taste' and 'sensibility'", Cronin involuntarily reveals the "social-class foundation" (cf. Williams 1977, 51) of these bourgeois ideological notions of literature and criticism:

'Criticism' [...] was at once a *discrimination* of the authentic 'great' or 'major' works, with a consequent grading of 'minor' works and an effective exclusion of 'bad' or 'negligible' works and a practical realization and communication of the 'major' values. What had been claimed for 'art' and the 'creative imagination' in the central Romantic arguments was now claimed for 'criticism', as the central 'humane' activity and 'discipline'. (Williams 1977, 51; Williams' italics)

This thesis aims to avoid these pitfalls of the Romantic ideology that – as the example of Cronin and others show – still mar the criticism of political literature. Neither will be any attention paid to whether the texts discussed qualify as 'major' works, as sanctified by literary critics, or not, nor will the emphasis be on the aesthetic, poetic and rhetoric propensities of the texts. These latter aspects will only be considered in so far as they have a direct bearing on the ideology that the texts aim to put forward rather than making the aesthetic the focus of the analysis. As Williams observes, the critical

obsession with "the 'aesthetic' dimension ('beautities' of language and style)" has served both as a pseudo-objective legitimisation for the implicit class bias of bourgeois criticism and as a tactic to obscure the ideology of the analysed texts (cf. 1977, 50-51). In short, the hegemony of the aesthetic, rhetorical and philosophical over the ideological analysis of revolutionary literature not only often unduly de-radicalises revolutionary literature, but, still more importantly, detracts attention from its immediate involvement in contemporary socio-ideological struggles.

This tendency is yet more pronounced in Germanic than in English studies, on which Cultural Materialism and New Historicism have had a deeper impact. While especially the 1970s, but also the 1980s, saw a sharp rise in socio-political – often Marxist – criticism of revolutionary literature, with the fall of Socialism and the end of the GDR such approaches have become unfashionable. Admittedly, while a considerable amount of GDR criticism on the Vormärz period consists in vulgar Marxist interpretations⁸ that simplistically relate the socio-economic conditions at the base one-to-one to literature as a superstructural element,⁹ more sophisticated Marxist approaches have yielded incisive insights into the shift from political and social revolution in revolutionary literature by crossing the fiction-non-fiction-divide.¹⁰ However, the backlash since 1989 against any socio-political approaches to German literature that display even slight Marxist tendencies has had adverse effects. Indeed the question of how German revolutionary literature of the Vormärz engaged with the transformation

⁸ In respect of two of the authors treated here, see for instance Kemp-Ashraf 1974 and Feudel 1974 for essays on Weerth and Kaufmann 1976 as a paradigmatic GDR study on Heine.

⁹ For the pitfalls of vulgar Marxist approaches, see for instance Eagleton 2002, 16. As he accurately highlights, such a method "suggests a passive, mechanistic relationship between literature and society" (2002, 46). For its shortcomings, compare further Williams' criticism of this critical strategy: "The interpretative method which is governed, not by the social whole, but rather by the arbitrary correlation of the economic situation and the subject of study, leads very quickly to abstraction and unreality [...]" (1967, 281).

¹⁰ One such very convincing example is Lefebvre's essay on Heine's and Marx's writings on social revolution (1973) that appeared in the proceedings of a GDR conference on Heine.

from a concept of political to social revolution has all but dropped off the critical radar.¹¹

The tendency of criticism to neglect this development stands in sharp contrast to the pivotal importance that this socio-ideological shift had for the period of the period investigated in this thesis. Peter Stein in 1998 in his introductory essay to the Vormärz volume of Hanser's renowned social history of German literature has crucially emphasised that in the period from 1815 to 1848 "Politik nicht die letzte Ursache der tiefgreifenden Umwälzung war" and hence "der (politische) Revolutionsbegriff allein kaum noch zureichend sein kann" (1998, 17). In order to address how texts in this period engage with the fundamental socio-political transformation in this epoch that fundamentally influenced the shift in revolutionary ideology a socio-political and socio-historical Marxist approach is needed that even more radically than prior to 1989 investigates revolutionary literature in this period from a genuinely inter-disciplinary and inter-discursive perspective. Especially the contributions of the late Marxist social historian Walter Grab have impressively proven the fruitfulness of such an approach and the great potential it harbours.¹² Among them in particular the 1970s inter-discursive and inter-disciplinary socio-historical study of revolutionary German poetry from the French Revolution to the foundation of the German Reich on which he collaborated with the author and dramaturge Uwe Friesel (Grab & Friesel 1973) will

¹¹ Notable exceptions to this general trend include in regard to Büchner his relationship to social revolution Holmes 1995a & 1995b and Frank 1998. For newer contributions on Heine's relationship to political and social revolution, see Mende 1991 and Holmes 1998 and in relation to Weerth Füllner 1999. Michael Perraudin in his promisingly entitled brief study *Literature, the Volk and the Revolution in Mid-Nineteenth Century Germany* (2000), deals with Heine's, Büchner's and Nestroy's relationship to the masses. In passing, he also mentions the issue of political/social revolution. However, his analysis does not venture very far beyond close readings of their texts since Perraudin crucially fails to contextualise the literary texts he discusses with contemporary non-fiction, such as socio-political essays, newspaper articles and pamphlets.

¹² For Grab's interdisciplinary essays on Büchner see for instance Grab 1985, 1987a, 1987b & 1990b, on Heine Grab 1992 & 1997, on Freiligrath Grab 1990a. Another Marxist social historian who has written on the revolutionary poets Herwegh and Freiligrath was the late Wolfgang Büttner (see 1992 & 1995). He has also dealt with Weerth as the editor of the arts section in Marx's *Neuer Rheinischer Zeitung* (see Büttner 1993).

serve as a model for my endeavour to trace the shift in revolutionary ideology from 1819 to 1848. The guiding principles of their book that they spell out in the introduction also apply to my study:

Nicht literarhistorische, sondern geschichtliche Zeiteinteilungen sind hier die Folie zur Interpretation. Die Geschichte der Literatur soll mit der politischen und sozialen Geschichte ebenso verschränkt sein, wie dies im tatsächlichen Ablauf der Fall war. (Grab & Friesel 1973, 13)

Taking these lines as a sort of motto for my project I will also aim to flesh out the shift from a concept of political to revolutionary ideology largely chronologically in relation to the unfolding socio-political and socio-economic historical developments.

A Marxist interdisciplinary and trans-discursive approach to the topic that takes on board the advances in socio-political intertextual and inter-discursive literary theory within the last twenty years (in particular Cultural Materialism) will serve as the basis for my study of the changes in revolutionary ideology throughout the period. Unlike Raymond Williams, however, who aims to transcend Marx's base-superstructure model, I will employ a less revisionist Marxist methodology. In contrast to Marx who places cultural products on the level of the superstructure, Williams persuasively argues that they (including literature) need to be viewed as social practices which belong not to the superstructure but directly to the material basis.¹³ While his revision of the Marxist societal model forms a seminal contribution to cultural studies and has provocatively and productively challenged bourgeois conceptions of the lofty status of culture and art

¹³ Regarding cultural activities as social activities, Williams claims that cultural practices actually rank among the primary productive forces. In the sense of men producing "themselves and their history" through their labour, creative cultural activities become part of the basic "*productive forces*" (cf. 1980, 35; Williams' emphasis). Therefore he is able to locate cultural activities on the level of the base. Crucially, this means that they lose their status of ideological forms and become material productive forces instead: "If we have the broad sense of productive forces, we look at the whole question of the base differently, and we are then less tempted to dismiss as superstructural, and in this sense as merely secondary, certain vital productive social forces, which are in the broad sense, from the beginning, basic" (Williams 1980, 35).

by highlighting their material aspects, it is less suitable for my purposes. Since this thesis precisely wants to illustrate the close interactions *between* the major socio-historic and socio-economic transitions on the one hand, and changes in revolutionary ideology, concepts and revolutionary literature on the other, the theoretical distinction between the economic base and the ideological superstructure that Marx most famously spells out in the preface to *Zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* (1859) needs to be maintained:

Die Gesamtheit dieser Produktionsverhältnisse bildet die ökonomische Struktur der Gesellschaft, die reale Basis, worauf sich ein juristischer und politischer Überbau erhebt, und welcher bestimmter Bewußtseinsformen entsprechen. Die Produktionsweise des materiellen Lebens bedingt den sozialen, politischen und geistigen Lebensprozeß überhaupt. Es ist nicht das Bewußtsein der Menschen, das ihr Sein, sondern umgekehrt ihr gesellschaftliches Sein, das ihr Bewußtsein bestimmt. Auf einer gewissen Stufe ihrer Entwicklung geraten die materiellen Produktivkräfte der Gesellschaft in Widerspruch mit den vorhandenen Produktionsverhältnissen oder, was nur ein juristischer Ausdruck dafür ist, mit den Eigentumsverhältnissen, in dem sie sich bisher bewegt haben. Es tritt dann eine Epoche sozialer Revolution ein. Mit der Veränderung der ökonomischen Grundlage wälzt sich der ganze ungeheure Überbau langsamer oder rascher um. In der Betrachtung solcher Umwälzungen muß man stets unterscheiden zwischen der materiellen, naturwissenschaftlich treu zu konstatierenden Umwälzung in den ökonomischen und den juristischen, politischen, religiösen, künstlerischen oder philosophischen, kurz, ideologischen Formen, worin sich die Menschen dieses Konflikt bewußt werden und ihn ausfechten. (MEW XIII, 8-9)

In this seminal passage for Marxist cultural studies¹⁴ which is almost as often misinterpreted as it is quoted, Marx construes a highly complex societal model that posits a dialectical relationship, a dynamic correspondence, between what he regards as the conflicts on the level of the material base and the ideological forms in which

¹⁴ The sociologist Chris Jenks has even recently maintained that Marx's claim of the interdependence of the socio-economic and the cultural is of pivotal importance for *any* contemporary theory of culture: "Like it or not Marx has provided a major element in contemporary thinking about society and culture: Indeed, one might go as far as to say that all subsequent theorizing about culture has to be read and understood in relation to what Marx and his interpreters have deposited for us" (2005, 65).

humans become conscious of them. While the ideological forms cannot directly influence and govern the socio-economic changes at the base, they are pivotal in gaining awareness of the struggles and conflicts that are emerging at the material level. The ideological forms provide the means to transform the struggle against the existing socio-economic conditions from an unconscious – or at the most semi-conscious – protest and rebellion to a conscious and directed socio-revolutionary fight against them.¹⁵

This function of ideological forms – to gain consciousness of the social and socio-economic transitions, processes conflicts and struggles taking place at the level of base, at the level of the process of production – is especially crucial at the "Epoche der sozialen Revolution", as Marx suggests in the passage above. In such a period the material forces of production enter into an irreconcilable contradiction to the present socio-economic system of production and the ensuing conflicts at the level of material production are also fought in the corresponding ideological forms. For Marx a massive contradiction was developing in the contemporary socio-economic situation in bourgeois society. The capitalist mode of production leads to the accumulation of immense profits, property and capital in the hands of the capitalists who do not play an active part in this process, while the property-less proletarian producers are denied ownership of their products, thus becoming increasingly more destitute, alienated from

¹⁵ Commenting on this passage in his seminal study *Metahistory*, Hayden White misses out on this dialectical element in the relation between base and superstructure that only makes a directed socio-revolutionary movement in the first place. Understanding by 'ideological forms' merely "publicly sanctioned forms of both consciousness and praxis" and not oppositional, revolutionary forms, he reduces Marx's complex interactional model to a simplistic causal relationship with an inbuilt time delay between cause and effect: "As can be seen from this passage, for Marx, significant causal efficacy proceeds from the Base to the Superstructure by a *direct*, not dialectical path. There is a lag between the causal forces that promote social transformations and between social transformations and cultural changes, but this lag is *inertial* [...] Only after a new mode of production has been established as the dominant one in a given society can the publicly sanctioned forms of both consciousness and praxis themselves be established, in new laws, a new form of state organization, a new religion, a new art, and so on". Again ignoring the pronounced socio-revolutionary overtones to this passage and the possibility of ideological forms that are subversive of the present socio-economic order, Hayden White identifies the only "dialectical" relationship in Marx's model "in the *mode of transition* from one *form of publicly sanctioned consciousness* to another" (1973, 305; White's emphasis).

their labour, the products of their labour and themselves.¹⁶ The ideological forms are a crucial means by which to become conscious of these contradictions and do battle with them, since the process of gaining an accurate awareness of the true social being, of the social class identity, of the conflicts and contradictions on the level of the material basis provides the necessary precondition for successful socio-revolutionary action. As Marx and Engels assert in *Die deutsche Ideologie* such consciousness of the extent of the contemporary social and socio-economic contradictions lies at the heart of the socio-revolutionary impulse, the realisation that "[es] sich in Wirklichkeit und für den *praktischen* Materialisten, d.h. *Kommunisten*, darum handelt, die bestehende Welt zu revolutionieren, die vorgefundnen Dinge praktisch anzugreifen und zu verändern" (MEW III, 42, emphasis in text).

Marx emphasises that art alongside philosophy, politics etc. constitutes one of the social practices through which humans acquire consciousness of their social being. As such they occupy a crucial but precarious position in the process of gaining consciousness, insofar as they can either contribute to achieving an adequate awareness of one's social being or lead to an ideologically distorted 'false consciousness'. As Marx and Engels suggest through the famous camera-obscura simile from *Die deutsche Ideologie* the whole of the contemporary bourgeois ideological forms (and thus most of bourgeois literature) promote such false distorted consciousness as is reflected

¹⁶ Cf. instance the following passages from the first notebook of *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte* (1844) in which Marx very clearly emphasises the irreconcilable contradictions arising from the alienation of labour in the capitalist process of production: "Der Gegenstand, den die Arbeit producirt, ihr Product, tritt ihr als ein *fremdes* Wesen, als eine von d[em] Producenten *unabhängige* Macht gegenüber. [...] Diese Verwirklichung der Arbeit erscheint in dem nationalökonomischen Zustand als *Entwirklichung* des Arbeiters, [...] daß der Arbeiter bis zum Hungertod entwirklicht wird. Die Vergegenständlichung als *Verlust des Gegenstandes* und *Knechtschaft unter dem Gegenstand*, die Aneignung als *Entfremdung*, als *Entäusserung*. [...] Die Aneignung des Gegenstandes erscheint um so sehr als Entfremdung, daß je mehr Gegenstände der Arbeiter producirt, er um so weniger besitzen kann und um so mehr unter die Herrschaft seines Products, des Capitals, geräth. In der Bestimmung, daß der Arbeiter zum *Product seiner Arbeit* als einem fremden Gegenstand sich verhält, liegen alle diese Consequenzen. Denn es ist nach dieser Voraussetzung klar: Je mehr der Arbeiter sich ausarbeitet, um so mächtiger wird die fremde, gegenständliche Welt, die er sich gegenüber schafft, um so ärmer wird er selbst, seine innre Welt, um so weniger gehört ihm zu eigen" (Marx & Engels 1975 ff. II, 364-365; Marx's emphasis).

paradigmatically in the ideology of contemporary German idealist philosophy. However, even in their distorted representation the material conflicts are still visible for the conscious observers whose accurate consciousness provides the corrective lens to rectify the inverted image:

Das Bewußtsein kann nie etwas Anderes sein als das bewußte Sein, und das Sein der Menschen ist ihr wirklicher Lebensprozeß. Wenn in der ganzen Ideologie die Menschen und ihre Verhältnisse wie in einer Camera obscura auf den Kopf gestellt erscheinen, so geht dies Phänomen ebensosehr aus ihrem historischen Lebensprozeß hervor, wie die Umdrehung der Gegenstände auf der Netzhaut aus ihrem unmittelbar physischen. (MEW III, 26)

Crucially – as is visible in both the camera obscura and in the base-superstructure analogy – in Marx's materialist perspective on historical and societal processes, human consciousness, which simultaneously arises out of ideological struggles and manifests itself tangibly in the various ideological forms, is not regarded as an autonomous entity as in an idealist conception, but as directly related to the material, social and socio-economic struggles of mankind. In one of his catchy chiasmic juxtapositions of the Hegelian model, Marx unmasks in the preface to *Zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* the idealist fallacy of viewing consciousness and the ideological forms as the determining force for human being, and simultaneously highlights the social nature of both being and consciousness: "Es ist nicht das Bewußtsein der Menschen, das ihr Sein, sondern umgekehrt ihr gesellschaftliches Sein, das ihr Bewußtsein bestimmt." It is wrong simplistically to claim – as many acolytes and adversaries of his have maintained alike – that there exists in Marx's model a uni-directional, uni-causal relationship between the socio-economic processes and conflicts, the material base, and the ideological forms and consciousness, the superstructure. As Raymond Williams has persuasively argued, to counter such distortions of Marx's model it is necessary to

strengthen the "alternative tradition of Marxism" in which consciousness is regarded as being "social and [...] centered in history" and hence "is restored as a primary activity" (cf. 2001, 160). Indeed such a conception of a social and historical consciousness lies at the heart of Marx's 'Basis-Überbau', or 'Unter-Überbau' analogy as it is alternatively called. Neither one of its two elements, neither the superstructure nor the base, determines the other in a straightforward and easy manner,¹⁷ but both interact dialectically with each other. As Georg Lukács importantly emphasises, Marx's dialectical outlook on society repudiates "einen einfachen Kausalzusammenhang" between base and superstructure, and furthermore "bestreitet, daß irgendwo auf der Welt rein einseitige Ursache-Folge-Beziehungen existieren" (1961, 215). Both elements of Marx's analogy are socially constructed and both have an impact on a society, meaning that – unlike in an idealist model – a simple change in the superstructure, in consciousness or in the ideological forms, among them politics, philosophy and art, will never alone suffice to achieve any societal change in the socio-economic base:

[...] der historische Materialismus betont mit besonderer Schärfe, daß [...] der Gesamtprozeß der gesellschaftlichen, der historischen Entwicklung überall als das komplizierte Geflecht von Wechselwirkungen zustande kommt. [...] Wer in den Ideologien das mechanische, passive Produkt des ihre Grundlage bildenden ökonomischen Prozesses sieht, der versteht von ihrem Wesen und ihrer Entwicklung gar nichts, der vertritt nicht den Marxismus, sondern sein Zerrbild, seine Karrikatur. (Lukács 1961, 215-216)

In his "Einführung in die ästhetischen Schriften von Marx und Engels" (1945), from which this quotation is taken, Lukács not only astutely sums up the complexities of Marx's dialectical model, but at the same time also paradigmatically outlines its implications for the Marxist understanding of literature and Marxist critical practice.

¹⁷ Among others Williams has shown the illegitimacy of interpreting the German word "bestimmen" in the seminal passage from Marx's preface in this mechanistic sense (see 1980, 31).

While "Ideologien – darunter Literatur und Kunst –" merely figure "als sekundär bestimmender Überbau" (1961, 215), they nevertheless play a pivotal role in the process of man becoming conscious of his social being and the entire historical societal process with its transitions and changes:

Die Existenz und das Wesen, das Entstehen und die Wirkung der Literatur können also bloß im gesamthistorischen Zusammenhang des ganzen Systems verstanden und erklärt werden. Entstehung und Entwicklung der Literatur sind ein Teil des gesamthistorischen Prozesses der Gesellschaft. Das ästhetische Wesen und der ästhetische Wert der literarischen Werke und im Zusammenhang damit ihre Wirkung sind ein Teil jenes allgemeinen und zusammenhängenden gesellschaftlichen Prozesses, in dem sich der Mensch die Welt durch sein Bewußtsein aneignet. (Lukács 1961, 215)

A materialist outlook on literature – as outlined by Lukács in this passage – that views literature as one interlinked component in the massive system of historical development ("des gesamthistorischen Prozesses der Gesellschaft"), calls for a radically holistic socio-historical literary criticism. It must aim to understand literature's place and function in the wider context of the entire societal system and look beyond the narrow confines of the arts and humanities. From a Marxist angle, literature and criticism have no history of their own, "keine Geschichte", "keine Entwicklung". Therefore the notion of their autonomy, "der Schein der Selbständigkeit" (cf. *MEW* III, 27), only constitutes a bourgeois ideological distortion. Consequently a materialist critic must repudiate an idealist conception which regards literature and its criticism as an autonomous system, which is structured by a genealogical history of literary epochs and in which separate specific rules and methods apply for the investigation of literary texts than for other ideological forms etc., an understanding that in spite of being increasingly challenged within the past decades still governs literary studies.

For the purposes of my materialist study of the discursive shift in revolutionary ideology in the period in question, of the transition from a concept of political revolution to one of social revolution, an approach is needed that largely disregards these traditional categories and conventional distinctions: one that is not primarily concerned whether the poem belongs to the Romantic period or not, whether the text is fictional or not, or even whether we are confronted with a political-philosophical essay, an historical source such as a pamphlet or literary poetical text. Instead a methodology is needed that subscribes to Marx's holistic conception of 'Wissenschaft' insofar as it "die in der bürgerlichen Welt modische scharfe Scheidung, Isolierung der einzelnen Wissenschaftszweige nicht anerkennt", as Lukács pointedly phrases it (1961, 214):

Weder die Wissenschaft, noch die einzelnen Zweige der Wissenschaft, noch die Kunst haben ihre selbständige, immanente, ausschließlich aus ihrer eigenen inneren Dialektik fließende Geschichte. Die Entwicklung aller wird bestimmt vom Gang der Gesamtgeschichte der gesellschaftlichen Produktion; nur auf dieser Grundlage können die auf den einzelnen Gebieten auftretenden Veränderungen, Entwicklungen wirklich wissenschaftlich erklärt werden. (Lukács 1961, 214)

Before I can embark on investigating the ideological transitions in revolutionary discourse during the period in question from a Marxist *interdisciplinary*, *inter-discursive* and *intertextual* angle, it is first necessary to define the terms 'political and social revolution' and debate their interrelationship. The main theory on which my investigation is based is the dialectic perspective on the antithetical nature and hence interdependency of 'political' and 'social revolution' that Marx was developing in three seminal essays in 1844: "Zur Judenfrage", "Einleitung *Zur Kritik der Hegel'schen Rechts-Philosophie*", and "Kritische Randglossen zu dem Artikel 'Der König von Preußen und die Socialreform: Von einem Preußen'". They also mark Marx's decisive departure from a concept of a purely political revolution. I will examine the latter two,

which, for several reasons, are suited to provide the theoretical backbone of my thesis: first, any Marxist approach to the topic necessarily must take into account Marx's deliberations on the question of social and political revolution; secondly they constitute a pivotal basis for any subsequent debate on social and political revolution in spite of their rather limited impact at the time of their publication; and thirdly these texts, which fall within the period under investigation, closely reflect and engage with other contemporary fictional and non-fictional contemporary discourses which deal with this question of political and social revolution.

It is crucial to stress that Marx was in no way the first to distinguish between political and social revolution. As scholars have conclusively shown (e.g. Ruckhäbele 1977, Seidel-Höppner 2000 & 2002) the development of a theoretical distinction between these two types of revolution must be located in the aftermath of the July Revolution of 1830 which saw the liberal bourgeoisie becoming the hegemonic class not only in France but also in other European countries such as Belgium. Marx's dialectical model of these two concepts of revolution builds strongly upon the division that early French socialists and early German proletarian associations in Paris (made up predominantly of workers, artisans and journeymen), such as 'Der Bund der Geächteten' and 'Der Bund der Gerechten' drew up during the 1830s. In spite of Marx's pronounced contempt for some of the early French socialists and his disdain for – what he derogatively called – the German 'Handwerkerkommunismus', he nevertheless subscribes to the following fundamental distinction between political and social revolution which they developed. According to Waltraud Seidel-Höppner this differentiation was first voiced by the early French socialist Albert Laponneraye in 1835 and was adopted rapidly by other socialists and the early German proletarian movement

in Paris.¹⁸ In the words of Seidel-Höppner's German translation, Laponneraye in his essay "Des Revolutions" (1835) distinguishes political and social revolution as follows:

Wir nennen politische Revolution jene, die nur einen Personenwechsel der öffentlichen Verwaltung oder einen Wechsel der Regierungsform zum Ziel haben, und soziale Revolutionen solche, die der Basis der Gesellschaft verändern wollen. (Quoted from Seidel-Höppner 2000, 15)

Seidel-Höpper has astutely summed up and further elaborated on this crucial distinction between political and social revolution, which is also pivotal for my entire thesis. Whereas a political revolution aims to change the governing figures and the "politischen Strukturen", a social revolution deeply revolutionises "alle Daseinsbereiche des gesellschaftlichen Lebens" and secures "politische Mitbestimmung aller durch umfassende Verbesserung der Lebensbedingungen". To achieve these goals, social revolutionaries do not shy away from "gesetzgeberische Eingriffe in Eigentums- und Erbrecht, in Produktions- und Verteilungsverhältnisse" (cf. 2000, 15).

The concept of social revolution has to be distinguished clearly from the idea of social reform. In contrast to the former the latter does not endorse radical changes in the socio-economic system such as legally curtailing the right to private property, or changing the mode of production and the distribution of wealth, but aims to alleviate social misery by reforming the bourgeois-capitalist system from within. Other non socio-revolutionary measures to improve the social condition of the working class included philanthropic projects and co-operatives. Inspired by various different ideologies, both British and German social reformers and philanthropists, such as the

¹⁸ For example in the pamphlet "Gedanken eines Republikaner", written by a member of the 'Bund der Geächteten', Theodor Schuster, and published in Paris in 1835, the term social revolution is also used. Schuster regards the slave revolution in Haiti in 1803, the workers' uprisings in Lyon in 1831 and 1834 and the Bristol riots of 1831 as the first signs of impending social revolution across the world. For him these socio-revolutionary revolts form "Brandzeichen der sozialen Revolution" (Schuster 1977, 192).

textile manufacturers Robert Owen¹⁹ and John Fielden, the Tory MP and social reform campaigner Lord Ashley (the later 7th Earl of Shaftesbury) in Britain,²⁰ Catholic and Protestant social reformers such as Adolph Kolping, Johann Hinrich Wichern, the co-operatist Friedrich Wilhelm Raiffeisen and others²¹ and the liberal industrialist Friedrich Harkort²² in Germany²³ importantly contributed to alleviating the suffering of the working classes.

While I by no means want to belittle their achievements, there is little evidence that the revolutionary authors discussed in this thesis subscribed to the idea of social reform as the solution to the social question. On the contrary some explicitly spoke out against this idea, which they regarded as an ideological delusion, a form of false consciousness. For instance Georg Büchner in a letter to Karl Gutzkow from the beginning of June 1836 categorically dismisses the concept that upper-class social reform could resolve the social crisis in contemporary society. Denouncing it as an idealist bourgeois-intellectual fantasy, he clearly endorses proletarian socio-revolutionary action instead. Advocating the socio-revolutionary notion of absolute *social* equality rather than mere *political* equality, he hopes that this revolution will

¹⁹ For a brief illuminating account of Owen's life, works and ideas, see Claeys 1996.

²⁰ For an overview about social reform in Britain during the period in question, see for instance Roach 1978, 9-142, Rawcliffe 1987 and Dennis & Skilton 1987. For a study into how literature engaged with both social and political reform, see Brantlinger 1977.

²¹ For an overview over social ideas in German Catholicism in the 19th century, see Stegmann & Langhorst 2000, 603-712 and in German Protestantism before 1871, see Jähnichen & Friedrich 2000, 873-922.

²² Not only did Harkort found the 'Verein für die deutsche Volksschule und Verbreitung gemeinnütziger Kenntnisse' (1844), the aim of which was to promote education among the lower classes, but he also established funds for the sick and mutilated among his workers and started food cooperatives (See Hardtwig 1998, 124). Walter Conze enthusiastically praises him as one of the few pioneering liberal entrepreneurs who combined entrepreneurial skills with a sense of social responsibility (1966, 130). Advocating social reform, he was adamantly opposed to any proletarian socio-revolutionary activities, as his appeal in "Brief an die Arbeiter" (1849) shows. In it he distinguishes the unruly and depraved "Proletarier, welche stets bereit sind, über anderer Leute Gut herzufallen und den Krebschaden der Kommunen bilden" from the peaceful, "braven Arbeiter". Only the latter are worthy of social reformist and philanthropic measures: "Diesen ehrenwerten Leute muß geholfen werden durch Hebung der Gewerbe, Vorschußkassen, guten Unterricht für die Kinder und Sicherstellung gegen Krankheit und Invalidität" (cf. 1965, 392-393).

²³ For a representative selection of contemporary German voices that engaged with the problem of pauperism and social question in the Vormärz and during 1848/49, see Jantke & Hilger 1965.

destroy modern bourgeois society that he considers as effete. In its place he envisages a socially just system of society which – in his eyes – the proletariat will create but not bourgeois reformers:

Übrigens; um aufrichtig zu sein, Sie und Ihre Freunde scheinen mir nicht grade den klügsten Weg gegangen zu sein. Die Gesellschaft mittelst der *Idee*, von der *gebildeten* Klasse aus reformieren? Unmöglich! Unsere Zeit ist rein *materiell*, wären sie direkter politisch zu Werke gegangen, so wären Sie bald auf den Punkt gekommen, wo die Reform von selbst aufgehört. Sie werden nie über den Riß zwischen der gebildeten und ungebildeten Gesellschaft hinauskommen. Ich habe mich überzeugt, die gebildete und wohlhabende Minorität [...] wird nie ihr spitzes Verhältnis zur großen Klasse aufgeben wollen. [...] Ich glaube man muß in socialen Dingen von einem absoluten *Rechtsgrundsatz* ausgehen, die Bildung eines neuen geistigen Lebens im *Volk* suchen und die abgelebte moderne Gesellschaft zum Teufel gehen lassen.²⁴ [...] Sie mag aussterben, das ist das einzig Neue, was sie noch erleben kann. (Büchner 2002 II, 440; Büchner's emphasis)

Scepticism about the notion of social reform and a move towards social revolution can also be observed in considerably less radical authors than the early socialist Büchner. For instance, Shelley who occasionally mentions Robert Owen and his social experiments went considerably beyond the latter's idea of a paternalistic philanthropism and a communitarian utopia. In his unpublished essay *A Philosophical View on Reform* (written 1819-1820) he does not even consider such measures as a solution to the social crisis in contemporary Britain as chapter 1 of this thesis will illustrate. Instead, in a pronounced socio-revolutionary move, he envisages a redistribution of wealth and and the nationalisation of land, "including the the parks and the chases of rich" and "of the uncultivated districts of the country" (cf. 1920, 67) to follow a political revolution.

²⁴ The radical, socio-revolutionary nature of Büchner's statements is often downplayed by critics, as it becomes obvious for instance in Michael Perraudin's gloss on this sentence: "moribund society should go to the devil and in the common people the creation of a new cultural life – thus one might render the difficult term 'geistig' here – is to be sought" (2000, 38). In the context of the whole passage that Perraudin ignores it becomes unmistakably clear that 'geistig' here means primarily 'social' rather than "cultural".

In spite of criticism of Owen's practical solution to the social question his theories had a considerably impact on nascent socialism, as for instance Gregory Claeys has demonstrated (1987a). He has argued that Owenite Socialism played a particular important role in Engels' initial move towards socialism (1985). However, as Claeys also acknowledges, after 1844 Engels went considerably beyond Owen's tenets of peaceful social change when he embraced transformation through violent proletarian socio-revolution.²⁵ One of the most comprehensive contemporary critiques of Owenism from a Marxist angle can be found in Georg Weerth's unpublished essay "Geschichte der Chartisten". A brief investigation of his analysis of Owenism proves seminal here in so far as Weerth in it paradigmatically fleshes out the key distinction between social reform and social revolution. In fact he uses the example of Owen, of his philanthropic and co-operative experiments, to launch a fundamental critique of all social measures falling short of social revolution. While expressing a considerable respect for Robert Owen, whom he met after the failure of his cooperative experimental community 'Queenwood' in Hampshire in 1844, his last project on British soil, Weerth states his conviction that any such small-scale experiments that do not alter socio-economic basis of society will not achieve lasting social change. As Weerth alleges, both this community which went bankrupt and Owen's earlier model village and woollen mill in 'New Lanark' were built on the idealist ideological delusion that social misery and exploitation of the proletariat could be abolished *within* the confines of the capitalist socio-economic order. Since Weerth, from a Marxist angle, regards social inequality,

²⁵ In *Das Manifest der kommunistischen Partei* Marx and Engels distance themselves explicitly from non-revolutionary socialism. Criticising what they term the "kritisch-utopische Sozialismus" for its refusal to embrace the proletariat as a consciously socio-revolutionary force, they explicitly include Owenism: "Die eigentlich sozialistischen und kommunistischen Systeme, die Systeme St.-Simons, Fouriers, Owens usw., tauchen auf in der ersten, unentwickelten Periode des Kampfes zwischen Proletariat und Bourgeoisie [...]. Die Erfinder dieser Systeme sehen zwar den Gegensatz der Klassen wie die Wirksamkeit der auflösenden Elemente in der herrschenden Gesellschaft selbst. Aber sie erblicken auf der Seite des Proletariats keine geschichtliche Selbsttätigkeit, keine ihm eigentümliche politische Bewegung" (MEW IV 489-490).

the unequal distribution of property and exploitation as the very basis of the capitalist mode of production, he regards any social movements that fall short of the socio-revolutionary goal of altering the base of contemporary society as ineffectual. Philanthropists, social reformers and utopians like Owen practice a form of social escapism, when they "aus der Starrheit der noch zur Stunde herrschenden Eigentumsverhältnisse [...] liebevoll und philanthropisch hervorzutreten" (Weerth 1957 III, 325), instead of altering the unequal distribution and possession of private property throughout Western contemporary society. Ironically, Owen inadvertently reaffirmed the very economic imperatives of the capitalist society of which was critical, when his attempts to produce in an economically viable manner, while at the same time abolishing exploitative work practices, ended in financial disasters:

So endete der zweite, ziemlich großartige Versuch, das System Owens praktisch zu verwirklichen. Bei dem ersten in New Lanark hatte Owen selbst die Kosten bezahlt, bei dem zweiten in Harmony Hall²⁶ zahlten die Aktionäre die Zeche. Wiederum hatte es sich gezeigt, dass trotz aller Ökonomie in der Einrichtung großer, gemeinschaftlicher Gebäude dennoch ein Konkurrieren mit der übrigen Gesellschaft, deren Prosperität auf dem Elende der Arbeiter begründet ist, unmöglich wird, wenn die Arbeiter der gemeinschaftlichen Anlagen viel besser leben wollen als ihre Kollegen da draußen. (Weerth 1957 III, 329)

Co-operatives do not resolve the fundamental contradiction of capitalist society that in it wealth can only be acquired by exploiting the workforce, but on the contrary the economic failure of such ventures highlights the ubiquity of this fundamental socio-economic law. By accepting this paradox, and either subjecting themselves to the laws of capitalism, or fleeing from their grasp into uncharted regions of the world, they contribute little towards resolving it. Hence co-operatives contribute to perpetuating the

²⁶ Weerth uses the name of the central hall of the community in Queenwood to refer to the entire co-operative. Explaining the failure of this project considerably differently from Weerth, Gregory Claeys maintains that this "impressively large building with lavish fittings" intended by Owen to form "a symbol of his ideas" was instrumental in the project's downfall as its construction devoured "the funds needed for daily operations" (cf. 1996, 264).

existence of the unequal socio-economic order they set out to change, Weerth pointedly claims:

Abgeschnitten und unberührt vom ganzen übrigen Weltverkehr mögen sie im fernen Westen von Amerika oder sonst in einem Winkel der Welt wohl noch gelingen. – solange sich aber eine Gemeinschaft noch den ökonomischen Gesetzen unterwirft, welche die übrige Welt rings um sie herum regieren, so lange wird sie auch die Konsequenzen dieser Gesetze tragen müssen. (Weerth 1957 III, 330)

Rather than futilely – as Owen did – "alle Gouvernements mit Vorschlägen besserer gesellschaftlicher Einrichtungen bombardierend" (325), Weerth advocates a proletarian social revolution by force, as the violent connotations of the present participle "bombardierend" imply. Only the latter form of social change, he is convinced, would transform socio-economic base of contemporary society, its exploitative mode of production, and thus improve the material living conditions of proletariat in a significant and enduring manner. Similar to Büchner in his letter to Gutzkow, Weerth prophesies that the proletariat, through social revolution, will build a lasting socially just society and not bourgeois social reformers and philanthropists:

Der Zukunft und einer noch gewaltigeren Entwicklung des Proletariats wird es überlassen bleiben, etwas dauernd Großes und Umfassendes an die Stelle unsrer heutigen Verhältnisse zu setzen. Die Philanthropie eines Owen ist nichts im Vergleich zu den Ereignissen, welche die eherne Notwendigkeit mit sich bringen wird. (Weerth 1957 III, 330)

For Marx a critique of social reform, of political strategies that wanted to implement social reform without changing the socio-economic order as a whole had served as the starting point for his first major exposition of the concept of a proletarian social revolution. His article "Kritische Randglossen zu dem Artikel: 'Der König von Preußen und die Socialreform: Von einem Preußen'" (*Vorwärts* No. 63/ August 7th

1844), is based on a critique of an article by Arnold Ruge on the Silesian Weavers' Uprising, which had appeared earlier in the same journal. In sharp contrast to Ruge, who identifies socio-political causes at the root of the proletarian misery and urges social reform, Marx dismisses not only social reform within the capitalist order but also mere political revolution as a viable solution to the social crisis. For him— as for the early French socialist and the early German proletarian movement — political revolution as the violent change in the system of government is not sufficient to end the exploitation and social inequality that he regards as fundamentally linked to the bourgeois socio-economic order of capitalism. More obviously than his precursors he emphasises how even in political revolutions there is pronounced social element present, a strong dimension of class struggle. The political emancipation of a politically oppressed class by revolutionary means, however, will only lead to the creation of a new socially equally oppressive class constellation. It is performed at the cost of the whole system of society since it only aims — in accordance with a particular abstract ideological theory of governance — to change society for the benefit of certain circles within it. The socio-economically oppressed individual who is suffering materially and mentally due to the exploitation of his labour and alienation from society is not considered in this transformation, disappearing underneath the smokescreen that the ideology of the political revolution creates. The theory of political revolution looks at the whole of society from a narrow ideologically distorted angle separated "vom wirklichen Leben", Marx alleges:

Die *politische Seele* einer Revolution besteht [...] in der Tendenz der politisch einflußlosen Klassen ihre *Isolierung vom Staatswesen* und von der *Herrschaft* aufzuheben. Ihr Standpunkt ist der des Staats, eines *abstrakten* Ganzen, das *nur* durch die Trennung vom wirklichen Leben besteht, das *undenkbar* ist ohne den *organisirten* Gegensatz zwischen der allgemeinen Idee und der individuellen Existenz des Menschen. Eine Revolution von *politischer Seele* organisirt daher auch, der *beschränkten* und *zwiespältigen* Natur dieser

Seele gemäß, einen herrschenden Kreis in der Gesellschaft, auf Kosten der Gesellschaft.
(Marx & Engels 1975b ff.²⁷ II, 462-463; Marx's emphasis)

Such an abstract political view of revolution that detaches itself from the real existent material suffering was for Marx the hallmark of the ideology of the great bourgeois republican revolutionaries from the age of the French Revolution. For him this attitude is epitomised in their leading figure Robespierre:

Je mächtiger der Staat, je *politischer* daher ein Land ist, um so weniger ist es geneigt im *Prinzip des Staats*, also in der *jetzigen Einrichtung der Gesellschaft*, deren thätiger, selbstbewußter und offizieller Ausdruck der der Staat ist, den Grund der *socialen* Gebrechen zu suchen und ihr *allgemeines* Prinzip zu begreifen. Der *politische* Verstand ist eben *politischer* Verstand, weil er *innerhalb* der Schranken der Politik denkt. Je geschärfter, je lebendiger, desto *unfähiger* ist er zur Auffassung socialer Gebrechen. Die *klassische* Periode des politischen Verstandes ist die *französische Revolution*. Weit entfernt, im Prinzip des Staats die Quelle der socialen Mängel zu erblicken, erblicken die Heroen der französischen Revolution vielmehr in den socialen Mängeln die Quelle politischer Übelstände. So sieht *Robespierre* in der großen Armuth und dem großen Reichthume nur ein Hindernis der *reinen Demokratie*. (MEGA II, 456-457; Marx's emphasis)

The belief in political revolution as the panacea for society's ills is a form of false consciousness, Marx insists. The political understanding of revolutionary change eclipses the social ills which for Marx lie at the root any socio-political crisis. The republican delusion consists in the belief that with the change of political system, from monarchy to a radical "*reinen Demokratie*", the major socio-economic ills of human society will disappear too, the gap between "der großen Armuth und dem großen Reichthume". As it will time and again become obvious in the course of my thesis this ideological blind spot in the republican concept of political revolution constitutes a

²⁷ The established acronym *MEGA* will be used to mark further quotations from this still unfinished critical edition of Marx and Engels' works.

major starting point for all revolutionary writers to move towards a concept of social revolution.

With respect to social revolution Marx goes along with the notion put forward by socialists of the 1830s that social revolution must mean a fundamental transformation of society that includes a radical change in the socio-economic sphere: the mode of production and the distribution of capital and wealth. However, it would be a grave mistake to reduce Marx's understanding of social revolution merely to a concept of socio-economic transformation, as it has often been misrepresented. He approaches the question of political and social revolution from a larger philosophical perspective that, at least in the early Marx, has little to do with precise economic figures, statistics and so forth. From his socialist-humanist perspective proletarian suffering is not only horrific because of its visible physical and psychological manifestations (starvation, physical deformation, stultification etc.), but also because it poignantly constitutes the epitome of human alienation in a society in which the majority of humans are being dehumanised and degraded from the status of subjects to objects, a perspective that will not only be of seminal importance to my final chapter on Marx's and Weerth's poetics of revolution but also to the first chapter that deals with Shelley's 1819 revolutionary poems. For Marx the goal of social revolution consists in ultimately reversing all human alienation. For him every localised proletarian revolt – such as the Silesian Weavers' Revolt of 1844 – harbours a strong socio-revolutionary dimension since it expresses a fundamental protest against human alienation and social exclusion. As a social revolution *en miniature* it forms the kernel of wider proletarian social revolution with its final aim to overcome human alienation altogether:

Eine *sociale* Revolution befindet sich deßwegen auf dem Standpunkt des *Ganzen*, weil sie –
fände sie auch nur in *einem* Fabrikdistrikt statt – weil sie eine Protestation des Menschen

gegen das entmenschte Leben ist, weil sie vom *Standpunkt* des *einzelnen wirklichen Individuums* ausgeht, weil das *Gemeinwesen*, gegen dessen Trennung von sich das Individuum reagiert, das *wahre* Gemeinwesen des Menschen ist, das *menschliche* Wesen. (MEGA II, 462; Marx's emphasis)

Based on such a holistic perspective on human alienation in contemporary bourgeois society, Marx in the "Einleitung *Zur Kritik der Hegel'schen Rechtsphilosophie*" in the *Deutsch-Französischen Jahrbücher* (1, 2) (1844) makes his case for the proletariat being the only class in bourgeois society capable of instigating and undertaking such a fundamental social revolution. In less concrete and in far more strongly philosophical language than in the "Randglossen" – as it befits an introduction to Hegel's philosophy of law – although not any less programmatically, Marx first outlines his concept of a proletarian social revolution. Still calling it "*radicale* Revolution" instead of social revolution, he explains in terms similar to those of the "Randglossen" why a political revolution will never lead to an emancipation of humanity. The rationale of those who claim it will liberate the entire societal system is that the political revolution will be undertaken by a portion of society that is excluded from political rule, which will then emancipate the whole of society. However in "*der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*" – as Marx asserts playing with the ambiguity of this term meaning both 'civil' and 'bourgeois' society – no group is capable of achieving this task, since there exist not only political inequality, but also strong social and socio-economic inequality, for instance in the distribution of capital and access to education:

Nicht die *radicale* Revolution ist ein utopischer Traum für Deutschland, nicht die *allgemein menschliche* Emancipation, sondern vielmehr die theilweise, die *nur* politische Revolution, die Revolution, welche die Pfeiler des Hauses stehen läßt. Worauf beruht eine theilweise, eine nur politische Revolution? Darauf, daß ein *Theil der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* sich emancipirt und zur *allgemeinen* Herrschaft gelangt, darauf, daß eine bestimmte Klasse von ihrer *besondern Situation* aus die allgemeine Emancipation der Gesellschaft unternimmt.

Diese Klasse befreit die ganze Gesellschaft, aber nur unter der Voraussetzung, daß die ganze Gesellschaft sich in der Situation dieser Klasse befindet, also z.B. Geld und Bildung besitzt oder beliebig erwerben kann. (MEGA II, 179; Marx's emphasis)

Denying to any class of bourgeois society the role of the social emancipator, Marx asserts that only the proletariat, which as the pariah of bourgeois society is totally excluded and alienated from it, is capable of negating human alienation and thus will eventually bring about a socially equal society. For Marx the proletariat is the only possible protagonist of the social revolution since it is the epitome of social alienation and socio-economic exploitation, of the inhumanity of man's injustice committed on his fellow human being:

[...] einer Klasse mit *radikalen Ketten*, einer Klasse der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft, welche keine Klasse der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft ist, eines Standes, welcher die Auflösung aller Stände ist, einer Sphäre, welche einen universellen Charakter durch ihre universellen Leiden besitzt und kein *besondres Recht* in Anspruch nimmt, weil kein *besondres Unrecht*, sondern das *Unrecht schlechthin* an ihr verübt wird, welche nicht mehr auf einen *historischen*, sondern nur noch auf den *menschlichen* Titel provocieren kann, [...] einer Sphäre endlich, welche sich nicht emancipieren kann, ohne sich von allen übrigen Sphären der Gesellschaft und damit alle übrigen Sphären der Gesellschaft zu emancipieren, welche mit einem Wort der *völlige Verlust* des Menschen ist, also nur durch die *völlige Wiedergewinnung des Menschen* sich selbst gewinnen kann. Diese Auflösung der Gesellschaft als ein besonderer Stand ist das *Proletariat*. (MEGA II, 181-182; Marx's emphasis)

To embrace the proletariat, a class which is often cast in the bourgeois imagination as the nemesis of civilised society, an anarchic mob threatening bourgeois property and life, as wholeheartedly as the protagonist of the social revolution and the redeemer of mankind as Marx does here, is no small feat for a bourgeois intellectual. It is all the more remarkable, since he is also highly conscious that the proletarian social revolution will negate the absolute right to private property, thus endangering not only the very

basis of contemporary society but potentially also the survival of his own class, the bourgeoisie. Yet, for him social injustice and socio-economic violence – for Marx the hallmarks of any class society – manifest themselves in the absolute property-less status of the proletariat under bourgeois capitalism so starkly that any claim to a right of private property becomes farcical:

Wenn das Proletariat die *Negation des Privateigentums* verlangt, so erhebt es nur zum *Prinzip der Gesellschaft*, was die Gesellschaft zu *seinem* Princip [sic] erhoben hat, was in *ihm* als negatives Resultat der Gesellschaft schon ohne sein Zuthun verkörpert ist. (MEGA II, 182; Marx's emphasis)

The proletarian threat to private property will be of key importance for the reluctance of aristocratic-bourgeois writers such as Shelley (chapter 1) and Börne and Heine (chapter 2) to embrace a proletarian social revolution, as will the spectre of anarchy that the prospect of a proletarian social revolution evokes. For instance as the latter warns in an article of September 17th 1842 (collected in the *Lutetia*), the early socialist attacks on private property will lead, "wo nicht zu Gütergemeinschaft, doch gewiß zur Erschütterung der bisherigen Eigentumsidee, des Grundpfeilers der heutigen Gesellschaft". As Heine paradigmatically admonishes, this will eventually result in a horrific social revolution, "eine soziale Umwälzung, wogegen die französische Revolution als sehr zahm und bescheiden erscheinen dürfte" (Heine 1997 V, 421-422). While Heine is opposed to proletarian social revolution as it would shatter the idea of private property, "des Grundpfeilers der heutigen Gesellschaft", Marx is opposed to a purely political revolution which shies away from challenging property. Using the same metaphor as Heine, Marx asserts that this revolution would by necessity be a haphazard "Revolution, welche die Pfeiler des Hauses stehen läßt" (MEGA II, 179), since it would

leave the mechanism of socio-economic oppression intact, as he expresses in this earlier statement from the "*Einleitung Zur Kritik der Hegel'schen Rechts-Philosophie*".

As a last point in this brief summary of the treatment of the concepts of political and social revolution by the early Marx, I will briefly look at the interrelation that Marx sketches out between political and social revolution. For him they are not mutually exclusive but instead complementary. Indeed – as he insists in the "Randglossen" – any genuine revolution that is worthy of its name incorporates both elements: the *political* and the *social*. This claim is put forward in the following statement that Marx presents as truism to his reader:

Jede Revolution löst die *alte Gesellschaft* auf; insofern ist sie *social*. Jede Revolution stürzt die *alte Gewalt*; insofern ist sie *politisch*. (MEGA II, 463; Marx's emphasis)

However, for him the political revolution which overthrows the old powers has to be followed by a social revolution. Unlike the former, the latter aims to create a radically different, more socially just, society in which other modes of production reign. This process of societal transformation will eventually mark the cessation of exploitation and an end to class oppression, indeed to social classes as such, as Marx and Engels will spell it out four years later in *Das Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei* (1848). In a more rudimentary form Marx already formulates a dialectic relationship of political and social revolution in the conclusion to the "Randglossen":

Die *Revolution* überhaupt – der *Umsturz* der bestehenden Gewalt und die *Auflösung* der alten Verhältnisse – ist ein *politischer Akt*. Ohne *Revolution* kann sich aber der *Socialismus* nicht ausführen. Er bedarf dieses *politischen Aktes*, soweit er der *Zerstörung* und der *Auflösung* bedarf. Wo aber seine *organisierende Tätigkeit* beginnt, wo sein *Selbstzweck*, seine *Seele* hervortritt, da schleudert der Sozialismus die *politische Hülle* weg. (MEGA II, 463; Marx's emphasis)

This Marxist conviction that the political revolution will be followed by social revolution was severely challenged by the course of the European revolutions of 1848/49 when the political overthrow of the old forces was not followed by a successful social revolution. As I will argue in the third chapter this major disillusionment not only manifested itself in a modification of Marxist revolutionary ideology but also in a poetics of revolution that depicted revolution as drama that is alternately staged as farce or tragedy.

1. Charting the Limits of Political Revolution: Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Mask of Anarchy*, "Song to the Men of England" and *A Philosophical View of Reform* (1819-1820)

1.1. Political, Social and Moral Revolution: The Stakes of Shelley's Dilemma

Shelley's 1819 poems underline the need for fundamental social change and, even more radically, a transformation of the socio-economic system. They decisively move towards a concept of social revolution, when they challenge the classical republican paradigm that views socio-revolutionary and socio-economic change as the necessary and inevitable result of a purely political revolution. At the same time Shelley is developing an alternative scenario of social revolution as 'moral revolution'. Wary of advocating revolutionary violence (at least none emanating from the lower classes), he proposes a moral education of the labouring classes in this process. It is believed that this will enable them to revolt peacefully against their physical and psychological enslavement at the hands of the upper classes.

Both historians and critics of English literature (McMaster 1981, Chandler 1998, 11) have suggested possible similarities between England in 1819 and revolutionary Europe in 1848, with respect to the simmering socio-revolutionary tensions as well as to the socio-ideological conflict the literary authors faced. Although the severe socio-economic crisis in Britain after the Napoleonic Wars did not lead to a revolution, unlike in continental Europe in 1848, the case has been made for regarding the late 1810s in England as a period when socio-revolutionary tensions ran high. For instance the social-historian E. P. Thompson maintains that in 1819 in Britain "a revolution was possible"

(1980, 737) and Edward Royle emphasises that the news of the 'Peterloo Massacre'²⁸ caused genuine revolutionary "[f]ear and anger" throughout the country. These feelings "coming on top of economic hardship and thwarted political demands, produced a revolutionary cocktail" (2000, 53), in short, a situation with great socio-revolutionary potential. Notably, Graham McMaster in a socio-historical investigation of Sir Walter Scott's novels has argued that in 1819 British society underwent a similar deep political and social crisis as continental Europe did during the revolutions of 1848. The spectre of social revolution, class war and anarchy that 'Peterloo' raised affected British bourgeois writers of all political persuasions and their attitude towards further social and political change, McMaster argues drawing upon Georg Lukács' assessment of 1848 in the latter's study on the historical novel. Lukács maintains that the socio-revolutionary confrontations of these years had a dramatic impact on all areas of bourgeois "Gebiete der Ideologie" influencing also decisively "das Schicksal von Wissenschaft und Kunst" (cf. 1965 VI, 207-208). McMaster suggests that a similar development took place in Britain in 1819, which presented bourgeois writers with the awkward choice of whether to embrace further political and social reform risking intensifying the class struggle or even the outbreak of a proletarian social revolution, or to defend the increasingly anachronistic socio-political and socio-economic status quo instead:

Lukacs was doubtless [sic] right to stress the importance of 1848 – in continental Europe and in the Austrian Empire particularly. In England, however, the year had less

²⁸ On August 16th 1819 the biggest mass meeting in British history up to that point took place on Saint Peter's Field in Manchester. Between 30, 000 and 100, 000 people gathered to campaign for electoral reform. Faced with these large numbers, the Manchester magistrates decided to have the main speaker Henry Hunt arrested, since – as they argued later – "the whole bore the appearance of insurrection" (Quoted in Stevenson 1992, 284). Yeomanry on horseback moved in to execute the order and, riding into the crowd, wounded several protesters with their sabres. When the yeomanry arrested Hunt, they found themselves surrounded by the crowd. Hussars, who were deployed to assist the yeomanry, hewed their way through the crowd. Panic set in and a massacre ensued, which left at least 11 protesters dead and several hundred wounded. In a sarcastic allusion to the British (and Prussian) triumph over Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815 (in fact some of the hussars were wearing their Waterloo medals), the left-wing press dubbed the massacre of St. Peter's Field, 'Peterloo Massace' or just 'Peterloo' (See Gardner 2002, 35).

significance, while others, which Lukacs ignores, were perhaps just as traumatic. 1848 was the year in which bourgeois writers had either to recognise and accept the new epoch that was dawning, or else be doomed to the role of apologists of a declining era. Scott, I believe, experienced a similar crisis in 1819, the year of Peterloo. The class struggle, or, as Scott called it, the constitutional question, was of course the single most important 'event' between 1815 and 1832 [the year of the passing of the Reform Bill]; most of the individual political crises can be subsumed into it. (McMaster 1981, 90)

In spite of these persuasive arguments put forward by McMaster and social historians to view 1819 in Britain as time of deep social crisis and high socio-revolutionary potential, Shelley's attitude towards social revolution as it emerges in his 1819 poems and his essay *A Philosophical View on Reform*, written 1819 to 1820, (subsequently referred to as *PVR*) has received little critical attention. This seems all the more surprising, since Shelley not only explicitly addresses the contemporary socio-economic crisis, but also strongly engages with the spectre of proletarian social revolution that it and the 'Peterloo' massacre raised. The massacre and its political and social implication are the central subject of his most famous poem from this year, *The Mask of Anarchy*, as its subtitle *Written on the Occasion of the Massacre in Manchester* prominently highlights. Yet, to my knowledge Michael Scrivener is the only scholar who actually recognises how the concept of social revolution is pivotal for understanding the ideological contradictions within Shelley's 1819 writings. Referring specifically to *The Mask of Anarchy* (subsequently abbreviated as *TMoA*), he argues that the poem's dilemma centres on the questions of proletarian-plebeian²⁹ violence and social revolution.

²⁹ In the following the terms 'proletarian', 'proletariat', 'lower class', 'labouring classes', 'working classes', 'labourer' and 'worker' will be used as near synonyms. With the exception of proletarian and proletariat, which only gained currency in the 1830s (see Conze 1984, 38-39), the contemporary discourse uses these terms in close semantic proximity to each other. Yet even though the term 'proletarian' or 'proletariat' did not yet exist, the concept did, as William Cobbett's definition of the labouring classes proves. By the "labouring classes" he understands "those who have no property in anything but their labour" (1998 VII, 494). As early as 1820, he highlights the lack of property as the key characteristic of the proletariat, thus agreeing with Marx and Engels who for instance in the *Manifest* define the proletarian as "eigentumslos" (*MEW* IV, 472). Furthermore Cobbett attributes the same strong socio-revolutionary potential to it that the French and German socialists were later to associate with this class. Its state of absolute destitution

Highlighting Shelley's profound "[a]mbivalence [...] towards social revolution" (1982, 210), he concludes that the poem "has to be recognized as contradictory, at war with itself, not entirely resolved" (199).

Other critics also emphasise the social implications of the poem's contradictions, in particular Shelley's uneasiness about violence as a revolutionary means. For instance, Susan Wolfson has provactively argued that *TMoA* ultimately seems more worried about lower-class violence than about the socio-political violence of the monarchic state. Alluding to its title, she maintains that "[w]hat the poem's contradictions contain, in both senses, is a specter of anarchy – not in the Crown, but in the Men of England" (1997, 202). Apart from ignoring that – as Scrivener (1982) and recently Duffy (2005) have conclusively proven – Shelley was strongly influenced in his political thinking by the philosophical anarchism of his father-in-law, William Godwin, there are further problems inherent in Wolfson's verdict. While she rightly recognises Shelley's anxieties and ambivalence about lower-class violence, she wrongly plays down his fundamental opposition to the ruling system in Britain. Shelley is so adamantly opposed to it precisely because he regards it as more than just a politically oppressive system. In Shelley's view, it constitutes one enormous *socio-economic* apparatus for the exploitation of the poor rather than merely being a *political* system to oppress them. For him, the monarchic order functions only as a political façade kept up to justify boundless exploitation of the lower classes by the ruling classes. "Monarchy is only the string which ties the robber's bundle", he insists in *PVR*. Compared to an "absolute

and lack of property explain for Cobbett the enormity of the threat it poses to contemporary society. Since it "cannot fall much lower", it also forms an extremely determined socio-revolutionary force, endangering all "who have property at stake" (cf. 1998 VIII, 494). Except for the key difference that Cobbett fears the proletarian revolution and Marx and Engels eagerly anticipate it, all three recognise in the proletariat's social status as society's pariah the cause for its strong revolutionary motivation. Since the proletariat cannot sink any lower in its socio-economic decline, it has to realise its full socio-revolutionary potential if it is to liberate itself, Marx and Engels assert in the concluding lines of the *Manifest*. Famously, they call upon the members of this class to unite, even beyond national boundaries, and start a revolution, since they have nothing to lose in it. "Die Proletarier haben nichts in ihr zu verlieren als ihre Ketten. Sie haben eine Welt zu gewinnen" (*MEW* IV, 493).

monarchy", in a parliamentary monarchy such as Britain, the "power of the rich" to exploit the poor has even increased considerably, because in the latter the "name and the office of king is merely a mask of this power". Both only function as a "kind of stalking-horse" for the rich to hide behind and to hide and legitimise their reckless capitalist greed (cf. 1920, 38). The term "Mask" in *TMoA*'s title must be understood in exactly this sense as referring to *any* class system that employs its political ideology and superstructure, "its superstructure of political and religious tyranny" (cf. 1920, 8) for the purpose of socio-economic exploitation. This tactic is neither just used by the Crown of England nor has it been merely practiced by all monarchic systems, but for Shelley it seems to have characterised most systems of government throughout history. As he bitterly remarks in a fragmentary sentence in a footnote to *PVR*, history has been a succession of "[r]egular and graduated systems of alternate slavery and tyranny, by which all except the lowest and the largest class were to be gainers in the materials of subsistence and ostentation at the expenses of that class, the means being fraud and force" (1920, 8).

In a similar way as with the term 'monarchy', Shelley further decisively shifts the common meaning of the key term in the poem's title: "Anarchy". It does not primarily denote anarchy as "a state of lawlessness due to the absence or inefficiency of the supreme power" (*OED*, under 'anarchy'; sense 1a), but on the contrary describes a state with myriads of laws that safeguard the exploitation of the lower classes. As Anarchy himself declares in an act of hubris, he is "'GOD, AND KING, AND LAW'" (l. 37, Shelley 1935, 335)³⁰. Shelley thus poignantly unmaskes how anarchy, in its figurative sense of "[n]on-recognition of moral law" (*OED*, under 'anarchy'; sense 2b), has governed most socio-political and socio-economic systems throughout history, its laws

³⁰ All quotation from Shelley's poems will be taken from this critical edition.

merely tools, arbitrarily devised by the ruling classes to legalise boundless brutal oppression and exploitation of the lower classes.³¹ This is the spectre of anarchy that is forcefully evoked in *TMoA*'s initial apocalyptic vision of utter devastation and destruction, which the monarch Anarchy and his train wreak upon England and its lower-class inhabitants. Probably most pointedly, Bertolt Brecht has summed up this crucial dimension to the depiction of Anarchy's procession. Emphasising Shelley's social realism which is artistically translated into ingenious allegorical and symbolic images, Brecht comments on the semantic shift of 'anarchy' as follows:

So verfolgen wir den Zug der Anarchie auf London zu und sehen große symbolische Bilder und wissen bei jeder Zeile, daß hier die Wirklichkeit zu Wort kam. Hier wurde nicht nur der Mord bei seinem richtigen Namen genannt, sondern, was sich Ruhe und Ordnung nannte, wurde als Anarchie und Verbrechen entlarvt. (Brecht 1969b, 41)

As many critics have pointed out, in order to fundamentally to alter this system of governance by amoral laws which legitimise an anarchic state of criminal socio-economic exploitation Shelley puts forward an ideal concept of a non-violent moral revolution. Most recently, Cian Duffy has insisted that "Shelley's great revolutionary writing" – including *PVR* – "repeatedly insists that a systematic revolution in opinion, a *moral* and *intellectual* revolution, must precede any successful and lasting change in political institutions" (2005, 10). While this way to transform the political and crucially

³¹ Shelley's understanding of anarchy as a system in which the ruling class devises amoral laws to exploit the dominated class strongly anticipates Büchner's views. In a letter written to his family after the failed coup in Frankfurt (around April 6th 1833), Büchner exposes the "*gesetzlichen Zustand*" as a state of eternal upper-class terror committed against the lower-class majority. The former degrade the latter even to the status of slaving animals: "Ein *Gesetz*, das die große Masse der Staatsbürger zum fronenden Vieh macht, um die unnatürlichen Bedürfnisse einer unbedeutenden und verdorbenen Minderzahl zu befriedigen". Although in contrast to Shelley, he does not explicitly mention the term 'anarchy', he also sees the contemporary laws as a form of lawlessness. Rather than by ethical considerations, the contemporary socio-political system is dominated by amoral anarchy: "eine ewige rohe, Gewalt, angetan dem Recht und der gesunden Vernunft". However, in sharp contrast to Shelley he unequivocally advocates socio-revolutionary violence as the only means of changing the *status quo*: "Meine Meinung ist die: Wenn in unserer Zeit etwas helfen soll, so ist es *Gewalt*" (Büchner 2002 II, 366-367; Büchner's emphasis).

also – one has to add – the socio-economic system constitutes (as will show later in this chapter) the *ideal* manner of revolution endorsed by both *PVR* and *TMoA*, the situation after the 'Peterloo Massacre' increasingly questions the practicability of such 'revolutionary action'. Faced with the "unbending realities of actual life" (Shelley 1920, 71) this theoretical solution is challenged by the socio-political circumstances. Most ironically, the spectre of civil war and anarchy that largely motivates Shelley's endorsement of non-violent moral change has already become reality through 'Peterloo'. While "[t]wo years ago it might still have been possible to have commenced a system of gradual reform" (Shelley 1920, 75), after the massacre this option has become entirely impracticable as the past conjunctive form highlights. Not only does Shelley emphasise in an open letter to *The Examiner* (November 3rd 1819) the perceived class and civil war dimension of Peterloo when he voices his horror at the news "that a *troop* of the enraged master manufacturer are let loose with sharpened swords upon a *multitude* of their starving dependents" (1964 II, 136; my emphasis), but in the first part of *TMoA*, he also depicts the devastation that Anarchy and his train wreaks upon England as amounting to civil war. As the repetition of the same words as in the letter underlines, the King Anarchy and his "mighty *troop*" (l. 42), the bourgeois yeomanry as his "hired murders" (l. 60) are "Trampling to a mire of blood / The adoring *multitude*" (ll. 40-41; my emphasis). Anarchy already firmly reigns in an England on the brink of civil war. As Shelley emphasises in *PVR*, civil war is precisely characterised by the utter and "sudden disruption of the bonds of social life" (1920, 90) which the beginning of *TMoA* and Shelley's reaction to the Peterloo Massacre in the open letter highlight.

Susan Wolfson conversely argues that Shelley fears more an impending scenario of lower-class anarchy in the sense of "[a]bsence of government" (*OED*, under 'anarchy'; sense 1a) or fundamental "[u]nsettledness" (sense 2b) that a proletarian mass

revolution might bring about than the continuation of the horror-scenario that the anarchic socio-political *status quo* represents. However, this view has to be considerably revised. As shown, Shelley is concerned about various forms of 'anarchy' and not merely about the spectre of lower-class anarchy. Most importantly she ignores blatantly how Shelley's sympathies and antipathies are weighed. As Kenneth Neil Cameron rightly emphasises, one must not exaggerate the importance of Shelley's fear of the labouring classes for his revolutionary ideology, at the cost of losing perspective of his by far bitterer antipathy towards aristocracy and bourgeoisie.³²

Although "bourgeois timidity" – as Marc Redfield terms it (cf. 2002, 106) – represents an important factor in Shelley's disquiet about lower-class revolutionary violence, his struggle with the concept of social revolution is of still greater importance. What all critics – including Scrivener – have so far failed fully to recognise is how these anxieties are inextricably linked to the emerging concept of social revolution. Pivotal to the latter involves a decidedly more dramatic and painful transition than political revolution. What is at stake are not two competing concepts of government, monarchy and republic, but two radically differing scenarios of society's future: one that is even more strongly divided into two classes fighting a bitter war against each other or one that will have managed to resolve class divisions and socio-economic oppression.

³² "While he sympathized with the working mass [...] he also feared them, though his fear of the ruling class was greater and his hatred of them intense" (Cameron 1979, 237). Brecht identifies even greater sympathies of Shelley with the lower classes. Implicitly attacking Lukàcs' apotheosis of Balzac as the greatest among all realist writers, he argues: "Aber Dichtern wie *Shelley* muß sogar ein noch sichtbarer Platz in der großen Schule der Realisten angewiesen werden als *Balzac*, da er die Abstraktion besser ermöglicht als jener und nicht ein Feind der unteren Klassen ist, sondern ein Freund" (1969b, 44). Recently, David Worrall has reiterated this claim, maintaining that Shelley's "poetry was both subversive of oligarchy and supportive of working-class culture" (2006, 49-50).

1.2. Social Revolution at the Crossroads of Republicanism and Socialism

The ideological tensions and contradictions that result from his perspective on contemporary class struggle form the centrepiece of Shelley's 1819 writings. In fact their attitude towards social revolution constitutes the defining feature of these texts, as Shelley himself suggests in letter to Leigh Hunt dated May 1st 1820. In it he requests Hunt – in vain – to find a potential publisher for a collection of "*popular songs*", which should have included the poems in questions here: *TMoA* and "SME".³³ Shelley emphasises the point that their publication would form his poetic contribution towards radical revolution, a fundamental change not purely on a political but also on a social level. Employing the topos of society as a building he asserts that a thorough transformation of the entire contemporary *social* system is paramount:

The system of society as it exists at present must be overthrown from the foundations with all its superstructure of maxims & forms [...] I wish to ask you if you know of any bookseller who would like to publish a little volume of *popular songs* wholly political, & destined to awaken & direct the imagination of the reformers. I see you smile – but answer my question. (Shelley 1964 II, 191; Shelley's emphasis)

With words that anticipate Marx's analogy of 'base' and 'superstructure', Shelley calls for a radical revolution of the present "system of society" from its "foundations" to its "superstructure", its ideological forms and apparatus. Yet such proto-Marxist insistence on transforming the basis of contemporary society clashes with the designation of the poems "as wholly political" and their addressees as being the moderate "reformers", a

³³ Paul Foot has convincingly argued that Hunt was the wrong person to address. According to Foot Hunt was too moderate to risk the inevitable persecution for publishing any of the poems, especially since he "knew how extreme his friend's [i.e. Shelley's] views were". However, Foot argues, Shelley saw no alternative than to plead with Hunt, since he was not acquainted with those radical publishers, such as Richard Carlile, who were prepared to face imprisonment for disseminating radical texts (cf. 1990, 14).

mainly bourgeois political faction that campaigned for the extension of the franchise and to which Leigh Hunt belonged. It is seemingly suggested that this mammoth task of first destroying today's society and then rebuilding it from scratch could be achieved within the paradigm of socio-political change, either through political reform or political revolution.

While the apparent preference for reform over revolution in this letter might be primarily due to tactical considerations – for instance the attempt to warm the moderate reformer Leigh Hunt to the idea of publishing the poems – we find comparable paradoxes in Shelley's (also unpublished) radical pamphlet, *PVR* (1819).³⁴ In ideological terms this essay wavers between political and social reform and social and political revolution, thus occupying a transitional space between 18th-century republicanism and 19th-century socialism. "In its ideas", Paul Foot pointedly states, "it falls half-way between" Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791/92) and Marx and Engels' *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei* (1848) (cf. 1990, 23). Taking up Foot's cue, I will illustrate how a two-way comparison of *PVR* and *TMoA* to Paine's pamphlet and to early writings by Marx allows us to judge where Shelley's essay stands in relation to political and social revolution.

The central tenet of Paine's pamphlet is that a political change from monarchy to republic, "a general revolution in the principle and the construction of Governments", would automatically spell an end to the exploitation of the poor. Hence, political revolution would be sufficient bring about social justice:

³⁴ In another letter from Italy, dated May 26th 1820, Shelley asks Hunt again about potential publishers, this time for *PVR*. As with his previous enquiry about the poems, Shelley did not receive a reply, in spite of his downplaying once again the radical edge of his writing. To distract from the explosive, socio-revolutionary nature of his essay, Shelley describes it as "boldly but temperately written" and further tries to advertise it as an entirely reformist, non-revolutionary pamphlet in the political-philosophical tradition of Utilitarianism. Most probably referring to Bentham's political pamphlet *A Catechism of Parliamentary Reform* (1817) he casts his essay as "a kind of standard book for the philosophical reformer politically considered, like Jeremy Bentham's something, but different & perhaps more systematic" (1964 II, 569).

When we survey the wretched condition of man under the monarchical and hereditary systems of Government, dragged from his home by one power, or driven by another, and impoverished by taxes more than by enemies, it becomes evident that those systems are bad, and that a general revolution in the principle and construction of Governments is necessary. (Paine 1969, 165)

Paine insists that it is not the economic but the political system that is to blame for the socio-economic inequalities in society. Crucially, it is not considered as a *socio-economic* war between the poor and the rich, between a class that exploits and one that is being exploited: the view of some of the early French socialists (e.g. Grachus Babeuf in the 1790s, Louis-Auguste Blanqui in the 1830s and 40s) and German socialists of the 1840s such as Marx and Engels, Moses Heß and others. Paine in *Rights of Man* regards the underlying conflict in the monarchic states as a *socio-political* war, taking place between the people and their rulers, who constitute its true "enemies" (cf. 1969, 165). Therefore, Paine maintains, revolutionary change in the system of government, from monarchy to democracy, will even solve the socio-economic problem of unequal division of property. As he optimistically implies, if the masses and no longer the few rule, if "[e]very citizen is a member of the Sovereignty", then *all* oppression, even the one of an apparent socio-economic nature, will cease. If "the management of the affairs of a Nation" is no longer "the *property* of any particular man or family, but of the whole community, at whose expense it is supported", then exploitation will no longer be possible (1969, 165; my emphasis). For the monopoly that a small ruling class holds on politics enables them to force the masses into providing for them. This unequal possession of political rights in turn leads to the inequalities in material property. If political rule becomes the property of all, this socio-political change will automatically safeguard a more equal distribution of wealth.

It is crucial to note that Paine's apotheosis of political revolution in *Rights of Man* goes considerably beyond the truism that every successful political revolution inevitably has social implications too, since it invariably destroys an old societal order (e.g. the destruction of the *ancien régime* through the French Revolution).³⁵ For Paine in *Rights of Man* political revolution becomes a cure not only for all political but also for all social ills. Distinctly taking sides in the debate about political versus social revolution, *Rights of Man* insists that at the root of all socio-economic exploitation lies socio-political oppression. This in turn results solely from an unjust political system that enshrines the ideology of a political inequality among man as the natural order. The economic inequalities among humans, the exploitation of the majority of society by the minority arise as an immediate consequence of the political inequality between the social classes. Thus Paine in effect reduces the socio-economically motivated class conflict to a struggle between opposing forms of political governance. To argue with Marx, Paine in *Rights of Man*, his manifesto of political revolution, is caught up in the ideological illusion characteristic of radical republicanism. It blames the political system for all social ills, instead of recognising "in der *jetzigen Einrichtung der Gesellschaft* [...] die Quelle der sozialen Mängel" (cf. *MEGA* II, 456-457; Marx's emphasis).

At first glance, *PVR* also appears to adhere to such a political view of class domination and exploitation, as well to the corresponding belief that a change in the political system alone could solve all socio-economic problems too. A closer look, however, reveals serious doubt about political revolution being the panacea for all of society's ills. Pivotaly, *PVR* repeatedly voices socio-revolutionary demands that go

³⁵ As pointed out earlier, Marx stresses the necessarily social aspect of any revolution in "Kritische Randglossen zum Artikel eines Preußen" (1844): "Jede Revolution lös't die *alte Gesellschaft* auf; insofern ist sie *social*. Jede Revolution stürzt die *alte Gewalt*; insofern ist sie *politisch*". (*MEGA* II, 463; Marx's emphasis)

beyond this republican concept of political equality and move towards communist ideas of socio-economic equality.³⁶ For instance Shelley calls for the nationalisation of parts of "the property of the rich" to pay off Britain's enormous national debt (cf. 1920, 56-57) and further demands a radical redistribution of land and property with the intention of "levelling [...] inordinate wealth" (67). Although – according to Seidel-Höppner's definition – all these measures form key components of social revolution, Shelley seems to consider them as an integral part of political revolution, or even reform. Most pointedly and at the same time most vexingly, these tensions and paradoxes become apparent in the following passage from *PVR*, in which Shelley links the demands for universal suffrage and the abolition of the monarchy to the redistribution of wealth:

I do not understand why those reasoners who propose at any price an immediate appeal to universal suffrage, because it is that which is injustice to withhold, do not insist, on the same ground, on the immediate abolition, for instance, of monarchy and aristocracy, and the levelling of inordinate wealth, an agrarian distribution, including the parks and chases of the rich, of the uncultivated districts of this country. No doubt the institution of universal suffrage would by necessary consequence immediately tend to the temporary abolition of these forms; because it is impossible that the people, having attained the power, should fail to see, what the demagogues now conceal from them, the legitimate consequence of the doctrines, through which they had attained it. (Shelley 1920, 67; Shelley's underlining)

Here the ideology and the rhetoric of political and social reform, political and social revolution inextricably merge, making it is almost impossible to isolate one from the other.³⁷ In Shelley's eyes overthrowing the monarchy and nationalising the land of the

³⁶ Indeed *PVR* adheres to a utopian ideal of a communist society as the following passage proves: "Equality in possessions must be the last result of the utmost refinements of civilization; it is one of the conditions of that system of society towards which, with whatever hope of ultimate success, it is our duty to tend" (Shelley 1920, 70-71).

³⁷ Patrick Brantlinger regards such a blurring of the limits between political and social reform on the one side, and political and social revolution on the other as characteristic of radical middle-class authors who wrote before 1829-1832. Shelley and other contemporary writers, "adopted revolutionary positions" because of "their political isolation," he argues. In contrast to their successors, "the tools of gradual social improvement seemed out of reach" for them (cf. 1977, 16).

rich seems to be part and parcel of one and the same revolutionary movement.³⁸ Necessarily, a political revolution will "immediately" lead to a social revolution, since the former politically emancipates and empowers the poor majority of the populace. The new government democratically elected by the masses will not hesitate to institute social measures to redistribute property and wealth. However, this is likely to lead to a violent socio-economic confrontation with the ousted ruling class, thus endangering social peace and stability. Indeed for Shelley it is such a scenario of bloody social revolution including the spectre of open class war and prolonged conflict about property, "a civil war" that constitutes "the legitimate consequence" of any violent political transformation: a disquieting insight that the "demagogues" who aim to incite the masses to overthrow the political system are careful to obscure (1920, 67).

So far Shelley here by and large only echoes – and at the same time critically reflects upon – Paine's tenet put forward in *Rights of Man* almost thirty years earlier that political revolution would automatically effect positive social change, including ending socio-economic oppression of the poor. The fundamental difference, however, between Paine's and Shelley's views is that the former from his political republican perspective regards socio-economic exploitation as a function of the political system, whereas Shelley is beginning to move towards a proto-Marxist view that regards the political system as a secondary function, a superstructure, built upon a socio-economic system which forms its basis. This fundamental paradigm shift is reflected in the way Shelley subtly changes the semantics of those entities that have traditionally constituted the main targets of revolutionary republicanism: the monarchy and the aristocracy. Shelley's

³⁸ It is likely that Shelley here echoes the demands of a contemporary ultra-radical faction: the 'Spenceans' named after the radical writer Thomas Spence. For this group the nationalisation of land after an overthrow of the present government formed a key tenet of their revolutionary agenda (See for instance Worrall 1992, 2). Anne Janowitz has shown how the ideas of Spence and his followers had a key impact on Romantic poetry (1998, 71-112); an influence she also traces in Shelley's poems *TMoA* and *Queen Mab* (1998, 97-108).

hopes and anxieties about revolutionary change can only be adequately understood if one considers carefully how he extends these socio-political concepts to include a decidedly socio-economic dimension. As mentioned earlier, 'monarchy' in *PVR* constitutes not a *political system* of government, but the *political expression* of the dominance of a certain socio-economic class: it has "represented in truth the interest of the rich" (cf. Shelley 1920, 37-38). Shelley's understanding of the term 'aristocracy' in the essay acquires an even more pronounced socio-economic dimension. Aristocracy not only includes the old feudal, hereditary aristocratic order, but crucially also the bourgeois capitalists. In a predominantly socio-economic sense, an aristocrat for him is anyone who lives by exploiting the labour of others while keeping the profit for himself. This becomes evident when he defines aristocracy in "that ordinary sense which signifies that class of persons who possess a right to the produce of the labour of others, without dedicating to the common service any labour in return" (1920, 43). He further underlines that even the greatest political revolution has never tried to abolish this "class of persons, whose existence is a prodigious anomaly in the social system" (43). The increasing hegemony of the bourgeoisie and breakthrough of capitalism, which the modern political revolutions have secured (in particular the British 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688 and the French Revolution), have only led to "the establishment of a new aristocracy which has its basis in funds as the old one had its basis in force" (43). Blunt military force has been replaced by the much subtler violence of the financial dealings and entrepreneurial ventures of industrial capitalism.³⁹ Political justice may have increased through these revolutions, but social justice has not. Understanding equal justice in a decidedly social sense, Shelley indirectly criticises the French Revolution for this omission, when he asserts, "there has never been an approach in

³⁹ The notion that the bourgeoisie constitutes such a shadow 'aristocracy', a moneyed aristocracy ('l'aristocratie d'argent' or 'Geldaristokratie') emerges in French and German revolutionary discourse and literature only in the 1830s. (See Chapter 2 of this thesis).

practice towards any plan of political society modelled on equal justice, at least in the complicated mechanism of modern life" (44). Shelley's ideological shift towards social equality demonstrates his growing awareness that any further effective revolutionary action must radically transform social politics and socio-economics. He is unable, however, to effect an unequivocal prioritisation in terms of the competing concepts concerning social revolution, political revolution and reform.

This also becomes evident when in the passage from *PVR* quoted above he casts doubt on the concept of revolutionary transformation as a whole. The change from monarchy to democracy, it is underlined, "would by necessary consequence immediately tend to the temporary abolition of these forms" of socio-economic exploitation. Although a political revolution is thought to lead to a *momentary* increase in *political* and *social* justice, this will be purchased at a high price: a dramatic *long-term* rise in political and social insecurity. Therefore a social republican system brought about by revolution is not likely to last long, since the violence that invariably accompanies it is likely to provoke a counter-revolution. The crucial difference from Paine is that Shelley is so worried about the prospect of prolonged class war, which he regards as the inevitable consequence of the violent establishment of a republic, that he even questions the benefits of such change in the system of government in the first place. Although in principle he strongly endorses a republican state form and full democracy, bourgeois class fears apparently make him favour a parliamentary monarchy with limited suffrage.

A Republic, however just in its principle and glorious in its object, would through the violence and sudden change which must attend it, incur a great risk of being as rapid in its decline as in its growth. [...] A civil war, which might be engendered by the passions attending on this mode of reform, would confirm in the mass of the nation those military habits which have been already introduced by our tyrants, and with which liberty is incompatible. (Shelley 1920, 67-68)

With some justification one could claim that Shelley's fear of the militant masses forms a stereotypical bourgeois-liberal anxiety, a view that is further supported when he declares the masses as yet unripe for democracy. They "should be instructed in the whole truth" and "their rights" *before* any revolution is attempted in order for them to be morally ready to partake in the running of the state (cf. 1920, 67). The Shape⁴⁰ in *TMoA* echoes this view that the moral education of the lower classes forms the decisive step in the fight for emancipation and liberation. She recommends "Science, Poetry, and Thought" (l. 254) as beacons in their struggle and further instructs the masses to cultivate their virtues, "Spirit, Patience, Gentleness" (l. 258), rather than improving their insurrectionary skills. It almost goes without saying that this exhortation reflects deeply rooted upper-class anxieties about the savagery and barbarity of the uneducated and uncivilised proletarians. Yet it is problematic to regard the Shape here as Shelley's exact political-poetic double, as Richard Cronin has argued. According to him, she is "a mythopoeic version of the Whig aristocrat, authorized by his culture and moral refinement to act as a champion of the inarticulate masses", hence forming a direct projection of Shelley's alleged own socio-political identity (2000, 179).

However, as for instance his socialist proposals in *PVR* such as nationalisation of land owned by the rich landed gentry prove, Shelley considerably transcends such a liberal stance. Further it is not sufficient to explain Shelley's reluctance to embrace emphatically either political or social *mass* revolution solely by class fears. Such

⁴⁰ The materialisation of this allegorical figure takes place in stanzas XXVI to XXX. Immediately killing Anarchy, she thereby rescues Hope from being trampled to death by the train of Anarchy. Through a desperate act of self-sacrifice Hope, who looks "more like Despair" (l. 87), tries to stop this wave of destruction. The Shape's subsequent address to the masses does not merely take up the majority of the poem's lines (226 lines out of 370), but also engages with all of the poem's key concerns. While, with certain justification, some critics have identified her as an alternative revolutionary incarnation of the Goddess Britannia –she is first described in the poem as "a Shape arrayed in mail" (l. 110) – I will refer to her as "the Shape". In my opinion this term describes best her protean ambiguity, which constitutes her defining trait both in respect to her changing appearance and her shifting ideology.

simplistic readings of his 1819 texts fall short of the complexity and depth of his concerns raised in them. First and foremost, he is extremely worried that a violent uprising of the oppressed masses will unleash a vicious cycle of revolutionary violence and counter violence. His anxieties are linked to the seminal insight that a hidden socio-economic war is taking place between a class of exploiters and a class of the exploited that underlies all existing social relations, a radical departure from a republican position on contemporary society. As for instance the *Shape* emphasises, the lower classes are exposed to socio-economic violence on a daily basis, blighting their existence:

LXIX

"From the haunts of daily life
Where is waged the daily strife
With common wants and common cares
Which sows the human heart with tares – (ll. 279-282).

These insights into violence, open or hidden, as the governing principle of proletarian life discredit the notion that a mass revolution could be limited to a purely political revolution as well as the hope that the violence unleashed by it would stop with the achievement of political equality. For Shelley these beliefs are a delusion, since what the proletarians are fighting for goes far beyond the issues of reform, of political participation and emancipation. In essence what they are struggling for is not merely social equality either, but a reversal of their fundamental alienation from humanity.

As Shelley clarifies in the lines immediately following this passage, this fundamental isolation of the poor from the political and the social, indeed from any human sphere has left indelible scars on the lower classes that a conventional revolution will be unable to heal. Ever since "the Roman Empire, that vast and successful scheme for the enslaving [of] the most civilised portion of mankind, to the epoch of the French

Revolution" history has been a succession of oppression and exploitation, Shelley bitterly maintains at the beginning of *PVR* (1920, 1-2). This legacy of violence has alienated the masses from their human essence and turned them into a potentially militant force. Seemingly only referring to the poor being forcibly recruited as soldiers – a practice still fresh in the collective memory only four years after the end of the Napoleonic Wars – Shelley casts the proletarian soldier as the epitome of a wider alienation of the lower classes from humanity which is due to their total enslavement:

From the moment that a man is a soldier, he becomes a slave. He is taught obedience; his will is no longer, which is the most sacred prerogative of men, guided by his own judgement. He is taught to despise human life and suffering; this is the universal distinction of slaves. (Shelley 1920, 68)

While at first glance Shelley in his depiction of the proletarian who was made a soldier seems to re-inscribe the aristocratic-bourgeois horror image of the lower-class mob as a murderous army,⁴¹ he in fact turns the accusations of moral depravity and inhumane cruelty against the ruling classes themselves. The latter, their brutish masters with their cruel and inhumane skills, teach the proletarians to become beast-like slavish creatures, without reason, will and morals, in the first place. Again, as with the terms 'anarchy', 'monarchy' and 'aristocracy', Shelley achieves this juxtaposition by introducing a semantic shift in the meaning of the term. When he defines disrespect "of human life and suffering" as "the universal distinction of slaves", then he effectively casts the bourgeois masters as the real slaves. They are the ones who truly despise human life, especially if the human beings belong to the working classes, be it the protesters on the

⁴¹ For a powerful contemporary expression of the upper-class fears that a depraved mob is assailing the moral foundations of the British state, see for instance George Cruikshank's caricature "Death or Liberty! Or Britannia & the Virtues of the Constitution in Danger of Violation from the Great Libertine, Radical Reform!" (December 1st 1819) (appendix, image I).

occasion of the Peterloo massacre or workers forced to produce under inhumane conditions.

Shelley's 1819 texts focus particularly strongly on the latter aspect, the violence intrinsic to the capitalist relations of production. Sustained socio-economic exploitation has exactly the same de-humanising and alienating impact on the lower classes as direct military force. If anything, in its insidious workings, it has an even more profoundly devastating effect on the proletarian existence and their social self. As both *PVR* and in *TMoA* stress, exploitation is worse under liberalism and industrial capitalism than it has ever been, even under the darkest most tyrannical regimes of the past.⁴² In spite of England being a parliamentary monarchy, human rights, let alone social rights, for the lower classes are non-existent. This conviction becomes evident when the Shape in *TMoA* maintains that the exploitation inherent in the capitalist industrial process robs the proletarians of their social self:

XLVI

"'Tis to be slave in soul
And to hold no strong control
Over your own wills, but be
All that others make of ye. (ll. 184-187)

Exactly echoing the key words of the passage from *PVR* quoted above, "slave" and "will", she implies that it is their profession as proletarians, as the modern slaves that deprives them as much of a will of their own as the soldier. Both, the labourer as well as the soldier, are forced to abandon their human self and are solely being brutally shaped

⁴² The Shape in *TMoA* exposes how the rich capitalists, aided by the introduction of paper money "the Ghost of Gold [,] / Take from Toil a thousandfold", thus making a substantially larger profit from the exploitation of labour than was ever possible in the feudal "tyrannies of old" (cf. ll. 176-179). The more sophisticated mechanisms of advanced capitalism enable them to siphon off a far greater percentage of labour's surplus value. "Neither the Persian monarchy nor the Roman empire [...] ever extorted a twentieth part the proportion now extorted from the property and labour of the inhabitants of Great Britain", Shelley echoes this view in *PVR* (1920, 39-40)

by external forces, thus resulting in a state of utter alienation. While the latter is being turned into a killing machine, the labourer is being turned into a machine to produce goods for the sole profit of the capitalist master and for consumption by the upper classes. In both processes a comparable degree of physical and psychological violence is involved and both radically alienate the poor from their human self. These are the implications of the Shape's definition of "Freedom" *ex negativo*, when she spells out in a decidedly socio-economic sense what "slavery" means for the labouring classes:

XXXVI

"What is Freedom? – ye can tell
That which slavery is, too well –
For its very name has grown
To an echo of your own.

XL

"'Tis to work and have such a pay
As just keeps life from day to day
In your limbs, as in a cell
For the tyrants' use to dwell.

XLI

"So that ye for them are made
Loom, and plough, and sword, and spade,
With or without your own will bent
To their defence and nourishment. (ll. 156-167)

"Slavery" is defined no longer in its traditional republican sense as a *politically* oppressive but rather as a *socio-economically* exploitative condition. Crucially, Shelley here does not attack the tools of extortion employed by an authoritarian government, such as excessive taxes levied on the poor, but mounts a much more fundamental critique of the socio-economic system. It blames the capitalist process of production itself, exposing it as a form of brutal class violence. This perspective on the cause of

destitution differs considerably not only from Paine's verdict in *Rights of Man* that the poor are "impoverished by taxes more than by enemies", but also stands in sharp contrast to many of the contemporary radical voices. Like Paine they also identify the high taxes levied on the poor as the primary cause of their destitution.⁴³ Noel Thompson stresses that the tendency to blame the political rather than the socio-economic system for the exploitation of the poor was widespread among radical writers of this period. He maintains that to view exploitation as caused by political factors rather than by inherent flaws in the economic system, to regard it as a symptom of bad governance rather than one of intrinsic exploitative nature of capitalism, formed the common characteristic of the political economy that the contemporary radical press developed.⁴⁴ The Shape mounts a more direct attack of the socio-economic system, as she reveals how the labourers are being deprived of the surplus value of their labour in the process of production, when they are being paid so little for their hard work that they are barely able to survive. Playing with the double meaning of "cell" – prison cell and cell of the body⁴⁵ – the Shape implies that they are imprisoned in a life of lethal toil. More

⁴³ The following angry attack on the excessive taxation of the poor from the introduction to John Wade's *Black Book* (1819) merely forms a particularly vociferous indictment of a malpractice which also William Cobbet, Richard Carlile and others identified as the main cause for the extreme poverty in Britain: "Instead of lightening the burdens of the people by retrenchment, THREE MILLIONS of additional taxes are to be imposed to supply the waste of the government; and upon whom are they to be levied? Not upon the clergy, the fundholders, nor the landholders; – no! upon none of these, but upon the useful classes, upon those classes we are now addressing. But it is upon the working classes that the fresh burdens fall with the most merciless weight. – Instead of relieving them from the salt-tax, the duties on leather, soap, and candles; they are now loaded with new imposts still more oppressive, and pursued through the whole circle of their enjoyments – beer – clothing – tea – tobacco – nothing has escaped the rapacity of their oppressors" (Wade 1820, 1). In 1820 Cobbett claims categorically that when "we take a view of the effects of *taxation*" there no is no need to look "further for the cause of our misery" (cf. 1998 VIII, 492; Cobbett's emphasis).

⁴⁴ As Thompson sums up, "exploitation as understood by writers in the radical press of the period 1816-1821 was essentially the product of factors exogenous to the functioning of economy [...] Economic ills and disturbances were not interpreted by radical writers as originating within the economic system; rather, they had their origin outside it. Such an analysis may have given material substance to attacks upon the political status quo but it did not contribute much in theoretical terms to the formation of a popular, working-class political economy" (1984, 121).

⁴⁵ The *OED* points out that while the precise modern biological sense of 'cell' as the "ultimate element in organic structures" was only determined in the 20th century, it had already been foreshadowed in scientific discourse throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. In its meaning as an "enclosed space, cavity, or sac, in organized bodies" as well in its more specific sense as "minute cavities or interstices in the structure of

radically than even Cobbett who defines "labouring classes" as "those who have no property in anything but their labour", in *TMoA* they do not hold any sort of ownership, neither over their labour nor even over their own bodies. Life solely inhabits their tortured physical frame "for the tyrants' use". One could even argue that these lines evoke an image of the capitalists as parasites which usurp the cells of the labourers' bodies for their own purposes of maximising profit. This brutal exploitation of proletarian labour and their bodies threatens their very lives. When the capitalists claim ownership even over their last two remaining forms of property – their bodies and their labour – proletarian existence turns into an eternal struggle for survival for good, as their alienated labour keeps them scarcely alive "from day to day" (l. 161).

This alienation of the producers both from their labour and their products results also in alienation from their essence as human beings. They become "slaves in soul" and products of their capitalists exploiters, when they are described as being "all that others make" of them. Total alienation strips the labourers of their humanity and reduces them to the sub-human status of inanimate objects. Utterly reified and deprived of any will of their own, they are turned into to the very machines and tools that they employ in their labour. They are "made / Loom and plough, and sword" for the capitalists.⁴⁶ However, in contrast to objects and animals the proletarians possess a rudimentary awareness that their suffering is inhuman, as the Shape emphasises in stanza LI:

"This is Slavery – savage men,
Or wild beast within a den
Would not endure not as ye do –
But such ills they never knew. (ll. 205-208)

any tissue, mineral substance, etc.", it was already current in the early 19th century. The *OED* quotes an anatomy book from 1819, which uses 'cell' in the biological sense of cellular membrane: "[...] by means of communication of the cells of this membrane [...] the butchers blow up their veal".

⁴⁶ In *PVR* Shelley, without resorting to metaphors, directly indicts the capitalist practice of using the workers as machinery. Referring in particular to the especially outrageous exploitation of child labour, he accuses the capitalists of turning "children into lifeless and bloodless machines" (1920, 42-43).

Playing with the two shades of meaning of the word 'to know' – to experience the suffering and to perceive the causes of it and means to remedy it – the Shape suggests that a full consciousness of their situation is the necessary prerequisite for revolutionary action by the proletarians. This conclusion anticipates Marx's who, while similarly emphasizing the total alienation and dehumanisation of the proletariat, asserts in the "*Einleitung Zur Kritik der Hegel'schen Rechts-Philosophie*" (1844) that only a social and not a political revolution is able to liberate this class. Since its social condition is "*der völlige Verlust des Menschen*" a radical social revolution aiming for "*die völlige Wiedergewinnung des Menschen*" is the only way to emancipate it (cf. *MEGA* II, 182; Marx's emphasis). However the problem remains what form this social revolution ought to take, whether it ought to be a violent proletarian revolution, a violent "*Protestation des Menschen gegen das entmenschte Leben*" (cf. *MEGA* II, 462) as Marx will posit later, or whether it should aim to succeed by moral force alone.

1.3. The Ethics of Proletarian Resistance: Moral versus Physical Force

Shelley's scenario of a non-violent moral social revolution, which aims to overcome the socio-economic crisis of capitalism and the class struggle, its underlying cause, must be regarded as the logical consequence of his social and political philosophy. However, it also constitutes a critical reaction to contemporary radical voices that used a similar analysis of the contemporary socio-economic and socio-political situation to justify a violent proletarian uprising against the system.

This can be illustrated by comparing *TMoA* to a series of articles on Peterloo that the radical self-taught journalist and former artisan Richard Carlile wrote for his *Republican* in August and September 1819. In them a rudimentary analysis of the exploitation of labour leads to a strong endorsement of proletarian revolutionary action. One key concern of both Carlile's and the Shape's economic analyses is what Noel Thompson terms the increasing "proletarianisation of labour"⁴⁷ throughout the 19th century, "on which contemporary commentators [...] critical of the existing economic and social arrangements inevitably focused" (1998, 33). Carlile regards the proletarianisation of labour as the root of the present socio-political crisis in Britain. He insists that the only means to end the extreme misery of the poor is for them to obtain "a fair requital for their hard labour". Similarly the Shape regards the proletarianisation of labour, the payment of an unfair and inadequate wage, as one of the principal causes for the labourers' precarious living situation: "'Tis to work and have such a pay / As just keeps life from day to day" (ll. 160-161). Extending the concept of freedom, as the

⁴⁷ For an explicit indictment of worsening proletarianisation of labour compare also the following statement from *PVR*: "the worth of the labour of twenty hours now, in food and clothing, is equivalent to the worth of ten hours then" (Shelley 1920, 47-48).

Shape does in *TMoA*, from a narrow *political* to a comprehensive *socio-political* sense, Carlile demands the speedy liberation of the poor from material oppression:

The great mass of the People of this country are not only deprived of even the least shadow of liberty, but are deprived of the necessities of life, and their only means of obtaining them – a fair requital for their hard labour. (Carlile 1970 I, 34)

However, in sharp contrast to Shelley, Carlile concludes from this scenario of total socio-economic exploitation and material suffering that lower-class physical force constitutes the only solution to this crisis:

Is it not in the course of nature that you should conspire together to get rid of such evils as those? [...] those authorities treat both you and your complaints with contempt; and does it not follow as an imperative necessity that you should threaten to effect by force what you find unattainable by milder means? The necessity is not only a justification of your threatening, but of your putting that threat into execution. (Carlile 1970 I, 34)

Harking back to the ancient British constitutional right to insurrection as a legitimate form of self-defence against tyranny,⁴⁸ Carlile here openly calls for revolution. Contrary to the Shape who advocates non-violent protest, he demands forceful resistance, "self-defence", against any further state and class violence⁴⁹ against the people to prevent another Peterloo massacre from happening:

⁴⁸ For instance John Belchem refers to this right and emphasises the crucial importance it held for the radicals after Peterloo. For the "constitutional radicals" the question whether to revolt or not formed a major dilemma for their leaders. He asserts that the prolonged arguments over the question of violent action, "physical resistance" led to the loss of any revolutionary momentum (see 1996, 49).

⁴⁹ Edward Royle points out that "the meeting [at St. Peter's Field] was held against a background of social tensions which were potentially revolutionary" but that the "real danger came after news of the massacre spread" (2000, 52 & 53). Royle & Walvin further stress the importance of Peterloo for the polarisation of the class conflict in the period, when they claim that it, "more than any other single event in the period 1815-1832, helped feed the hostility of working-class reformers to the government and the social class from which the yeomanry was recruited" (1982, 119). John Mark Gardner identifies in the aftermath of Peterloo "the largest, and most politically and socially conscious display of class conflict that Britain has ever seen" (2002, 18), claiming that in "many of the numerous pamphlets released relating to the massacre is a realisation that a class war is taking place" (45) Furthermore some contemporary cartoons depicting the massacre also display strong overtones of class war. For instance George Cruikshank's caricature "Britons, strike home!" (August 1819) shows a mounted troop of obese yeomanry men hacking

In advising you to call another public meeting, I would earnestly recommend you to do it the earliest time possible [...] and at the same time seek some more advantageous spot for self-defence, in case of attack, than St. Peter's Field – it was, of all places, the most unfortunate for an unarmed people to be assailed by a brutal armed force. We must not shrink from duty from the terror of a similar attack. Let every man be prepared to sell his life as dearly as possible, and I'll pledge mine that we can beat off the combined Yeomanry Cavalry of the whole country. (Carlile 1970, 35-36)

Carlile's advice to the people to devise an effective strategy of defence for the next meeting is diametrically opposed to the Shape's, when she calls upon the people to gather for "a vast assembly" (l. 295). For the Shape rallying words, shouts of "Liberty" (l. 335) have to act as a substitute for forceful lower-class action. In contrast to Carlile's pragmatic and actively revolutionary view, in the Shape's idealistic call to 'arms' words are essentially to replace weapons and armour as the people's means both for self-defence and a counter-attack:

LXXIV

"Be your strong and simple words
Keen to wound as sharpened swords,
And wide as targes let them be,
With their shade to cover ye. (ll. 299-302)

Theoretically this strategy of moral resistance circumnavigates the problem that an endless succession of violence and counter-violence may create a vicious circle.

Practically, however, as she is well aware, her advice means further – potentially

down emaciated lower-class figures, some of them dressed in rags (see appendix, image II). With a "call to class warfare" (Patten 1992, 154), their leader spurs his men: "Down with'em! Chop em down my brave boys: give them no quarter they want to take our Beef & Pudding from us." This command clearly parodies the bourgeois fear of the poor waging war on the possessions of the rich, while at the same limiting the comprehensive proletarian demands to the food question. Some critics have investigated Shelley's engagement with popular caricature in his 1819 texts. Scrivener investigates links between *TMoA*'s iconography and the political illustrated satires that William Hone and George Cruikshank were publishing at the same time (see 1992, 200-209). For a recent comparative analysis of Cruikshank's and Shelley's gendered depiction of revolution in their 1819 caricatures (including "Britons, strike home!") and poems respectively, see Cross 2004.

senseless – loss of lower-class life, for the consequence will just be another massacre in the style of Peterloo. The idea that mere words can protect the poor from upper-class violence proves an illusion even in Shape's vision within the fiction of Shelley's poem. The Yeomanry is likely to butcher the passive people again, as the Shape's own words testify in stanza LXXXIV, when she urges the masses stoically and passively to endure the frenzy of killing and mutilation. While she is conscious of the numerical strength of the masses – "ye are many, they are few" – she incongruously tells them to remain passive and resignedly to accept their martyrdom: "Look upon as they slay / Till their rage has died away" (ll. 346-347). The Shape suggests that their aggressors will then experience the moral feeling of shame at their actions; an emotion which will form the kernel for a thorough ethical transformation in their oppressors. Experiencing profound shame will then lead to the soldiers distancing themselves from the yeomanry, to fraternising with the people and turning against their oppressors:

LXXXV

"Then they will return with shame
To the place from where they came,
And the blood thus shed will speak
In hot blushes on their cheek.

[...]

LXXXVI

"And the bold, true warriors
Who have hugged Dangers in wars
Will turn to those who would be free,
Ashamed of such base company. (ll. 347-350 & ll. 356-359)

The people's non-violent moral victory manifests itself in the conversion of the yeomanry and the army. Having been trained to become a killing machine, they are slowly regaining their humanity from which they have been alienated. Rhetorically this

is expressed through a personification that is combined with a metonymy: the spilled blood of the crowd will proclaim the moral defeat of their murderers through the latter's flushed faces that recall recalled the people's blood they have spilt. However, this means that in the Shape's vision, the people are not allowed to speak up for themselves and must have to remain mute. Metonymically, their blood "will speak up" thus constituting both a symbol of people's martyrdom and the crucial sign that that announces the beginning ethical transformation of their enemies. The rhetorical intricacy with which this argument is put forward reflects the constructed nature of Shelley's scenario of a moral revolution. To maintain that passive resistance will suffice to achieve a fundamental transition of the politically and socially equally repressive society is highly unconvincing, both in respect to the particular situation and in general.⁵⁰

By contrast Carlile criticises the passivity the crowd at Peterloo displayed, and implies that at a future meeting an arming of the masses will be the only way to prevent another massacre from occurring. He also asserts that the numerical superiority of the armed masses will ensure their *military* victory over government forces, if the people mount a determined counter attack, as opposed to Shelley's *moral* victory achieved through passive resistance:

To me it was a painful moment, to think that such a body of fine resolute men should have been surprised unarmed by a cowardly and ferocious armed force – cowardly murderers, that would have shrunk from fifty of you with your pikes; yet who could riotously and wantonly plunge their sabres into the bosom of women, because they knew the men had not weapons to protect them. (Carlile 1970, 33)

⁵⁰ Ian Pindar in a review of Mark Kulansky's recent book on the history of on non-violence finds a general misconception behind the strategy of passive resistance that could also be said to apply to the Shape's argument: "Violence is immoral, the argument goes, so by not defending themselves pacifists can claim a moral victory, eventually shaming their opponent into submission. The flaw in this argument is that it assumes that one's opponent is capable at experiencing shame at his actions. Often the only dilemma pacifists pose to their aggressors is how to dispose of so many corpses. Even Kurlansky concedes that absolute passivity might result in annihilation, which seems a high price to pay for the moral high ground" (2007, 8). He further explicitly points out that this reckoning behind the strategy of passive resistance "is sadly contradicted by the Peterloo massacre" (8).

He does not harbour the Shape's naïve hope that the regular army will side with the people, ashamed to be associated with the massacring Yeomanry, and paints a much more realistic picture of the military's continued violent reaction to peaceful protest. For Carlile the sustained upper-class violence not only justifies proletarian counter-violence, but also demands this strategy as the only means to procure socio-political change:

[... I]f the military will consent to cut the throats of their friends and relatives, we have no alternative but to prepare to sell our lives as dear as possible; or to obtain, by the necessary means, the necessary reform. (Carlile 1970 I, 35)

What emerges through Shelley's and Carlile's opposing views is the ideological conflict between physical and moral force as instruments of revolutionary change. While the Shape discourages lower-class revolutionary violence and advocates moral force, Carlile advocates physical force and endorses lower class violence.

However, even Carlile's endorsement of physical force is based on arguments that state a moral case for legitimate resistance against state violence enshrined by the unwritten ancient British Constitution. In essence Carlile advocates a similar ultra-radical socio-revolutionary stance as the following anonymous Spencean pamphlet found on the streets of London on the night of August 24th 1819, nine days after the Peterloo massacre. Both cast physical resistance and planned insurrection against tyranny as the moral right and duty of the British people:

To a Brave British People
Britons Arise and take up Arms in Support of your Lawfull [sic] Rights & Privileges [...].
(Quoted after Worrall 1992, 145)

The reference to the constitutional British right of resistance here functions as a call for insurrection, whereas the Shape in *TMoA* employs the "old laws of England" (l. 331) as a crucial argument to advocate moral resistance.⁵¹

The ideological key difference between the two writers emerges most clearly if one compares the following passage from one of Carlile's Peterloo articles to the concluding stanzas of *TMoA*. Since these passages are closely interrelated in their imagery, I would even go as far as to maintain that the ending of *TMoA* forms a direct, intertextual rebuttal of Carlile's advice to the lower classes immediately to start socio-revolutionary action by attacking their enemies:⁵²

There is yet time to recover yourselves, but for your families, and your country's sake, defer not till to-morrow, that which should be done today. Whilst you delay, your enemies will seek to weaken you – you cannot be stronger than at the present time – resolve and you will speedily accomplish – your enemies have taken the alarm and are on the alert – prepare and strike at them. Let your voice come round them like the rolling thunder, and let your indignation flash on them, as the destructive fluid of the terrific lightning. The majority of you have nothing to lose and every thing to gain, far better for you it would be to perish in an attempt to recover for yourselves and families the necessaries of life, than to perish from the direful effects of hunger and starvation. (Carlile 1970 I, 6)

Pivotaly, here a kind of proletarian revolutionary action is advocated that clearly bears socio-revolutionary overtones. The aim of the uprising – and here crucially Carlile agrees with Shelley – must be socio-economic rather than political: "to recover [...] the necessaries of life" and not gain the right to vote. Yet, while Carlile maintains that the masses have never been "stronger than at the present time" and make use of their moral

⁵¹ Dawson ignores this crucial aspect when he argues that the reference to old laws of England constitutes a purely "tactical appeal to a political tradition" in order to improve the chances of the poem being published (cf. 1991, 34).

⁵² There is positive evidence that Shelley read British newspapers and journals even though he lived in Italy. In a letter from Livorno to his friend Thomas Love Peacock (dated September 9th 1819), Shelley thanks him for his "attention in sending the papers which contain the terrible and important news of Manchester". He further urges Peacock to provide him with further up-to-date political news coverage: "Pray, let me have the *earliest* political news which you consider of importance at this crisis" (Shelley 1964 II, 119; Shelley's emphasis).

strength by exerting physical force, the Shape advises the masses: "Do not thus when ye are strong" (l. 196). Instead she orders the poor to suppress their revolutionary anger, to "Stand [...] calm and resolute" and fend off their oppressors merely with their composed "looks" that are to function as substitutes for "weapons" (cf. ll. 319-322). In sharp opposition to Carlile the masses are further deprived of a revolutionary voice of their own. Merely their stoically borne martyrdom, their "slaughter" at the hands of their class-enemies shall become "Eloquent, oracular" (l. 360 & 363), not they themselves:

LXXXIX

"And this slaughter to the Nation
Shall steam up like inspiration,
Eloquent, oracular;
A volcano heard afar.

XC

"And these words shall then become
Like Oppression's thundered doom
Ringing through each heart and brain,
Heard again – again – again – (ll. 364-367).

Both texts, employing traditional revolutionary rhetoric, liken the voice of revolution to thunder.⁵³ However, in contrast to Carlile where the shouts of the fighting poor merge into one united voice likened to "rolling thunder", in the *TMoA* the Shape's voice dominates as it narrates the scenario. The booming sound that accompanies the Shape's vision of a non-violent moral revolution is nothing but the reverberating echo of her earlier command to "rise like lions after thunder" (l. 368 & l. 151 respectively). Her call, which she in a self-congratulatory and over-optimistic manner hails as "Oppression's thundered doom", is echoed by the multitude, producing a deafening noise. Far from

⁵³ Additionally, Shelley recurs here to the image of the approaching revolution as an erupting volcano; a frequent metaphor in Shelley's poetry. For a discussion of the political and revolutionary importance of the sublime volcanic images in Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, see Duffy 2005, 176-184.

constituting an outright call for lower-class violent revolution or at least an encouragement of their socio-revolutionary impulses after Peterloo, the Shape's amplified words aim to silence this very demand and to replace it didactically – from socially superior perspective – with the concept of a moral revolution. Unlike in Carlile's scenario the oppressed masses remain voiceless, passive listeners to the Shape's monologue of how to best conduct a non-violent, moral revolution. Although the masses are acknowledged as the decisive force in the revolutionary process – "Ye are many, they are few" the Shape stresses at the beginning and the end of her address (l. 156 & l. 372) – their voice and perspective on how to achieve socio-political transformation is withheld. The masses are to act as vital but voiceless extras in the attempt to achieve revolution through moral force: "an unwarlike display of the irresistible number and union of the people", as Shelley proposes in *PVR* (1920, 89). In spite of all of the poem's violently revolutionary imagery, we are presented instead with an essentially quietist, bourgeois view which propagates idealist moral instead of pragmatic physical action.

In particular, the comparison with Carlile's article has clearly shown how Shelley's moral revolution constitutes a *theoretically* but not *practically* valid attempt to escape out of the following impasse: a decisive shift towards proletarian social resistance and social revolution is counteracted by the fear that proletarian violence might lead to class violence spinning even further out of control. However, even Carlile's much more unambiguous and pragmatic endorsement of physical force is still characterised by a key ethical caveat. Violence is only permissible as a reaction to violence, as a means of resistance. It is not permissible as a means for the masses to achieve socio-political liberation by starting the revolution themselves. They have to wait for concrete violent transgressions of their oppressor first to be allowed to resort to

physical violence themselves. In this respect both concepts of a moral revolution differ considerably from Marx's theory that socio-economic oppression is so totally inscribed into the everyday seemingly peaceful workings of bourgeois capitalism that physical force of a revolutionary-united proletariat is the only way to redress it. In the remainder of this chapter I will discuss how Shelley in "Song to the Men of England" (1819) (hereafter abbreviated as "SME") moves a considerable step closer to such a view of proletarian social revolution.

1.4. "Song to the Men of England" versus *The Mask of Anarchy*: The Limits of Moral Revolution and the Collapse of the 'Moral Economy'

Shelley's concept of moral revolution as the means to achieve fundamental socio-economic change arises to a large degree out of the potent ideological notion that moral imperatives should govern the socio-economic relations between the classes, the 'moral economy' of the poor. This seminal concept was first theorised by E. P. Thompson for 18th-century Britain, although it reaches back much further and was not limited to the British Isles.⁵⁴ It is based on the assumption that there was a popular consensus which demanded that economics be governed by essentially moral principles. Thompson defines it as

[...] a consistent traditional view of social norms and obligations, of the proper economic functions of several parties within the community, which, taken together, can be said to constitute the moral economy of the poor. (Thompson 1971, 79)

If the lower classes felt that these principles had been violated they regarded it as their moral right and duty to redress this imbalance through forms of popular protest, including riots. These actions were legitimised by specific traditional notions of moral laws governing socio-economic relations that were believed to transcend specific class interests. Underlying the moral economy, Thompson argues, was a passionate and strong belief in "notions of the common weal – notions which, indeed, found some support in the paternalist tradition of the authorities" (1971, 79). Both under the impact of emerging industrial capitalism and the parallel development of a "new political economy [...] disinfested of intrusive moral imperatives" (90), this ideology was

⁵⁴ For a brief overview of the history of the 'moral economy' until 1815 see Claeys 1987a, 1-33. For a concise summary of Thompson's concept as well as subsequent elaborations and applications to the German context and critical assessments of it, see Gailus 1990, 201-208.

coming under increasing pressure in the latter half of the 18th century. "The breakthrough of the new political economy of the free market" (136)⁵⁵ and the ensuing change in their socio-economic circumstances eradicated any lingering notions of a moral economy within the upper and middle classes.⁵⁶ However, "the moral economy of the crowd took longer to die", and was picked up by "some Owenite socialists", E. P. Thompson insists (1971, 136).⁵⁷ As Manfred Gailus has further emphasised, even in mid-19th-century Europe the moral economy of the poor still crucially motivated the behaviour and actions of the crowd. Hence it must be considered when investigating why socio-economic suffering caused riot, rebellion or even revolution in one region, whereas other regions similarly affected remained calm:

Von grundlegender Erklärungskraft bleibt das bei Thompson angelegte paternalistische Erklärungsmodell zwischen fürsorgepflichtigen Obrigkeiten und Schutz und Versorgung beanspruchenden Volksmassen. (Gailus 1991, 209)

Shelley's concept of moral revolution is to a considerable degree based on such ethical and paternalistic notion of relations between classes. If, with Raymond Williams, one regards the moral economy as a residual social practice and ideology (see 1980, 40-42), its continuing influence on contemporary radical ideology accounts for several of the contradictions in *TMoA*'s scenario of moral revolution. If the Shape unconvincingly insists that parts of the upper classes will "feel such compassion / For those who groan, and toil, and wail" (ll. 288-289), and consequently will "make/ War for thy [i.e. the

⁵⁵ Thompson identifies Adam Smith with his *Wealth of Nations* (1776) as one of the main theoretical instigators of this decisive shift towards a market-driven capitalist economic concept.

⁵⁶ Both E. P. Thompson and Noel Thompson locate the final breakdown of the moral economy as a principle that had some influence on the actual economic relations within the period of the Napoleonic Wars, i.e. the years between 1803 and 1815, shortly before Shelley's text in question here were written.

⁵⁷ Noel Thompson goes even further when he sees a strong resurgence of this ideology in the popular political economy of the 1820s and 1830s. This questions the common opinion among scholars that by then the belief according to which "productive activity occurred within a framework of fairness and justice, had already, in large part been dismantled" (cf. Thompson 1998, 37).

lower-classes'] beloved sake/ On wealth, and war, and fraud" (ll. 250-252), then Shelley clearly relates to the paternalistic obligations of the rich under the moral economy, to safeguard the welfare of the poor.⁵⁸ Indeed, most of the seemingly contradictory and perplexing advice that the Shape gives to the people – to trust that the bourgeois yeomanry will be ashamed of the base massacre of the crowd and that the army will side with the people, and even to insist that moral force will eventually triumph over physical force – makes sense only when it is regarded as a manifestation of the residual grip of the moral economy. The grand delusion behind the Shape's idea that a large, peaceful and passively resistant mass assembly will eventually force the authorities to grant the lower classes political and social rights finds its origin in the moral economy's key tenet that moral force will prevail. The imperative that moral principles instead of the crude right of might ought to govern the relations between the social classes clearly constitutes an extension from the imperative that moral principles ought to govern the economy, in particular the labour relations.

These moralistic views are decisively revised in "SME", a poem that underneath its simple, broad-side ballad-like form hides a considerable degree of socio-ideological sophistication. With its rudimentary socio-revolutionary message it transcends decisively the ideological muddle that is *TMoA*. In striking contrast to the Shape, the speaker of "SME" exhorts the labourers to resist forcefully the socio-economic violence that the capitalist system inflicts on them and to change their miserable situation

⁵⁸ Contemporary philanthropic projects, such as Robert Owen's 'model mill' in New Lanark, could also to be said to be inspired by these paternalistic imperatives of the moral economy. However, the Shape in her appeal to the upper-class "compassion" seems to think more of the old aristocracy than bourgeois entrepreneurs such as Owen when she locates these friends of the people in "palaces" rather than mansions (cf. ll. 283-290). Shelley makes little reference to Owen's projects throughout his works, although he mentions him in the open letter to *The Examiner* (November 3rd 1819). Provocatively aligning him with two figures that formed the epitome of oppression for contemporary British radical writers, Napoleon Bonaparte and Viscount Castlereagh, Shelley's stance towards "Mr Owen of Lanark" remains highly unclear (cf. 1964 II, 145). The latter, however (at least according to Paul Foot) was a great admirer of Shelley, "his publications, most notably the newspaper *The New Moral World* of the late 1820s, bristl[ing] with Shelley quotations" (1980, 238).

themselves by resorting to revolutionary violence. Crucially, he marries this call with a proto-Marxist analysis of the exploitation and the alienation of labour that is at least as radical as the Shape's:

V

The seed you sow, another reaps;
The wealth ye find, another keeps;
The robes ye find, another wears;
The arms ye forge, another bears

VI

Sow seed, – but let not the tyrant reap;
Find wealth, – let no impostor heap;
Weave robes, – let not the idle wear;
Forge arms, – in your defence to bear. (ll. 16-24)

More lucidly and with less pathos than *TMoA* the total alienation of the producers from their product is exposed. However, the key difference between the two poems lies in their contrasting revolutionary ideology, firstly in relation to violence as a socio-revolutionary means and secondly in respect to how to overcome the socio-economic class war. Instead of shying away – as the Shape does – from the socio-revolutionary consequences that arise from such a sharp socio-economic analysis of the capitalist process, the speaker of "SME" endorses violent revolutionary action by the exploited. Unlike *TMoA*, "SME" is devoid of the illusory hope that the upper classes will be moved by lower-class moral force, as the moral economy posits, and act philanthropically in accordance with their paternalistic duties.⁵⁹ Instead the speaker urges the labourers to resort to physical force against them as the only way to counter the violence intrinsic to the capitalist process of production. Similar to Carlile and other

⁵⁹ As Scrivener suggests, Shelley's use of the "labor theory of value" in his "analysis of estranged labor" is not merely mirroring the agenda of contemporary political and social reformers. Scrivener considers it as much more radical than "the moral outrage of Hunt and Owen" (cf. 1982, 233).

ultra-radical voices, he judges the proletarian revolt to be just and moral, because merely defensive, use of force. The rich have started the class warfare by oppressing and exploiting the lower classes. Like Carlile, the speaker of "SME" advises the proletarians to "bear arms in [their] defence". Yet in contrast to the former, the speaker identifies as their key opponent not the yeomanry nor the regular army but the capitalist. Carlile argues that "an unarmed people to be assailed by a brutal armed force" (1970 I, 35) legitimises physical force used in defence. The speaker argues that socio-economic exploitation and violence within the capitalist process of production legitimises this: "the arms ye [i.e. the workers] forge – another wears" to use against their producer. What the speaker in effect envisages as the aim of such a socio-economic war of liberation is the annihilation of the exploiters, the capitalists and not merely the yeomanry, a decisive shift towards a proletarian social revolution.

A close investigation of the stanzas' language reveals how the entire rhetoric is geared towards the goal of the listeners gaining these socio-revolutionary insights.⁶⁰ As the triple parallelism of the three phrases negating the existence of the exploiter in the socio-economic process of production drastically suggests ("no tyrant", "no impostor", "not the idle"), the producers have actively and forcefully to remove the exploiters from the socio-economic equation. The capitalist to whom the indefinite pronoun "another" refers and who stands between the labourer and the produce of his labour has to be rooted out. Syntactically, the subject of the capitalist ("another") violently separates the subjects that produce from the objects they produce. Shelley thus illustrates rhetorically how the forced alienation of the labourers from their products forms allows the capitalist to profit from the labour of his workers in the first place. While the labourers form the subjects to all the verbs of production ("sow", "finds", "find" and "forge"), the

⁶⁰ For a discussion in how far Shelley's 1819 poems constitute examples of 'interventionist' literature, see Janowitz 1994.

capitalists constitute the subjects to all the verbs denoting the use of the goods and products ("reaps", keeps", "wears" and "bears"). To remove the agency of the capitalist from the economic equation, will only be possible, the speaker insists, if the workers seize the arms that they produce. While they now paradoxically produce the very tools – weapons – that their exploiters need to oppress them, they are urged instead to forge them for the purpose of their own liberation. With the metre stressing the possessive pronoun "your", they are being told "to forge arms, – in *your* defence". This positive command is strongly divided from the preceding negative ones: "let no", "let no" and "let not". In fact – the speaker implies – it is vital for the poor to take the war on wealth and exploitation into their own hands and not to wait for the upper classes to act on their behalf as the Shape insists. This is the decisive ideological difference between the two poems that shows Shelley taking a major step towards proletarian social revolution.

One might still argue from a Marxist materialist angle that "SME" falls victim to the idealist fallacy that a change in consciousness is sufficient to bring about a transformation of material living conditions, an ideological trap in which Dawson sees Shelley's entire thinking being caught up (see 1991, 40-41). However, at least in respect of "SME", such an allegation is largely unfounded because the poem posits an immediate interconnection between acquiring consciousness of the mechanism of exploitation and subsequent socio-revolutionary action. For the speaker, as for Marx, one cannot take place without the other: the proletarians' adequate awareness of their socio-economic situation and of their inevitably hostile relationship to the capitalist bourgeoisie constitutes the very precondition for an active transformation of the material process of production to take place. The only serious omission Shelley could be accused of here is that poem fails to depict how this should concretely take place. The revolutionary act of rising up against the exploiters and overthrowing them remains a

lacuna. It is merely typographically marked by the series of dashes in stanza 6. While the benefits of socio-economic transformation are being depicted, the lower class socio-revolutionary violence needed to achieve this is not. This omission again highlights Shelley's disquiet about violence as a revolutionary means, although in contrast to *TMoA*, he now condones it and even implicitly calls for it. Crucially he now asserts that the contemporary process of production has to be changed actively and by force if proletarian alienation and suffering are ever to be ended.

This marks a major departure both from the moral economy and the concept of a moral revolution as Shelley sketches it out in *TMoA*. In "SME" the trust in moral force, upper-class paternalism, scientific or theoretical progress that – as the Shape in *TMoA* tells the proletarians – will ease and alleviate their suffering are exposed as false hopes, as dangerous ideological delusions, as is the entire concept of a peaceful moral revolution. This becomes obvious if one considers the intertextual dialogue that unfolds between the following stanzas of *TMoA* and "SME":

LXIII

"Science, Poetry, and Thought
Are thy [the people's] lamp; they make the lot
Of the dwellers in a cot
So serene, they curse it not

LXIV

"Spirit, Patience, Gentleness
All that can adorn and bless
Art thou – let deeds, not words, express
Thine exceeding loveliness

LXV

"Let a great Assembly be
Of the fearless and the free
On some spot of English ground
Where the plains stretch wide around. (ll. 254-265)

VII

Shrink to your cellars, holes and cells;
In halls ye deck another dwells.
Why shake the chains ye wrought? Ye see
The steel ye tempered glance back on ye.

VIII

With plough and spade, and hoe and loom,
Trace your grave and build your tomb,
And weave your winding-sheet, till fair
England be your sepulchre. (ll. 24-32)

The two last stanzas of "SME" exactly juxtapose the *TMoA*'s optimistic concluding scenario that a vast assembly by the people of England will form the starting point of a successful moral revolution. While in *TMoA* the place of the assembly, "the spot of English ground", will become the source of a spiritual, moral and social rebirth of England, in "SME" it turns it into a place of spiritual as well as literal death for the masses who have failed to revolt. It is on this English earth on which the exploited proletarian will forever "Trace [their] grave and build [their] tomb". The bitter irony here is all that the labourers are producing for *themselves* and not for the capitalists through their exploited labour is an untimely death. In fact they are not only shovelling their own grave in the process of exploited labour, but also burying the concept of the moral economy. They are erecting a "sepulchre" to "fair England", the mythical place of pre-industrial rural England where its laws were thought to have governed a peaceful coexistence of the social orders; a problematic notion deeply embedded in the contemporary radical discourse.⁶¹

⁶¹ This myth of fair old England as the rural arcadia occurs frequently in contemporary discourse. William Cobbet, for instance, refers to it frequently in order to highlight the state of the current socio-economic crisis. While today misery abounds, the "state of our great grandfathers and great grandmothers" was decisively different. Not only did political justice prevail, but also this "country has been famed in all

While "SME" remains ambivalent whether such an arcadia could be regained – at least it does not explicitly preclude it – it is adamant that this can never be achieved by a moral revolution as *PVR* and *TMoA* propose. By illustrating how deeply socio-economic violence is embedded in the capitalist process of production, "SME" extols the violent change of the capitalist system as the primary goal of any revolution.

This revolutionary ideology can with some justification be regarded as proto-Marxist. Looking closely at labour's and the labourer's role in the process of production it both exposes the illusions of a moral economy and also reveals brutal alienation of industrial capitalism. In this way the perspective taken in "SME" differs decisively from the contemporary analysis of liberal political economists such as Ricardo and others, who emphasised the benefits of capitalism for the national economy rather than looking at the process of production itself. As Marx claims, the proponents of a market economy are carefully to obscure this negative effect of industrial capitalism, by looking at the national economy instead:

Die Nationalökonomie verbirgt die Entfremdung in dem Wesen der Arbeit dadurch, daß sie nicht das unmittelbare Verhältniß zwischen dem Arbeiter, (der Arbeit) und der Production betrachtet. Allerdings. Die Arbeit producirt Wunderwerke für d[en] Reichen, aber sie procucirt Entblössung für d[en] Arbeiter. Sie producirt Paläste, aber Höhlen für d[en] Arbeiter. Sie producirt Schönheit, aber Verkrüppelung für d[en] Arbeiter. (MEGA II, 366; Marx's emphasis)

Marx further argues that "das Verhältniß [des] Vermögenden zu den Gegenständen der Production" is a direct result, "nur eine *Consquenz*", of the alienated "*Verhältniß des Arbeiters zu den Gegenständen seiner Production*" (cf. *MEGA II*, 366; Marx's

ages [...] for the happiness of its people; for the comfort they enjoyed; for the neatness and the goodness of their dress; [...] and for the excellence and plenty of their food" (cf. 1998 VIII, 487). Although less pronounced, Carlile voices a similar nostalgia for the past (see 1970 I, 5). Both influentially and controversially, Donald H. Reiman has argued that Shelley – like Cobbett – must be regarded as an 'agrarian reactionary' (2002).

emphasis). Exactly the same view is put forward by "SME" which illustrates how the ownership of the rich over the labourers' produce stems directly from the alienated relationship of the workers towards their produce. In fact one could claim that in these stanzas more core proto-Marxist tenets are voiced. If the masses do not liberate themselves violently from the socio-economic enslavement in which the capitalist process of production imprisons them they will continue producing the very means for their oppression. They will keep on constructing the halls and palaces of the rich, while – as both Shelley and Marx point out – they will continue to eke out their existence in cellars and holes. Repeating and extending the observations made in stanza IV that "the arms [they] forge – another bears", the speaker further emphasises how "the chains [they] wrought" and "the steel [they] tempered" are being used to bind and quash the labourers. Alienated from its producers, the product of their labours, the steel of the weapons takes on a life of its own. As it is expressed in ll. 27-28, they "see / The steel [they] tempered glance back on" them. While their product is being personified, the producers are being dehumanised and reified through through the capitalist process of production. The steel not only looks at them, but worse still "glance[s] back", in the sense that it strikes back on its producers. Their alienated products mirror their own alienation from the rest of humanity as well as from their human essence which is shown to have its roots in the alienated process of production. The loss of ownership over their products marks a fundamental loss of their selves; a point that – as mentioned earlier – is also stressed in *TMoA* when the alienated condition of labourers is this referred as them being "slaves in soul" and "All that others make of them" (cf. ll. 184-187)⁶² Hence, it is implied in "SME", not only the agency of the "another", the

⁶² Again there exists a conspicuous parallel to Marx's claims about alienation in the capitalist mode of production. Marx insists that the alienation of workers is not merely a *result* of the process of production, is but already *inscribed* in the capitalist labour process itself. Not only do proletarians have to renounce ownership of the products, but also of their selves, of their human essence. "[...] die Entfremdung zeigt

exploiter, must be eradicated but also the mode of production with its intrinsic physical and psychological violence must be fundamentally changed. If this is not achieved, any further resistance will just form another ultimately futile act of rebellion, the speaker maintains in his rhetorical question: "Why shake the chains ye wrought?"

To sum up, much more unequivocally than *TMoA*, "SME" dismisses any notion of a purely political revolution, and at the same time moves decisively towards proletarian social revolution. The results of a political change, it insists, will be continued bourgeois oppression through the very products the labouring classes have manufactured. Instead the working classes have to break the capitalist cycle of production. Any residual notion of fair trade and just industrial relations, in which the workers have rights that are respected by the masters, is renounced as an ideological delusion under the current system of production, a notion that was prevalent in the traditional discourse. For instance a remonstrance, which was adopted in London earlier and taken by Hunt to the meeting at St. Peter's Field in Manchester, the site of the Peterloo massacre demands:

[...] every industrious labourer, manufacturer and mechanic, has the right to reap the ample and substantial fruits of his virtuous and USEFUL TOIL. (Quoted in Belchem 1996, 45, emphasis in the original)

Michael Scrivener goes as far as to maintain that one "will look in vain through the works of Cobbett or any other radical author to find such an uncompromising view on labor alienation" as in "SME" (1982, 232). Indeed, even a lower-class revolutionary activist such as Richard Carlile is still nostalgically caught up in the notion of the moral

sich nicht nur im Resultat, sondern *im Akt der producirenden Thätigkeit* selbst. Wie würde d[em] Arbeiter d[as] Product seiner Thätigkeit fremd gegenübertreten können, wenn er im Akt der Production selbst sich nicht selbst entfremdete? [...] In der Entfremdung des Gegenstandes der Arbeit resumirt sich nur die Entfremdung, die Entäusserung in der Thätigkeit der Arbeit selbst" (*MEGA* II, 367; Marx's emphasis).

economy of the pre-industrial days when he blames a deliberate misgovernment of the socio-economic affairs for the proletarian predicament and not the system per se:

'Tis misrule – fatal misrule, that keeps the better half of thy children in a state of wretchedness, and starvation, whilst the few squander thy produce. When shall thy sons shake off that grovelling apathy, and awake to a sense of their degradation? When shall they *again* reap that which they sow? (Carlile 1970 I, 5; my emphasis)

Yet in "SME" such a residual, idealist notion of fairness in the contemporary industrial relations has given way to a disillusioned analysis of the capitalist process of production from a materialist angle. When the speaker of "SME" addresses the labourers with a series of rhetorical questions about the role they play in the capitalist process of production, he makes it unmistakably clear that its very *modus operandi* is not only to deny the labourers ownership of their products, but also of their work as such. Through the four times repeated question, "wherefore" they work with so much dedication for their oppressors in the first place, the speaker points out how their forced labour amounts to a sacrifice of their selves. Again striking a proto-Marxist note,⁶³ Shelley emphasises how the alienated nature of their work, which the labourers have to perform within the capitalist system of production, essentially determines their alienated social being:

I

MEN of England, wherefore plough
For the lords who lay ye low?
Wherefore weave with toil and care

⁶³ Both Marx and Shelley depict the worker's labour as alienated in a double sense. Firstly their labour is not their own as it belongs to the capitalist and secondly they lose their sense of self through their labour. They sacrifice themselves for the ones who own their labour and in this process sacrifice their selves: "Die äusserliche Arbeit, die Arbeit, in welcher der Mensch sich entäussert, ist ein Akt der Selbstopferung, der Kasteiung. Endlich erscheint die [Äu]sserlichkeit der Arbeit für den Arbeiter darin, daß sie nicht sein eigen ist, sondern eines andern ist, daß sie ihm nicht gehört, daß er in nicht sich selbst, sondern einem andern angehört [...] so ist die Thätigkeit des Arbeiters nicht seine Selbstthätigkeit. Sie gehört einem andern, sie ist der Verlust seiner selbst" (MEGA II, 367; Marx's emphasis).

The rich robes your tyrants wear?

II

Wherefore feed, and clothe, and save,
From the cradle to the grave,
Those ungrateful drones who would
Drain your sweat – nay, drink your blood?

III

Wherefore, Bees of England, forge
Many a weapon, chain, and scourge,
That these stingless drones may spoil
The forced produce of your toil? (ll. 1-12)

In "SME", a feeling of moral outrage, which is based on the ethical assumption that the masters ought to take a certain responsibility for the material well-being of their workers, is unmasked as a form of false consciousness that guarantees the perpetuation of the present system of socio-economic exploitation. If the proletarians believe that under the present socio-economic system the capitalists could ever be anything other than bloodsucking parasitic leeches, idle "ungrateful" drones that live off the exploitation of the labour of the poor, then they are deluded, the speaker implies in a series of rhetorical questions in the first three stanzas of the poem. Like the drones in a colony of bees, the capitalists can only fulfil an exploitative function in the capitalist socio-economic system, because the labourers, who are likened to worker bees, provide their sustenance. This is the essence of the capitalist system of alienated labour, in which the workers are necessarily participating in order to survive under its terms. It turns the capitalists from "stingless drones" into the powerful oppressors in the first place and is about as moral as the economy within a bee-hive.

The central imagery of these lines constitutes the comparison of the poor to worker bees who have to provide for the drones – the rich – without getting anything

back. Not only is this allegory common throughout Shelley's oeuvre,⁶⁴ but it actually forms a traditional image for socio-economic exploitation that, as Dawson has pointed out, stretches as least as far back as Thomas Paine (see 1980, 51).⁶⁵ As Gardner illustrates in his contextualisation of "SME" the contemporary radical press also employed this image. For instance an article in *The Medusa*, which appeared on July 3rd 1819, over a month before the 'Peterloo' Massacre, indicts the evil influence of the "DRONES of SOCIETY" on the socio-economic situation of the working poor (see Gardner 2002, 132-133).

However unlike these uses, in the "SME" this image is further radicalised and placed into a strong socio-revolutionary context, as it is merged with a metaphor that compares the capitalists to bloodsucking leeches.⁶⁶ The capitalist system not only permits the capitalist to exist as idle drones that live off the workers' toil, but with its imperative to maximise profit at all costs also turns them into lethal parasites. In comparison to *TMoA* where the image of capitalist as parasites is also evoked, the immediate connection of this practice to the economic system is far more strongly evoked. Even more importantly, in stark contrast to *TMoA*, "SME" clearly suggests that both parasitic capitalists must be shaken off violently and capitalism be destroyed if the labourers are ever to enjoy the fruit of their labours.

⁶⁴ Foot illustrates how this allegory for exploitation can be found in much of Shelley's later work from *Queen Mab* and *Swellfoot the Tyrant* to his drama fragment *Charles I* (See 1980, 85-87).

⁶⁵ According to Foot this image was also employed by other 18th-century radicals such as Thomas Spence, who posits in *The Constitution of a Perfect Commonwealth* (1798, second edition) that in his ideal state he would have "no lords, no gentlemen": "For I did not mean to have such a nest of wasps in my Commonwealth, to devour the honey which the working bees had toiled for" (quoted in Foot 1980, 85). However, Spence maintains that the working bees are not being robbed by the drones which are part of the same economic system, but by wasps, a different species. In contrast to Shelley, he thus locates the violence outside the socio-economic system of the bee-hive and obscures the intimate relationship between the producers and the consumers.

⁶⁶ In another of his 1819 poems, the sonnet "England in 1819", Shelley also employs the image of the people's oppressors as leeches. However, in contrast to "SME", it is not used to depict the socio-economic but the political elite whose reckless oppression is regarded as self-defeating: "Rulers who neither see, nor feel, nor know, / But leech-like to their fainting country cling, / Till they drop, blind in blood, without a blow, –" (ll. 4-6).

Such socio-revolutionary fervour is rare in contemporary discourse as is the image of capitalists as leeches. Two years later in 1821 the co-operative journal *The Economist*, could be said to employ a somewhat comparable rhetoric when it implies that capitalism does not shy away from trading in human blood, if this augments profit. Indicting the system for slavery, it alleges that "Capital [...] will traffic even in blood and slavery of human victims, furnished by a whole quarter of the globe for its unrighteous increase" (quoted in Thompson 1984, 123). However, the allegations made here against capital are not nearly as drastic as those raised in "SME", and crucially they do not attack the capitalists ad hominem, a moderate Owenist tendency that according to Noel Thompson is characteristic of the entire co-operative press (see 1994, 123). Furthermore by accusing capital of an "unrighteous increase", the writer implies that there must exist such a thing as a 'righteous' increase.

To sum up, in contrast to the large majority of the contemporary British radical discourse and *TMoA*, "SME" not merely stages the collapse of the ideology of the moral economy, but also unmasks how the latter impedes the emergence of an advanced critique of industrial capitalism, not to mention the development of socio-revolutionary concepts.

1.5. "[...] We Have Eaten From the Tree of Knowledge" – Proletarian Socio-Revolutionary Consciousness and the Bourgeois Didactics of Revolution

In the last section I have shown how the "SME" takes the socio-revolutionary impetus, which arises from a radical analysis of alienation in the capital process of production, further than most contemporary texts. However, it would be wrong to maintain that "SME" was unique at this time, since some examples exist in contemporary radical discourse that leave – to a decisive degree – the framework of the moral economy behind and move considerably towards proletarian social revolution. One very striking example is the pamphlet *Address of the Reformers of Fawdon to their Brothers the Pitmen, Keelmen and other Labourers on the Tyne and Wear* (1819), in which Gardener locates a "proto-Marxist" awareness (cf. 2002, 46). In contrast to "SME", where an upper-class speaker addresses the lower classes and didactically tries to engender an awareness of their situation, in the pamphlet we find the beginnings of a genuine working-class consciousness. This is rhetorically reflected in the frequent use of the first person plural when discussing the workers' situation, which contrasts starkly with the speaker relating the labourers' plight to them in the second person plural in "SME". Instead of telling "ye" what to think of themselves and how to act, the pamphlet propagates a "'we'-consciousness' and critical, independent working-class reflection of their state. Strongly dismissing the patronising attempts of bourgeois writers to tell them what to think and to do, to "trifle with [them] as children", the working-class authors assert their ability to become conscious of their situation without upper-class interference. Attacking bourgeois prejudice about their inferior intellectual powers, they self-confidently state in the pamphlet's opening paragraph that as even as "poor working-people" they are well able to think independently. The negative image "SME"

and *TMoA* in particular depict, of the proletarian masses as more or less passive, dehumanised victims of exploitation, "as slaves", is replaced by a decidedly more positive self-image. Crucially, instead of portraying the proletarians in need of bourgeois enlightenment, it sees the workers as producers of their own class-consciousness:

ALTHOUGH we are not so well able to express our sentiments as to think, yet the great quantity of low, stupid, stuff that has lately been addressed to us, and other poor working people, provokes us to speak. [...] Aye, these miserable drivellers may [...] trifle with us children, or insult us as slaves; but we have eaten of the tree of knowledge, and are able to discern good from evil. (Reformers of Fawdon 1969, 3)

While still arguing from a moral basis that there exist rights and wrongs in socio-economic practice, the authors at the same time acknowledge that in contemporary reality a socio-economic war of the rich against the poor is unfolding in which those moral imperatives no longer apply. In fact they are turning the bourgeois accusations on their head that the poor lack any moral sense and solely aim to loot and rob the possessions of the rich. Instead, they assert, it is the rich who recklessly and without any ethical consideration despoil the poor:

You all know that our oppressors and their humble tools, who can tag a few words together, agree in abusing us, and in repeating over and over that the present dispute is between those who have property and those who want to plunder them [...] But the cunning, bad people who spread abroad this falsehood know full well that it is a struggle between what is right and what is wrong; betwixt a starving people, and a few shameful, hard-hearted Diveses [i.e. rich men], who first plunder us, without right or reason, and then, when we complain, send in the military, either to murder us or to awe us into slavery. (Reformers of Fawdon 1969, 3)

This passage posits a similar link between socio-economic and political oppression to that found in "SME". In both texts one finds a comparable realisation of

the intimate interconnection of political and economic oppression, political and socio-economic violence. The Reformers regard the military oppression as a manifestation of the ruling classes' attempt to keep up the system of socio-economic exploitation, the violence of which forms the source of this class war:⁶⁷ first the rich "plunder" the poor, and if the latter protest against their exploitation, the rich then "send in the military" either to massacre them (as the recent Peterloo massacre has demonstrated) or to coax them back into the stolid acceptance of socio-economic oppression, of "slavery".

Even more strongly than "SME" – and for that matter *TMoA* – the pamphlet exposes that contemporary society is defined by class war. The rich are waging war on the poor and thus are clearly the aggressor. As in "SME", the combined violence of upper-class exploitation and military oppression give the lower classes the right to revolt as an act of self-defence:

The bloated tax-eaters accuse us of conspiring. Now, the rich keep fire arms in their houses – they are now training their servants and tenants in their Halls and Parks – their obsequious dependants are members of Yeomanry Corps – they possess unbounded property and influence – they are continually meeting and plotting to withhold our rights; they have a standing army at their call [...] – while were we, who with difficulty can purchase a dinner, to get arms for our own defence, and to attempt to use them, we would be called daring, rebellious rascals. [...] Yet after all, who are the real conspirators? Is it not the rich that are conspiring against the unprotected poor? (Reformers of Fawdon 1969, 7)

Cleverly the authors turn the accusations that are being used by the bourgeoisie and the government to criminalise the lower classes against them. Not the protesting and arming poor but the rich are "the real conspirators". The daily socio-economic violence that this system enacts on the poor when their wages hardly suffice to buy them their meals

⁶⁷ This insight almost transcends the label 'proto-Marxist' since it anticipates – albeit in less theoretical language – Marx and Engels' key claim from the *Manifest der kommunistischen Partei* that "die politische Gewalt im eigentlichen Sinne ist die organisierte Gewalt einer Klasse zur Unterdrückung einer andern" (*MEW* IV, 482).

justifies violent unified working-class action against the bourgeoisie. Capitalism in itself, it is implied, has to be regarded as a clandestine conspiracy of the rich against the poor. In embracing socio-revolutionary violence the authors of the pamphlet clearly adopt a stance that is diametrically opposed to the Shape's categorical denouncement of lower-class violence. In fact with their suggestion "to get arms for [their] own defence" they clearly echo the call of the speaker of "SME" to "Forge arms – in [their] defence".⁶⁸

Significantly, the passage above displays not only an acute awareness that the political and military power of the rich is connected to "their unbounded capital", but also that the ongoing violent class confrontation is founded on an underlying socio-economic warfare. This consciousness is expressed in extremely lucid terms in the paragraph immediately preceding the passage quoted above:

Is it nothing that we are deprived of more than half the fruits of our labour? And must we, like stupid, blind gin-horses, move on and never complain? No, no – we will not be cheated out of our reason. We see now why the hardest working people on earth, inhabiting a fine country, blessed with the most abundant harvests, and possessing the most wonderful machinery, are still growing poorer and poorer. It is because there are so many greedy drones in the hive who eat up all the honey. (Reformers of Fawdon 1969, 7)

The authors here employ – like the speaker of "SME" and other radical voices – the topos of the idle drones that spoil the produce of the workers' toil to generate a potentially socio-revolutionary concept. When they state that it is the existence of too many profit-hungry capitalists ("greedy drones") that devour the entirety of the labourer's products ("all the honey"), they imply that their number has to be reduced if necessary by force. Hence they already display the socio-revolutionary consciousness

⁶⁸ The call in the pamphlet might also allude to concrete historical events. According to E. P. Thompson in particular in Newcastle (where the pamphlet was printed) and the surrounding area the "pitmen and forgermen" began to arm in turn "to counter the threat of an 'Armed Association'" formed by Newcastle loyalists, leading to "the preliminaries of civil war" (1980, 758-759).

that the speaker of Shelley's poem patronisingly aims to drum into his imagined lower-class audience. Solely by the powers of their own reasoning, the authors claim, they have liberated themselves from ideological delusions. Rather than putting up meekly and unconsciously with the socio-economic system that oppresses them, they will resist and fight it, they declare. While it deprives them both of the goods they produced and the surplus value of their labour,⁶⁹ they "will not be cheated out of their reason". Neither will they be deterred by any ideological or physical pressure from inquiring further and deeper into the causes for their socio-economic situation and taking the necessary – potentially forceful – steps. The authors declare that they will resist the potential stultification and dehumanisation their alienated labour might cause (and which *TMoA* and "SME" so drastically depict) and instead become conscious of the mechanisms that govern the capitalist labour relations. This conviction is expressed by the authors' refusal to remain in an animal-like condition, to be "stupid, blind gin-horses" (i.e. horses that were used to drive a mill or other machinery) which "move on and never complain". Instead of blindly contributing to the continuation of the system of exploitation, by moving senselessly round in circles without any awareness of their condition like these animals, by becoming in effect a dehumanised extension of the machine, "ein bloßes Zubehör der Maschine" (*MEW* IV, 468), they assert the determination to defend and reclaim their full humanity. This is the "moral revolution" (cf. 1969, 8) they aim to achieve. As it includes the possibility of transforming the socio-economic system by force and further involves proletarian self-education which aims to acquire an authentic proletarian self-consciousness without bourgeois interference it differs considerably from both from *TMoA*'s concept of moral revolution

⁶⁹ This realisation that the capitalists increase their profit through the surplus value of their worker's labour is articulated in the following statement: "The work of a man is always worth his wages, and a little more, otherwise he would not be employed" in the first place (Reformers of Fawdon, 1969, 6).

and "SME's" attempt to procure a proletarian social revolution from above.⁷⁰ It is for the sake of their social self-liberation that they will continue to "read or talk about politics" in spite of all the intimidations and threats by the capitalists (cf. 1969, 6).

This self-fashioning of the proletarians as self-confident, strong and determined in spite of all their socio-economic hardship, throws light on a key aspect that prevents Shelley's 1819 poem from embracing the proletariat as the force that will bring about revolutionary – and ultimately socio-revolutionary – change: its depiction as a class that is so downtrodden, so dispirited and degraded that they form the epitome of human misery. Shelley is caught up in a bourgeois monologue about the proletarian condition and social revolution, as the monologue structure of both *TMoA* and "SME" conspicuously illustrates. A proletarian voice is lacking as is the emerging proletarian discourse on social revolution. However, I would argue that such a dialogue between a bourgeois and proletarian conception of revolution formed the prerequisite for a further decisive move of the avant-garde bourgeois author moving further towards social revolution. This dialogue did not take place in the case of Shelley or for that matter with any English author of the 1810s. As the next chapter will illustrate it was only starting to happen in the 1830s between German early-proletarian and artisan associations and revolutionary authors that engaged with them.

⁷⁰ At first glance, the final sections of the pamphlet seem again to withdraw from the radical consequences of this socio-revolutionary consciousness. The author's claim that they are campaigning for "a moral Revolution", for "Reform – with a view to *prevent* Revolution" (Reformers of Fawdon 1969, 8; their emphasis) seems to contradict sharply their earlier militant sentiments. However, as they at the same time embrace what are seen as the beneficial results of the bloody French Revolution for the socio-economic condition of the lower classes – "the condition of the people of France, at present [is] indeed greatly superior to that of the people of England" (8) – it becomes evident that the apparent denouncement of violence represents predominantly a tactical manoeuvre. The strategy first to call for armed uprising and then again discourage it is repeatedly employed throughout the text. Its aim seems to provide for a defence in case charges of sedition and high treason are brought against the authors and the printer of the pamphlet.

2. The Social Turn in Revolutionary Ideology during the 1830s and early 1840s: Heine, Börne, Beddoes and Büchner

2.1. The Socio-Historical Background and Revolutionary Ideology in 1830s Europe

Unlike in the 1810s in Britain, when the move towards socio-revolutionary ideology was still haphazard, the 1830s in Europe witnessed a sustained and conscious ideological shift in the discourse of the revolutionary avant-garde away from political towards social revolution. As Eric Hobsbawm and others have argued the "emergence of the new social-revolutionary trend" (1977, 149) could be observed across nearly all of Europe (see 1977, 148-163). He argues further that for the bourgeois revolutionaries the question of whether they were prepared to press for further fundamental change "at the price of a social revolution" introduced a decisive "split in their ranks" (1977, 151). This paradigm shift from political to social revolution was triggered by at least three key developments that were closely interrelated: the gathering momentum of industrialisation across most of Western and Middle Europe and the ensuing social crises such as unemployment, pauperisation and proletarianisation etc., the failure of the liberal Revolutions of 1830 to combat these socio-economic problems and finally the rise of the European workers' movements. Summing up the impact of the Revolutions of 1830, which took place in France and some other European countries (Belgium, Poland etc.), on the left-wing revolutionary discourse, Clive H. Church observes a novel "insistence on bringing a social dimension into any future revolution" (1983, 184). Kurt Holzapfel in his assessment of the influence of these revolutions on Europe links the 1830s revolution directly to the rise of the European workers' movement. He claims that the July Revolution of 1830, and – closely linked with it – the quashed workers' rebellions in Lyon in 1831 and 1834, opened "die Epoche der sozialen Massenkämpfe

des 19. Jahrhunderts und des Aufschwungs der internationalen Arbeiterbewegung" (1988, 177).

The birthplace of the early socialist and communist revolutionary movements and theories was France.⁷¹ Among the former featured most notably the conspiratorial faction of the socio-revolutionary Neo-Babouvists, which took its name from one of first proto-socialist revolutionaries of the French Revolution, François-Noël ('Gracchus') Babeuf (1760-1797). Not only must he be credited with having first developed the concept of social revolution,⁷² but he also tried to implement his demands in the failed coup 'La conspiration pour l'Egalité' (1796).⁷³ The Neo-Babouvists were led by his surviving fellow conspirator Filippo Buonarroti (1761-1836) and, most importantly, by Louis-Auguste Blanqui (1805-1881).⁷⁴ Paris also formed the cradle for the German early workers' and socialist movement,⁷⁵ which in turn was influenced by the ideologies of the early French socialists.⁷⁶ Indeed the most radical factions among the German

⁷¹ The majority of the early French socialists (e.g. Saint-Simonists, Fourierists etc.) did not propagate a revolutionary ideology, but campaigned for peaceful social change. They formed "die friedliebende Schar der neuen Sozialisten", as a contemporary German commentator remarked in 1839 (Quoted in Schieder 1984, 947). However, their tenet of a peaceful societal change found little echo among the writers discussed in this study. Even Heine advocated revolution rather than reform, although he was highly influenced by the ideology of the Saint-Simonists, as numerous critics have shown. For the history of the terms "socialism" and "communism" and their heterogeneous meanings, see Schieder 1984. Lorenz Stein in his seminal study *Der Socialismus und Communismus des heutigen Frankreichs* (1842) identified the stance towards proletarian social revolution as the distinguishing feature between socialism and communism: "der Socialismus ist positiv, der Communismus negativ; jener will eine neue Gesellschaft bilden, dieser nur die bestehende umstürzen; [...] jener hofft auf seine Verwirklichung durch die Gewalt der Wahrheiten, die er aufstellt und zu deren Betrachtung er jeden Denkenden einladen möchte, dieser durch die Gewalt der Masse, ja durch Revolution und Verbrechen" (1842, 131). For a discussion of the problematic nature of these two terms, see for instance Bouvier 1986, 265-278. For a study-cum-anthology of seminal texts by the early French socialists, see Höppner & Seidel-Höppner 1975. For an anthology that includes texts by French, British and German early socialists from 1789 until 1848, see Vester 1971.

⁷² Walter Euchner credits Babeuf with having initiated the "kommunistisch-revolutionäre Wende in den gesellschaftspolitischen Auseinandersetzungen der Französischen Revolution" (2000, 27).

⁷³ For an analysis of this event and his writings from a socialist point of view, see for instance Höppner & Seidel-Höppner 1975 I, 74-95. They also give a selection of Babeuf's (1975 II, 53-84) and Buonarroti's writings (86-111) in German translation.

⁷⁴ Blanqui was a professional revolutionary who was involved in all the important revolutionary and insurrectionary attempts in Paris from 1830 to the Commune in 1871, in spite of spending over 37 years of his life in prison. For a socialist biography of Blanqui see Bernstein 1971.

⁷⁵ See for instance Bouvier 1986, Seidel-Höppner 2000 and Schieder 1963.

⁷⁶ Samuel Bernstein claims that in the German artisan 'Bund der Gerechten', founded in 1838, "[v]irtually every French socialist belief had its expounders" (1971, 80).

organised workers and artisans adhered closely to the insurrectionist doctrines of the Neo-Babouvists.⁷⁷ As this chapter will show, these two groups and their socio-revolutionary ideology exerted a crucial influence on leftist German bourgeois authors, which accelerated their move towards social revolution.

In Britain, however, such a decisive shift did not take place during this decade. Unlike in other European countries, neither Germany nor Britain experienced a revolution in the 1830s. While the years 1830 to 1832 in Britain – as in Germany – saw a strong increase in socio-revolutionary tensions,⁷⁸ unlike in the German avant-garde discourse they did not translate into the sustained development of a socio-revolutionary ideology. As a matter of fact they considerably eased after the passing of the Reform Bill in 1832, although the latter legislation merely enfranchised parts of the middle classes and thus led to bitter disappointment among the working classes. This feeling of betrayal was even exacerbated by the passing of the 'Poor Law Amendment Act' in 1835. Drastically cutting the amount spent on supporting the poor and introducing workhouses where the paupers had to perform senseless hard labour, it effectively

⁷⁷ See Ruckhäberle 1977, 40-60. Bernstein states that Thomas Schuster and his friends in the 'Bund der Gerechten' adhered to "Buonarroti's body of principles" (1971, 81), a point qualified by Ruckhäberle who states that while it was ideologically heavily influenced by Buonarroti, it adopted a democratic rather than a hierarchical organisation that characterised the latter's secret revolutionary societies (1977, 19). Members of the federation such as Karl Schapper were involved in the attempted coup of May 12th 1839, organised by Blanqui and his secret associations.

⁷⁸ Hobsbawm goes as far as to identify the period of 1831-2 as the only time in British 19th-century history when there was genuine potential for a revolution (1977, 140). For an overview of the riots, socio-economic protests and attempted insurrections of these years which included the so called 'Swing Riots' in 1830 and the 'Bristol Riots', see Royle 2000, 67-91. The latter riots, which lasted for three days (October 29th to 31st 1831) and which saw lower-class violence directed against government institutions as well as against private property including warehouses, Royle calls "the worst urban disorder" in Britain for over fifty years (cf. 2000, 73). He concludes that in Britain during 1830-32 there "was a clearly revolutionary situation [...]: one which in France would have led to revolution" (2000, 88).

From August 1830 until 1832 there was widespread unrest throughout the German States, with Brunswick, Saxony, Hanover and Hesse forming the epicentres of the revolts which often took on pronouncedly socio-revolutionary dimensions. In Brunswick, Leipzig and Dresden only the formation of bourgeois citizen's guards prevented further escalation of the situation, at the cost of further increasing the tension between the bourgeoisie and the lower classes. In Leipzig and Dresden, as well as in Aachen, proletarians directed their anger against bourgeois property, destroying several mansions (see for instance Hardtwig 1998, 54). For studies of the increased political and social protest in Germany during these years see for instance Fenske 1986 and Volkmann 1984. Wolfgang Hardtwig lists a total of 136 instances in the years from 1830 to 1839 compared to 29 from 1816 to 1829. Even more significant is the rise in what he terms socio-economic protest: from 3 cases to 28 (1998, 284).

meant the *de jure* end to any surviving traces of the moral economy. Nevertheless the Reform Bill reaffirmed a certain belief in the possibility of reform, both political and social, which partly explains why the ensuing wave of working-class agitation focused predominantly on universal suffrage and workers' rights. Even the mass movement of Chartism, which had the strongest proletarian grass-root basis of any contemporary European workers' movement, largely campaigned for socio-economic liberation of the lower classes through attaining political emancipation, holding the belief that "soziale Verbesserungen nur über verbesserte politische Rechte zu erreichen seien" (Langwiesche 1985, 148).⁷⁹ Only on the fringes of Chartism did a socio-revolutionary message emerge,⁸⁰ while the socialist Owenites mainly propagated social reforms, workers' unions, utopian co-operatives and other forms of peaceful social change. Pivotaly, in Britain the concept of social revolution did not occupy the bourgeois revolutionary vanguard to the same degree as it did in Germany. Unsurprisingly, therefore it also featured much less prominently in British literature in the 1830s than it did in the German revolutionary authors. The writings of Thomas Lovell Beddoes constitute a rare instance in which this concept surfaces in revolutionary English

⁷⁹ Hobsbawm similarly foregrounds as what he identifies the mainly political character of Chartism when he argues that the programme of the 'Six points' of the 'People's Charter' was essentially "no different from the 'Jacobinism' of Paine's generation" (1977, 144). However, in contrast to Paine's insistence on political revolution as the means to achieve social change, Chartism largely campaigned for political reform. In particular, an electoral reform that would introduce general suffrage would automatically achieve a decisive improvement in the social situation of the lower classes, the mainstream of the Chartist movement maintained. There exists an ongoing debate among historians whether Chartism constituted a mainly political movement with a mass lower-class basis or a proletarian class movement calling for socio-economic change. Gareth Stedman Jones has influentially argued that ideologically it did not go much beyond the "central tenet of radicalism – the attribution of evil and misery to a political source" (1982, 14), whereas Gregory Claeys maintains that "some of its leaders had a new, sophisticated critique of political economy in which the manufacturing middle classes were identified as the opponents of the working classes" (1987b, 18). For an overview of this controversy, see Brown 1998, 6-9.

⁸⁰ For instance Julian Harney in article in *The London Democrat* in 1839 employs clearly socio-revolutionary language. He calls for a coup following the presentation of the Chartist petition of 1839, pledging to use "a body of well-armed *sans-culottes*" against the middle-classes, the bourgeoisie, which he terms the "shopocracy" (Quoted in Kovalev 1956, 334-335). However, the article, like most of the left-wing Chartists discourse that advocates physical force, does not display an unwavering commitment to a social revolution in the sense that it would call for fundamental change to the socio-economic system of capitalism.

literature of this decade. However in socio-political terms – as I will argue in the last section of this chapter – Beddoes must be considered more a German proto-socialist revolutionary than an English radical.

Without meticulously investigating the links that German revolutionary literature formed both with the contemporary socio-revolutionary factions and their discourse it is impossible adequately to judge and understand the turn towards social revolution in the former. Seminally, Hans-Joachim Ruckhäberle has argued that especially the writings and pamphlets of the German early workers' movement in Paris must be regarded as pivotal texts within "der literarischen Entwicklung zwischen 1830 und 1848/49". According to him, they engage closely with the "beiden Grundwidersprüche der Zeit", which also form the underlying concern of some of leftist revolutionary bourgeois literature after 1830 (cf. 1977, 30). While the rise of the industrial capitalist bourgeoisie was increasingly abolishing the remnants of feudalism and its political and social inequalities, this came at the high price of further socio-economic injustice: the generation of heightened social inequality through the new socio-economic system, the industrial capitalist mode of production, which was subjected to a sharp critique by the "frühen sozialistischen und proletarischen Bewegung" (30). Yet, as Ruckhäberle rightly claims, critical discourse has largely suppressed the key importance and influence of these early proletarian and socialist texts by the undue privileging of what he terms the period's "demokratische 'Hochliteratur': Börne-Bücher[sic]-Heine" (cf. 1977, 30), a critique that almost thirty years later has lost little of its relevance. To rectify this shortcoming it is not sufficient just to mention the interconnection between these two types of revolutionary writing, but it is important to investigate how both closely interlink on an ideological as well as on an intertextual level. Without considering the suppressed socialist and proletarian texts

as direct intertexts, it is impossible fully to understand the ideological involvement of Börne, Büchner and Beddoes with the emerging concept of social revolution.

As critics have conclusively shown, Büchner was the bourgeois German writer who was most strongly influenced by Neo-Babouvism⁸¹ and the early German proletarian exile associations.⁸² Yet, since he had largely undergone the shift towards a proletarian social revolution *before* writing his first literary work *Dantons Tod* in 1835,⁸³ it is impossible to trace a pronounced ideological transformation from political to social revolution within his work. Nevertheless his early socialist revolutionary position will serve later as a point of reference to judge how far Beddoes advanced towards a concept of proletarian social revolution.

⁸¹ Walter Grab maintains that the Neo-Babouvist ideology formed "das politische Credo des frühkommunistischen Sozialrevolutionärs" Büchner (1987b, 357). For Büchner's links to these ideological factions, see further Mayer 1979a, Holmes 1995a & 1995b and Knapp 2000, 19, 22 & 83-84. For a critique of Mayer 1979a, whose claims are based in large part on unpublished sources that he has been keeping secret, see Wetzel 1981. Far more lucidly and astutely than Mayer, Terence M. Holmes fleshes out the close interconnection between the revolutionary ideology of Büchner and the early French socialists, especially the socio-revolutionary group of the Neo-Babouvists.

⁸² From a biographical point of view it is also crucial to mention that in 1834 Büchner founded a revolutionary 'Gesellschaft der Menschenrechte' in Darmstadt and Gießen, which took its name and partly also its ideology from the French Neo-Babouvist society 'Société des Droits de l'Homme' (see Mayer 1987a, 168). Furthermore – according to Mayer (1979b, 376) – it also incorporated elements from the German Parisian society 'Bund der Geächteten', which it also mirrored in the social background of its members: academics and artisans. A comprehensive critical study that investigates the discursive and the ideological links between Büchner and the German exile associations remains a seminal task for further Büchner scholarship.

⁸³ Büchner's school essays and speeches still revolve around the concept of political freedom. For instance the essay "Helden-Tod der vierhundert Pforzheimer" (1829 or 1830) is a patriotic apotheosis of the concepts of political freedom and freedom of thought. To achieve such political change, Büchner advocates revolutionary change in the German neo-absolutist states (see 2002 II, 18-28).

2.2. A Social Revolution without the Proletariat? The Myth of Heine as a Socio-Revolutionary Author

2.2.1 A Programme of Proletarian Social Revolution? Heine's Manifesto of Sensual Liberation in *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland* (1835) and its Critics

In contrast to the other authors discussed here, Heine distanced himself clearly from the socio-revolutionary discourses of the Neo-Babouvists and the German early proletarian movement. Furthermore he did not undergo the shift towards the concept of social revolution that assigned the key role in the transformation of society to the proletariat. Although he himself and most critics have strongly claimed otherwise, he never genuinely embraced such a concept, neither during the 1830s nor at a later point.⁸⁴

Together with the closely interrelated programmatic announcement in Caput I of *Deutschland: Ein Wintermärchen* (1844) in which the narrator states that he will compose the song of future human liberation, the following passage from Heine's essay *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland* (1835) is often misread as his conversion to the concept of social revolution:⁸⁵

⁸⁴ For an informative albeit biased summary of how Heine fashioned himself throughout his life as a committed political and increasingly also social revolutionary, see Mende 1991. He also argues that it was Heine who coined the term "soziale Revolution" in 1830 in a letter to Varnhagen (1991, 86). It is impossible to list here the plethora of critics who regard Heine as a socio-revolutionary writer, which includes socialist critics. Among the latter some even go as far as to portray Heine's revolutionary ideology as proto-Marxist. Georg Lukács' essay on Heine's ideological anticipation of the 1848 Revolution shows how such attempts are doomed to fail. Trying to cast Heine at once as a proto-Marxist prophet of social revolution and a defender of the bourgeois political revolution, Lukács self-consciously reveals the inherent paradox of such a perspective. He argues that Heine often goes considerably beyond the horizons "der bürgerlichen Revolution" and displays a keen awareness of the need to transgress the limits of bourgeois society. Yet, at the same time, Heine sticks to his belief in "eine radikal und allseitig durchgeführte bürgerliche Revolution" (cf. Lukács 1978, 36).

⁸⁵ See for instance recently Höhn 2004, 353–354 and Windfuhr 2004, 110–114. Höhn praises this passage as an avant-garde "sozial-revolutionär[e] Vision". According to him, it illustrates with great imagery Heine's uniquely advanced proto-Marxist perspective on "Entfremdung" and the way to overcome it (cf.

Die politische Revolution, die sich auf die Prinzipien des französischen Materialismus stützt, wird in den Pantheisten keine Gegner finden, sondern Gehülfen, aber Gehülfen, die ihre Überzeugungen aus einer tieferen Quelle, aus einer religiösen Synthese, geschöpft haben. [...] Das große Wort der Revolution, das Saint-Just ausgesprochen: le pain est le droit du peuple, lautet bei uns: le pain est le droit divin de l'homme. Wir kämpfen nicht für die Menschenrechte des Volks, sondern für die Gottesrechte des Menschen. Hierin, und in noch manchen andern Dingen, unterscheiden wir uns von den Männern der Revolution. Wir wollen keine Sansculotten sein, keine [sic] frugale Bürger, keine [sic] wohlfeile Präsidenten: wir stiften eine Demokratie gleichherrlicher, gleichheiliger, gleichbeseligter Götter. Ihr verlangt einfache Trachten, enthaltsame Sitten und ungewürzte Genüsse; wir hingegen verlangen Nektar und Ambrosia, Purpurmäntel, kostbare Wohlgerüche, Wollust und Pracht, lachenden Nymphentanz, Musik und Komödien – Seid deshalb nicht ungehalten, Ihr tugendhaften Republikaner! (Heine 1997 III, 570)

Although Heine employs the term political revolution here, its antithesis, social revolution, is not mentioned. The term used instead is the religious doctrine of pantheism, which can be traced back in bourgeois German revolutionary literature at least as far as Goethe's Sturm-und-Drang poem "Ganymed" (1789). As in Goethe's ballad, Heine's political adaptation of this religious concept, his "religiösen Synthese", also remains within a bourgeois-liberal framework. Distancing himself from St-Just's dictum that bread is a social right of the people, he propagates an Epicurean sensualism of the wealthy instead. This becomes evident when he replaces St. Just's "peuple" designating the lower classes by the sociologically vague term "l'homme". Furthermore he declares he will *not* campaign for "die Menschenrechte des Volkes" as the contemporary radical early French socialists did, but in a chiastic phrase juxtaposes these rights with the "Gottesrechte des Menschen". The "Vol[k]" will only earn the claim to its "Gottesrechte" if it matures from its current state as the uncivilised brutish rabble to that of refined, civilised and cultured "Menschen", Heine insinuates. He is

2004, 354). More cautiously Norbert Eke speaks of a "Programm einer umfassenden sozialen und sinnlichen Befreiung der Menschheit" that this passage supposedly contains (2005, 73).

adamantly opposed to the unconditional social liberation and emancipation of the proletariat and instead posits – in accordance with liberal bourgeois ideology – that it has to be educated first, both aesthetically and ethically.

The liberal ideology inherent in this passage and its hostility towards a concept of proletarian social revolution emerge fully when one compares it to two passages in Büchner's oeuvre, one from *Dantons Tod* (1835) and the other from *Leonce und Lena* (1836-37), in which Büchner intertextually relates back to Heine's sensualist manifesto from *Zur Geschichte der Philosophie und Religion*. Most critics have argued that in both instances Büchner echoes and affirms Heine's idea of social revolution. For instance Terence Holmes concludes that Heine's scenario displays a strong "affinity with Büchner's own social criticism" and thus could be termed Heine's "programme of proletarian revolution" (cf. 1995b, 105). By contrast, I strongly contest such view. Instead I will suggest through a close intertextual comparison and the contextualisation with an early proletarian pamphlet that Büchner sharply parodies the liberal ideology of Heine's manifesto, both in regard to its attitude towards the proletariat and its complicity with capitalist exploitation.

In scene I, 1 of *Dantons Tod*, the Dantonists debate the present course of the revolution and their future strategy, while diverting themselves with prostitutes and playing card games. Camille Desmoulins, who joins them in the middle of the scene, conjures up a vision of sensual revolution that utters the same demands as Heine. Like the latter he wants to replace the austere republicanism that Robespierre and others preach by an Epicurean indulgence in sexuality and aestheticism instead. Not only does he hence hark back to the same ideas of Greek Dionysian enjoyment as Heine with words and rhetoric reminiscent of the latter, but he also embraces – at least as emphatically as the latter – a scenario of unbridled sensualism in his manifesto:

Wir wollen nackte Götter, Bacchantinnen, olympische Spiele, und melodische Lippen: ach, die gliederlösende, böse Liebe! Wir wollen den Römern nicht verwehren sich in die Ecke zu setzen und Rüben zu kochen aber sie sollen uns keine Gladiatorspiele mehr geben wollen. Der göttliche Epicur und die Venus mit dem schönen Hintern müssen statt der Heiligen Marat und Chalier die Türsteher der Republik werden. Danton du wirst den Angriff im Konvent machen. (I, 1; Büchner 2002 I, 15-16)

Camille reiterates Heine's antithesis between "frugale Bürger" with their "enthaltssame Sitten und ungewürzte Genüsse" on the one hand, and on the other hand "eine Demokratie gleichherrlicher [...] Götter" with "Wollust und Pracht, lachenden Nymphentanz, Musik und Komödien". The equivalent terms that Camille employs are the "Römer" who are cooking "Rüben" and staging "Gladiatorspiele" (i.e. the mass executions) and the "nackte Götter, Bacchantinnen, olympische Spiele, und melodische Lippen". Both evoke the same contrast between an ascetic, fanatic Jacobin republicanism modelled on the Roman republic and a liberal hedonist Hellenist sensual democracy. How deeply the latter model is invested with liberal-bourgeois anti-proletarian values, becomes evident when one considers which ideology "die Heiligen Marat und Chalier" epitomise, whom Desmoulins wants to have replaced by the "göttliche Epicur und die Venus mit dem schönen Hintern". In particular the executed Chalier had been "Schrittmacher der Volksbewegung der Enragés (Wütenden)" who, as Henri Poschmann explains, put forward a strongly anti-bourgeois, anti-capitalist and socio-revolutionary demands such as "radikale Maßnahmen zur Existenzsicherung der ökonomisch Benachteiligten (Preisstop für Versorgungsgüter, Beschlagnahmungen, Sozialhilfe, Bekämpfung von Spekulanten und Verrätern)" (cf. Büchner 2002 I, 484). Like Heine, who distances himself from any social revolution involving the proletariat ("wir wollen keine Sansculotten sein"), Camille also sides with the liberal bourgeois

mainstream which was opposed to proletarian social revolution, when he dismisses Chaliier and his programme of radical socio-revolutionary measures.

Büchner, however, clearly shows the urgency of such radical socio-revolutionary change in the next scene (I, II), which parodies both Camille's and Heine's theories of a sensual social revolution, by exposing them as the ideology of a privileged and exploitative class. Büchner depicts how the proletariat, the sans-culottes, are recklessly exploited and deprived of any right to nourishment, as it expressed in St Just's dictum that "le pain est le droit du peuple", a theoretical claim that the latter as much as any other prominent revolutionary failed to guarantee in practice. While Camille does not even consider this right and Heine explicitly rewrites and distances himself from it, Büchner implies that the refusal of the bourgeois revolutionaries to change the social condition of the poor in the capitalist process of production must be regarded as the major failure of the French Revolution (as well as the July Revolution of 1830 to which Büchner's historical drama implicitly refers). In spite of all the revolutionary struggles, the sans-culottes still lack basic material needs of life as much as before the revolution. As one of them angrily points out, "wir laufen wie zuvor auf nackten Beinen und frieren" (Büchner 2002 I, 19). Since from Büchner's early socialist perspective the bourgeoisie is seen to deprive the working class of the fruits of their labour in the present socio-economic order, a violent revolution of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie that leads to decisive socio-revolutionary change is regarded as vital. This need for a proletarian social revolution is spelled out by another sans-culotte in an angry speech. Sharply satirising Camille's and Heine's call for sensual-sexual liberation, it echoes passages from the socio-revolutionary works of Babeuf, from the 'enragés' Jacques Roux and Filippo Buonarrotti, as Henri Poschmann points in his commentary (see Büchner 2002 I, 489-491):

Ihr habt Kollern im Leib und sie haben Magendrücken; ihr habt Löcher in den Jacken und sie haben warme Röcke, ihr habt Schwielen in den Fäusten, und sie haben Samthände. Ergo ihr arbeitet, und sie tun nichts, ergo ihr habt's erworben, und sie haben's gestohlen; ergo, wenn ihr von eurem gestohlenen Eigentum ein paar Heller wieder haben wollt, müßt ihr huren und betteln; ergo, sie sind Spitzbuben und man muß sie totschiagen. (I, 2; Büchner 2002 I, 18)

Büchner's sans-culotte indicts the rich of robbing the proletariat of the produce of the labour, their rightful possession. All the 'property' the proletarians have left is their alienated labour through which they must try to reclaim a portion of their "gestohlenen Eigentum" in whatever possible manner, be it through prostitution or beggary. As it is expressed by a female sans-culotte earlier whose daughter works as a prostitute: "Wir arbeiten mit allen Gliedern" (2002 I, 18). The allegation against the upper classes the sans-culotte voices here, namely that the exploitation of proletariat's labour amounts to a severe crime, is taken directly from contemporary socio-revolutionary discourse. For instance Buonarotti in his *Conspiration pour l'égalité dite de Babeuf* (1828) maintains that the existence of those idlers who live off the "Schweiße des Arbeitmannes, den Mühsal und Entbehrung zu Boden drückte" is based on criminal exploitation. From this he radically concludes that "Eigentum ist die schlimmste Geißel der Gesellschaft, es in ist in der Tat ein Verbrechen an der Allgemeinheit" (Quoted in Höppner & Seidel-Höppner 1975 II, 98; their translation). The only form of property that is not regarded as stemming from criminal exploitation is the direct produce of one's own labour. Crucially, this position is not limited to the early French socialist discourse, as Poschmann has illustrated, but is also taken up the German proletarian movement in France. For instance, it is reiterated in the anonymous pamphlet "Gedanken eines Republikaner", which was written by a member of the 'Bund der Geächteten' in Paris, Karl Wilhelm Theodor Schuster, and published in same year, 1835, as *Dantons Tod*:

*Eigenthum ist daher jedes für die natürlichen Bedürfnisse des Menschen unentbehrliche Gut. [...] Wer Gewalt gebraucht, um einen Andern aus den zustehenden Früchten seiner Arbeit zu entsetzen; wer sich listiger Mittel bedient, um ihm seine rechtmäßigen Güter zu entlocken, der erwirbt als Räuber, als Dieb, als Betrüger [...] Ein Fabrikant trotzt auf seine Reichthümer, weil, sagt er, sie der mühsame Ertrag sind von langjähriger Arbeit. – Aber ist es denn er selbst, der seine Stoffe erzeugt, er selbst, der seine Fabriken erbaut, der seine Maschinen verfertigt, der seine Goldstücke gemünzt, oder sind es die Kräfte Anderer? Und wenn es Andere waren, die Kräfte, Gesundheit, Frohsinn und Leben geopfert, um der Erde ihre Früchte zu entreißen und dem Gewerbe seinen Ertrag: wie wagt Er, der *Nicht-Urheber*, sich zu übersättigen, während die *Werk-Urheber* hungern, ja! es ist das Wort, Brüder, *hungern!!* (Schuster 1977, 191; emphasis in the original)*

Schuster and Büchner's sans-culotte are both arguing that the exploitation of the proletariat's labour amounts to a crime, to robbery, since the only form of rightful property is the produce of one's labour. Any other form of property is based on the criminal exploitation of the workers and the alienation of their produce, which enables the luxurious existence of the rich in the first place. The "Fabrikant" is as much a "Spitzbube", as the rich aristocratic idler, since both live off the labour and exploitation of others. The social injustice of this mode of production which is based on the exploitation and alienation of labour produces and perpetuates immense socio-economic inequalities, as Schuster and the sans-culotte insist in a similar antithesis that contrasts the utter deprivation of the labourer with the superfluous riches of the capitalist. Both expose how it is the mode of production which permits the "*Nicht-Urheber*, sich zu übersättigen, während die *Werk-Urheber* hungern", as Schuster writes. The sans-culotte puts forward the same argument, when he claims this class who "arbeitet" to have "Kollern im Bauch" due to the lack of food, while those who "tun nichts" experience "Magendrücken" from overeating. Schuster seems to regard a proletarian "socialen Revolution" "der Geächteten Europas" of which Schuster already observes the first signs all across Europe in riots and uprising (cf. Schuster 1975, 192) as the only solution

to alter the exploitative system. Another sans-culotte, the "Dritt[e] Bürger", in scene I, 2 also voices a socio-revolutionary position and the conviction that attacks the system in itself, which he indicts as criminal, "ein Mord durch Arbeit" and not only the exploiters as "Spitzbuben", as the first sans-culottes. Unlike the first sans-culotte who directs his anger merely against the exploiters, when he maintains, "man muß sie totschiagen" in order end to exploitation, the third sans-culotte seems to envisage a more fundamental transition of the mode of production and the place the proletariat has in it. He asserts that the proletarians will triumph in changing the current socio-economic system, in which they are caught up for the entire life like a hanged man struggling for his life:

Nur ein Spielen mit einer Hanflocke um den Hals! S'ist nur ein Augenblick wir sind barmherziger als ihr. Unser Leben ist ein Mord durch Arbeit, wir hängen 60 Jahre lang am Strick und zappeln, aber wir werden uns losschneiden (Büchner 2002 I, 19).

The proletariat in *Dantons Tod* displays socio-revolutionary tendencies and insists – in contrast to Heine's declaration in his manifesto – on its right to bread. It even explicitly accuses the bourgeois revolutionaries of failing to change its material living conditions. As lower-class women angrily assert, "Die Guillotine ist eine schlechte Mühle und Samson [der Henker] ein schlechter Bäckersknecht, wir wollen Brot, Brot!" (III, 10; Büchner 2002 I, 75). In spite of depicting the awakening socio-economic consciousness and the socio-revolutionary potential of the proletariat, Büchner also portrays it as easily misled and betrayed by the bourgeois revolutionary leaders and ideologues. Both the charismatic Danton and the fanatical Robespierre pay lipservice to the proletariat's social demands, in order to win the powerstruggle and to achieve their bourgeois political ends.

As has become obvious, Büchner's outlook on social revolution, which is grounded in Babouvist and the early proletarian German revolutionary discourse, is

fundamentally opposed to Camille's and Heine's apotheosis of luxury and indulgence. What emerges most prominently through the intertextual comparison is that their visions conspicuously evade any mention of labour and instead conjure up an earthly paradise in which idleness is seen as a divine quality. Thus, one could argue, their scenarios enshrine the ideology and the *modus operandi* of a socio-economic system, which both Büchner's sans-culottes and Schuster forcefully attack. In particular when one considers the discourse of exploited and alienated labour, to which Büchner both ideologically and intertextually refers, it seems impossible to uphold the wide-spread thesis that Heine's manifesto spells out "a programme of proletarian struggle", related to Büchner's, as Terence Holmes paradigmatically maintains (cf. 1995b, 101).

A contextualisation with *Leonce und Lena* further invalidates this dominant view and reveals how firmly Büchner is opposed to Heine's vision. In the final lines of this bitterly satirical comedy Büchner exposes even more directly than in *Dantons Tod*, how Heine's scenario is complicit with the ruling ideology and the dominant socio-economic system. This becomes particularly evident in the last lines of the play. In these the lower-class fool character Valerio, who has just been designated minister, issues a decree against labour. Recalling Heine's vision from *Zur Geschichte der Religion und der Philosophie in Deutschland*, his proposed law will criminalise proletarian labour, while at the same time elevating aristocratic-bourgeois indulgence and idleness to the prescribed life-style, the *raison d'être* of society:

[...] es wird ein Dekret erlassen, daß, wer sich Schwielen in die Hände schafft, unter Kuratel gestellt wird; daß, wer sich krank arbeitet, kriminalistisch strafbar ist; daß jeder, der sich rühmt, sein Brot im Schweiß seines Angesichts zu essen, für verrückt und der menschlichen Gesellschaft gefährlich erklärt wird; und dann legen wir uns in den Schatten und bitten Gott um Makkaroni, Melonen und Feigen, um musikalische Kehlen, klassische Leiber und eine komm[o]de Religion! (Büchner 2002 I, 129)

Although the arcadia that the fool Valerio sketches out forms a more material and prosaic version of an earthly paradise than Heine's vision, the former unmistakably echoes the latter: Heine's "Nektar und Ambrosia" have become "Makkaroni, Melonen und Feigen", "Musik und Komödien" equal Valerio's wish for "musikalische Kehlen", "klassische Leiber" relates back to "Wollust und Pracht, lachenden Nymphentanz" and finally the "kom[o]de Religion" that Valerio recalls Heine's sensualist variety of "Pantheismus", his "religiös[e] Synthese" (cf. Heine 1997 III, 570).

In contrast to Heine, however, who does not refer to labour at all, the first part of Valerio's decree reveals that exploitative labour is necessary to keep up the level of luxurious life-style that the upper classes already enjoy. I would argue that Büchner here alludes to the contemporary Neo-Babouvist and early proletarian discourse on labour, which Valerio, in the typical manner of a fool, turns on its head. At the same time Valerio's speech also marks an inversion of the allegations of exploitation which the sans-culottes voice in Scene I, 2 of *Dantons Tod*. The first sans-culotte in *Dantons Tod* angrily complains that the proletarians have "*Schwielen* in den Fäusten", whereas the rich whom he regards as criminally exploiting proletarian labour, sport "*Samthände*". As pointed out, the third sans-culotte alleges that the poor are forced to a life of "*Mord durch Arbeit*". Valerio turns this accusation round. From his perspective whoever "*sich Schwielen in die Hände arbeitet*", must be put under surveillance as a potential criminal. His next, even more cynical, law that whoever "*sich krank arbeitet, kriminalistisch strafbar ist*", seems almost like a direct parody of the following assertion from Schuster's pamphlet "*Gedanken eines Republikaners*":

Arbeit ist [...] die Grundbedingung jedes Eigenthumserwerbs, und jeder arbeitskräftige Bürger, welcher Güter in Anspruch nimmt, deren Erwerb nicht unmittelbar oder mittelbar aus der eigenen Thätigkeit her stammt, begeht einen Verstoß wider die Gesetze der Natur

und einen strafbaren Eingriff in die Eigentumsrechte seines Nächsten. (Schuster 1977, 190-191; emphasis in the original)⁸⁶

As this contextualisation of Valerio's speech with the early proletarian discourse reveals, Büchner satires both the current socio-economic system and the sarcastic aristocratic-bourgeois attitude towards the socio-economic situation of the lower classes that his fool exhibits in a satirically exaggerated manner. Its biting satire also extends to Heine's vision in *Zur Geschichte der Religion und der Philosophie in Deutschland*, which is seen as complicit with the ruling socio-exploitative ideology. Neither does Büchner affirm Heine's utopian "Manifest des Hedonismus" when he, in an allegedly revolutionary-utopian manner, suspends "das Ethos und die Zwänge der Arbeitsgesellschaft", as Burghard Dedner has claimed (cf. 2001, 170). Nor does Heine (nor Valerio's or Camille Desmoulins' vision), "ope[n] up the perspective of luxury for the whole of humanity" (Holmes 1995b, 101), but merely for a privileged few. On a rhetorical level this elitism is mirrored by Valerio's, Desmoulins' and Heine's similar use of the first person plural when they are sketching their respective earthly paradise.⁸⁷ "Wir" begs the questions to whom it refers and which social classes are to be included in it. The answer is that this is most likely the bourgeoisie, while the sweating, labouring proletarians will be excluded from it.

Viewed from this angle it becomes even questionable whether the following assertion that misery destroys or debases the body and thus also destroys the spirit

⁸⁶ In a similar form, these allegations against the idle profiteers of labour can be found in other pamphlets of the 'Bund der Geächteten'. For instance the widely distributed pamphlet "Erklärung der Menschen- und Bürgerrechte" (1834), which forms a translation of a Neobavouvist text by Teste, similarly accuses the idle non-producers of theft: "*Art. 14. Arbeit ist eine Schuld, welche jeder arbeitskräftige Bürger der Gesellschaft abtragen muß, Müssiggang soll gebrandmarkt werden als ein Diebstahl [...]*" (quoted in Ruckhäberle 1977, 126; italics in the original).

⁸⁷ Valerio declares, "dann *legen wir* uns in den Schatten und *bitten* Gott um Makkaroni [...]". Camille Desmoulins demands: "*Wir wollen* nackte Göttinnen [...]", while Heine maintains: "*Wir wollen* keine frugalen Bürger, sein [...] *wir verlangen* Nektar und Ambrosia [...]".

actually carries the pronounced "soziale Dimension" which Manfred Windfuhr observes (cf. 2004, 110):

Wir beförden das Wohlsein der Materie, das materielle Glück der Völker, nicht weil wir gleich den Materialisten den Geist mißachten, sondern weil wir wissen, daß die Göttlichkeit des Menschen sich auch in seiner leiblichen Erscheinung kund gibt, und das Elend den Leib, das Bild Gottes, zerstört oder aviliert, und der Geist dadurch ebenfalls zu Grunde geht. (Heine 1997 III, 570)

Rather than referring to the social misery caused by the exploitation of labour, the whole passage relates closely to Heine's sensualist version of pantheism, as the religious imagery and vocabulary emphasises ("Geist", "Göttlichkeit", "Bild Gottes", "kund gibt"). Even the goal to promote "das Wohlsein der Materie, das materielle Glück" appears to refer more to the religious-philosophical debate on the mind-body dualism and the dichotomy of spirit and matter rather than representing a summons to change the social system so that the whole of mankind will be able to provide for its material needs. Seen in this light, Windfuhr's claim that Heine here calls for an end to "die Ausbeutung der Bevölkerungsmehrheit durch eine Minderheit" (2004, 110) does not seem to be very compelling.

Heine refers in this passage less to the existential crisis of an exploited proletariat struggling to survive than to the spiritual deprivation of the bourgeoisie, which undergoes a social identity crisis as it is taking over the socio-economic role of the ruling class from the aristocracy. As Franz Schüppen convincingly suggests in one of the few dissident readings of *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie*, this essay as Heine's "ideologisches Hauptwerk" promotes "die neue sensualistische Diesseitsphilosophie" which must be seen as part of the wider endeavour by bourgeois intellectuals to come to terms with the spiritual and social crisis of this class (cf. 1998,

531). In spite of tacitly acknowledging the proletariat's misery, Heine – displaying a stereotypical liberal bourgeois attitude – considers the proletarians as such brutes that it is unlikely that they will ever be able to appreciate the more refined joys of civilisation and culture, a faculty which in Heine's epicurean ideology only makes a person a full human being. At best they may behave as noble savages, at worst as brute beasts.

Such a portrayal of the proletarians as either noble or evil savages emerges very prominently for instance in his article collection, *Französische Zustände* (1832). Describing the failed insurrection of June 5th and 6th 1832, Heine explicitly likens the workers to fierce club-wielding savages. In spite of their fierce nature, they display unconditional love and adoration for their champion Lafayette, the veteran hero of three bourgeois revolutions (the American, the French and July Revolution). Spectacularly displaying their love for him, their "alten, treuesten Freund", they unstrap the horses of Lafayette's carriage and pull him through Paris "mit eigenen Händen". However even this noble gesture betrays their perceived semi-human status, as it likens them to animals which are absolute faithful to their master. Ironically, however, these noble savages at the same time endanger the general, their greatest benefactor, when the masses in their frenzy threaten to overturn the carriage:

[...] als Lafayette, ermüdet von dem vierstündigen Wege, sich in einen Fiaker setzte, hat das Volk die Pferde desselben ausgespannt und seinen alten treuesten Freund, mit eigenen Händen, unter ungeheurem Beifallsruf, über die Boulevards gezogen. Viele Ouvriers hatten junge Bäume aus der Erde gerissen und liefen damit, wie Wilde, neben dem Wagen, der in jedem Augenblick bedroht schien, durch das ungefüge Menschengedränge umgestürzt zu werden. Es sollen zwei Schüsse den Wagen getroffen haben. (Heine 1997 III, 241)

This image of proletarians as semi-human noble savages is complemented by its counter-image of the ferocious animal-like masses, which forms a staple of contemporary

liberal bourgeois discourse.⁸⁸ A nauseating example of the negative image of the proletarians as brutes can be found in the depiction of a lynch mob in article VI of the same work. The Parsian poor – under the delusion that the cholera epidemic of 1832 constitutes a conspiracy of the rich to poison them – brutally butcher any bourgeois suspects:

Wie wilde Tiere, wie Rasende, fiel dann das Volk über sie her. [...] sechs Menschen wurden aufs unbarmherzigste ermordet. Es gibt keinen gräßlicheren Anblick, als solchen Volkszorn, wenn er nach Blut lechzt und seine wehrlosen Opfer hinwürgt. Dann wälzt sich durch die Straßen ein dunkles Menschenmeer, worin hie und da die Ouvriers in Hemdsärmeln, wie weiße Sturzwellen, hervorschäumen, und das heult und braust, gnadenlos, heidnisch, dämonisch. Auf der Straße St-Denis hörte ich den altberühmten Ruf "A la lanterne!" [...] Auf der Straße Vaugirard, wo man zwei Menschen, die ein weißes Pulver bei sich gehabt, ermordete, sah ich einen dieser Unglücklichen, als er noch etwas röchelte, und eben die alten Weiber ihre Holzschuhe von den Füßen zogen und ihn damit so lange auf den Kopf schlugen, bis er tot war. Er war ganz nackt, und blutrünstig zerschlagen und zerquetscht; nicht bloß die Kleider, sondern auch die Haare, die Scham, die Lippen und die Nase waren ihm abgerissen, und ein wüster Mensch band dem Leichname einen Strick um die Füße, und schleifte ihn damit durch die Straße, während er beständig schrie: "Voilà le Choléra-morbus!" Ein wunderschönes, wutblasses Weibsbild mit entblößten Brüsten und blutbedeckten Händen stand dabei, und gab dem Leichname, als er ihr nahe kam, noch einen Tritt mit dem Fuße. (Heine 1997 III, 173)

This passage categorically proves that Heine's stance towards the proletariat is not always characterised by a benevolent and sympathetic paternal attitude as Zhang Yushu has recently claimed,⁸⁹ but at times by fierce hostility. The proletarians act like wild animals (or for that matter 'savages') in their slaughter of the bourgeoisie and lack even the most basic human emotions, such as mercy. These qualities are epitomised by the

⁸⁸ Maybe most famously the image of the proletarians as savages is summed in the following dictum by Saint-Marc Girardin in an article on the Lyon weavers' revolt, which appeared in *Le Journal des Débats* on December 8th 1831: " *Les barbares qui menacent la société ne sont point au Caucase ni dans les steppes de la Tartarie; ils sont dans les faubourgs de nos villes manufacturières*" (quoted in Rude 1977, 239; emphasis in the text). ("The Barbarians who menace society are neither in the Caucasus nor in the steppes of Tartary; they are on the edge of our industrial cities", my translation).

⁸⁹ Yushu writes that Heine was a "Freund des Proletariats", who appreciated "diese verzweifelte Kinder so voller Liebe und Mitleid, doch zugleich so nüchtern und objektiv" (2004, 152).

sexualised half-naked woman with "entblößten Brüsten" who kicks the dead body of a mutilated bourgeois man whose genitals have been ripped off. Her appearance is highly reminiscent of the allegorical figure of 'Liberté' in Delacroix's iconic painting of the bourgeois July Revolution of 1830, "La Liberté, Guidant la Peuple" (1830) (see appendix, image III). While Delacroix's Liberty, who also displays her naked breast to the onlooker, leads the people on in their fight towards political freedom, Heine's proletarian woman spurs on her fellow proletarians in their descent towards anarchic savagery. While Delacroix's 'Liberté', who is carrying the tricolore in her hands, epitomises the glory of the bourgeois political revolution, Heine's proletarian woman figure "mit blutbedeckten Händen" becomes an allegory of the horrors of a proletarian social revolution.

The strong anti-proletarian, anti-socio-revolutionary tendencies in Heine's depiction of the behaviour and actions of the Parisian proletariat during the Europe-wide cholera epidemic of 1830-31 (which in the French capital alone killed more than 18000 people mainly from the lower classes), become even more strikingly evident when one compares Heine's portrayal of it to Börne's in the "Sechzigster Brief" (1833) of the *Briefe aus Paris*. Most likely harking back to the passage in Heine's *Französische Briefe*, Börne is much more sympathetic to the proletariat and its reaction to this crisis, and at the same time extremely critical of the bourgeoisie's perspective on it. Quoting as proof the cynically arrogant observation of the bourgeoisie that "die Krankheit treffe nur die Armen und die Niedrigen, die Reichen und die Vornehmen hätten nichts von ihr zu fürchten", he maintains that there is profound truth behind the proletariat's seemingly deluded notion that "die Vornehmen und Reichen wollten sie vergiften und die Cholera sei ein Mischmasch des Hasses!" (1964 III, 378). This illusion in Börne's view constitutes a semi-conscious realisation of the proletariat's socio-economic status under

capitalism as "ein schlechtes Handwerkszeug, zum Dienste der Reichen geschaffen, das man wegwirft, wenn man es nicht braucht, und zerbricht, wenn es unbrauchbar geworden" (378).

To sum up, unless a magical transformation should occur, Heine's uncivilised proletarian savages will never acquire full membership in his version of a Hellenic Elysium on earth. The latter forms a universal community of the cultured with an aesthetic sensibility, "eine Demokratie gleichherrlicher, gleichheiliger, gleichbeseligter Götter", which is essentially an exclusively bourgeois social utopia.⁹⁰ It does not envisage a social democracy in which the right for absolute universal political and social equality, irrespective of class, education, culture and aesthetic sensibilities is paramount.

⁹⁰ One might argue that Heine here partakes in the liberal bourgeois ideological notion of culture as a "universal community" which can be located "only in some few chosen circles", as Terry Eagleton finds it paradigmatically expressed in Schiller's *Briefe über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* (1795-1796) (cf. Eagleton 1990, 109). In contrast to the proletariat, in the case of the bourgeoisie there is hope for Heine that the philistine bourgeoisie of today will overcome its cultural and spiritual impoverishment and mature into a class of human beings worthy of Heine's social utopia.

2.2.2. Prophesying the Social Revolution: Heine as a Precursor to Marx?

In spite of the pronounced bourgeois liberal ideology of Heine's sensual revolution, there exists a conspicuous tendency to cast it as a precursor of Marx's concept of social revolution. For instance Manfred Windfuhr has argued that Heine in the essay in questions anticipates the Communist demand to end exploitation, a conviction that will enable Heine later to accept the "Programm der Kommunisten" in spite of his fears for bourgeois culture (cf. 2004, 110). Gerhard Höhn goes even so far as to argue that Marx derived his conception of proletarian social revolution from Heine, in particular from this essay *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland*. He maintains that Marx's notion of the proletarian social revolution corresponds with "Heines Beharren auf eine soziale Revolution mit allgemeiner Emanzipation". Heine, he claims, was the first to develop this concept in that essay. In particular his scenario of the German radical philosophical revolution – "einer gesellschaftlichen Umwälzung" as Heine regards it (cf. 1997 III, 638) – depicted in the concluding pages anticipates Marx's radical revolution as he develops it in the "Einleitung *Zur Kritik zur Hegel'schen Rechts-Philosophie*" (1844) (cf. Höhn 2004, 130):⁹¹

Unsere philosophische Revolution ist beendet. Hegel hat ihren großen Kreis geschlossen. [...] Die deutsche Philosophie ist eine wichtige das ganze Menschengeschlecht betreffende Angelegenheit, und erst die spätesten Enkel werden darüber entscheiden können, ob wir dafür zu tadeln oder zu loben sind, daß wir erst unsere Philosophie und hernach unsere Revolution ausarbeiteten. [...] Durch diese Doktrinen haben sich revolutionäre Kräfte gebildet, die nur des Tages harren, wo sie hervorbrechen und die Welt mit Entsetzen und Bewunderung erfüllen können. [...] Es werden bewaffnete Fichtianer auf den Schauplatz

⁹¹ Without properly acknowledging it, Höhn takes this idea from a very insightful talk by Jean Pierre Lefebvre. In it Lefebvre discusses the question "eines möglichen *reziproken Einflusses*" of Marx and Heine (1973, 41; Lefebvre's emphasis), in contrast to Höhn who identifies a largely one-directional influence of Heine on the early Marx. Giving concrete intertextual evidence, Lefebvre further suggests that not only Marx but also Engels engaged with Heine's essay on German religion and philosophy (see 1973, 46).

treten, die in ihrem Willens-Fanatismus, weder durch Furcht noch durch Eigennutz zu bändigen sind; denn sie leben im Geist, sie trotzen der Materie, gleich den ersten Christen [...] ja, solche Transzendental-Idealisten wären bei einer gesellschaftlichen Umwälzung sogar noch unbeugsamer als die ersten Christen [...]. Lächelt nicht über den Phantasten, der im Reiche der Erscheinungen dieselbe Revolution erwarten, die im Gebiete des Geistes stattgefunden. Der Gedanke geht der Tat voraus, wie der Blitz dem Donner. [...] Es wird ein Stück aufgeführt werden in Deutschland, wogegen die französische Revolution nur wie eine harmlose Idylle erscheinen möchte. (Heine 1997 III, 636, 638-640)

Indeed Höhn raises a crucial point when he maintains that Heine's essay forms a crucial intertext for Marx's introduction, which forms a theoretical milestone in Marx's move towards social revolution. Not only does Marx similarly claim – as Höhn highlights (2004, 130) – that for Germany "ist die *Kritik der Religion* im Wesentlichen beendet" (*MEGA* II, 170; Marx's emphasis), but he also stresses the world-historical role of German philosophy. In spite of his pronounced critique of German idealism, he emphasises that the "*deutsche Rechts- und Staatsphilosophie* ist die einzige mit der *officiellen* modernen Gegenwart *al pari* stehende *deutsche* Geschichte" (*MEGA* II, 175; Marx's emphasis). Yet, as I have pointed out in the introduction, Marx regards the *proletarian* social revolution as the only way to achieve human emancipation and end alienation. Heine never came to share Marx's unequivocal commitment to this form of revolution, even though Höhn insists that Heine reached such a position shortly after Marx. Höhn concedes that Heine in *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie* – in contrast to Marx in his preface to his critique of Hegel – does not assign the initiative and main role in the social revolution to the proletariat, which he often depicts from a disparaging,⁹² or outright hostile, bourgeois angle, as I have illustrated. Furthermore, Jean Pierre Lefebvre maintains that Heine never managed to resolve the contradictions

⁹² Terence Holmes argues that Heine's sensualist programme for social revolution remains implausible, mainly due to his negative portrayal of the working class: "Gerade Heines abschätzige Schilderung des proletarischen Lebens macht die Motivierung der Arbeiterklasse durch seine sensualistische Staatsutopie so unwahrscheinlich" (1998, 546).

in socio-political and revolutionary ideology, "weil ihm die politische Perspektive der proletarischen Revolution fehlte" (1973, 44). Despite such weighty counter-arguments, Höhn insists that Heine changed his mind on the decisive aspect of a proletarian social revolution. He posits that Heine in a fragmentary essay, the so-called *Briefe über Deutschland* (1844), endorses as strongly a proletarian social revolution as Marx does in his preface to his critique of Hegel's philosophy of law which was written in the same year (2004, 130 & 450). However, this thesis is problematic, as a brief intertextual comparison will show.

Referring back to and quoting from the sensualist manifesto from his earlier essay on the history of German religion and philosophy, Heine in the *Briefe über Deutschland* clearly insists that bourgeois intellectuals such as philosophers must not only initiate and lead the revolutions of the future, but also control and limit the proletariat's role in it. In fact, he casts himself as such a philosophical-intellectual leader of the proletariat, while at the same time boasting that he was the first to prophesy the future revolution almost tens years earlier:

Mit dem Umsturz der alten Glaubensdoktrinen ist auch auch die ältere Moral entwurzelt. [...] Die Vernichtung des Glaubens an dem Himmel hat nicht bloß eine moralische, sondern auch eine politische Wichtigkeit: die Massen tragen nicht mehr mit christlicher Geduld ihr irdisches Elend, und lechzen nach Glückseligkeit auf Erden. Der Kommunismus ist eine natürliche Folge dieser veränderten Weltanschauung, und er verbreitet sich über ganz Deutschland. Es ist eine ebenso natürliche Folge, daß die Proletarier in ihrem Ankampf an das Bestehende *die fortgeschrittensten Geister, die Philosophen der großen Schule, als Führer besitzen*; diese gehen über von der Doktrin zur Tat, dem letzten Zweck alles Denkens, und formulieren das Programm. Wie lautet es? Ich habe es längst geträumt und ausgesprochen: "Wir wollen keine Sanskulotten sein, keine frugale Bürger [...]" Diese Worte stehen in meinem Buche "De l'Allemagne", wo ich bestimmt vorrausgesagt habe, die *politische* Revolution der Deutschen aus jener Philosophie hervorgehen wird, deren Systeme man so oft als eitel Scholastik verschrien. (Heine 1997 V, 197-198; my emphasis)

Höhn regards this passage as proof that Heine had by then fully reached Marx's avant-garde position on the need for a proletarian social revolution (see 2004, 450). This claim is untenable firstly since Heine here explicitly terms the future German revolution, a "politische Revolution", while Marx in the "Einleitung *Zur Kritik der Hegel'schen Rechts-Philosophie*" from the same year 1844 is adamant that a mere political revolution will only achieve illusory change in Germany:

Nicht die *radicale* Revolution ist ein utopischer Traum für Deutschland, nicht die *allgemein menschliche* Emancipation, sondern vielmehr die theilweise, die *nur* politische Revolution, die Revolution, welche die Pfeiler des Hauses stehen läßt (*MEGA* II, 179; Marx's emphasis)

Secondly, Marx assigns a much more important and active role to the proletariat in the future German revolution than Heine ever does. This becomes clear if one looks closely at the corresponding passage in the "Einleitung" to which Höhn refers to back up his claim. Unlike Heine in his essay on German religion and philosophy and his *Briefe über Deutschland*, Marx does not call for bourgeois intellectuals like philosophers to act as leaders and guardians of the proletariat, but on the contrary insists that it must reach these philosophical and theoretical insights itself in order to begin the radical, the social revolution. Marx's differing estimate of the proletariat's role in the future social revolution is closely linked to his differing view of its social role in contemporary society. Much more strongly than Heine, Marx highlights its socio-political status as the pariah of humanity. Exploited and oppressed to the utmost extreme it has become the epitome of human impoverishment and alienation: "der *völlige Verlust* des Menschen". Therefore it follows for Marx that a more than merely political revolution is vital, since the proletariat "nur durch die *völlige Wiedergewinnung des Menschen* sich selbst gewinnen kann" (*MEGA* II, 182; Marx's emphasis). Only an active form of acquiring self-awareness of its situation, Marx insists, and not bourgeois didactic

lessons will enable the proletariat to become such a radical socio-revolutionary force. As such it will not only undertake its own emancipation, but the emancipation of humanity in general. Such a perspective differs sharply from Heine's who grants to the proletarians merely a semi-conscious thirst for earthly happiness and assigns to the bourgeois intellectuals to lead them towards their emancipation:

Wenn das Proletariat die *Auflösung der bisherigen Weltordnung* verkündet, so spricht es nur das *Geheimniß seines eigenen Daseins aus*, denn es ist die *faktische Auflösung* dieser Weltordnung. [...] Wie die Philosophie im Proletariat ihre *materiellen*, so findet das Proletariat in der Philosophie seine *geistigen* Waffen und sobald der Blitz des Gedankens gründlich in diesen naiven Volksboden eingeschlagen ist, wird sich die Emancipation der *Deutschen zu Menschen* vollziehn. [...] Der *Kopf* dieser Emancipation ist die *Philosophie*, ihr *Herz* das *Proletariat*. Die Philosophie kann sich nicht verwirklichen ohne die Aufhebung des Proletariats, das Proletariat kann sich nicht aufheben ohne die Verwirklichung der Philosophie. (MEGA II, 182-183; Marx's emphasis)

Marx here clearly echoes images and key terms from Heine's essay *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie*. Heine's "bewaffnete Fichtianer" which only live "im Geist" (cf. 1997 III, 638) have become with Marx the "*geistigen* Waffen" of the proletariat, as which it will use German philosophy. Heine's revolutionary prophecy which he utters in the simile, "[d]er Gedanke geht der Tat voraus, wie der Blitz dem Donner" (639) has changed in Marx's text to the metaphor "der Blitz des Gedankens". When the latter strikes the masses, "den naiven Volksboden", then they will start the social revolution, Marx is convinced. By contrast Heine omits the people from his simile. The ideas of the philosopher-poet and revolutionary action are portrayed as immediately linked as lightning and thunder, thus detracting from the fact that the masses form the major actor in any revolution. To sum up, unlike in Marx's in Heine's conception of 'social revolution', the bourgeois intellectuals, "die Philosophen der großen Schule", take on the active role in the social revolution. They are the ones who will prophesy the social

revolution, since they are the only social group which is able to gain a full awareness of the contemporary social crisis. Thus they must not only take upon themselves the task of drawing up its programme, but also of putting it into practice: "sie [i.e. the philosophers] gehen über von der Doktrin zur Tat, dem letzten Zweck alles Denkens". In stark contrast to Heine, in Marx's social revolution it is the proletariat that has to take a fully active revolutionary part. Not the bourgeois intellectuals, but the revolutionary proletarians put philosophy into practice. When they stand up against their exploiters, they become practical social philosophers themselves. It is only through this theoretical-practical proletarian social revolution that philosophy will become real and socially relevant, going beyond egotistical speculation and navel-gazing.

Heine in his understanding of social revolution is stuck in exactly this latter bourgeois ideological cul-de-sac that Marx denounces throughout his 1844 writings. In fact, whenever Heine talks of social revolution, he means by it a bourgeois socio-philosophical revolution in the realms of the mind that *excludes* the masses, the proletariat as the ideologues of their own liberation. Maybe most famously he expresses this in Caput I of *Deutschland: Ein Wintermärchen* (1844). Switching from the singular personal pronoun 'I' to the collective 'we', the persona of the poet undertakes the task of gaining awareness of the ideological mechanism of oppression and exploitation in lieu of the masses. The bourgeois poet is speaking for the masses and is fashioning himself as the prophet of social revolution.⁹³ He alone devises its programme in his poem and thus assigns to the proletariat "eine subalterne Rolle", as Terence M. Holmes highlights (cf. 1998, 550):

⁹³ For Heine's self-fashioning as the prophet of revolution, see for instance Bierwirth 1995, 311-319. For an attempt to structure Heine's prophetic scenarios, see Windfuhr 2004, for the social-political scenario in particular pp. 109-114. While Windfuhr rightly foregrounds Heine's "Neigung zur Selbsterhebung" during the 1830s, he maintains that in the 1840s this tendency gives way to a "stärker sozialen Orientierung" (cf. 114). I would contest this claim, arguing that by stylising himself as the poetic prophet of a social revolution he elevates himself even further.

Ein neues Lied, ein besseres Lied,
O Freunde, will *ich* Euch dichten!
Wir wollen hier auf Erden schon
Das Himmelreich errichten.

Wir wollen auf Erden glücklich sein,
Und wollen nicht mehr darben;
Verschlemmen soll nicht der faule Bauch
Was fleißige Hände erwarben. (ll. 33-40; Heine 1997 IV, 578; my emphasis)

In spite of flirting time and again with the concept of social revolution and even communism,⁹⁴ Heine remained throughout his life a staunch supporter of the liberal socio-political order. Highly conscious – and also extremely frightened – of the socio-revolutionary potential of the proletariat, he advocated political equality and remained adamantly opposed to absolute social equality, a fact that the historian Walter Grab recognises much more accurately than most literary critics:

Bei aller Einsicht in die Notwendigkeit, den Volksmassen eine lebenswerte Existenz zu sichern, war Heine nicht geneigt, seinen liberalen Freiheitsbegriff auf dem Altar der sozialen Gleichheit zu opfern. Trotz seines Abscheus vor der Heuchelei und Bigotterie der herrschenden Plutokratie distanzierte er sich vor [sic] den aufbegehrenden Massen. (Grab 1992, 228)

⁹⁴ For Heine's relationship to socialism, communism and Marxism see for instance Windfuhr 1972, 19-23, Lefebvre 1973, Bodi 1979, Schieder 1981, Briegleb 1986, 71-104, Boldt 1990, Grab 1992, 211-232 and Höhn 2004, 127-130. While critical discourse has time and again investigated Heine's stance towards St.-Simonism as well as less frequently his attitude towards Marxism and Neo-Babouvism, a comprehensive study focusing on Heine's ideological stance on *all* the various contemporary socialist factions remains a lacuna.

2.2.3. Heine's *Ludwig Börne: Eine Denkschrift* (1840): A Polemic against Proletarian Social Revolution

How Heine's pronounced distancing from the rebellious masses mars his understanding of political and social revolution becomes perhaps most evident in his definition of these terms in article IX of the *Französische Zustände* (1832). Semantically and ideologically interpreting the terms "soziale" and "politische Revolution" fundamentally differently both from the early French socialists and Marx, Heine crucially warns against letting the proletariat and its demands determine the shape of the social revolution. Effectively dismissing political revolution by which he seems to understand a mass revolution, he defines 'social revolution' as socio-political change in the distant future which is envisaged by bourgeois intellectuals at this present time:

Der Schriftsteller, welcher eine soziale Revolution befördern will, darf immerhin seiner Zeit um ein Jahrhundert vorseilen; der Tribun hingegen, welcher eine politische Revolution beabsichtigt, darf sich nicht allzuweit von den Massen entfernen. (Heine 1997 III, 215)

Promoting the 'social revolution' remains the exclusive domain of the visionary bourgeois intellectuals. For Heine it is a bourgeois author like himself who must become the prophet of such future socio-revolutionary change from above, one that ironically prevents the masses from taking the active role in their own liberation. Heine dismisses those writers who assign to the masses the decisive role in bringing about social revolution as narrow-minded populists who adhere to an anachronistic concept of political revolution, the ideological crux in this passage that Fritz Mende refuses to acknowledge when he comments on it as follows:

So bleibt thematisch die soziale Revolution im Zentrum seiner [i.e. Heine's] hochgestimmten politischen Erwartungen, die er freilich stets an den Gegebenheiten der Zeit und am gegenwärtigen Bewußtseinsstand der "Massen" auszurichten bemüht ist. (Mende 1991, 96)

Apart from defining Heine's understanding of social revolution, that key passage from the *Französische Zustände* also constitutes an attack on Börne and his revolutionary ideology which increasingly was influenced by an early socialist and early proletarian conception of revolution. In his controversial essay against Börne, *Ludwig Börne: Eine Denkschrift* (1840), Heine singles out this shift in Börne's revolutionary ideology as a main point of his polemic against his – by then dead – colleague and rival. In fact I would argue that the controversy about the proletarian social revolution is the decisive ideological issue which is at stake in this bitter feud between these – at this time – most famous German revolutionary writers, an aspect that has so far been ignored by existing criticism on the Heine-Börne controversy.⁹⁵ While he, Heine, wisely refrained from embarking on "die deutsche Tribunalkarriere" (1997 IV, 75) – a clear echo of the "Tribun" who associates with the masses from the passage from *Französische Zustände* quoted above – Börne succumbed to this temptation, as Heine suggests through a series of insidious rhetorical questions:

War es Tugend oder Wahnsinn, was den Ludwig Börne dahin brachte, die schlimmsten Mistdüfte mit Wonne einzuschnaufen und sich vergnüglich im plebejischen Kot zu wälzen? Wer löst uns das Rätsel dieses Mannes, der in weichlichster Seide erzogen worden, späterhin in stolzen Anflügen seine innere Vornehmheit bekundete, und gegen Ende seiner Tage plötzlich überschnappte in pöbelhafte Töne und in die banalen Manieren eines Demagogen der untersten Stufe? (Heine 1997 IV, 75-76)

⁹⁵ See for instance Oellers 1972, Kaufmann 1973, Rippmann 1972, 1981, 1995 & 1997, Hinderer 1974, Hohendahl 1980, Kruse 1988, Lamping 1990, Höhn 2004, 421-424, Yushu 2004, 138-143 and Eke 2005, 68-69. For a study of the contemporary and later reception of the controversy and its protagonist in literary history, see Weber 1984, for an anthology of its reception and of Heine's and Börne's respective attacks on each other, see Enzensberger 1997. The scope of this thesis does not permit me to discuss the particulars of the feud between Börne and Heine, let alone review the substantial amount of criticism dealing with it. For a comprehensive overview up to the end of the 1980s, see Lamping 1990, 200-201.

Heine alleges that Börne was deluded by the poisonous ideology of the proletarian social revolution that had been preached at the meetings of the German exile artisan association. In turn, he has switched his allegiances from the bourgeoisie to the proletariat abandoning "his innere Vornehmheit" for "pöbelhafte Töne". Worryingly (for Heine), through Börne's contacts with working-class circles social equality replaced political equality as the goal of revolution, thus endangering the hegemony of the bourgeoisie. Heine implies this through the following spiteful description of one of their meetings:

Börne sprach über den Preßverein, welcher sich vor aristokratischer Form zu bewahren habe; [...] ein verwachsener, krummbeinigter Schneidergeselle trat auf und behauptete alle Menschen seien gleich ... Ich ärgerte mich nicht wenig über diese Impertinenz Es war das erste und letzte Mal, daß ich der Volksversammlung beiwohnte. (Heine 1997 IV, 74-75)

Börne, so Heine implies, has betrayed his bourgeois roots by siding with the proletarian enemy. The latter is here epitomised by the deformed apprentice tailor whom Heine caricatures. While capitalist exploitative violence is tacitly acknowledged – the apprentice seems to have become a cripple through his exploitative work – the goal of social equality is angrily dismissed.⁹⁶ Börne, so Heine alleges, misuses his great oratory skills to preach the ideology of violent social revolution to the proletarian-plebeian groups, thus heightening the socio-revolutionary threat that they already pose to bourgeois society:

⁹⁶ Identifying Heine as a liberal in socio-political terms, Hans Boldt highlights the extent of Heine's antipathy to radical notions of social equality: "Die meritokratische Ordnung der Saint-Simonisten mit ihrer Geisteselite, keinem Geburts- oder Geldadel, – das war akzeptabel, grundsätzlich jedenfalls, nicht aber jene völlige Nivellierung der Gesellschaft durch Pariser Kommunisten Babeufscher Provenienz" (1990, 73).

[...] jene Pariser Propaganda bestand vielmehr aus rohen Händen als aus feinen Köpfen; es waren Zusammenkünfte von Handwerkern deutscher Zunge, die in einem großen Saale des Passage Saumon oder in den Faubourgs sich versammelten [...] so dauerte es nicht lange und tausenden von deutschen Handwerkern wurden Republikaner [...] vielleicht weit mächtiger als Börnes geschriebene Reden war Börnes mündliches Wort, welches er an Leute richtete, die es mit deutschem Glauben einsogen und mit apostolischem Eifer in der Heimat verbreiteten. Ungeheuer groß ist die Anzahl deutscher Handwerker,⁹⁷ welche ab und zu nach Frankreich auf Wanderschaft gehen. Wenn ich daher las, wie norddeutsche Blätter sich darüber lustig machten, daß Börne mit 600 Schneidergesellen auf den Montmartre gestiegen, um ihnen eine Bergpredigt zu halten, mußte ich mitleidig die Achsel zucken, aber am wenigsten über Börne, der eine Saat ausstreute, die früh oder spät die furchtbarsten Früchte hervorbringt. Er sprach sehr gut, bündig, überzeugend, volksmäßig; nackte, kunstlose Rede, ganz im Bergpredigerton. (Heine 1997 IV, 73)

For Heine, Börne here preaches the new gospel of social revolution to the proletarian masses, which might bear the most terrible fruits, a proletarian social revolution. Heine's major concern is that the German proletariat will recognise in Börne a bourgeois prophet of proletarian revolution, as the allusion to Jesus and his sermon of the mount implies. More than potential jealousy, the potential threat to bourgeois society motivates Heine's tirades against his rival for role of the German prophet of revolution. In fact he deeply worries that a proletarian social revolution will result in a socio-political system which will have achieved absolute social equality at the price of a totalitarian suppression of the bourgeoisie and its cultural traditions, Heine maintains at the end of his *Börne* essay:

Da kommen zunächst die Radikalen und verschreiben eine Radikalkur, die am Ende doch nur äußerlich wirkt, höchstens den gesellschaftlichen Grind vertreibt, aber nicht die innere Fäulnis. Gelänge es ihnen auch, die leidende Menschheit auf eine kurze Zeit von ihren wildesten Qualen zu befreien, so geschähe es doch nur auf Kosten der letzten Spuren von Schönheit, die dem Patienten bis jetzt geblieben sind; häßlich wie ein geheilter Philister, wird er aufstehen von seinem Krankenlager, und in der häßlichen Spitaltracht, in dem

⁹⁷ Jacques Grandjonn points out that about three quarters of the German community in Paris at this time were either artisans or workers (see 1973, 167).

aschgrauen Gleichheitskostüm wird er sich all sein Lebtage herumschleppen müssen. Alle überlieferte Heiterkeit, alle Süße, aller Blumenduft, alle Poesie wird aus dem Leben herausgepumpt werden, und es wird davon nichts übrig bleiben, als die Rumfordsche Suppe der Nützlichkeit. – Für die Schönheit und das Genie wird sich kein Platz finden in dem Gemeinwesen unserer neuen Puritaner, und beide werden fletiert und unterdrückt werden, noch weit betrüblicher als unter dem älteren Regimente. [...] sie passen nicht in eine Gesellschaft, wo jeder im Mißgefühl der eigenen Mittelmäßigkeit, alle höhere Begabung herabzuwürdigen sucht, bis aufs banale Niveau. (Heine 1997 IV, 140-141)

Heine voices his bourgeois terror of a proletarian social revolution and an egalitarian society (key goals for both the radical early French socialists and the German early proletarian associations) by displacing bourgeois class fears of an emancipated proletariat with disquiet about the future of the bourgeois artistic and cultural tradition. Heine here uses the appeal to, what Raymond Williams terms, a "*selective tradition*" (1977, 115; Williams' emphasis) to campaign against a proletarian social revolution and to defend the social status quo, the rule of the bourgeoisie over a proletariat whose social and political pressure is increasing.⁹⁸ While at first glance Heine claims only to be concerned about the danger that those groups (whom he denounces as the new Puritans) allegedly pose to the bourgeois cultural heritage "[a]lle überlieferte Heiterkeit", "die Schönheit und das Genie", in truth he is worried much more about the fundamental threat that their revolutionary ideology poses to bourgeois society as a whole.⁹⁹ Whereas in the *Französischen Zuständen* (1833) he still has ridiculed and

⁹⁸ Williams understands by this term "an intentionally selective past and a pre-shaped present, which is then powerfully operative in the process of social and cultural identification. [...] this selection is presented and usually successfully passed off as 'the tradition', 'the significant past'. What has then to be said about any tradition is that it is in this sense an aspect of *contemporary* social and cultural organization, in the interest of the dominance of a certain class. It is a version of the past which is intended to connect with and ratify the present" (1977, 115-116; Williams' emphasis). Heine here appeals to two key traditional concepts of the bourgeois ideology of the aesthetic, 'beauty' and 'genius', to legitimise his defence of the socio-economically oppressive order of bourgeois capitalism. His strategy has been successful so far, as critics have failed to recognise the social significance of this ideological move.

⁹⁹ Gerhard Höhn realises the extent of Heine's disquiet about the proletarian social revolution which, he argues, Heine in *Börne: Eine Denkschrift* considers a "falsch[e] Revolution". However, at the same time

dismissed these groups as living anachronisms – "Plagiarien der Vergangenheit", which conjure up the spectres of a revolutionary past such as Robespierre and the terror of the French Revolution (cf. Heine 1997 III, 126) – he now is realising that their socialist ideology will form the revolutionary spectre of the future. While taking this menace increasingly seriously throughout the 1830s, Heine remained adamantly opposed to proletarian social revolution and did not move towards an endorsement of this type of revolution as some other contemporary revolutionary authors such as Börne did.

he re-inscribes the myth that Heine endorsed the counter-concept "der zeitgemäßen, sozialen Revolution" (cf. 2004, 429).

2.2.4. "Ein Fluch dem König, dem König der Reichen": Heine's "Die Schlesischen Weber" (1844) as a Call for Proletarian Social Revolution?

As historians have pointed out the Silesian Weavers' Revolt in June 1844 marked a key turning point in the public perception of social misery in Germany¹⁰⁰ and in the awareness that this might lead to a class confrontation between proletariat and bourgeoisie. For instance Wolfgang Büttner remarks that few events "im deutschen Vormärz haben so viel öffentliches Aufsehen erregt" as this revolt (1986, 202). As the contemporary socialist writer Wilhelm Wolff insists in 1845, after the revolt it has become impossible to deny any longer the extent of social misery that regards as ubiquitous in contemporary society:

Ganz besonders aber wird sich unser Blick auf die Zustände der Weber im Gebirge zu richten haben, da hier die unausbleiblichen Folgen eines der Gerechtigkeit, der Gleichheit und der Brüderlichkeit feindlichen Prinzips, in welchem unsere jetzigen Verhältnisse sämtlich wurzeln, am ersten, greifbarsten und in der betrübendsten Weise ans Tageslicht getreten sind und nun selbst dem blödesten Auge nicht mehr verborgen bleiben können. (Wolff 1965, 157)

Reactions to the crushed revolt ranged from the founding of various philanthropic societies, which are harshly dismissed by Wolff as "ein Tropfen auf eine brennend heiße Sandwüste" (1965, 167),¹⁰¹ to an increasing radicalisation of parts of the German

¹⁰⁰ As Wolfgang Büttner highlights (1986, 206) and Jantke and Hilgers's anthology (1965) of contemporary texts on the social situation of the lower-classes vividly illustrates, a large part of the German public had already been aware of the social question before the revolt. However, the Silesian Weavers' Revolt and the ensuing heightened perception of social misery had a catalysing effect since the rebellion displayed the urgency of the social crisis. As for instance Wolfgang Hardtwig emphasises the extent of social misery and exploitation was particularly extreme in this region throughout the 1840s (see 1998, 28-29); a verdict confirmed by Büttner (1986, 206-207). For an overview over contemporary reactions and the social crisis that caused it, see for instance Wehner 1980 and Büttner 1986.

¹⁰¹ Engels in the preface zu *Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England* is as scathing as Wolff in his verdict on these philanthropic associations. Accusing their members of an idealist lack of consciousness of the actual proletarian condition, he satires them as "die wohlmeinenden 'Vereine zur Hebung der arbeitenden Klassen', in denen jetzt unsre Bourgeoisie die soziale Frage mißhandelt [...]" (MEW II, 233).

socialists (see for instance Bouvier 1986, 296-298). Subsequently, its vanguard, among them Marx and Engels, advanced a concept of proletarian social revolution.¹⁰² However, also lesser known communists such as Wilhelm Wolff moved towards proletarian social revolution in aftermath of the events in Silesia. Summarising the lessons of the Silesian Weavers' Revolt, he writes in the *Vorwärts!* (No. 98/ December 7th 1844) that in order for "die Gegensätze von Eigentümern und Eigentumslosen, von Reichen und Armen" to disappear, it seems necessary that "das Drama, dessen vorausgeworfene lange Schatten wir im Sommer an den Bergen der Eule erblickten, von der arbeitenden Masse zu Ende geführt werden müssen". After the spectacle performed in Silesia, social reform can no longer be regarded as a viable option, "weil die Verblendung der Besitzenden [...] fast zu groß ist, als daß auf eine friedliche Lösung des gesellschaftlichen Problem es zu hoffen wäre" (quoted in Büttner 1986, 228). The catalytic effect of the revolt was not limited to the socialists and their ideology. The outrage against the Prussian army massacring the rebellious weavers fermented further the liberal opposition towards the Prussian state, while the weavers' defiant violent resistance to police and regular army as well as their large-scale destruction of bourgeois property¹⁰³ heightened the anxiety about the spectre of an impending proletarian social revolution.¹⁰⁴ It also boosted an unprecedented literary reaction with saw nearly every political poet (e.g. Karl Beck,

¹⁰² Marx's radicalisation and move towards proletarian social revolution becomes most visible in his article series "Kritische Randglossen" (August 1844) which I have discussed in the introduction to this study. It forms a harsh critique of Arnold Ruge's article on the Weavers' Revolt which played down its social dimension and spoke out against social revolution. Earlier even than Marx, Engels identifies the revolt as a fundamental protest against capitalist socio-economic exploitation. As he writes in *The Northern Star* (No. 346/ June 29th 1844), the cause for the riots is "the factory system with all its consequences" which leads to "oppression and toil for the many, riches and wealth for the few" in Germany as much as in Britain (*MEGA* III, 611 & 609).

¹⁰³ The weavers not only completely destroyed the mansions and factories of several entrepreneurs, but also managed to fight back Prussian troops who had fired into the crowd killing at least 11 people. For depictions of the events and course of the crushed revolt, see for instance Wehner 1980, 17-19 and Büttner 1986, 213-224. For a contemporary socialist depiction and interpretation of the revolt see Wolff 1965.

¹⁰⁴ Bourgeois worries about imminent proletarian socio-revolutionary action were further heightened by wide-spread workers' revolts in the industrial districts of Bohemia, including unrest in Prague, during the same year, 1844. For an essay that investigates these and their impact, see Klíma 1986.

Georg Weerth, Ferdinand Freiligrath, Gustav Pfau, Louise Otto etc.) producing a poem about the event.¹⁰⁵ However, it is Heine's "Die schlesischen Weber" that has become the definitive literary text dealing with the revolt. Indeed, critics have canonised it as one of the greatest German revolutionary poem ever written. More than any other Heine text critics have regarded this poem as an endorsement of proletarian social revolution. Not only do nearly all critics irrespective of their ideological persuasions agree on this point,¹⁰⁶ but also it was very favourably received by the majority of the early German working-class and socialist movement.¹⁰⁷

However, I would argue, such an interpretation of "Die schlesischen Weber" is only possible by distorting its ideology. One of the earliest examples of such a tendency can be detected in Engels' reading of the poem. Writing for Robert Owen's newspaper *The New Moral World* (No. 25/ December 13th 1844), he hails Heine's "Die armen Weber"¹⁰⁸ both as one "one of the most powerful poems [he] know[s] of" and singles it out among the "pieces" in Heine's recent "volume of political poetry" as the one which

¹⁰⁵ For a selection, see Wehner 1980, 83-95. Weerth's poem "Sie saßen auf den Bänken" (1846) will be discussed in chapter 3.3.

¹⁰⁶ For example Alexander Schweickert speaks of "kommunistischer Kampflyrik" and terms it "eines der besten kommunistischen Gedichte überhaupt" (1969, 42-43). Walter Grab and Uwe Friesel see the "ausgebeutete Proletariat" prepare the social revolution in one of "der massivsten Anklagen gegen Ausbeutung, Verlogenheit und Unmenschlichkeit der herrschenden Klassen, die man in der deutschen Literatur findet" (1973, 192-193). Walter Wehner recognises in the poem a proclamation of the revolutionary protest of the "'Masse'" (cf. 1980, 39). From "einer sozialrevolutionären Perspektive, , Heine's poems casts the weavers as "die Totengräber der alten Gesellschaft", Wehner argues in an allusion to *Das Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei* (1848). Heine also regards the proletariat as the determining force of future society, Wehner further maintains (cf. 1980, 63) Jan Christoph Hauschild und Michael Werner explicitly differentiate "Die schlesischen Weber" from the other poems in the cycle *Zeitgedichte*. Whereas the latter aim for the "satirischen Zertrümmerung reaktionärer Ideen und Manifestationen", Hauschild and Werner regard the former as pronouncedly socio-revolutionary poem. They back up their claim by referring to the verdict of Heine's friend Alexandre Weills who termed the poem the "'Marseillaise der deutschen Arbeiter'" (cf. 2002, 106).

¹⁰⁷ See for instance Füllner, Hauschild & Kaukoreit 1985.

¹⁰⁸ The poem was first published under this title, in *Vorwärts! Pariser Deutscher Zeitschrift* (No. 55/ July 10th 1844). It differs as follows from "Die schlesischen Weber" as Heine re-named it when it was re-published in Püttmann's *Album* in 1846. In stanza 2 the first two lines read "Ein Fluch dem Gotte, dem blinden, dem tauben / Zu dem wir gebeten mit kindlichem Glauben;" (Heine 1997 IV, 969) instead of "Ein Fluch dem Gotte, zu dem wir gebeten/ In Winterskälte und Hungersnöten" in the later version (455). The first version lacks the fifth stanza altogether, with the fourth stanza incorporating the image of the weaving of the winding sheet: "Ein Fluch dem falschen Vaterlande, / Wo nur gedeihen Lüg und Schande, / Wo nur Verwesung und Totengeruch – / Altdeutschland, wir weben dein Leichentuch; Wir weben! Wir weben!" (970)

is most overtly "preaching Socialism" (cf. Marx & Engels 1975a IV, 232-233). The fact that now also "Henry Heine, the most eminent of all living poets has joined our ranks"(232) proves for Engels his thesis about the recent fast advances of Communism in Germany that his article sets out to demonstrate. However, his assertion that Heine had become a Socialist is as much a product of wishful thinking as his claim that "the rapidity with which Socialism has progressed in this country [i.e. Germany] is quite miraculous" (229). In order to prove his point about "Die armen Weber" being a socialist text, Engels even has to alter Heine's poem considerably. In his translation of it that he gives in the article he adds the following line to the first stanza: "'We have suffered and hunger'd long enough [...]", the weavers declare in Engels' version (232), thus clearly indicating that their protest is directed against exploitation and material suffering.¹⁰⁹ When Engels makes Heine's weavers voice such a defiant call for further socio-revolutionary action in spite of their rebellion having been defeated, he clearly invests the weavers' announcement in the next line to weave the shroud of old Germany with a pronounced socio-revolutionary intention. However, in the German original it is far more ambiguous whether the weavers actually pursue proletarian socio-revolutionary goals with the protest. At least on a literal level the three-fold curse that the proletarians weave into the winding-sheet is not at all directed against capitalist socio-economic violence and their exploiters, but against the unholy trinity that epitomises the Prussian state, "dem Gotte", "dem König" and "dem Vaterland". Undercutting his reading of the poem as a piece of socialist agitation, Engels' actually points out this aspect of Heine's poem himself when he explains to the British readers that the threefold curse in poem "refers to the battle-cry of the Prussians in 1813 –

¹⁰⁹ Klaus Briegleb suggests that this additional line in Engel's translation "vermuten läßt, daß er eine handschriftliche Version bei seiner Durchreise nach England mitgenommen hat, als er Ende August 44 in Paris ist und seine Freundschaft mit Marx begründet" (Heine 1997 IV, 970); a not altogether convincing conjecture.

"With God, for King and fatherland!" which has ever been since a favourite saying of the loyal party" (232). By mentioning the date of 1813 and locating the origin of this slogan in the wars of liberation against Napoleon, Engels involuntarily betrays that Heine's main focus of critique is the anachronistic nature of the German states (in particular Prussia), and not an exposure of modern capitalist socio-economic violence and practices. He thus contradicts his own assertion that Heine's poem adopts a socialist perspective on the social condition of the proletariat, its socio-revolutionary leanings and the exploitative nature of contemporary bourgeois society.

Even less self-consciously than Engels, most modern critics have played down the importance of poem's political attack on the Prussian state in favour of its alleged socio-revolutionary critique of capitalist society. As far as I can see there is merely one dissenting critical voice – that of Ludwig Marcuse – which suggests that Heine stages in "Die schlesischen Weber" an assault on the Prussian state and not an attack on the bourgeoisie. Unlike Marx who in his "Kritische Randglossen zu dem Artikel: 'Der König von Preußen und die Socialreform. Von einem Preußen'" (1844) uses the occasion of Silesian Weaver Revolt to undertake a "soziologisch[e] Analyse der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft dreier europäischer Länder", Germany, England and France, Heine's poem reveals the reactionary nature of German neo-absolutism:

Heine seziert nicht die Bourgeoisie, sondern apostrophiert im höchsten Affekt Deutschland. Es geht nicht gegen ein Gesellschaftssystem, sondern gegen ein Land, Preußen, mit seinem "Gott, König und Vaterland" [...] Diese Dreieinigkeit wird als preußische, nicht als bürgerliche Gottheit ironisiert. (Marcuse 1980, 237)

One might go even further than Marcuse and argue that the social criticism present in Heine's poem constitutes a typical example of the widespread practice to mount a "Kritik der sozialen Verhältnisse" in order to voice a disguised critique "der Bourgeoisie

an der Machtausübung der Feudalklasse in den deutschen Staaten", which Wolfgang Büttner has identified as common in contemporary liberal discourse (cf. 1986, 205). This strategy also emerges in the discourse on the Silesian Weavers' Revolt. For instance, as Marx criticises in "Kritische Randglossen", Arnold Ruge in his article on the rebellion mounts such a liberal, essentially political critique. Similarly to the weavers in Heine's poem, Ruge focuses in his article on the King of Prussia, the state of Prussia and the role of religion rather than the socio-economic antithesis between proletariat and bourgeoisie, Marx disapprovingly notes. For Marx this amounts to an ideological distortion of the true conflict since the Prussian King "hat seinen unmittelbaren Gegensatz in der Politik, in dem Liberalismus", "[f]ür den König existirt der Gegensatz des Proletariats eben so wenig, wie der König für das Proletariat existirt" (*MEGA* II, 449).

To ascertain whether Heine's poem goes beyond such a liberal, essentially political, critique of the German states and adopts a proletarian socio-revolutionary position, I will compare its ideology to that of "Das Blutgericht" (1844). Although this song of the rebellious Silesian weavers received broad public attention, as far I can see, an intertextual comparison has not been undertaken yet.¹¹⁰ In a pronounced break with critical orthodoxy, the main focus will be on "die inhaltliche Aussagen" (Marcuse 1980, 237) of the two poems rather than the rhetorical intricacies of Heine's poem, its play with sounds, its rhythm which imitate the weaving process, the form of the folk ballad etc..¹¹¹ Neither will the focus be on the alleged lack of these intricacies in "Das

¹¹⁰ Wulf Segebrecht analyses "Das Blutgericht" on its own (1979). Wehner in his study of "Die schlesischen Weber" and its contexts does the same (1980, 29-30). He even categorically denies any link between the two poems, "[e]ine direkte Verbindung zum "Blutgericht besteht nicht" (1980, 40).

¹¹¹ For an analysis that particularly foregrounds the firework of stylistic devices in Heine's poem, see Wehner 1980, 37-41.

Blutgericht".¹¹² I would argue that the ideology of Heine's poem only emerges when one is not deluded by its rhetorical brilliance, its high "Poetizitätsfaktor", as Wehner (1980, 38) calls it. As I will suggest, it is its form, with its stirring and rousing rhythm and chorus, that creates the false impression that Heine's poem endorses proletarian social revolution rather than any of the ideological tenets it puts forward. As Gerhard Höhn admits, "die agitatorische Kraft des Gedichts geht von seinem verbissenen Rhythmus, von dem fünfmal im Refrain und insgesamt fünfzehnmal wiederholten 'Wir weben' aus, das die mechanische Bewegung des Webens nachahmt" (2004, 111).

"Das Blutgericht", of which various versions exist, was the song of the rebellious weavers that was instrumental in fuelling the uprising. According to the *Vossische Zeitung* (No. 144/ June 22nd 1844) the song "eilte wie ein Aufruf von Haus zu Haus; es fiel als Zündstoff in gärende Gemüter" (quoted in Büttner 1986, 213). Although it lacks any explicit socio-revolutionary call, such as to attack the capitalists and their system of exploitation, it can with some justification be termed the "Marsaillaise der Notleidenden", as the contemporary socialist Wilhelm Wolff termed it, thus emphasising the socio-revolutionary power of the weavers' song (cf. 1965, 169). It performs a double function as an ideological form of gaining consciousness of the socio-economic processes, the adverse effects of which are painfully experienced, as well as fermenting a feeling of collective social identity, a rudimentary proletarian class consciousness that harbours a strong socio-revolutionary potential. Angrily it exposes both the exploitative practices of the entrepreneurs, the crass contrast between abundant

¹¹² Wehner maintains that "Das Blutgericht" is characterised by its utter lack of any "[ä]sthetische Qualitäten" with its incongruent images, absence of rhyme and its "holprigen Verse" (cf. 1980, 25). While, in contrast to Heine's highly aestheticised weaver poem, it was never intended as a work of art, but as a song of social protest and agitation, Wehner's verdict is a simplistic assertion that needs to be qualified. As my analysis will show, the weavers' song skilfully employs images to drive its ideological message home, even punning with the semantics of certain words.

wealth and utter starvation, as well as the class hostility between the proletarian weavers and the bourgeois capitalists, a characteristic feature of the song that Marx emphasises:

Zunächst erinnere man sich an das *Weberlied*, an diese kühne *Parole* des Kampfes, worin Herd, Fabrik, Distrikt nicht einmal erwähnt werden, sondern das Proletariat sogleich seinen Gegensatz gegen die Gesellschaft des Privateigentums in schlagender, scharfer, rücksichtsloser, gewaltsamer Weise herausschreit. Der schlesische Aufstand *beginnt* grade damit, womit die französischen und englischen Arbeiter-Aufstände *enden*, mit dem Bewußtsein über das Wesen des Proletariats. (*MEGA* II, 459; Marx's emphasis)

While it is not true that the song looks at the class antagonisms from a general abstract level – on the contrary the entrepreneurs are explicitly mentioned by name as well their respective exploitative practices¹¹³ – Marx is right when he stresses that the song expresses a pronounced proletarian awareness, "das Bewußtsein über das Wesen des Proletariats". As the use of the generic term "Armen" instead of 'Weber' or 'uns' suggests, the weavers are conscious that the capitalist mechanisms of exploitation are not only at work in their profession, but symptomatic of the contemporary industrial and class relations in bourgeois society:

15

Ihr fangt stets an zu jeder Zeit
Den Lohn herabzubringen,
Und andre Schurken sind bereit,
Dem Beispiel nachzuringen.

[...]

20

Von euch wird für ein Lumpengeld

¹¹³ In contrast to Marx, Engels in his article in *The Northern Star* stresses the concrete references in "Das Blutgericht": "The weavers assembled before the house of one of the most respectable manufacturers, of the name of Zwanziger, singing a song, in which the behaviour of this individual towards his workmen was animadverted upon, and which seems to have been manufactured for the occasion" (*MEGA* III, 610). However, Engels implies, similar to Marx, by the use of the verb 'to manufacture' that the weavers create through their song – although it is based on their individual experiences – a wider proletarian consciousness.

Die Waare hingeschmissen,
Was dann euch zum Gewinne fehlt,
wird Armen abgerissen. (Quoted in Wehner 1980, 23 & 24)

The song portrays the industrial relations as amounting to class war. In this confrontation the capitalists mercilessly exploit the proletarians by cheating them of the profit of their labour. Such proto-Marxist views of the socio-economic workings of capitalism (lowering of wages to maximise gains and the capitalists' profiteering of the surplus value of proletarian labour) are conspicuously absent from Heine's poem. In its revised version published in 1847, the reference to "Winterskälte und Hungersnöten" (l. 7; Heine 1997 IV, 455) may even create the impression that natural phenomena, such as winter's frost and famine,¹¹⁴ are to blame for the weavers' sufferings rather than capitalist business practices. In sharp contrast to "Das Blutgericht" the entrepreneurs escape any criticism. In fact they are not even mentioned and the blame is put on the King of Prussia instead who deprives the weavers of their last penny rather than the capitalists. While it is historically accurate that tithes and taxes exacerbated the destitution of the weavers (as even contemporary socialist writers such as Wilhelm Wolff acknowledged),¹¹⁵ it considerably distorts the picture to cast the Prussian monarch and his state as the main cause for the weavers' desperate socio-economic condition, as Heine does in "Die armen Weber":

Ein Fluch dem König, dem König der Reichen,
Den unser Elend nicht konnte erweichen,

¹¹⁴ The 1840s saw wide-spread failures of the crop and famines across Europe; crises that precipitated the outbreak of the European revolutions in 1848.

¹¹⁵ Wolff devotes a considerable part of his investigation into the socio-economic causes of the weavers' miserable living conditions on how remnants of feudal levies, services and taxes worsen their material situation (see 1965, 158-162). However, a concrete summary that he gives of the taxes, levies, interests on a loan etc. of a comparatively well-off weaver shows that the taxes to the state did not constitute the major part of these fees. "Grundsteuer an den Staat jährlich" und "Klassensteuer" together make up 3 Thaler and 15 Silbergroschen out of total of 19 Thaler and 5 Silbergroschen, compared to an annual income of 60 Thaler. The two biggest expenditures are "Schuldgeld für 2-3 Kinder" of 4 Thaler and "Zins eines auf dem Hause stehenden Kapitals von 100 Tlr" of 5 Thaler (cf. 1965, 165).

Der den letzten Groschen von uns erpreßt
Und uns wie Hunde erschießen läßt –

Wir weben, wir weben! (ll. 11-15; Heine 1997 IV, 455)

[...]

Ein Fluch dem falschen Vaterlande,
Wo nur gedeihen Lüg und Schande,
Wo nur Verwesung und Totengeruch –
Altdeutschland, wir weben dein Leichentuch:

Wir weben, wir weben (Heine 1997 IV, 970)

4

Ihr Schurken all, ihr Satansbrut,
Ihr höllischen Kujone,
Ihr freßt den¹¹⁶ Armen Hab und Gut,
Und Fluch wird euch zum Lohne!

5

Ihr seyd die Quelle aller Not,
Die hier den Armen drücket;
Ihr seyd's, die ihr das trocken Brot
Noch vor dem Mund wegrücket. (Quoted in Wehner 1980, 22)

The direct comparison between both poems illustrates how Heine's poem spares the bourgeoisie, while the weavers' song severely indicts the capitalists of crimes against the poor. In both the early version of the poem, "Die armen Weber" as well as "Die schlesischen Weber" the monarch and the anachronistic neo-absolutist German states are depicted as *the* sources of the weavers' abject socio-economic condition, whereas in "Das Blutgericht" the capitalists and their business practices are regarded as the single source, not merely of the weavers' but of proletarian misery in general: "die Quelle aller Not, / Die hier den Armen drücket". Unlike in Heine's poem in which the weavers utter a "Fluch" against "dem König, dem König der Reichen", the weavers in their song

¹¹⁶ A variant quoted reads "der Armen Hab und Gut" (Büttner 1986, 213 and Grab & Friesel 1973, 189).

direct their "Fluch" against the rich capitalists,¹¹⁷ a difference that Wehner also points out, although without considering how this intertextual reference reflects back on the ideology of Heine's poem (see 1980, 40). In a pun on 'Lohn' as 'wage' in the literal sense of the word and 'merit' in its figurative sense, the weavers in "Das Blutgericht" imply that the capitalists have well deserved the weavers' curse for paying them pitiful wages, whereas in the "Die Schlesischen Weber" it is the king who has incurred the weavers' curse by first exploiting them and then having them killed them as they rebelled. In Heine's poem the social relationships between monarch and his destitute subjects are shown to have been emptied out of any moral imperatives, in the weavers' song it is the industrial relations between master and labourer.

In "Das Blutgericht" the concept of a moral economy is shown to be defunct. The relationships between the rich and the poor are governed by the cruel laws of capitalism, which are exposed as bestial and savage. Employing the verb "fressen" which normally relates to animals, the capitalists are first likened to animals which "freß[en]" the possessions of the poor. In stanzas 10 and 11 allegations of savagery are taken to an extreme when the capitalists' act of the depriving the proletarians of their products is metaphorically portrayed as an act of cannibalism:

10

Man denke sich diese Noth
und Elend dieser Armen,
Zu Hause oft kein Bissen Brot
Ist das nicht zum Erbarmen?

11

Erbarmen, ha! ein schön Gefühl,

¹¹⁷ This difference cannot be simply be explained by the class difference between the authors of the two poems. For instance in the poem "Der Leineweber" (1847) by the bourgeois social-republican poet Ludwig Pfau, the starving weaver directly curses the capitalist, his "Herrn" as in "Das Blutgericht" and not God or the King as in Heine's poem (cf. Pfau 1993, 53).

Euch Kannibalen fremde
Und jede[r] kennt schon euer Ziel
Der Armen Haut und Hemde (Quoted in Wehner 1980, 23).

The Christian values of pity and charity have lost their meaning. As Wilhelm Wolff maintains in the same way as "Das Blutgericht", these ethical values have been completely superseded by the "Nützlichkeitsprinzip, d. h. die Selbsucht [... die] rät, dem Armen so wenig als möglich zu geben, wenn er arbeitslos oder –unfähig ist" (1965, 159). The greed for profit has led to sustained reckless exploitation and it has quenched in the capitalists any remaining ethical sense and degraded them to the moral state of savage cannibals, the weavers allege in their poem. As such they not only rob the proletarians of their products, their "Hemde", but even appear to devour parts of their bodies, their "Haut", in order to maximise their profit. This indictment of the manufacturers constitutes a stark image to express the extent the physical damage that the entrepreneurs inflict upon the proletarians that they exploit. The image's rhetorical and ideological force is further heightened by the alliteration which turns "Haut und Hemde" into an actual hendiadyoin. Robbing the producers of the product and thus of the profit of their labour virtually amounts to murdering them, it is implied. Such devastating criticism of the capitalist manufacturers cannot be found in Heine's poem, or for that matter anywhere else in his oeuvre. One has to turn instead to the discourse of the revolutionary German socialists to find similar allegations against the bourgeoisie which are rhetorically expressed through the same striking image of capitalist exploitation as a form of capitalism. While Büchner in *Der Hessische Landbote* (1834) had already employed this comparison between socio-economic exploitation and

cannibalism,¹¹⁸ in the contemporary context it reoccurs most prominently in the dedication "To the Working-Classes of Great Britain" to Engels' *Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England* (1845):

Having, at the same time, ample opportunity to watch the middle-classes, your opponents, I soon came to the conclusion that you are right, perfectly right in expecting no support whatever from them. Their interest is diametrically opposed to yours, though they always will try to maintain the contrary and to make you believe in their most hearty sympathy with your fates. Their doings give them the lie. I hope to have collected more than sufficient evidence of the fact, that – be their words what they please – the middle-classes intend in reality nothing else but to enrich themselves by your labour while they can sell its produce, and to abandon you to starvation as soon as they cannot make a profit by this indirect trade in human flesh. (Marx & Engels 1975a IV, 298)

Like the authors of "Das Blutgericht" Engels exposes how under industrial capitalism any ethical imperatives as prescribed by the concept of the moral economy have been invalidated and that the manufacturers constitute utterly unscrupulous exploiters of Consequently, the only form of protest that remains for the proletarians is to rise up against the entrepreneurs and to destroy the property the latter have extorted from the labour of the poor.

In "Die schlesischen Weber" such lack of moral responsibility is not indicted in relation to the entrepreneur, but in respect to the person of the monarch. While through the genitive attribute "König der Reichen" the rich bourgeoisie are indirectly implicated in the oppression of the weavers, the main attack is directed against the type of monarch who does not care for the welfare of *all* his subjects, but solely for the rich among them. This critique applies to the Prussian King Wilhelm IV as much as to the contemporary French King Louis Philippe, 'le roi citoyen', whose rule dependend utterly on the

¹¹⁸ Büchner likens the exploitation in the semi-feudal agricultural economic system of 1830s Hessa to cannibalism. For Büchner the rich "haben die Häute der Bauern an, der Raub der Armen ist in ihrem Hause [...]", thus also portraying exploitation as a crime amounting to cannibalism (Büchner 2002 II, 55).

support of the wealthy bourgeoisie. Hence it would be inaccurate to claim – as Marcuse does – that Heine's criticism here only extends to Prussia and its ruler. By principle Heine opposes any such 'kings of rich' and contrasts them with a monarch figure whose paternalistic responsibilities first and foremost extend to the poor. As for instance Wolfgang Koßek and Hans Boldt point out (see Koßek 1982, 223-224 and Boldt 1990, 75-78), such an idea of 'Volkskönigtum' or 'Volkskaisertum' forms a key socio-political notion for Heine. He finds this ideal of a monarch epitomised by Napoleon, who promoted "die physische und moralische Wohlfahrt der zahlreichen und ärmern Klassen", as Heine writes of the emperor in the "Tagesbericht vom 20. August 1832" from the *Französische Zustände* (1997 III, 269). Again implicitly referring to Napoleon, in *Shakespeares Mädchen und Frauen* (1838) Heine praises those Roman emperors who granted "dem Volke sein erstes Recht" by giving it "sein tägliches Brot". He even casts such monarchies, "wo ein Einziger als Inkarnation des Volkswillens an der Spitze des Staates steht", as the best possible form of government since it provides a just form society. Seemingly paradoxically he maintains that under this socially responsible form of monarchy "blüht die sicherste Menschengleichheit, die echtste Demokratie" (cf. 1997, IV, 200-201). The Prussian King clearly violates any such notion of the monarch's social responsibility. He forms the exact antithesis of such a 'Volkskönig',¹¹⁹ when he exploits the lower classes and then brutally quashes their justified social protest by military force. His father, Friedrich Wilhelm IV, had betrayed his people when he had promised a constitution if they fought for him, 'für Gott, König und Vaterland' against Napoleon. Now his son similarly betrays his people's social needs by employing the same propagandistic slogan.

¹¹⁹ Heine is not the only contemporary liberal author who voices such criticism. Even before the Silesian Weavers' Revolt, Bettina von Arnim in *Dies Buch gehört dem König* (1843) had accused the Prussian King of neglecting his social responsibilities towards the lower classes.

As the comparison of "Die schlesischen Weber" to "Das Blutgericht" has illustrated, the former, unlike the latter, neither shows how the weaver's condition is a direct result of the capitalist social order, nor does it advocate socio-revolutionary violence against the bourgeoisie. On the contrary in Heine's poem the proletarian voice of the weavers is usurped by the bourgeois one of the poet which strives to substitute the weavers' socio-revolutionary proletarian ideology by a liberal ideological position. Thus it is misleading to claim, as Jeffrey L. Sammons does, that "Die schlesischen Weber" are "ein Rollengedicht der grollenden, drohenden Weber" in which – unlike in other Heine poems – "gestische Hervorhebung der dichterischen Maske" is absent (cf. Sammons 1991, 104). Even more inaccurate is Hans Kaufmann's similar claim that "Die schlesischen Weber" constitute "den einzigen Fall in Heines Lyrik" in which der wahre Gegenspieler" of the bourgeoisie, the proletariat "weder in Gestalt des Dichters noch in symbolischen Beschreibungen, sondern in objektiver und realer Gestalt auftritt" (1976, 216-217). The "wir" of the weaver is deceptive as it disguises the ego of the poet's persona. The poet's persona is not absent, but on the contrary manifest itself in the intricate rhetorical form of the poem which rhythmically not only imitates the process of weaving but also highlights the process of composing, of 'weaving' the poem. In the poem's form the persona of the poet is present as much as in its ideological content. Thus it is not the threatening and grumbling weavers who "den dreifachen Fluch gegen Gott, König und Vaterland in das Leichentuch Altdeutschland hinweben" (Sammons 1991, 104), but the persona of the poet.

Heine in his poem no more adopts a proletarian ideological position than he promotes a radical socio-revolutionary position, something which a brief comparison with contemporary socialist texts readily demonstrates. In his "Kritische" Randglossen", in which Marx – as shown in the introduction – develops the distinction between

political and social revolution, he explicitly casts the Silesian Weavers' Revolt as the mother of all future proletarian revolutions. As "eine Protestation des Menschen gegen das entmenschte Leben" (*MEGA* II, 462), it forms a proletarian social revolution en miniature. "Der Aufstand war nicht unmittelbar gegen den König von Preußen, er war gegen die Bourgeoisie gerichtet" (446), Marx maintains in sharp contrast to Heine in "Die schlesischen Weber". Wolff adopts a similar socio-revolutionary perspective on the revolt when he regards it as the prelude "in dem unaufhaltbaren Proletarierdrama, [...] im Kriege der Besitzlosen gegen die Tyrannei und Selbstsucht des Privateigentums". In this struggle the proletarians engage as "zur Maschine erniedrigten Menschen" with the aim of "Wiedergewinnung seiner Würde" (cf. 1965, 168). As I have stressed repeatedly, the weavers' protest in Heine's poem is depicted as not being immediately directed against the bourgeoisie, against the rule of private property or as an attempt of the weavers to regain their alienated humanity, but – at least on the literal level – as a struggle against the aristocracy and the neo-feudal order of "Altdeutschland".¹²⁰

Nevertheless, Heine's poem does implicitly evoke a scenario of a potential proletarian social revolution. However, Heine's perspective on this type of revolution is fundamentally opposed to the positive view of it propagated by parts of the socialist movement. In Heine's poem such a transformation is not regarded as a desirable development, a lasting solution to the social crisis, but on the contrary as a profound threat to any civil society. The repressed – potentially socio-revolutionary – aggression of the defeated proletarian which the poem expresses is not depicted in a positive and sympathetic light, as critics have repeatedly argued, but in an altogether more

¹²⁰ This lack of criticism of the bourgeoisie and the capitalists also differentiates Heine's poem from Shelley's "Song to the Men of England" in which the same motif is used. As pointed out in chapter I the proletarians in this poem are weaving their own "winding-sheet – till fair / England be [their] Sepulchre" (ll. 31-32)

ambiguous manner. When the weavers are depicted in the second line – "Sie sitzen am Webstuhl und fletschen die Zähne" – then they are portrayed as semi-human, resembling aggressive and menacing animals. While in "Das Blutgericht" it is the capitalist who are cast as sub-human, as savage cannibals, in "Die schlesischen Weber" it is the proletarians. In fact one could be as cynical as to argue that the king is not totally mistaken "wenn er [die Weber] wie Hunde erschießen läßt" (l. 14), since in their initial depiction in the poem they exactly resemble dogs that bare their teeth. Although this depiction of proletariat is not as quite as unsympathetic as that as a savage mob of murderers of the bourgeoisie in article VI of the *Französische Zustände* that I have discussed in the chapter 2.1.1, it differs decisively from the image of an alienated proletariat that struggles heroically to regain its humanity, a view of the Silesian Weavers' Revolt that Marx, Engels and Wolff sketch out in order to promote their concept of proletarian social revolution. While he does not mention his ideological discrepancies to Heine at all, for instance Engels is acutely aware of them, as another line of his translation of Heine's "Die armen Weber" shows. When Engels renders "sie fletschen die Zähne" as "the rage of despair in their face", he significantly alters the impression of the weavers as being semi-human (Marx & Engels 1975, 232).

A significant transformation in Heine's negative perception of the proletariat is neither visible in "Die schlesischen Weber" nor in his prose publications of the 1840s. Discussing in article LI of the *Lutezia* (September 17th 1842) the English mass movement of Chartism, which he considers more dangerous to bourgeois society than French early socialism, he again vividly evokes the spectre of proletarian social revolution. The "Terrorismus" of the Chartists and the French Communists, who both aim to incite the proletariat to socio-revolutionary action will cause "eine soziale Umwälzung", which will attack the established "Eigentumsidee, des Grundpfeilers der

heutigen Gesellschaft". Compared to the horrors of this future proletarian social revolution, the terror of the bourgeois French Revolution will pale, it will "als sehr zahm und bescheiden erscheinen" (cf. Heine 1997 V, 419-420). Demonising further the proletariat, he suggests that in this imminent proletarian revolution this uneducated class will reveal its true nature as bloodthirsty cannibalistic savages, lest bourgeois social utopian ideas, such as Saint-Simonism,¹²¹ will cure the social disease first that afflicts the body politic. In this insinuation of the proletariat's cannibalistic leanings Heine reveals a diametrically opposed stance to the Silesian Weavers. While they in their song, as pointed out, accuse the bourgeoisie of such cannibalistic practices as which they picture extreme socio-economic exploitations, Heine identifies such in the revolutionary proletariat. Rising up like the workers of Lyon in the 1830s the English proletarians they will like the French counterparts acquire a taste for human flesh, Heine suggests appealing to bourgeois nightmares about butchering hordes of proletarians:

[...] nur [...] durch geistige Medikamente kann der sieche Staatskörper geheilt werden. Nur soziale Ideen können hier eine Rettung aus der verhängnisvollsten Not herbeiführen, aber, um mit Saint-Simon zu reden, auf allen Werften Englands gibt es keine einzige soziale Idee; nichts als Dampfmaschinen und Hunger. Jetzt ist freilich der Aufruhr unterdrückt, aber durch öftere Ausbrüche kann es wohl dahin kommen, daß die englischen Fabrikarbeiter, die nur Baum- und Schafwolle zu verarbeiten wissen, sich auch ein bißchen in Menschenfleisch versuchen und sich die die nötigen Handgriffe aneignen, und endlich dieses blutige Gewerbe ebenso mutvoll ausüben wie ihre Kollegen, die Ouvriers zu Lyon und Paris [...]. (Heine 1997 V, 419)

It is characteristic that in 1842 Heine in this article in the *Lutezia* observes the danger of a proletarian social revolution merely in Britain and France. For Heine as well as for the majority of the German public, this spectre only emerges powerfully with the Silesian

¹²¹ It is surprising that Heine in this context does not seem to count the contemporary cooperative movement of Owen and his followers as an important social idea, but instead refers back to Saint-Simonism, which in early 1840s had already become an anachronism.

Weavers' Revolt in 1844. While, as illustrated in chapter 2.1.3., in 1840, for instance in *Börne*, he still regarded this danger as largely limited to France and the German exile population of workers and craftsmen, now this threat has also reached Germany. There is no evidence that Heine's negatively anxious perspective on a socio-revolutionary proletariat underwent a drastic change from the mid 1840s onwards. His acquaintance with Marx in Paris in 1843 did not convince Heine of Marx's tenet of proletarian social revolution as the panacea to society's ill, as it has been occasionally argued. While there is evidence (as discussed in chapter 2.1.2.) that Heine could identify with Marx's insistence on the vital role of philosophy for engendering socio-political change, the perceived "Führungsrolle, welche die Philosophen darin übernahmen" (Schieder 1981, 124-125), he was not prepared to endorse a scenario of a violent social revolution led by the proletariat itself that directly aims to destroy bourgeois capitalist society, a concept that Marx spelled out with his "Kritische Randglossen" in August 1844. While "Die schlesischen Weber" evokes the possibility of such a disconcerting scenario of the destruction of bourgeois society, it at the same time provides, as Walter Grab argues, "kein positives Zukunftsbild" that would follow this act of violence. "Nicht geleitet von demokratischen Intellektuellen, vermögen die Massen nicht mehr, als ihre Bitternis hinauszuschreien und düstere Dohungen auszustoßen", Grab glosses Heine's poem (1992, 153). In my opinion, such a reading of the poem summarises the anti-proletarian ideology of "Die schlesischen Weber" much more accurately than Wehner's assertion that Heine with his fictional representation of the Silesian Weavers' Revolt is the first – as well as almost the only – poet who manages to create a vision "einer sozialrevolutionären Perspektive, zur Konfrontation von Proletariat und Bourgeoisie": Heine "denkt die Weber als ein revolutionäres Proletariat, das den Untergang der alten Gesellschaftsordnung bewirken wird", as becoming "*die* bestimmende Macht der

zukünftigen Gesellschaft" (1980, 63; Wehner's emphasis). On the contrary, I would maintain that Heine promotes with his poem a nightmare vision of revolutionary proletariat rather than a vision of the proletariat as the saviour of society as Wehner asserts.

Arguably such an image the proletariat as a ferocious revolutionary force that will overrun bourgeois society with an anarchic order, emerges most clearly in the opening passage of article IV of the *Lutezia* (April 30th 1840). In it Heine alleges that in addition to its natural savagery, the proletariat is being indoctrinated by socialist propaganda, which further incites their fierce nature towards destroying the bourgeoisie. As Heine observes with great concern, "Baboeufs Lehre und Verschwörung von Buonarotti, Schriften, die wie nach Blut rochen"¹²² are being distributed among "den Ouvriers, dem kräftigsten Teil der untern Klasse" in the factories in the faubourgs of Paris. It is in these places, Heine prophesies, that the proletariat forges in the rhythm of its work the downfall of contemporary society:

[...] Lieder hörte ich singen, die in der Hölle gedichtet zu sein schienen, und deren Refrains von der wildesten Aufregung zeugten. Nein, von den dämonischen Tönen, die in jenen Liedern walten, kann man sich in unsrer zarten Sphäre gar keinen Begriff machen; man muß dergleichen mit eigenen Ohren angehört haben, z. B. in jenen ungeheuern Werkstätten, wo Metalle verarbeitet werden, und die halbnackten trotzigen Gestalten während des Singens mit dem großen eisernen Hammer den Takt schlagen auf dem dröhnenden Amboß. Solches Akkompagnement ist vom größten Effekt, sowie auch die Beleuchtung, wenn die zornigen Funken aus der Esse hervorsprühen, Nichts als Leidenschaft und Flamme! (Heine 1997 V, 251)

¹²² Wehner insists that Heine's negative judgement on French early socialism is mainly caused by its alleged "Kunstfeindlichkeit". According to him it does not extend to a scenario of a proletarian social revolution, as his allegedly positive attitude towards Marx and Marxism proves (cf. 1980, 42). I am not convinced this by these arguments that are common in Heine criticism. As I have sketched out in chapter 2.1.3., Heine uses the appeal to class-based aesthetic concepts to disguise his pronounced class antipathies against the proletariat.

In light of these clearly negatively connotated passage Wehner's suggestion that Heine in it – as well as by extension in "Die schlesischen Weber" – positively comments on the beginnings of proletarian culture, such as "Ansätze einer proletarischen Literatur [...] in den demokratischen Volks- und Revolutionsliedern" (cf. 1980, 32), appears rather absurd. The "halbnackten trotzig" French proletarians in the factories are working towards the death of bourgeois society, while they "mit dem großen eisernen Hammer den Takt schlagen auf dem dröhnenden Amboß" and are singing savage socio-revolutionary songs "mit dämonischen Tönen". In the same way, their German counterparts in "Die schlesischen Weber" are incessantly weaving a prophecy of doom for contemporary bourgeois society into the product of their labour. While Heine literally presents them as only weaving the weaving sheet for anachronistic Germany "Altdeutschland", it is implied that their intensely savage anger also threatens modern bourgeois society on a whole. Like the French ouvriers they produce the prophecy to the rhythm of their work and with the tools of their trade. Instead of the hammer they use their flying shuttle, instead of the anvil sounding, the loom is creaking. While the ouvriers sing fierce demonic songs, the weavers voice their growling curses while they "fletschen die Zähne" (l. 2) like angry dogs:

Das Schiffchen fliegt, der Webstuhl kracht,
Wir weben emsig Tag und Nacht –
Altdeutschland, wir weben dein Leichentuch,
Wir weben hinein den dreifachen Fluch,
Wir weben, wir weben! (ll. 21-25; Heine 1997 IV, 455)

Although their rebellion has failed, Heine's weavers are – in contrast to most contemporary depictions – not portrayed as "resignierende und ausgehungerte Elendsgestalten" (Wehner 1980, 63). However that does not mean, as Wehner thinks,

2.3. "Der Krieg der Armen gegen die Reichen": Börne's Shifting Perspective on the Proletarian Social Revolution

Unlike Heine who recognised a socio-revolutionary shift in Börne's ideology and, as a consequence, decisively distanced himself from him, most critics have ignored or at least considerably played down its extent and importance. Norbert Eke is one of the few critics who underlines the fact that after 1830 Börne – unlike Heine – uncompromisingly campaigned for "Veränderung der *sozialen* Verhältnisse" (cf. 2005, 65; my emphasis). One might suspect that such unwavering socio-political commitment would manifest itself in a distinct move towards social revolution in Börne's works that were written after the July Revolution. However, Hans-Joachim Ruckhäberle, the sole critic who investigates them from this angle, maintains that this is not the case. While stressing that close ties existed between Börne and the Parisian early German workers' movement (1977, 12-16, 1988, 99-101),¹²³ he claims that in terms of revolutionary ideology Börne never went beyond a republican bourgeois, that is a political perspective on revolution. He concludes his essay with the verdict that Börne was precariously poised between Heine's liberal ideological position and those of the early socialist artisans and workers (cf. 1988, 109). The latter were strongly influenced by the revolutionary ideas of the early French socialists, in particular the group of the Neo-Babouvist around Buonarotti and Blanqui. Although Börne abandoned the belief in the autonomy of art, which was the central tenet of Heine's self-understanding as a political poet, and recognised that the lower classes have to form the basis for any future

¹²³ These links are largely ignored even by recent criticism. For instance Peter-Uwe Hohendahl indiscriminately states that Heine and Börne in Paris just "cultivated their connections with French literati" (2004, 567). The following observation made by Hans-Joachim Ruckhäberle almost 30 years ago is still topical: "Die Haltung Heines und die aktive Rolle Börnes im 'Deutschen Volksverein' und im 'Bund der Geächteten' ist erstaunlicherweise wenig erforscht" (1977, 15).

revolution, he did not make the transition from the "politischen Schriftsteller" to the social (cf. 109). Targeting mainly the educated bourgeois audience "des rasonnierenden Lesepublikums"¹²⁴ he remained firmly committed to "der literarisch-publizistischen Partei der radikalen Republikaner, nicht der sich entwickelnden frühsozialistischen Richtung der Arbeiterbewegung" (108).

However, reading Börne's post-1830-works in close interrelationship to the developing German early proletarian and early French socialist discourses challenges such a view. Decisively moving towards a notion of proletarian social revolution, Börne's revolutionary ideology increasingly encompassed the social and socio-economic demands voiced by these movements. In fact – as my inter-textual analysis will suggest – it seems as though he at times even influenced the German proletarian perspective on revolution, a crucial aspect that nearly all the existing Börne criticism ignores.¹²⁵ In the course of his *Briefe aus Paris* (1832-1834) Börne's acute analysis of the contemporary socio-political conditions in France provides the basis for a debate on the shape and nature of future revolutions. Growing increasingly radical and

¹²⁴ This verdict is hard to uphold. Börne contributed at least one article, "Rettung" (1835) about Hugues-Félicité-Robert de Lammenais' *Paroles d'un Croyant* (1834), a controversial Christian socialist text, to Jakob Vennedey's *Geächteten*. This journal was the organ of the eponymous secret German exile fraternity, the majority of whom were artisans and workers. According to Norbert Eke, Börne also distributed his translation of Lammenais among the German workers in Paris as a free pamphlet (2005, 69). There is evidence to suggest that Börne had a considerable readership among German artisans and workers in Paris. *Briefe eines Schweizers aus Paris* (1835-1836), written by the Swiss artisan Wolfgang Strähl, not only pay homage to Börne's *Briefe aus Paris*, but also display a thorough knowledge of Börne's work. While Strähl opposes Heine's elitist tendencies, he praises the *Briefe aus Paris* "des rühmlichen Herrn Börnes [...] der auch über politische und wissenschaftliche Dinge ein gar artiges Urteil hat" (1988, 163; Strähl's emphasis). The library holdings from 1840 of the London-based proletarian 'Communistischen Arbeiter-Bildungs-Verein' list Börne's last book *Menzel, der Franzosenfresser* (1837) under entry number 198, but not a single one of Heine's works (see Grandjonc, König & Roy-Jacquemart 1979, 39). All in all there is convincing evidence that Börne enjoyed certain popularity among the working classes.

¹²⁵ As far as I can see, Inge Rippmann is the only critic to posit a potential influence of Börne on the German exile workers' movement. According to her, the disappointment with the July Revolution did not only trigger a decisive ideological shift in Börne, "vom Liberalen zum radikalen Aktivisten", but also led him to embrace a different social class as the target of his revolutionary interventions. No longer content "den deutschen Mittelstand aufzurütteln", he embarked on the "Schulung der von ihm als geschichtsbildend erkannten Unterschicht der Handwerker und Arbeiter" (cf. 1981, 107).

uncompromising in ideological terms, this challenges fundamentally the validity of a primarily political bourgeois revolution.

In the "Vierzehnter Brief" (dated "17. November [1830]" and published 1832), Börne first voices his profound disillusionment with the liberal July Revolution. With respect to both political and social freedom it is has achieved so little, "daß man die letzte Revolution als ganz fruchtlos ansehen kann" (1964 III, 66).¹²⁶ Far earlier than Heine, Börne recognises the sociological fact that the rich bourgeoisie has become "eine Geldaristokratie".¹²⁷ This class has replaced the aristocracy as the ruling class which oppresses and exploits the lower classes (thus mounting a similar critique as Shelley did in the British context of 1819). The majority in parliament is held by

[...] die Gutsbesitzer, die reichen Bankiers, die Krämer, die sich mit einem vornehmen Worte die *Industriellen* nennen. Diese Menschen, die funfzehn [sic] Jahre lang gegen alle Aristokratie gekämpft – kaum haben sie gesiegt, noch haben sie ihren Schweiß nicht abgetrocknet und schon wollen für sich selbst eine neue Aristokratie bilden: eine Geldaristokratie, einen Glücksritterstand. (Börne 1964 III, 67; Börne's emphasis)

In contrast to the old aristocracy, the power of this new aristocracy is based entirely on its capital and capitalist ventures, as the terms "Geldaristokratie" and "Glücksritterstand" connote. As a result the people striving for equality will have to

¹²⁶ Soon afterwards, in the "Einundzwanzigsten Brief", Börne echoes this sentiment and reaches an even more devastating verdict on the July Revolution. He acknowledges that any dreams that it would bring about more socio-political freedom were illusory. In exasperation, he metaphorically terms its aftermath – in allusion to the topos of revolution as a political springtime – "der erbärmlichste Revolutionsfrühling, der mir je vorgekommen" (1964 III, 100).

¹²⁷ Heine uses this same term first in Artikel LVII (May 5th 1843) of the *Lutezia*, more than ten years after Börne. Discussing the increasing takeover of politics by the business and financial elite, Heine writes: "[...] es ist das Staatsruder, dessen sich die herrschende Geldaristokratie täglich mehr und mehr bemächtigt. Jene Leute werden bald nicht sowohl das comité de surveillance der Eisenbahnsozietät, sondern auch das comité de surveillance unserer gesamten bürgerlichen Gesellschaft bilden" (1997 V, 450). Heine's comparably late use of this term refutes Wolfgang Koßeck's claim that Heine was the first to recognise this sociological development. Heine was not only thinking "sozial sehr genau" but also "weit moderner als alle seine Zeitgenossen", Koßeck wrongly maintains (cf. 1982, 227).

attack the possessions of the ascendant industrial bourgeoisie. This will necessitate a new type of revolution, "eine Art neuer Revolution"¹²⁸ (Börne 1964 III, 113):

Werden aber Vorrechte an den Besitz gebunden, wird das französische Volk, dessen höchste Leidenschaft die Gleichheit ist, früher oder später das zu erschüttern suchen, worauf die neue Aristokratie gegründet worden – den *Besitz*, und dies wird zur Güterverteilung, zur Plünderung und zu Greueln führen¹²⁹, gegen welche die der frühern Revolution nur Scherz und Spiel werden gewesen sein. (Börne 1964 III, 67; Börne's emphasis)

This acknowledgement that behind such an uprising lies the desire for social equality, elevates the fearfully anticipated future popular revolution from the status of an anarchic unconscious uprising of a mob to a semi-conscious proletarian social revolution. While Börne does not yet view the proletariat as being under direct attack from the moneyed bourgeoisie as the early socialist revolutionary Blanqui does,¹³⁰ he similarly realises that without a re-distribution of property, a "Güterverteilung", the people will never be able to emancipate themselves from the rule of the new aristocracy whose very power base is their now-entrenched capitalist privileges.

To sum up, Börne's 14th letter demonstrates the ideological tensions that he was experiencing at this time. He maintains the primacy of a political revolution, while at the same astutely recognising the link between capital and political power. In this way

¹²⁸ This is because – as Börne will later affirm – a bourgeois political revolution has become an anachronism. The bourgeoisie no longer harbours any revolutionary potential but only the so called "Pöbel [...], das heißt die armen Leute, das heißt die einzigen, welchen das verfluchte Geld nicht die ganze Seele, allen Glauben abgehandelt; die einzigen, denen der Müßiggang nicht alle Nerven ausgesogen, und die einen Geist haben, die Freiheit zu wünschen, und einen Leib, für sie zu kämpfen" (Börne 1964, III, 114-115). This clear commitment to the proletariat as the only remaining revolutionary class refutes Rutger Boöf's verdict that Börne assigned a very minor role to the "'Pöbel' bei künftigen revolutionären Umwälzungen" (1977, 249).

¹²⁹ Despite sharing some of Shelley's apprehension concerning the spectre of anarchy attendant on any proletarian uprising, Börne demonstrates less ambivalence in realising the absolute inevitability of such an occurrence. Furthermore in contrast to Shelley, he accepts that any successful revolution will have to employ violent means.

¹³⁰ Blanqui was one of the first to use the term moneyed aristocracy, "aristocratie d'argent" (1971, 75) in 1832. In his famous defence speech delivered before the Court des Assizes in Paris on January 15th 1832, he alleges – in the words of a contemporary German translation – that the property-less proletarians find themselves "durch eine platte Geldaristokratie in die Kaste der Parias verwiesen" (1987, 96).

he implicitly envisages a scenario of social revolution. Rhetorically and ideologically, however, he still aims to contain it within the concept of a political revolution: a revolution against privileges ("Vorrechte") rather than their property ("Besitz"), despite the fact that these are obviously linked in his discourse.¹³¹

Such a perspective on revolution can also be found among the German-speaking artisans and workers in Paris. Three years later in a very similar vein to Börne the Swiss piano maker Wolfgang Strähl in his *Briefe eines Schweizers aus Paris* (1835-1836) also highlights the negative consequences for social equality that arise from this inextricable link. Like Börne he moves towards a proletarian social revolution, but also stops short of actually calling for it. It still remains a lacuna, forming the implied answer to the question that concludes this passage:

In einem Staate, der kein Verdienst anerkennt, oder wenigstens so hochschätzt, als das Verdienst, *Geld zu besitzen* – was hat da der arbeitende Teil, der doch überall der größte ist, für eine Freiheit? Der Reiche besitzt Ämter, Ehrenstellen, er hat Vermögen und häuft jeden Tag größere Schätze, lebt in Saus und Braus und alle Mittel stehen ihm zu Gebote, seine Gelüste zu befriedigen; allein der Arme (so nenne ich den Bürger, den Handwerker, und den Landmann) sieht sich von jedem Lebensgenusse ausgeschlossen, und sein Vermögen schmälert sich notwendig immer mehr und mehr, so wie des Reichen immer mehr und mehr zunimmt, und was bleibt ihm noch? (Strähl 1988, 289; emphasis in text)

The main stumbling block that prevents both Strähl here and Börne in the 14th letter of his *Briefe from Paris* from reaching a concept of a proletarian social revolution is that they still largely regard socio-economic exploitation as a result of socio-political oppression. The bourgeoisie primarily aims to safeguard its socio-political privileges. To this end they use their hegemonic position to exploit the proletariat and thus keep it

¹³¹ This follows Blanqui's conception of property as the major stumbling block towards equality in the new political dispensation insofar as it guarantees the privileges of the ruling bourgeoisie. Blanqui ironically satirises the bourgeois perspective using terms similar to Börne: "Unaufhörlich klagt man uns Proletaires als Raubgesindel an, das bereit sey, sich über die Besitzthümer herzumachen [...]. Die Privilegirten hingegen, die sich vom Schweiß der Armuth mästen, diese sind legitime Besitzer, denen ein gieriger Pöbel mit Raub und Plünderung droht" (2000, 199).

in socio-political despondency. Börne, however, quickly shifts to a perspective in which the desire for socio-economic domination becomes an end in itself. To acquire property and capital at the expense of others is viewed as the sole underlying motivation for all political action. The bourgeoisie conquers not by military force, but by economic might.

This notion is pointedly expressed in the "Fünfundzwanzigsten Brief", in which Börne further elaborates the relationship between bourgeoisie and proletariat in France. After having used the proletariat to gain victory against the aristocracy in the July Revolution, the bourgeoisie now cracks down on the former, not merely to stabilise its political rule, but first and foremost to increase its profits. Reminiscing about the relation between July Revolution and the July Monarchy, after having watched scenes depicting the events on open air panoramic paintings, "die Schlachttage im Juli", "die Barrikaden, das Pflastergeschoß, die schwarzen Fahnen und die dreifarbigten, die königlichen Soldaten, [...] die Leichen auf der Straße" (1964 III, 122), Börne angrily unmasks the capitalist betrayal of the proletarian basis revolution¹³²:

[...] es ist zum Totweinen! Denn ich habe die Kämpfenden gemustert, ich habe die Leichen betrachtet und gezählt und die Verwundeten – es waren viele junge Leute; die meisten Alten aber gehörten zum sogenannten, so gescholtenen Pöbel, der jung bleibt bis zum Grabe. Einen bejahrten Mann in einem guten Rocke, ich sah keinen, weder unter den Streitenden noch unter den Gefallenen. Die Männer in guten Röcken sitzen in der Pairs- und Deputiertenkammer und halten sich die Nase zu vor den stinkenden Pöbelleichen und sagen: *Wir* haben Frankreich gerettet, es gehört uns wie eine gefundene Sache, wie eine Entdeckung, und sie ließen sich ein Patent darüber geben. Und die reichen Leute, die verfluchten Bankiers kamen und sagten: halb part! und haltet uns nur den Pöbel im Zaum, damit die Renten steigen. An diese muß die Rache auch noch kommen. (Börne 1964, III, 122-123; Börne's emphasis)

¹³² The notion of the stolen revolution – 'la revolution escamotée' – that Börne voices here was common among left-wing contemporary observers. Sharif Gemie sharply dismisses this thesis, which is also common among left-leaning historians (1999, 27). Nevertheless he has to concede that this thesis makes some sense, "in the days after July 1830", when the bourgeoisie reaped the fruits of a revolutionary victory largely brought about by the proletariat (cf. 32).

While Börne's self-fashioning as an eyewitness of the July Revolution is purely fictional,¹³³ his verdict on the social composition of the revolutionaries – that most of them belonged to the proletariat – is historically accurate.¹³⁴ More importantly still, Börne, when he highlights the fact that the proletarians formed the main force of the July Revolution and the manner in which the bourgeoisie subsequently betrayed them, moves very close to a Neo-Babouvist position. Blanqui in a famous defence speech that he delivered at his trial before the 'Court des Assizes' on January 12th 1832 highlights in a very similar manner the selfless heroism of the proletarian barricade fighters and their selfish betrayal at the hands of the bourgeoisie. With rifles and cobblestones they defeated the well-equipped regular army and swept the bourgeoisie to power (cf. Blanqui 1971, 84), only to be paid back with cynical contempt and heightened socio-economic oppression, once the bourgeoisie had secured their political hegemony:

[...] qui l'eût dit que tant de joie et de gloire se changerait en un tel deuil! Qui eût pensé en voyant ces ouvriers grands de six pieds, dont les bourgeois, sortis tremblant de leurs caves, baisaient à l'envi les haillons, et redisaient les désintéressement et le courage avec des sanglots d'admiration, qui eût pensé qu'ils mourraient de misère sur ce pavé, leur conquête, et que leurs admirateurs les appelleraient *la plaie de la société*! (Blanqui 1971, 84; emphasis in text)¹³⁵

¹³³ Börne was actually in Germany, in Bad Ems on a health cure during the Revolution and did not arrive in Paris until September 16th 1830 (See Enzensberger 1997, 370). Rütger Boß discusses how fictionalised Börne's *Briefe aus Paris* are, how they were edited and changed before publication (see 1977, 168-181).

¹³⁴ As for instance Dieter Langewiesche stresses, the bourgeoisie was barely involved in the street fighting. In these battles "überwogen Handwerker und gelernte Arbeiter, auf die fast 1000 der etwa 1500 Verwundeten und Toten der Julikämpfe von 1830 entfielen" (1987, 49). In contrast to Börne's sociologically accurate accounts Eugène Delacroix's iconic painting of the July Revolution, "La Liberté, Guidant la Peuple" (1830) (see appendix, image III) influentially conjured up the myth that all social classes and groups were united and equally represented in their fight for freedom behind the barricades: the bourgeois with the top hat, the student of the Ecole Polytechnique and the ferocious proletarian.

¹³⁵ "Who would have known that so much joy and glory would be transformed into such grief? Who would have thought, in seeing these six-foot tall workers [and the bourgeois, who trembling stepped out of their cellars and were kissing incessantly their rags, and told time and again of their unselfishness and courage under sobs of admiration; who would have thought they would die of misery on the same cobbled streets they had conquered] and that their admirers would call them the *plague of society*" (Blanqui 1983, 45; my alterations).

Most indicative of Börne's move beyond the concept of a bourgeois political revolution is the financial imagery with which he depicts the appropriation of the July Revolution by the bourgeoisie. While the proletarians decided its outcome on the barricades, the liberal bourgeoisie claims ownership of the revolution at the bourse. Metaphorically the betrayal of the revolution is represented as a financial transaction, as capitalist profiteering from the proletarian revolution, which is the product of the workers in the first place. France "gehört uns" the bourgeoisie self-confidently asserts, as it brokers a deal with the financial magnates to keep the proletariat in check in order for stocks to soar. Financial transactions have now become the greatest weapon in the arsenal of the bourgeoisie as it launches an all-out class war against its former 'allies'. In this respect Börne has an even more modern – one might even claim a more proto-Marxist – perspective on class war than Blanqui. The latter in the corresponding passage from his defence speech employs a more traditional republican rhetoric, although he also mentions the bourgeois stockbrokers as one group among the various aristocratic and bourgeois social parasites that rule France and form the enemies of the proletariat. However, as the verb "speculieren" implies the power of the high bourgeoisie to determine politics is growing:

[...] die Höflinge, Hofdamen, Schranzen und Papierstutzer, die auf der Börse zum Voraus schon die Ehre und Zukunft des Landes verhandeln, die Maitressen, Lieferanten, Polizeifiguren, Scribler etc., welche auf den Untergang Polens¹³⁶ speculieren. (Blanqui 1987, 96)

It is only around three years later in the early proletarian discourse that the rich bourgeoisie is identified as the major class enemy of the proletariat. For instance in the

¹³⁶ Blanqui alludes here to the Polish Revolution (1831), which was brutally quashed by Russia. Sympathy with the rebellious Poles and after their defeat with those seeking exile was widespread among liberal and republican circles. In Germany the identification with the Polish revolutionaries led to a decisive politicisation of the bourgeoisie.

anonymous article "Die Geldmacht" (1835) in the Parisian German journal *Der Geächtete*, the social group, the rich bourgeoisie, that dominates the stock market is not only regarded as the socio-politically most powerful class, but also as the direct class enemy of proletariat. Similarly, as Börne sees it, they employ their financial clout as weapons in the class war:

Man denke sich den Börsenkaiser mit seinen Millionen, als Stimmführer einer Minderzahl von einer Million Menschen in einem freien Staate von dreißig Millionen; [...] *ihm* ist das Geschick des Staates in die Hand gegeben, und er giebt der Mehrzahl entweder Gesetze oder den Bürgerkrieg. (Venedey et al. 1972 I, 161; emphasis in text)

Generally, however, the direct ideological impact of Blanqui looms large throughout the *Briefe aus Paris*, becoming even more obvious in the later letters. In particular in the "Sechzigster Brief" (1833) Börne is debating the socio-economic war between the rich and the poor in terms that are strongly influenced by Blanqui's socio-revolutionary ideology. Even Ruckhäberle, who is, as pointed out earlier, very reluctant to ascribe any early socialist beliefs to Börne, admits Blanqui's presence in the "babouvistisch inspirierte Formulierung vom Krieg der Armen gegen die Reichen [...] wie dessen Zurückführung auf den 'Besitz'" (1988, 107). Yet, Börne here is not merely inspired by Blanqui as Ruckhäberle claims. In fact, he engages very deeply with Blanqui's justification of a proletarian social revolution, even relating back intertextually to Blanqui's widely publicised defence speech.

For instance Blanqui reveals that the laws are but a ploy by the rich minority to keep up the system of political oppression and socio-economic exploitation of the proletarian majority:

Les lois sont faites par cent mille électeurs, appliquées par cent mille jurés, exécutées par cent mille gardes nationaux urbains [...]. Que font les trente millions de prolétaires dans toutes ces évolutions? Ils paient. (Blanqui 1971, 77)¹³⁷

Merging it with a different passage from Blanqui's speech, Börne echoes this view of the law as a means to legalise socio-political oppression and socio-economic exploitation:

Die reichen Leute machen allein die Gesetze, sie allein verteilen die Auflagen, davon sie den größten und schwersten Teil den Armen aufbürden. [...] Dreißig Millionen stiehlt jährlich der Staat aus den Beuteln der Tagelöhner, und eine Regierung, die dies tut, hat noch das Herz, einen Dieb an den Pranger zu stellen und einen Räuber am Leben zu bestrafen! Und nach allen diesen Abscheulichkeiten kommen sie und lästern über die Unglücklichen, die nichts zu verlieren haben, und fordern die reichen Leute auf, gegen das wilde Tier, Volk, auf seiner Hut zu sein! (Börne 1964 III, 376 & 377)

Similarly to Shelley before them, both Börne and Blanqui regard the capitalist liberal state as a deeply anarchic system. Underneath the legalistic framework and the semblance of order, they agree, a civil war, a class war between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat is simmering: "*la guerre entre les riches et les pauvres*" (Blanqui 1971, 72). The rich are the aggressors, but by representing the proletarians as ferocious beasts which are about to inflict pillage and destruction upon society, the bourgeoisie ideologically tries to veil this fact:

Das Gericht hat eurer Einbildung, [...] eine Empörung der Sklaven vorgespiegelt, um euren Haß durch Furcht anzuregen. "Ihr seht, sagte es, dieß ist der Krieg der Armen gegen die Reichen; Jeder der etwas besitzt, ist betheiltigt diese Eingriffe zurückzuweisen; wir führen euch eure Feinde vor, zernichtet sie, bevor sie furchtbarer werden."

Ja, meine Herren! Dieß ist der Krieg zwischen Arm' und Reich'; so wollten es die Reichen, denn sie haben den ersten Angriff gethan. – Sie finden es nur übel, daß die Armen

¹³⁷ "The laws are made by one-hundred thousands electors, [administered] by one-hundred thousand jurors, enforced by one-hundred thousand urban national guardsmen. [...] [What is the role of the thirty million proletarians in all these evolutions?] They pay" (Blanqui 1983, 41; my alterations).

Widerstand leisten; gerne möchten sie vom Volke sagen: "Diese Bestie ist so wild, daß sie sich vertheidigt wenn man sie angreift" Die ganze Philippica des Hrn. General-Advokaten beschränkt sich auf den Gehalt dieser paar Worte. (Blanqui 2000, 199)

As a defendant representing the proletarians, Blanqui is turning the tables against their accusers, because "die Rolle des Anklägers ist die einzige, die dem Unterdrückten zukommt" (2000, 198).

Börne in his "Sechzigster Brief" is replicating exactly Blanqui's argumentative attack on the bourgeoisie. Like Blanqui he quotes the bourgeois propaganda against proletarians (in this case against the rebellious silk weavers of Lyon)¹³⁸ only eventually to turn those accusations against their originators. Claiming to quote the former French Premier, minister of the interior and banking magnate Casimir Périer, Börne angrily comments:

Dieser Kasimir Périer hat darüber gefrohlockt, daß in den blutigen Geschichten von Lyon gar nichts von Politik zum Vorschein gekommen, und daß es nichts als Mord, Raub und Brand gewesen! Es sei nichts weiter als ein Krieg der Armen gegen die Reichen, derjenigen, die nichts zu verlieren hätten, gegen diejenigen, die etwas besitzen! Und diese fürchterliche Wahrheit, die, weil sie eine ist, man in den tiefsten Brunnen versenken müßte, hielt der wahnsinnige Mensch hoch empor und zeigte sie aller Welt! Die dunkeln Triebe des Volks hat er ihm klar gemacht; seiner wilden Laune des Augenblicks hat er durch Grundsätze Dauer gegeben; seinen kurzsichtigen Sorgen des Tages den Blick in ewige Not eröffnet. (Börne 1964 III, 371)

Périer, exactly like the court at Blanqui's trial, voices a paradigmatic liberal bourgeois perspective, when he speaks of a war by the poor against the rich. Like Blanqui Börne satirises this view when he exposes how Périer in his patronising verdict on the Lyon uprising inadvertently highlights the pivotally novel dimension that is intrinsic to this

¹³⁸ The *canuts*, as the Lyon silk weavers were called, rose on November 20th 1831, protesting against their working conditions. They managed to take control of the city before they were routed after three days by an army sent in from Paris. In April 1834 they rebelled again. For studies investigating these first mass scale workers' rebellions in European history, see for instance Bezucha 1974, Rude 1977 and Gemie 1999, 44-62.

workers' rebellion. While Börne disagrees with Périér's assessment of the Lyon events – that they constitute nothing more than criminal acts on a massive scale, "nichts als Mord, Raub und Mord" – he subscribes to his other assertion, albeit in a fundamentally different sense. When Périér triumphantly and euphemistically declares, "daß in den blutigen Geschichten von Lyon *gar nichts von Politik* zum Vorschein gekommen", he wants to highlight that these events are just an anarchic bloody riot of a politically unconscious rabble, i.e. not a fundamental threat to the bourgeois liberal state. By contrast, Börne takes it to mean that the Lyon weavers' revolt transcended politics, insofar as it had a distinctly *socio-economic* character. Rather than having been another attempt to stage a *political* revolution, a repetition of the July Revolution, it marks the first major instance of proletarian *social* revolution. Pivotaly, Theodor Schuster in the pamphlet "Gedanken eines Republikaners" (1835) identifies the workers' revolts of Lyon in 1831 and 1834, together with the 'Bristol Riots' (1831) and the slave rebellion in Haiti (1803) as the first manifestations of this novel proletarian type of revolution. In one of the first uses of the term 'social revolution' among the German exile association in Paris, he remarks on the fundamentally socio-revolutionary character of the Lyon rebellion:

Auf Haiti unterstützten die müßigen Pflanzer ihren Besitz mit den Beweisgründen der *Geißel*, in Europa unterstützen die müßigen Kapitalisten ihren Besitz mit den Beweisgründen des *Hungers* und *des Kapitals*: in Haiti antworteten die Sklaven mit dem Brandzeichen der socialen Revolution: die Warnungsworte der Geächteten Europa's stehen auf den Mauern von Bristol und Lyon! (Schuster 1977, 192; emphasis in text)

Hence the revolt of Lyon poses a severe threat not merely to the liberal state, but to bourgeois society as a whole. Crucially, Börne acknowledges that the major conflict in contemporary society is in essence *not a political* but a *socio-economic* confrontation, a

class conflict between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. This ideological shift from the political to social not only marks a major move from republican radicalism to socialism, but also displays a decisive departure from the concept of a political revolution.

Still, one might argue, Börne's move towards a concept of a proletarian social revolution is hampered by his bourgeois fear of proletarian class violence against the bourgeoisie, of the "Krieg der Armen gegen die Reichen". Yet such a view ignores the manner in which Börne plays with bourgeois depictions of the proletariat as a semi-animal-like entity without consciousness and incapable of rationality – full of "dunkeln Triebe", "wilden Laune des Augenblicks" and "kurzsichtigen Sorgen" – in order to evoke the spectre of anarchy and indicate their revolutionary potential, an image of the proletariat that for instance Heine often employs as I have shown in chapter 2.1. Any bloodthirsty drive which the proletariat manifests is not an indication of its brutish nature but rather points to a semi-conscious and growing awareness of its victimisation,¹³⁹ an awareness which he wishes to promote through his satire: the wish for a better life that their dark drives express, the "Grundsätze" that lie behind this momentous manifestation of proletarian rebellion, an insight into the causes of the "ewige Not" the proletarians suffer and which prevents them from caring about anything other than the immediate future.

Adopting the same strategy of juxtaposing bourgeois stereotypes and discriminatory assertions about the proletariat as Blanqui, Börne in this letter also

¹³⁹ In contrast to Börne Marx in his retrospective assessment of the Lyon questions whether the workers even had a semi-conscious awareness of the social relevance of their actions. In "Randglossen zum Artikel eines Preußen" (1844) Marx maintains that the lack of social insight made the proletariat waste "seine Kräfte – wenigstens im Beginn seiner Bewegung – [...] an unverständige, nutzlose und im Blut erstickte Emeuten". He refers to the revolts of Lyon as prime examples to illustrate this thesis, adopting a decisively more patronising view of the workers than Börne. In contrast to Börne, he asserts that any socio-revolutionary motivation was purely an instinct, a dark drive, thus reaffirming the bourgeois stereotype of the proletariat as incapable of rational actions: "Die Arbeiter zu Lyon glaubten nur politische Zwecke zu verfolgen, nur Soldaten der Republik zu sein, während sie in Wahrheit Soldaten des Socialismus waren. So verdunkelte ihr politischer Verstand ihnen die Wurzel der geselligen Noth, so verfälschte er ihre Einsicht in ihren wirklichen Zweck, so *belog* ihr *politischer* Verstand *ihren socialen Instinkt*" (MEGA II, 461; Marx's emphasis).

inverts the bourgeois formula of the war by the poor against the rich. Like Blanqui, he reveals that in reality bourgeois society stages a permanent war by the rich against the poor. Poignantly, Börne unmasks how the capitalist socio-economic system incessantly inflicts violence on the poor:

Das Herz empört sich, wenn man sieht, mit welcher Ungerechtigkeit alle Staatslasten verteilt sind. Hat man je denn je einen reichen Städter über zu starke Auflagen klagen hören? Wer trägt denn nun alle die Lasten, unter welchen die europäischen Völker halb zerquetscht jammern? Der arme Tagelöhner, das Land. [...] Der Bauer muß seinen einzigen Sohn hergeben, den frechen Überfluß der Reichen gegen seine eigene Not zu schützen, und unterliegt er der Verzweiflung und murt, schickt man ihm den eigenen Sohn zurück, der für fünf Kreuzer täglich bereit sein muß, ein Vtermörder zu werden. [...] Der reiche Fabrikant hält sich für zugrunde gerichtet, wenn nicht jede seiner Töchter einen türkischen Schal tragen kann, und um sich und seiner Familie nichts zu entziehen, wirft er seinen Verlust auf die Arbeiter und setzt ihren Tageslohn herab. Die Stadt Paris braucht täglich vierzig Millionen, von welchen ein schöner Teil in den räuberischen Händen der begünstigten Lieferanten und Unternehmer zurückbleibt. (Börne 1964 III, 376 & 377)

This passage of "Sechzigster Brief" is again based on Blanqui's speech. As pointed out earlier, Blanqui asserts that the bourgeois socio-economic system has created the war between the poor and the rich in the first place, since the rich have directly attacked them by relentlessly exploiting them. Börne shares Blanqui's perspective on class war, as the similarity of their examples of socio-economic oppression and exploitation suggest. Like Börne, Blanqui reminds his audience of the stark social inequality in France. Similarly to Börne he maintains that "alles Geld wird ja in den Städten verzehrt" to enrich "die privilegierte Bürgerklasse" in Paris and other cities, whereas "dem Bauer soll übrigens kein Heller ohnehin von den anderthalb Milliarden, deren Fünftsechstheile durch ihn bezahlt wird, zurückkehren" (cf. 1987, 96). Furthermore he alleges – using several of the same keywords that Börne employs – that taxes, sinecures, tithes, tolls

etc. become a chain which "den *Proletair* umschlingt, alle seine Glieder fesselt und auszehrt":

Die Bemerkung mag hinreichen, daß diese Masse von Lasten immer so ausgeteilt ist, daß der Reiche dabei immer verschont wird, und der Arme ausschließlich gedrückt werde, oder vielmehr *daß die Müßigen die arbeitenden Massen auf eine schändliche Weise berauben.*
(Blanqui 1987, 96; emphasis in original)

Echoing this passage Börne also depicts the taxes levied upon the lower classes as robbery by the ruling classes: "Dreißig Millionen stiehlt jährlich der Staat aus den Beuteln der Tagelöhner" while a rich person, "die jährlich vierzigtausend Franken Einkommen hat, zahlt nichts" (cf. 1964 III, 377). Both Blanqui and Börne mainly seem to blame the excessive taxes and levies for the condition of the working classes as well as for the exploitation of the toiling producers by the idle consumers. Hence although they move a long way towards locating an intrinsic flaw in the capitalist of production, they still seem to subscribe largely to the traditional radical explanation for the exploitation of the poor: financial exploitation of the proletariat by the state apparatus, its socio-economic machinery and the privileged class etc., as I have pointed out in respect to discourse in Britain in the 1810s.

However, there are instances in both texts that considerably transcend such radical republican discourse. For instance, when Börne in a satirically pointed manner mentions the example of the rich manufacturer who lowers the wage of his workers to compensate for his losses, he blames the capitalist process of production itself, since the characteristics of the industrial capitalist system permit him to act in this way in the first place (e.g. labour as the sole capital of the proletariat, the competition under the workers due to the increasing demand etc.). Within the capitalist system the proletariat has no other option than to drive the very machine that exploits it, as Blanqui powerfully

suggests, when he metaphorically casts the capitalist system of production as one immense industrial apparatus designed for exploiting the proletariat up to the point at which it kills the producers:

Schreckliche Maschine, welche von 25 Millionen Bauern und 5 Millionen Handwerkern einen um den anderen zermalmt, um ihr reinstes Blut abzapfen und in die Adern der Privilegierten umzugießen. Das mit bewunderungswürdiger Kunst kombinierte Räderwerk, diese Maschine ergreift den Armen jeden Augenblick, verfolgt ihn in den geringsten Bedürfnissen seiner anspruchslos bescheidenen Lebensweise, rafft die Hälfte seines geringfügigen Gewinns, seines armseligsten Genusses, hinweg. (Blanqui 2000, 200)

These passages from Blanqui's and Börne's texts leave no doubt that they regard the war waged by the rich against the poor as a socio-economic war which both underpins and supersedes the action staged within the political arena. In fact as long as the capitalist system exists, the proletarians will never be represented in the political process, as Börne recognises. Commenting on two of the most advanced liberal states in Europe, Britain and France, he writes:

Im Parlament wie in den Deputiertenkammer sitzen nur die reichen Gutsbesitzer, die Rentiers und die Fabrikanten, die nur ihren eigenen Vorteil verstehen, welcher dem der Arbeitsleute gerade entgegensteht. (Börne 1964 III, 375)

Börne here reaches a proto-Marxist position, when he regards the socio-economic and class interests of proletariat and bourgeoisie as diametrically opposed to each other. On the basis of this insight Börne dismisses not only political reform as the way to end the class war, but also political revolution.¹⁴⁰ The British "Reformbill" of 1832 as well as – by implication – the French July Revolution of 1830 "hat nur den Zustand der

¹⁴⁰ Commenting on this passage Wolfgang Labuhn unconvincingly argues it proves that Börne like other German liberals advocated political and social reform as the solution to the social tensions: "Da die Integration der sozialen Unterschichten in den bürgerlichen Staat an gewissen organisatorischen Mängeln gescheitert sei, gelte es diese zu beseitigen" (1980, 255).

Mittelklassen verbessert und das Helotenverhältnis des niedern Volks von neuem befestigt" (Börne 1964 III, 375). For Börne the traditional radical tenet that political revolution, establishing a democratic state with universal suffrage, will prove sufficient to instigate socio-economic change has proved an illusion.

Consequently for both Börne and Blanqui a proletarian social revolution remains the only viable alternative. To that end, both recognise it is necessary for the proletariat fully to become conscious of their socio-economic situation and the revolutionary power to change it. When this happens the proletarian social revolution will begin, Börne asserts in a statement which anticipates Marx's dialectic between authentic social consciousness and socio-revolutionary action:

Ja, freilich, das beruhigt [die Reichen und Vornehmen], daß das Volk nicht denkt. Aber ihm ist der Gedanke Frucht, die Tat Wurzel, und wenn das Volk einmal zu denken anfängt, dann ist für euch [die Reichen] die Zeit des Bedenkens vorüber, und ihr ruft sie nie zurück.
(Börne 1964 III, 378)

2.4. "With upright Toasting Fork and Toothless Cat": The Impending Proletarian Revolt Against the Effete Bourgeoisie in Beddoes and Büchner

To throw a final spotlight on the paradigm shift from political to social revolution in the 1830s and early 1840s I want briefly to investigate some of Thomas Lovell Beddoes' writings from this period under this aspect. Beddoes, an English playwright, poet, doctor and radical, lived in exile in Germany and Switzerland from 1826 until his death in 1848 and had close contacts with radical movements in both places.¹⁴¹ I have shown elsewhere how throughout the 1820s he adhered to a concept of bourgeois political revolution. This ideological stance is prominently reflected in the earlier versions (the so-called α -and β -version) of his fragmentary major oeuvre, the farcical Gothic tragedy *Death's Jest-Book* (see Hörmann 2007).

However, the general disappointment with the July Revolution among leftist writers also affected him and led to a decisive radicalisation in his revolutionary ideology. Like Börne he castigated the French bourgeois regime for being as tyrannical in a socio-political respect as the monarchy that it had replaced. An article he wrote for the journal *Bayerisches Volksblatt* (No. 19, February 14th 1832) on the revolutionary changes in France strikingly demonstrates this. In it he asserts "dass das nackte Unrecht der Menschheit sich nicht mit den Lumpen der Restauration zu bedecken und erwärmen braucht" (Beddoes 1935, 562).¹⁴² A further article published in the same periodical, entitled "Périer: Eine Allegorie" (1832) alleges that the latter's liberal government is neither fish nor fowl: neither monarchy nor republic. Punning on the established term for the new socio-political order *juste milieu*, Beddoes terms it *Triste milieu* and depicts

¹⁴¹ For Beddoes' role in the Bavarian radical-revolutionary movement and a discussion of his political articles, see Burwick 1969 and Polster 1989, 185-188. For his importance for the German radical movement in Switzerland, see Burwick 1972. A detailed investigation of Beddoes' exact involvement with the German democratic-revolutionary movement is still outstanding.

¹⁴² Unless indicated otherwise all subsequent references to Beddoes' works will be to this critical edition.

it as a monstrous but at the same time weak and effete bat that will soon be overthrown by its lower-class enemies. The latter are also allegorised as animals, but in contrast to the bourgeois bat, they are depicted as deadly predators. Im "Kampfe mit den fliegenden und kriegenden Geschöpfen", the system liberal system "Perier" designed will soon be devoured by the revolutionary masses. The bat will end up "im Rachen des Wolfes", the latter word rhyming with "Volkes":

Das freudenlose grässliche Thier heisst *Perier*, zugehörig dem Geschlechte der *Doctrinair's*, der sogenannten Wolkentreter und Erdsegler, sein Schatten heisst *Bürger-König*, seine helldunkle Ritze *Triste milieu*. Armseliges Geschöpf! wie lang gedenkst Du noch so auszuhalten? (Beddoes 1935, 571; italics in original)

In a later article "Gratulazions-Projekt" (No. 33, April 23rd 1833), which Beddoes wrote for the Swiss radical journal *Der Schweizerische Republikaner*, his criticism of the socially repressive nature of Liberalism becomes even more pronounced. Attacking the liberal government of Zurich, he alleges that it is dependent on a militia to defend itself against the lower classes, sarcastically praises it as the "Zierde unsrer vortrefflichen, städtischen, Wälle und liberale Regierung vertheidigen Soldateska" (quoted in Burwick 1972, 94). Liberalism is dependant on socio-economically suppressing the lower classes, as Beddoes maintains. Alluding to an event in the canton of Basel (1832), when the liberal government brutally tried to crush socio-economically motivated peasant revolts,¹⁴³ Beddoes implies that all that the bourgeoisie is interested in is increasing its wealth. The "theur[e] Hel[d]" is dear to them in a double sense, since he not only defied the spectre of a proletarian-plebeian revolution, but also enabled it to pocket and acquire even more wealth in spite of owning an abundance of it already:

¹⁴³ James Murray Luck even goes as far as to call this conflict a "civil war" (1985, 352).

Was wollen wir ihm geben, dem theuren Helden, der die Bauern von Babel frikassiert und ihre Freiheitsbäume in die Hosen schob. – Sollen wir ihm geben den kostbaren habersackprügelnden Sarraß des Sultans Bimbambi? – Er hat ihn schon. – [...] Geld? – Er hat dessen im Ueberfluß. (Quoted in Burwick 1972, 94)

These quotations strongly suggest that in the early 1830s Beddoes had already abandoned his former belief that a mere political revolution against a monarchic system of government would secure a more just society. When in 1831 he affirms the idea of "allgemeiner Gütergemeinschaft", he clearly moves towards a concept of social revolution.¹⁴⁴

This ideological shift from a political to a social revolution is also reflected in the revisions that Beddoes undertook in the γ -version of *Death's Jest-Book* after 1829. In the revised first Act of Beddoes' play we find a passage in Scene 1 that mirrors – on an ideological level – Blanqui's and Börne's view of a war between the rich and the poor. Like Börne, Beddoes also reflects both growing socio-economic injustice and resistance to it by the exploited.¹⁴⁵ Seemingly only referring to the play's pseudo-medieval world of robber barons, the fool-cum-usurper Isbrand cynically exposes the underlying system of socio-economic exploitation that guarantees the perpetuation of the injustices of the feudal system. This notion of capitalism constituting a continuation of the right of might, of the anarchy of the dark ages, is present in both Börne and Blanqui. The former in the "Siebzigster Brief" of the *Briefe aus Paris* (1833) compares the exploitative practices of the capitalists to the crimes of medieval "*Raubritter*" (cf.

¹⁴⁴ "Die Gespenster", *Bayerisches Volksblatt* (suppl.) (April 27th 1831), quoted in Burwick 1969, 297. When Beddoes advocates the egalitarian concept of a community of goods he in fact adopts an avant-garde position among the German revolutionaries. According to Ruckhäberle this concept did not become widespread in German revolutionary pamphlets until the mid and late 1830s (1975, 225-231).

¹⁴⁵ Titmouse's nonsensical social ballad about the starving tailor who steals eggs from a witch in order to survive and is transformed into a human hen that lays eggs clearly shows Beddoes' heightened awareness of socio-economic oppression (γ : I, 4, ll. 74-121). The increasing industrialisation of the traditional artisan professions led to an enormous rise in unemployment, deprivation and proletarianisation among the craftsmen and women, both in Germany and Britain. For two contemporary social realist ballads that indict this development with particular regard to the tailoring sector, see e.g. Thomas Hood's "Song of the Shirt" (1843) and Georg Weerth's "Es war ein armer Schneider" (1845) in chapter 3.3 of this thesis.

1964 III, 473; Börne's emphasis), while Blanqui in his defence speech at the 'Court des Assizes' (January 1832) alleges that the capitalist socio-economic system "ist, nur unter einer andern Form, und zwischen andern Gegner, der Krieg der Feudalbarone gegen die Kaufleute, die sie auf offenen Heerwegen anfielen und plünderten (2000, 199). Similarly, Beddoes stresses, like Börne, that these rapacious and exploitative practices are not limited to this particular period. It is but one stage in the "real history of the World" (γ: I, 1, ll. 123-124) that is fundamentally based on exploiting the majority of humankind.¹⁴⁶ In fact – as Isbrand sarcastically makes clear – for the poor the sole purpose of living is to ensure the material well-being of the rich, with the consequence that the former are driven literally to the brink of starvation, while the latter grow fatter and fatter:

A whole people is stout and surly, being mostly certain steaks and Barons of beef gone human: another, after a century of amphibious diet, owes to the frog's legs in its wooden shoes the agility with which it jumps over gentle King Log, and devotes itself patriotically to the appetite of Emperor Stork, his follower: aye, it would even blow itself up to be bull itself. (γ: I, 1, ll. 123-129)

What Isbrand allegorically pictures here – "in Æsop's fable-book in masquerade" (γ: I, 1, l. 123) – is an extremely polarised society of idle consumers and slaving producers.¹⁴⁷ The rich are fat, complacent, lethargic and bad-tempered ("stout and surly"), while the poor are lean and supple, due to their active life-style, which their struggle for

¹⁴⁶ Comparably Börne in the "Sechzigsten Brief" (1833) emphasises that exploitation and social inequality have marred human history for at least three thousand years. Even the republics "des Altertums kränkelten an diesem Übel der Menschheit. Contrasting political with social freedom, he continues: "Frei nannten sich die Völker, wenn die Reichen ohne Vorrang untereinander die Gesetze gaben und vollzogen; die Armen waren niemals frei" (Börne 1964 III, 372).

¹⁴⁷ Isbrand here alludes to two of Æsop's fables, "The Frogs Desiring a King" and "The Frog and the Ox". Both warn that a false consciousness of the oppressed regarding their own power and that of their rulers has fatal consequences. The image of the poor as amphibians might also be inspired by a passage from *The Constitution of a Perfect Commonwealth* (1798, 2nd edition) by the radical Thomas Spence. In an ideal state, he maintains, there would be "no lords, no gentlemen [...] no amphibious class between the government and his people" (quoted in Rudkin 1927, 37).

subsistence necessarily entails. While the former are metaphorically linked to fattened cattle ("Barons of beef gone human"), the latter are described as amphibious animals, in particular frogs. Since those – in contrast to the stuffed "bull[s]" – are able to move very quickly, both on land and water, they could theoretically overcome their degenerate rulers. To use Isbrand's image, they can easily jump over their "gentle King Log".¹⁴⁸ The socio-revolutionary potential of the poor is high. However a major ideological delusion prevents them from staging a social revolution against the complacent middle classes, the fat bulls. Rather than revolting against the latter, they try to emulate them, as Isbrand – alluding to Æsop's fable "The Frog and the Ox" – expresses it on a pun on bulls and bullfrog. The frogs would do anything; they "would even blow [themselves] up to be bull". Yet, by imitating them, the poor are not being transformed into proper well-nourished bulls, but still remain starving bullfrogs. If instead the poor used their superior agility and their strength in numbers to attack the bourgeoisie, they would easily manage to overthrow them. However, being caught up in a system of severe repression and extensive state propaganda, they have neither been able to develop the means to revolt effectively nor to become fully conscious yet of the extent to which they are being exploited: two key pre-conditions for a successful social revolution. For the moment the poor are still in the grip of the ideology of the ruling class, when they devote themselves "patriotically to the appetite of the Emperor Stork", their natural archenemy. When the poor are feeding the rich, they are tragically caught up in the delusion that they are performing this sacrifice for a greater good, such as the fatherland. Yet in fact the only ones to benefit from their sufferings are the rich.

Such a grim outlook on a society that is characterised by stark social divisions and an impending class war is reminiscent of the socio-revolutionary views of Georg

¹⁴⁸ In my opinion the attribute "gentle" must be understood as highly ironic in the context of *Death's Jest-Book's* anti-monarchic ideology. In Æsop's fable the king Jove has sent the frogs actually is a log. The frogs, however, are deluded into thinking that he is their powerful and rightful monarch.

Büchner.¹⁴⁹ In his farcical comedy *Leonce und Lena* (written 1836-1837), which is a bitter satire of a fictitious German mini-kingdom, he puts forward a comparable socio-revolutionary ideology through similar imagery. As in the passage from *Death's Jest-Book* quoted above, the latter is taken from the semantic fields of food and animals. For example, when in a draft version of Büchner's play the fool Valerio stresses the "Fleiß" of the ants and paradoxically regards them as "ein sehr nützliches Ungeziefer" (2002 I, 137-138) he is in fact talking about the labouring poor with the voice of the rich. Like Beddoes' fool Isbrand, Büchner's fool mocks the contempt of the rich for the poor. Both are employing – in a grotesquely exaggerated manner – the cynical discourse the rich use to talk about the poor. On another occasion, Valerio even sarcastically comments on this ideological-rhetorical strategy. As he expresses it with a paradoxical neologism, the rich talk very "philobestialisch" of the poor (III, 1; 2002 I, 120). Not only do they speak contemptuously of the poor, but they are at the same time misguided in their patronising and belittling attitude towards the poor that consists in reducing them to animals. As both fools reveal, regarding the poor as harmless and useful slaves is as wrong as it is dangerous. Isbrand warns in his allegorical language that the bullfrogs might eventually triumph over the bulls. Valerio points out that even the seemingly harmless and useful ants are "wieder nicht so nützlich, als wenn sie gar keinen Schaden thäten" (2002 I, 138). In the same vein, but even more explicitly, he exclaims shortly afterwards: "Seht, was man nicht mit einem Floh ausrichten kann!" (139) With this comment, he emphasises the potential power of the poor to overthrow the present system if they unite against it. Despite all the efforts of the ruling class to vilify, to contain and belittle them,

¹⁴⁹ As far as I know Frederick Burwick is the only critic who has argued for a connection between Beddoes' and Büchner's works (1971 & 1987). There is proof that Beddoes and Büchner met in Zurich. As Burwick has shown, Beddoes was the assistant doctor treating Büchner during his terminal illness in January and February 1837 (1971, 5). Furthermore both were associated at the same time with the same department (Anatomy) at the University of Zurich.

even to the state of fleas, the power of the unified masses constitutes the basis for any potential social revolution.

The harsh confrontation between the rich and the poor is vividly enacted in the final two scenes of Büchner's play. In Act III, Scene 2 we see a schoolmaster who has to drill a group of starving peasants to applaud the royal couple during their sumptuous wedding celebrations.¹⁵⁰ In the next scene we hear the master of ceremonies complaining that the mountains of food prepared for the wedding are perishing, since the rich people are too caught up in self-indulgent ennui to eat it:

Es ist ein Jammer. Alles geht zu Grund. Die Braten schnurren ein. [...] Alle Vaternörder legen sich um, wie melancholische Schweinsohren [...] und der Hofpoet grunzt [...], wie ein bekümmertes Meerschweinchen [...]. Alles Fleisch verdirbt vom Stehen. (III, 3; Büchner 2002 I, 123)

By contrast the peasants who are nearly collapsing from hunger are mercifully granted that they "einmal in [ihrem] Leben einen Braten riech[en]" (III, 2; 121). In the passage above Büchner indicts both this inhuman behaviour towards the poor as well as the related inhumane discourse. Subverting it, he turns it against the rich. When they treat the poor worse than animals, the rich in fact become "pigs" themselves in the figurative sense of the word, as the reference to pigs in the words "Schweinsohren" and "Meerschweinchen" implies.

This inhuman treatment naturally breeds strong social resentment among the oppressed towards their oppressors. However – comparable to the passage above from *Death's Jest-Book* – the poor are not yet ready to overthrow their oppressor. In fact, their revolutionary power is also still misdirected and auto-aggressive. In mockery of

¹⁵⁰ In fact Büchner, in this scene, sarcastically parodies an actual royal wedding between the successor to the Dukedom of Hesse and Princess Mathilde of Bavaria, which took place January 5th and 6th 1834. The wedding celebrations are depicted in a chronicle, on which Büchner's social satire is mainly based (for excerpts from the chronicle see Büchner 2002 I, 652-657).

the festivities of the rich they will perform a proto-revolutionary "transparenten Ball mittelst der Löcher in [ihren] Jacken und Hosen, und schlagen [sich] mit [ihren] Fäusten Kokarden an die Köpfe", the schoolmaster announces (III, 2; 122). The cockades – prominent revolutionary insignia – are bruises inflicted on each other's heads and not on the heads of their oppressors. However there can neither be any doubt of the immense socio-revolutionary potential that manifests itself in this scene¹⁵¹ nor of the fact that Büchner believed that the poor would eventually overthrow the equally degenerate classes: the aristocracy and bourgeoisie, which together make up "die abgelebte moderne Gesellschaft", as Büchner expressed it in a letter to Gutzkow in June 1836 (2002 II, 440). As Lukács has exposed as early as 1937 all critical attempts to cast Büchner as a fatalist who had become disillusioned with socio-revolutionary change have to be seen as attempts to de-radicalise him and make his ideology compatible with the ideological aims of the critic (see Lukács 1990).¹⁵²

In short, as the intertextual reading of these passages from the γ -version of *Death's Jest-Book* and *Leonce and Lena* suggests, Beddoes was as far from abandoning his belief in revolutionary change as was Büchner. It is *not* an abstract and de-politicised "larger revolution of man against the dehumanizing factors of all political strife", as Frederick Burwick maintains, that increasingly preoccupied Beddoes and

¹⁵¹ As I have illustrated in chapter 2.2.1. a similar tension between great socio-revolutionary potential in the proletariat and its remaining delusions that keep it from taking socio-revolutionary action can be observed in Act 1, Scene 1 of *Dantons Tod*. While the sansculottes identify exploitation as the reason for the misery and the bourgeoisie as their exploiters, they are kept from uprising by Robespierre's propaganda. It is his address that placates the revolutionary mob. In it he promises the discontended masses to care for their welfare in patriarchal manner and always remain their wise advocate if they refrain from socio-revolutionary action. Playing on the double meaning of 'Streich' as strike and prank he dismisses the anti-bourgeois violence as self-destructive while likening it at the same time to childish pranks. Robespierre reprimands the people to remain puppets and tools that act out the political schemes that the bourgeois Jacobins devise for the benefit of the masses: "Armes tugendhaftes Volk! Du tust deine Pflicht, du opferst deine Feinde. [...] Aber deine Streiche dürfen deine eigenen Leib nicht verwunden, du mordest deinen eigenen Leib. [...] Deine Gesetzgeber wachen, sie werden deine Hände führen, ihre Augen sind untrügbar, deine Hände sind unentrinnbar. Kommt mit zu den Jakobinern" (Büchner 2002 I, 20).

¹⁵² In addition to Lukács, Christian Hausschild has influentially argued that Büchner's so-called 'Fatalismusbrief' to his fiancée (January 1834) cannot be regarded as proof that Büchner had abandoned the idea of revolutionary change (see Hausschild 1989).

Büchner (1987, 300). This argument is not supported by either *Death's Jest-Book* or by Büchner's works. On the contrary, what we find in the γ -version of Beddoes' play is a clear move away from a purely political towards a social revolution, a change that the younger Büchner had already undergone before writing his first play *Dantons Tod* in 1835. Thus far from abandoning politics for philosophy, Büchner and Beddoes were actually among the avant-garde of revolutionary writers of their time. As the γ -version of the first act as well as his continued political writings and poetry suggest, it was no longer a bourgeois political revolution in which Beddoes put his hope, but an eventual proletarian social revolution. For both Beddoes and Büchner the degenerate bourgeoisie had lost all the revolutionary spirit it once possessed. As Büchner writes in a letter to Gutzkow in 1835 – again employing the imagery of food and eating in a revolutionary context – the bourgeois revolution "muß von der ungebildeten und armen Klasse aufgefressen werden; das Verhältnis zwischen Armen und Reichen ist das einzige revolutionäre Element in der Welt" (2002 II, 400).

Most strongly and poignantly, Beddoes voices a comparable view not in *Death's Jest-Book*, but in one of his last poems that the editor H. W. Donner entitled "Lines written in Switzerland" (Beddoes 1935, 156-158). In Geoffrey Wagner's opinion, this fragmentary poem shows how much "Beddoes loathed capitalism" (1949, 423). At the very least, it is strongly critical of British capitalism, since it accuses the latter of being based on "slave-raised" (cf. l. 32; 156) profits. With exploitation abounding both at home and abroad in the colonies, the poem depicts a doubly explosive social situation. Even the patriotic myth of the British Empire – traditionally a potent ideological tool to pacify the discontented masses – is shown to be crumbling. This is epitomised in the decline of the sublime Goddess Britannia to a mundane bourgeois figure minted "on a copper coin". Her fierce companion, the Lion, has turned into a harmless "toothless cat"

and instead of the deadly trident she holds a "toasting fork" in her hand (cf. ll. 31-34; 156-157).

Under these circumstances, it is highly doubtful that the British bourgeoisie will be able to stem the rising socio-revolutionary tide for much longer. If not in the countryside, at least in the industrial cities of Britain such as Manchester social unrest among the proletariat is brewing. In an allusion to the Italian volcano Avernus, whose crater in antiquity was thought to be an entrance to the underworld, one of the foremost seaports of the British Empire "Pestiferous Liverpool" is termed "Ocean-Avernus" (cf. ll. 26-27; 156). Thus it is allegorised not only as the entrance to the hell of industrial capitalism and colonial exploitation, but it also suggests – through the revolutionary connotations of the volcano image – violent resistance by the oppressed both at home and abroad. The modern proletariat will not devote itself much longer "patriotically to the appetite" of the ruling class as the lower orders in the neo-feudal world of *Death's Jest-Book*. As soon as the proletariat manages to overcome its remaining ideological illusions and its conditioned fear of the ruling class and its system of control, then the latter's days are numbered, the poem prophesises. A faint but clear socio-revolutionary voice is already audible in its revolutionary-apocalyptic scenario, which is strongly reminiscent of Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Mask of Anarchy*. Like the voice of the allegorical Phantom figure, the Shape, in Shelley's poem, it will also increase in volume and intensity. Depending on the listener's political attitude, it might either be interpreted as triumphantly proclaiming the doom of bourgeois rule through impending proletarian social revolution or warning starkly of such a disquieting scenario:

Be proud of Manchester
Pestiferous Liverpool, Ocean-Avernus,
Where bullying blasphemy, like a slimy lie,
Creeps to the highest church's pinnacle,

[...] O flattering likeness on a copper coin!
Sit still on your slave-raised cotton ball,
With upright toasting fork and toothless cat:
The country clown still holds her for a lion.
The voice, the voice! when the affrighted herds
Dash heedless to the edge of craggy abysses,
[...] But clearer, though not loud, a voice is heard
Of proclamation or of warning stern. (ll. 26-41; Beddoes 1935, 156-157)

3. The Drama of Class Struggle and Social Revolution: Georg Weerth and the Evolution of a Socialist Poetics of Revolution

3.1. Modern Tragedy and the Proletariat as its Hero

So far this thesis has discussed how certain selected German and English authors shifted from a concept of political revolution to one of social revolution. This final chapter will broaden this perspective by investigating how the German socio-revolutionary vanguard, the Communists around Marx and Engels, were developing a virtual poetics of revolution that took in the fundamental distinction between proletarian social and bourgeois political revolution. Besides Marx – this chapter will argue – the German poet, journalist and businessman Georg Weerth was pivotal in drawing up a poetics of revolution that incorporated the elements of tragedy and farce.

Weerth underwent the shift towards a proletarian social revolution around the same time as Marx and Engels did,¹⁵³ in the years between 1843 and 1845. As critics have conclusively shown,¹⁵⁴ the first-hand experience of the social conditions of the proletariat during his two and a half years' stay (December 1843 to April 1846) in Bradford (then a booming industrial city that harboured one of the worst slums in Britain),¹⁵⁵ as well as the encounter with Engels who was living in nearby Manchester

¹⁵³ For a very informative article on how the English context influenced Engels' ideological turn (taking place between 1842 and 1845) from a concept of gradual peaceful social reform to a scenario of a violent, proletarian social revolution see Claeys 1985. He also mentions Weerth as an astute observer of the interrelation between Owenism and Chartism and how the formers influence led to a split among the Chartist leaders on the question of revolutionary violence (cf. 1985, 464).

¹⁵⁴ In particular Weerth's biographer Uwe Zemke has maintained how Weerth's time in Bradford was formative for further socio-ideological development (1988, 157-159, 1993, 114-115). He concludes that Weerth "in weniger als 1½ Jahren seines Bradford-Aufenthalts, zuerst angeregt von Engels und dann bestärkt durch die Eindrücke seiner Umwelt und den Kontakt zur Arbeiterklasse, zum Kommunisten geworden [war]" (1988, 158). Mary Kemp-Ashraf (1974, 59) and Werner Feudel (1974, 13) detect a similar ideological change in Weerth during his stay in Bradford.

¹⁵⁵ As contemporary official reports confirm, the living conditions of the poor in Bradford were among the worst in England (see Zemke 1988, 142, Kemp-Ashraf 1974, 45-46). The life-expectancy of the

turned Weerth into a Communist.¹⁵⁶ Writing to his mother during a business trip from Bruxelles (where he had met Marx) on July 19th 1845 Weerth announces his conversion to communism and his admiration for Engels and his recently published study *Die Lage der arbeitenden Klassen in England*. As the elevation of their struggle to a battle for life and death shows, he assigns a highly dramatic dimension to the socio-revolutionary working-class struggles:

Ich gehöre zu den "Lumpen-Kommunisten", welche man so sehr mit Kot bewirft und deren einziges Verbrechen ist, daß sie für arme und Unterdrückte zu Felde ziehen und den Kampf auf Leben und Tod führen. Laß die Herren des Besitzes sich in acht nehmen, die kräftigen Arme des Volkes sind auf unsrer Seite, und die ersten Geister aller Nationen treten nach und nach zu uns über – Da ist mein sehr lieber Freund Fried[rich] Engels aus Barmen, der hat ein Buch zugunsten der englischen Arbeiter geschrieben und die Fabrikanten mit vollem Recht schrecklich gezeißelt. Sein eigener Vater hat Fabriken in England und Deutschland. (Weerth 1989 I, 320)

Weerth's radical ideological re-orientation also had a deep impact on his journalistic and poetic works. As a poet it transformed him from a writer of neo-Romantic poems and drinking songs to the author of aggressively socially critical and highly socio-revolutionary poems within the span of a mere two years: a dramatic change that earned him the epithet "der erste und bedeutendste Dichter des deutschen Proletariats", which Engels famously bestowed on him posthumously (*MEW* XXI, 6).

Maybe most conspicuously the shift in Weerth's ideological stance becomes evident if one compares two of his poems from different years which deal with the same topic: the misery of the small wine-growers on the Rhine and Moselle. The first one called "Der Wein ist nicht geraten" was published in the *Kölnische Zeitung* (No. 316/

working classes was a mere 17 years which was partly due to the extremely high infant mortality (see Zemke 1988, 141 & Kemp-Ashraf 1974, 46).

¹⁵⁶ For this socio-ideological development of Weerth see for instance Zemke 1988, 158. He also emphasises the importance of Weerth's friendship with Engels for the latter's shift towards communism.

November 12th 1843), the second one "Die Winzer"¹⁵⁷, which Bruno Kaiser dates as having been written in 1845 (see Weerth 1956 I, 301), was never published during Weerth's life-time. The older poem, composed in the autumn of the year when a failure of the harvest had subjected many wine-growers to utter deprivation and starvation, reflects melancholically on their plight. Full of resignation it even implies in stanza 7 that all that remains for the peasants is either to starve to death or to kill themselves and their families. Instead of "die Hände legen [...] an die Kelter [sein]", his winepresses, he will 'Hand an sich legen' which is the euphemism for suicide that is recalled in these lines:

Du [der Weinbauer] wirst die Hände legen
Nicht an die Kelter dein!
Nun träuft des Weines Segen
Nicht in dein Faß hinein!
Du wirst kein Lied mehr singen!
Kein Brot und wärmend Kleid
Wirst du den Kindern bringen,
Ist alles rings verschneit! (Weerth 1956 I, 92)

In spite of the sympathetic depiction of the peasant's fate in the style of what Engels will some four years later mock as the ineffective sentimentality of the poetry of the 'wahren Sozialismus' – "das sentimentale Abfinden mit [den] bestehenden Zuständen", "der pomphaft-weinerliche Sozialismus" (cf. *MEW* IV, 221 & 222) – any political or social factors that caused, or at least precipitated, that crisis are not even taken into account. Instead the roots of the misery are seen as purely natural since rain, snow and frost have ruined the harvest:

¹⁵⁷ Bruno Kaiser, the editor of the only existing edition of Weerth's works, heads it "Die rheinischen Weinbauern" following the title under which it first appeared in 1883. However, the original title in Weerth's manuscript reads "Die Winzer". Bernd Füllner in the edition of Weerth's works that he has been preparing opts for title Weerth intended; a decision that I will follow.

[...] Da zog mit Stürmen
Der kalte Herbst daher:
Er sah die Wolken türmen
Sich rings so regenschwer.
Verschwunden ist sein Hoffen!
Das kurze Glück ist aus!
Von hartem Schlag getroffen
Geht weinend er nach Haus! (Weerth 1956 I, 91)

The analysis of the causes of the wine-growers' misery as an act of God is tragic in the classical Greek sense that higher powers are ultimately blamed for the protagonist's downfall. In this perspective not other humans but gods determine human fate. The poem also conveys a similar view, as the wine-grower's earlier comment implies when he is looking at the ripening grapes before the storms have struck: "Gott ist mir gut gewesen" (91).

Here Weerth adopts a decidedly un-Communist view. Indeed such a perspective is diametrically opposed to Marx's view as it emerges in the articles on this crisis that he wrote earlier in same year in the *Rheinischen Zeitung*. In these he identifies exploitative (wine)-merchants, as well as an oppressive administration as the main culprits for the wine-growers' plight.¹⁵⁸ Finally, to alleviate the misery of the wine-growers the speaker of Weerth's poem does not advocate pressure on the government, let alone direct revolutionary action by the proletariat, but instead appeals towards to moral conscience and charity of the bourgeois consumer, the wine drinkers:¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ See the series of articles "Rechtfertigung des \dagger \dagger -Korrespondenten von der Mosel" (January 15th to 20th 1843) (MEGA I, 296-323).

¹⁵⁹ Florian Vaßen recognises in this advice to the reader a link to the ideology of the 'wahren Sozialisten' (1971, 82). Indeed Engels' sarcastic gloss of the poem "O, streuet Ihr den goldenen Segen!" by one of this school's main exponents, Karl Beck equally applies to "Der Wein ist nicht geraten": "Die Reichen werden aufgefordert, dem *Dürftigen* eine Unterstützung angedeihen zu lassen" in order that the rich person can feel that he has been "ein guter *Bürgersmann*" (MEW IV, 214; Engels' emphasis).

Die im schmucken Saale,
Aus grünen Römern zecht,
[...] Denkt, daß mit schwerem Herzen
Manch arme Winzer wacht!

Denkt, daß zu allen Tagen,
Denkt, daß bei uns von je
Man immer hörte sagen:
"Nur Wohl und Keinem Weh!"
Und laßt das Scherflein springen
So lustig an den Rhein,
Wie ich dies Lied tät singen
Frei in die Welt hinein! (Weerth 1956 I, 92-93)

The perspective on the root causes of the peasants' misery and the means to alleviate it changes radically in Weerth's other poem on this subject, written about three years later. In "Die Winzer" the speaker explicitly blames an unholy trinity of capitalist merchants, an oppressive state administration and a belief in divine justice as the agencies at the heart of the crisis:

An Ahr und Mosel glänzten
Die Trauben gelb und rot;
Die dummen Bauern meinten,
Sie wären aus jeder Not.

Da kamen die Handelsleute
Hertüber aus aller Welt:
"Wir nehmen ein Drittel der Ernte
Für unser geliehenes Geld!"

Da kamen die Herren Beamten
Aus Koblenz und aus Köln:
"Das zweite Drittel gehöret
Dem Staate an Steuern und Zölln!"

Und als die Bauern flehten
Zu Gott in höchster Pein,

Da schickt er ein Hageln und Wettern

Und brüllte: "Der Rest ist mein!" (Weerth 1956 I, 195)

In "Die Winzer" a Marxist analysis of the exploitation of the wine-growers' labour has taken the place of sentimental sympathy with their plight that characterised "Der Wein ist nicht geraten". Unlike in the latter poem, in "Die Winzer" divine powers are not seen as determining the proletarian fate. Instead it is the capitalist apparatus that deprives the peasants of the fruits of their labour, while their deluded belief in higher powers and higher justice keeps them fulfilling their role in the capitalist process of production and prevents them from rebelling against oppression and exploitation. It is this sense in that the speaker terms them "die dummen Bauern",¹⁶⁰ since they are subject to such tranquillising ideological delusions.

Their failure to recognise the true causes for their misery amounts to a tragic fallacy. As in Greek tragedy, only pain and suffering may induce a reversal of the protagonist's delusion which will result in an accurate realisation of the true causes for the tragic suffering: the *anagnorisis*. As Aristotle defines it in the eleventh chapter of the *Poetics* – to quote him in Manfred Fuhrmann's excellent German translation – this term means the "Umschlag von Unkenntnis in Kenntnis" (chapter 11; 1994, 35) which will result in the downfall of the tragic hero. Yet unlike in Greek tragedy, in Weerth's conception of proletarian tragedy this recognition is seen as the key to reversing the tragic plot. *Anagnorisis* is not seen to cause the further downfall of the proletariat as the tragic hero, but to provide the means to actively fight for his social emancipation. This is partly due to the secularised nature of modern tragedy. As "Die Winzer" vividly illustrates, the agents that cause the suffering and the final annihilation of the tragic

¹⁶⁰ Florian Vaßen fails to recognise that Weerth here mounts a fundamental critique of any paternalistic ideology including the concept of moral economy, when he argues that Weerth through the epithet "dumm" merely points out to the reader "wie naiv der Glaube der Bauern auf Besserung ihrer Lage durch eine gute Ernte [...] ist" (1971, 82).

protagonist are not gods but humans from the antagonistic class. With the proletariat becoming the tragic hero the Olympian heights of Greek tragedy, its socially elitist nature, are left behind for good, as is the notion of the inevitability of the tragic outcome. Stronger even than in the 'bürgerliches Trauerspiel', the socio-economic determination of the catastrophe is highlighted. Prototypically this is shown in Büchner's fragment of a 'proletarian tragedy' *Woyzeck*.¹⁶¹ In this drama the tragic outcome is presented as a direct consequence of the socio-economic position of its tragic hero. It is his social identity as a proletarian that makes him subject to bourgeois exploitation and leads to a psychotic alienation from his self. In contrast to the 'bürgerliche Trauerspiel' as well as classical tragedy the catastrophe is thought to be avoidable but only under the condition that the proletariat first gains an accurate consciousness of its material and social being and then translates it into decisive socio-revolutionary action. Woyzeck is unable to achieve a full consciousness of his social being and his aggression remains misdirected. Fearing the loss of one of his few remaining 'possessions', Marie, he kills her. The reader, however, is left in no doubt that a revolutionary change of the socio-economic order is vital to end proletarian suffering and exploitation that marks the proletarian tragedy in contemporary society.

A similar view on proletarian tragedy and the means to end it is presented to the readers of "Die Winzer". While the proletarians within the framework of the poem are unable to achieve an awareness of the socio-economic determination of their tragic fate, the reader is clearly shown how bourgeois exploitation and the capitalist system cause the catastrophe. The final stanza with its sententious tone it parodies any belief in the

¹⁶¹ Nevertheless Georg Büchner's brother Ludwig in the preface to the first edition of some of Georg's post-humous works (*Leonce und Lena*, *Lenz*) tries to subsume *Woyzeck* under the genre of 'bürgerliches Trauerspiel', when speaks of "einem ziemlich weit gediehenen Fragment eines bürgerlichen Trauerspiels ohne Titel" (1850, 39). To make a convincing case for *Woyzeck* as the prototype of the novel genre of 'proletarian tragedy' would require a detailed investigation that is not possible within the confines of this thesis.

immutably tragic nature of the world as cynical ideology employed to justify exploitation of the labouring classes. By the same token the trust in bourgeois charity as a solution to the social crisis that the final stanza of Weerth's earlier poem proclaims is mocked as complicity with a social system that is built upon immense suffering of the majority:

Viel Leid geschieht jetzunder,
Viel Leid und Hohn und Spott,
Und wen der Teufel nicht peinigt,
Den peinigt der liebe Gott! (Weerth 1956 I, 195)

The naively optimistic assertion contained in the final stanza of the earlier poem and extolled in the toast "Nur Wohl und Keinem Weh" that the tragic proletarian suffering can only be alleviated by charitable actions of the bourgeoisie is exposed as complicity with the system of capitalist exploitation. Such a notion – the speaker provocatively suggests – would mean subscribing to a pre-Enlightenment Christian fatalism (as it is particularly evoked by the archaism "jetztunder" reminiscent of baroque poetry) that presupposes eternal and unchangeable suffering on earth. However, such a perspective – like the bourgeois philanthropic view of Christian charity – amounts to cynical mockery ("Hohn") of proletarian misery, as it also suggested by the rhyme "Gott" – "Spott". Dismissing these two reactions to the social crisis as inadequate, this highly ironic statement calls upon the proletariat not to submit fatalistically to its miserable living conditions (its tragic fate from a sympathetic bourgeois perspective) but instead actively to resist the powers that cause them. The only prospect of eventually overcoming exploitation lies in a social revolution, Weerth suggests. Otherwise, the hierarchical higher agencies, even if they mask themselves as compassionate, will always aim to despoil the poor of the profits of their labour. The Christian paternalistic notion of "der

liebe Gott" is as much a delusion, as is the idea that the bourgeoisie will ever put its socio-economic class interests aside and stop exploiting the proletariat. Although this Christian ideology of divine mercy is also exposed as illusory in Heine's "Die armen Weber" (1844) in which the weavers utter a curse against "*dem Gotte, dem blinden, dem tauben, / Zu dem wir gebeten mit kindlichem Glauben*" (Heine 1997 IV, 969) this confrontation between bourgeoisie and proletariat is never explicitly mentioned, whereas in "Die Winzer" "die Kaufleute" are cast as direct enemies and exploiters of the winegrowers. The class antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat, it is implied, can only be overcome violently, by a proletarian social revolution. What the poem propagates is that realising the universality of the proletariat's inevitable suffering under bourgeois capitalism and simultaneously reaching the insight that unified proletarian resistance to the agents of this tragedy is the only way to end it. Tragic here means that a concretely identifiable social agency, the bourgeois class, determines the fate of the protagonist, turning the latter's existence into a tragedy. Thus it is vital for the proletariat to overcome its antagonist if the tragedy of capitalist exploitation is ever to be ended.

In 1845 Weerth has ideologically caught up with the vanguard of German socialism and additionally introduced a sophisticated notion of the tragic in its revolutionary ideology. Indeed similar tenets are paradigmatically voiced in a speech that Engels gave before an assembly of workers in Elberfeld in the same year.¹⁶² Like Weerth he is – among other examples – referring back to the disastrous plight of the

¹⁶² These two speeches were given on February 8th and 15th 1845 respectively and printed in the first volume of the *Rheinische Jahrbücher* (1845). Weerth's article on "Proletarier in England", which I will discuss later, appeared in the same journal in the same year in August.

Rhine wine-growers to make the proletarians aware of the universal nature and the universal causes of their suffering in order to enable them to overcome them:¹⁶³

Bei unserer letzten Zusammenkunft ist mir vorgeworfen worden, daß ich meine Beispiele und Belege fast nur aus fremden Ländern, namentlich aus England, genommen habe. [...] Betrachten wir zuerst die gegenwärtige soziale Lage Deutschlands. Daß viel Armut unter uns existiert, ist bekannt. Schlesien und Böhmen haben selbst gesprochen.¹⁶⁴ Von der Armut der Mosel- und Eifelgegenden wußte die "Rheinische Zeitung" viel zu erzählen. Im Erzgebirge herrscht seit undenklicher Zeit fortwährendes großes Elend. Nicht besser sieht es in der Senne und den westfälischen Leinendistrikten aus. Von allen Gegenden Deutschlands her wird geklagt, und es ist auch nicht anders zu erwarten. Unser Proletariat ist zahlreich und muß es sein, wie wir bei der oberflächlichsten Betrachtung unserer sozialen Lage einsehen müssen. [...] Unter allen Umständen muß das Proletariat nicht nur fortexistieren, sondern auch sich fortwährend ausdehnen, eine immer drohendere Macht in unserer Gesellschaft werden, solange wir fortfahren, jeder auf seine eigne Faust und im Gegensatz zu allen anderen zu produzieren. Das Proletariat wird aber einmal eine Stufe der Macht und Einsicht erreichen, bei der es sich den Druck des ganzen sozialen Gebäudes, das fortwährend auf seinen Schultern ruht, nicht mehr wird gefallen lassen, wo es eine gleichmäßigere Verteilung der sozialen Lasten und Rechte verlangen wird; und dann wird – wenn sich die menschliche Natur bis dahin nicht ändert – eine soziale Revolution nicht zu vermeiden sein. (MEW II, 549 & 550)

Engels here in his second speech also depicts the proletarian suffering as a universal tragedy haunting Europe. It follows as a necessary consequence that further advances of capitalism will increase proletarianisation and thus the amount of proletarian suffering. While this seems an inevitable and tragic development, the tragic plot will be reversed, when the proletariat reaches the "Stufe an Einsicht" at which it will become aware of how its exploitation is bound up with capitalism, at which point it will realise its power and subsequently move towards socio-revolutionary action. It will mark the turning

¹⁶³ Moses Heß' journal *Gesellschaftsspiegel* (1845-1846), to which Weerth contributed several poems and articles, also aimed "eine getreue Schilderung der gesellschaftlichen Zustände aller civilisirten Länder [zu] eröffnen" to alleviate "den Mangel an Einsicht" among the German lower classes regarding their condition (cf. Heß 1971 I, 1).

¹⁶⁴ Engels is referring here to the Silesian Weavers' revolt of 1844 and rebellions in the Bohemian industrial districts in the same year.

point of the drama's plot at which its proletarian protagonist will no longer accept their fate as immutable, as tragic, but revolt against this notion by staging "eine soziale Revolution". As in Greek drama *anagnorisis* causes *peripeteia*, a reversal in fortune. However in contrast to the Greek model, 'tragic' material and spiritual suffering is revealed as being caused not by higher powers but directly by the existing socio-economic system. The same desperate "soziale Lage" will necessarily exist, as long as the "soziale Ordnung" of bourgeois capitalism prevails, as Engels emphasises in the preface to *Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England* (1845):

Und wenn auch die proletarischen Zustände Deutschlands nicht zu der Klassizität ausgebildet sind wie die englischen, so haben wir doch im Grunde dieselbe soziale Ordnung [...]. Dieselben Grundursachen, welche in England das Elend und die Unterdrückung des Proletariats bewirkt haben, sind in Deutschland ebenfalls vorhanden und müssen auf die Dauer dieselben Resultate erzeugen. (*MEW* II, 233)

It is not only in England that the proletariat suffers, but also in Germany and anywhere across the world where capitalism reigns: a point also indirectly conveyed by "Die Winzer" which – while written in England – depicts the misery and exploitation of the German proletarians.

More clearly than in this poem, Weerth highlights this international dimension of proletarian suffering and its reversal through a conscious proletarian social revolution in the article "Die Armen in der Senne" (December 1844). It depicts the social conditions in a remote region close to Weerth's birthplace Detmold, the Senne, (which Engels also mentions in the excerpt from his second speech quoted above) that was notorious for rural poverty. Harrowingly depicting the extent of deprivation and desperation of the rural poor in this area, in its final paragraph Weerth – like Engels in his speech – asserts

that these examples show the universality of the tragedy of proletarian destitution and misery in contemporary society:

Wir schreiben dies in einer Fabrikstadt Englands, in einem echt chartistischen Loch, in dem Armut und Unheil zu Hause ist; man hat uns manche Sachen erzählt, die das Herz beben machen können, aber Geschichten, wie die erzählte aus der lieben *Heimat*, sind doch auch des Schauderns wert. (Weerth 1956 II, 54; Weerth's emphasis)

Here the tragic dimension of the proletarian fate is emphasised. The strong emotion "des Schauderns" that the spectator experiences in witnessing the tragic suffering of the proletariat corresponds with the "Jammer und Schaudern" that the spectator of Greek tragedy experiences in the face of *anagnorisis* and *peripeteia* (cf. chapter 11; Aristotle 1994, 35). However, at the same time Weerth here alludes to the way to cause a reversal of fortune, a radical twist of the plot, the meaning of the term *peripeteia*. When he colloquially speaks of Bradford as "einem echt chartistischen Loch", the home of poverty, tragic disaster and mischief ("Unheil"), he suggests that the organisation and unification of the proletariat, which the Chartist mass movement attempted,¹⁶⁵ and hence the conscious fight for political and social emancipation present the only way for the proletariat to overcome its tragic suffering. As for Engels, for Weerth the first step

¹⁶⁵ The nation-wide movement of Chartism developed in the late 1830s out of the remnants of the old reform movements. It takes its name from "The People's Charter" (1838), whose six points demanded universal suffrage, annual parliaments and thus the establishment of a truly democratic system which would guarantee the political and social rights of the working classes (for an insightful introduction to the Chartism see Brown 1998). Its main faction aimed to achieve these goals peacefully, via 'moral force' through petitions, campaigns, strikes, mass gathering (the so-called 'monster meetings') etc. A minority among its leaders, the 'physical force' Chartists, believed in the socio-political emancipation of the lower classes through revolutionary violence. While, as Alex Wilson claims, only "a relatively small proportion of the leaders of the movement", belonged to this group, a "very substantial proportion of the rank and file" of the Chartist movement belonged to the physical force school, which based its revolutionary ideology on the conviction that there "was an irreconcilable conflict of interest between the middle and working classes" (1970, 119). It was mostly with those Chartist leaders that leaned to towards socio-revolutionary change that Weerth acquainted with, most notably George Julian Harney (see for instance Füllner 2006, 43, 52, 59). Uwe Zemke claims that "Weerth während seines England-Aufenthaltes als engagierter Sozialist und Anhänger der 'physical force Chartists', des linken, Gewalt predigenden Flügels der Chartisten-Bewegung auftrat" (1993, 115). Although Weerth even wrote a "Geschichte der Chartisten von 1832 bis 1848", his stance towards this largest contemporary working-class movement is surprisingly little researched. In the context it is also important to mention that in 1846 Weerth translated a Chartist manifesto into German for Heß' *Gesellschaftsspiegel* (see Heß 1971 II, 37-39).

in this process that both think will lead to proletarian social revolution is a reversal of proletarian ignorance of its social condition: a development that the poems he wrote in England chart and enact. This moment when a first insight of the proletariat into its social being replaces ignorance constitutes the beginning of *peripeteia* in Weerth's socialist poetics of revolution. It marks the first step in the positive reversal of proletarian misery, "einen Umschlag vom Unglück ins Glück" as Aristotle defines it in chapter 7 of his *Poetics* (1994, 27), leading towards proletarian social revolution, the dramatic climax of the modern revolutionary drama.

3.2. "Und wußte nicht warum": The Tragic Lack of Social Consciousness in "Es war ein armer Schneider" (1845)

The nexus between an increasing proletarian consciousness both of its social being and its revolutionary powers as well as the move towards socio-revolutionary action underpins the vast majority of the poems that Weerth wrote during his time in England. As Fumio Takaki comments, the characters in these poems, "sind [...] sich im unterschiedlichen Maß der Ursachen der Unterdrückung und der Not bewußt" and "ihr Bewußtsein wird langsam von Gedicht zu Gedicht klarer" (1993, 76).

This emphasis on a concrete proletarian awareness of its material living conditions has to be regarded as being part of a wider paradigmatic shift in German socialism that was taking place throughout the second half of the 1840s: "das Umdenken eines Teils der sozialistischen Intelligenz" (Weber 1983, 269) from mainly abstract and theoretical (i.e. philosophical and socio-economic) models of social revolution as for instance Marx developed in his 1844 writings to a position that took the concrete living circumstances, the experiential consciousness and the struggles of the European proletarians as its basis. Instead of theory, the emphasis was now on "Basisarbeit mit der Vermittlung gesellschaftlicher Fakten, um das für revolutionäre Veränderungen notwendige Bewußtsein zu schaffen" (Weber 1983, 269): a project in which Weerth prominently participated with his poems and articles. Arguably the most famous example of this new approach constitutes Engels' *Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England* (1845), which with its compendium of statistics, reports and case studies aims to induce a socio-revolutionary proletarian awareness. In the preface to his study Engels self-critically reflects on his turn from theory to practice and emphasises the latter's pivotal importance for the further development of German Communism. According to him a

concrete and authentic consciousness of the proletariat's socio-economic conditions forms the precondition for any further advances in socialism and not a materialist critique of German idealism, as Marx had undertaken for example in the "Einleitung *Zur Kritik der Hegel'schen Rechts-Philosophie*" (1844) and, together with Engels, in *Die deutsche Ideologie*:

Der deutsche Sozialismus und Kommunismus ist mehr als jeder andre von theoretischen Voraussetzungen ausgegangen; wir deutschen Theoretiker kannten von der wirklichen Welt noch viel zu wenig, als das uns die wirklichen Verhältnisse unmittelbar zur Reformen dieser "schlechten Wirklichkeit" hätte treiben sollen. Von den öffentlichen Vertretern solcher Reformen ist fast kein einziger anders als durch die Feuerbachsche Auflösung der Hegelschen Spekulation zum Kommunismus gekommen ist. Die wirklichen Lebensumstände des Proletariats sind so wenig gekannt unter uns, daß selbst die wohlmeinenden "Vereine zur Hebung der arbeitenden Klassen", in denen jetzt unsre Bourgeoisie die soziale Frage mißhandelt, fortwährend von den lächerlichsten und abgeschmacktesten Meinungen über die Lage der Arbeiter ausgehen. Uns Deutschen vor allen tut eine Kenntnis der Tatsachen in dieser Frage not. [...] Einstweilen wird aber das konstatierte *englische* Elend uns einen Anlaß bieten, auch unser *deutsches* Elend zu konstatieren, und einen Maßstab, woran wir seine Ausdehnung und die Größe – der in den schlesischen und böhmischen Unruhen zutage gekommenen Gefahr messen können, welche von dieser Seite der unmittelbaren Ruhe Deutschlands droht. (*MEW* II, 233; Engels' emphasis)

While deliberately playing down his socio-revolutionary agenda in order for his study to pass the German censorship, Engels here underlines the pan-European dimension that he recognises both in the tragic suffering of the proletariat and in the perceived resolution of this crisis. The "Ausdehnung und Größe" of pan-European proletarian misery will eventually lead the Europe-wide proletarian social revolution. The Silesian Weavers' Revolt and the Bohemian Workers' Rebellion in 1844 have been the prelude this great world-historic and sublime drama that will "dem ganzen sozialen System eine neue Basis geben" (*MEW* II, 233) rather any bourgeois idealist attempts at social reform. However, to precipitate the revolutionary crisis in Germany an accurate

awareness of the more advanced British industrial capitalism with its more extreme proletarianisation to reflect upon the situation in Germany is necessary, Engels insists.

Such a dialectic between the discourse on the English working class and its implication for the awakening German proletarian consciousness lies also at the heart of Weerth's texts about English proletarians, including his poems. Immediately recognising the seminal importance of Engels' book for the further advance of the German socialist revolutionary agenda, Weerth implicitly engages with it in its own accounts of English proletarians and humbly measures them up against Engels' study.¹⁶⁶ As the latter does in his preface to *Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England*, Weerth in his article "Proletarier in England" (August 1845) stresses the importance of gaining an accurate consciousness of the proletarian condition, as well as the crucial role that the German reflection upon the English situation plays in this endeavour:

Ich schließe hiermit diesen mangelhaften Bericht über Proletarier in England und freue mich nur, daß in diesem Augenblick eine der besten philosophischen Federn in Deutschland damit beschäftigt ist, eine umfassende Darstellung des Lebens englischer Arbeiter zu schreiben; ein Werk, welches von unberechenbarer Wichtigkeit sein wird. Jedenfalls versteht jener Schriftsteller besser, wie ich, die einzelnen Sachen in ihr rechtes Licht zu stellen, und hat durch langen Aufenthalt in Manchester, der Wiege des Proletariats, mehr Gelegenheit gehabt, den Arbeiter zu beobachten, als ich in Gesellschaft meines edlen Freundes, des Doctor Mac [...]. (Weerth 1845, 326)

¹⁶⁶ Critics have occasionally remarked on parallels and differences between Weerth's articles on the English workers and working-class movements and Engels' study (e.g. Köster-Bunselmayer 1981, 120-133, Köster 1993, 93-99, Zemke 1988, 164-165, Vaßen 1988, 69 and Claeys 1985, 464-465). Doris Köster-Bunselmayer's relatively detailed comparison (and to a lesser degree also Uwe Köster's assertions which draw heavily upon her argument) suffers considerably from her desire to – inaccurately – represent Weerth as a social *reformer* rather than as a social *revolutionary*. While the scope of this thesis does not permit me to investigate the links between Weerth's and Engels' writings about the English proletariat, it is worth pointing out that there exist even some exact overlaps between these. For instance Weerth's poem "Die hundert Männer von Haswell" (first published in the *Gesellschaftsspiegel* in 1845 and republished in 1846 in Püttmann's *Album* under the title "Die hundert Bergleute") refers to a mining disaster that Engels' also engages with in *Die Lage* (see *MEW* II, 462-463). A systematic study comparing Weerth's and Engel's depiction of the condition of the English working classes remains an urgent task both for Weerth and Engels as well as for Marxist scholarship in general.

Despite his self-deprecating remarks, Weerth's contribution to the project of raising the German proletarian social self-awareness must not be underestimated in the face of the towering figures of Marx and Engels. The same applies to another instigator among the German Communists of this paradigm shift towards a concrete consciousness of the proletarian condition, Moses Heß. With his *Gesellschaftsspiegel: Organ zur Vertretung der besitzlosen Volksklassen und zur Beleuchtung der gesellschaftlichen Zustände der Gegenwart* (1845-1846) he became one of the most dedicated proponents of such a socio-revolutionary approach. Its programmatic subtitle underlines the fact that this journal aimed not only to represent the proletariat, but also to illuminate its position within the contemporary socio-economic system of bourgeois capitalism. Managing to reach a wide audience among the workers, it tried to make the proletariat conscious of its necessarily tragic situation in this system and to engender a socio-revolutionary consciousness:

Durch ungeschminkte Berichte von Armut, Hunger, Unterdrückung und Verwahrlosung sollte den Arbeitern ihr kollektives Schicksal zu Bewußtsein gebracht werden. Erst das Wissen von der Allgemeinheit des Einzelschicksals schuf, nach Hess, die Bedingungen für den notwendigen Klassenkampf. (Weber 1983, 269)

Weerth's texts about English proletarians must be seen as an integral part of this strategy to engender a revolution in proletarian consciousness by depicting as exemplars the fate of individual members of this class. As he stresses in his praise of Engels in his article "Proletarier in England", the goal must be "den Arbeiter zu beobachten" in the English industrial cities, "der Wiege des Proletariats", in order to show how the English proletariat paradigmatically expresses the suffering and struggles of this new social class that has been emerging all across Europe. Considering the shared intentions of

Heß' and Weerth's writings, it is no coincidence that at least three of Weerth's articles about England¹⁶⁷ and four of Weerth's poems about the English proletariat, "Es war ein armer Schneider", "Die hundert Männer von Haswell", "Der alte Wirth in Lancashire" and "Der Kanonengießer" appeared under the heading *Lieder aus Lancashire* in Heß' *Gesellschaftsspiegel* in 1845 (see Heß 1971 I, 63-65 & 196-197).

Both Weerth and Heß subscribe to a similar conception of proletarian tragedy, in which proletarian suffering can only be reversed by *anagnorisis*. The realisation by the proletariat of its authentic social being must replace the widespread "Mangel an Einsicht" (cf. Heß 1971 I, 1) among it, if the social crisis is ever to be overcome. As Heß programmatically states in the editorial to its first issue, the *Gesellschaftsspiegel* will aim to contribute to the growth of such a decisive insight:

Um die Mittel aufzufinden und anzuwenden, welche die vielfach verzweigten und obendrein noch künstlich verhüllten Uebelstände unseres socialen Lebens gründlich und nachhaltig beseitigen sollen, ist es vor allen Dingen nöthig, diese Uebelstände selbst kennen zu lernen. Der "**Gesellschaftsspiegel**" wird daher alle Krankheiten des gesellschaftlichen Körpers vor sein Forum ziehen; er wird allgemeine Schilderungen, Monographien, statistische Notizen und einzelne charakteristische Fälle veröffentlichen, welche geeignet sind, die socialen Verhältnisse aller Klassen in ihr rechtes Licht zu stellen [...] Die Lage der arbeitenden Klassen wird uns vor Allem beschäftigen, da sie von allen Uebeln der heutigen civilisirten Gesellschaft das schreiendste ist. (Heß 1971 I, n. p.; Heß' emphasis)

As the imagery of enlightening, exposing and illuminating shows, Heß regarded the clear consciousness of the ills of society as the crucial step in a mental process that would reverse tragic suffering. In pursuit of this aim he not only deems empirical and

¹⁶⁷ These are "Die Wohlthaten des Herzogs von Marlborough" published as "Nachrichten und Notizen aus Bradford, Yorkshire, im Februar" (1, 1) (see Heß 1971 I, 17-19), "Das Blumen-Fest der englischen Arbeiter" (1, 5) (see Heß 1971 I, 180-187), "Der Gesundheitszustand der Arbeiter in Bradford, Yorkshire, England" (1,5) (see Heß 1971 I, 163-167) and "Manifest der Chartisten" (2, 9) (see Heß 1971 II, 37-39). In the edition of Weerth's works currently in preparation, Bernd Füllner will further include a short article from the *Gesellschaftsspiegel* "Allmählig steuern wir auf eine lustige Krise zu" (2, 11) (see Heß 1971 II, 70), which is most likely an excerpt from a, since lost, letter that Weerth sent to Heß.

factual evidence and non-fictional accounts vital, but also fictional texts if they faithfully recreate proletarian existence:

Der "Gesellschaftsspiegel" wird nicht allein das materielle Elend, oder das geistige und moralische Elend etwa nur da schildern, wo es mit jenem Hand in Hand geht [...] und er wird sich in seiner Darstellung nicht allein auf statistische Notizen und wirkliche Historien aus dem Leben beschränken, er wird auch Dichtungen in Prosa und in Versen, aber nur solchen, die das Leben *getreu* schildern, seine Spalten öffnen. Schilderungen *nach* dem Leben werden ihm nicht minder willkommen sein, als Schilderungen *aus* dem Leben. (Heß 1971 I, n. p.; Heß' emphasis)

In calling for a new kind of socialist literature, Heß here directly harks back to the notion of *mimesis* in the tragedy as Aristotle understands it in the *Poetics*. Similarly, the latter asserts that "Tragödie ist nicht Nachahmung von Menschen, sondern von Handlung und Lebenswirklichkeit" (cf. 1994, 21; chapter 6).

These poetic concepts apply very strongly also to Weerth's poems about the proletariat. Their emphasis is not on the characters as imitations of really existing proletarians, but "als Schilderungen *nach* Leben" they aim to depict within their fictional literary form both the proletarian living conditions and the proletarian actions in a mimetic fashion that reveals the socio-economic laws that determine proletarian life. However, in contrast to Greek tragedy the proletariat's fate is not shown as invariably tragic. Unlike the classic tragedy of fate, the proletarian social tragedy can be ended through gaining an authentic class consciousness and then moving onwards to socio-revolutionary action.¹⁶⁸ Weerth's poems function as an important contribution to this end. To deny this pivotal didactic, socio-political function of these poems, as Ernst Weber does when he claims that Weerth did not assign any "politischen Wert" to them

¹⁶⁸ Without making the connection to the tradition of poetics, Hans-Georg Werner similarly emphasises that Weerth in his poems "macht in der Darstellung von Real-Gegenwärtigem die revolutionäre Perspektive sichtbar": a poetic strategy that sets them apart "von den meisten revolutionären Gedichten – auch denen proletarischen Charakters – anderer Schriftsteller des Vormärz" (1974, 62).

(cf. 1983, 272),¹⁶⁹ is to belittle Weerth's educational and revolutionary ambitions that he – as much as Heß – pursued with his writing.

In fact the very poem that Weber analyses, "Es war ein armer Schneider" (published in the *Gesellschaftsspiegel* in 1845) disproves his point. The ballad deals with the suicide of a tailor, who is neither aware of the reasons for his suffering nor of the motives for taking his life. That his death is related to the increasing pauperisation of the traditional artisan trades, both in Germany and in England,¹⁷⁰ the contemporary reader has to induce. The poem evidently focuses on the dialectics of unconsciousness and consciousness of the proletariat regarding its social being, condition and status. The four times repeated line "Und wußte nicht warum", functioning as the poem's chorus, strongly foregrounds the crucial importance of the tailor's ignorance of his tragic fate. His ignorance, however, must not be equated with stupidity, but on the contrary it is forced upon him. It is determined by the nature of his alienated labour, as the first stanza emphasises:

Es war ein armer Schneider
Der nähte sich krumm und dumm;
Er nähte dreißig Jahre lang

¹⁶⁹ Identifying an alleged contradiction between Weerth's "sozialem bzw. politischem Engagement und weitgehendem Publikationsverzicht" as far as his poems are concerned, Weber argues this proves that Weerth did not assign a high "literarischen Wert" to them, or indeed any political worth (cf. 1983, 272). The absurdity of Weber's claim becomes evident when one considers the large number of socio-political poems (over 30 not counting repeated publication of some poems) that Weerth published between 1845 and 1848. Weerth stressed his socio-revolutionary intentions even further by *exclusively* publishing them in Socialist organs, such as Heß' *Gesellschaftsspiegel*, Hermann Püttmann's *Bürgerbuch*, *Rheinische Jahrbücher* and *Album*, the Communist *Deutsche-Brüsseler Zeitung* and Marx's *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*.

¹⁷⁰ As Weber points out, the situation of the German craftsmen who were becoming unemployed due the increasing industrialisation was disastrous and led to a high rate of suicides among them. The tailor trade was particularly badly hit by this crisis (See 1983, 267-268). For a comprehensive study of this crisis of the German artisan trade between 1845 and 1849, see Bergmann 1986. He demonstrates that this structural crisis was one of the major factors in bringing about the German Revolution and that the social demands of the unemployed and pauperised craftsmen considerably shaped the face of the Revolution. Although industrialisation was already far more advanced in Britain, the impact on the traditional trades still continued to be felt. According to Eric Hobsbawm foremost affected were the "declining industries and occupations, displaced by technical progress". The members of these professions "starved progressively in a vain attempt to compete with the new machines by working more and more cheaply" (cf. 1999, 71).

Und wußte nicht warum. (Weerth 1971, 63)

The tailor's entire being amounts to nothing more than his crippling, repetitive and stultifying work. His alienated labour determines not only his physical but also his mental decline, as the second line with its internal rhyme "krumm und dumm" also linguistically foregrounds. Hence, his lack of consciousness becomes not a simple failing, but a tragic flaw. With circumstances beyond his immediate control, his need to survive in an increasingly competitive environment is to blame for his physical and mental degeneration.

However, as the poem progresses one begins to wonder whether the tailor's awareness of his situation is really utterly deficient. Although he does not express it in words or thoughts, through his actions the tailor displays a rudimentary consciousness of his situation, of the reasons that drive him to his suicide. When the actual suicide is described in stanza 3 and 4, the way he kills himself acquires a highly symbolic meaning:

Und nahm die blanken Nadeln
Und nahm die Scheere krumm –
Zerbrach so Scheer' und Nadel
Und wußte nicht warum.

Und schlang viel starke Fäden
Um seinen Hals herum;
Und hat am Balken sich erhängt¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ It is conceivable that Weerth might be referring here to a contemporary popular broad-sheet ballad, "The State of Great Britain or a Touch at the Times". Similar to Weerth's ballad, it exposes the decline and the pauperisation of the traditional trades through the increasing industrialisation. In contrast however to Weerth's poem, the immediate reason for the impending suicide is mentioned: "The railroads all through England have great depression made; / Machines of every kind has [sic] put a stop to trade; / The innkeepers are weeping, in agony and grief, / And the ostlers swear they'll buy a rope and go to felo-de-se" (Quoted in Palmer 1974, 88). One might argue, however, that the suicide of Weerth's tailor, who in stanza 2 also "fing [...] wohl zu weinen an" (1971, 63), forms a much more far-reaching indictment of the human cost of industrial capitalism than the potential one in the ballad. It singles out but one development, the building of the railroads, as the reason for this human catastrophe, whereas Weerth by

Und wußte nicht warum. (Weerth 1971, 63)

In spite of his general ignorance, the tailor seems to harbour a dark notion that his trade is doomed due to the advances of capitalism, when in a symbolic act he breaks his scissors and needles, the tools of his trade, before he commits suicide. The way he actually kills himself, using many strong threads – staples of his profession – to make a rope to hang himself, is further proof of his semi-consciousness. These consciously symbolic gestures profoundly question the validity of Weber's verdict that the tailor's "Verblödung" is already so advanced that he is "sich selbst entfremdet" (cf. 1983, 267) to the extent that he lacks any understanding of his situation. By way of contrast, I would even go as far as to argue that his suicide represents a form of protest, however impotent and ineffective, against his de-humanisation at the hands of the bourgeois socio-economic system. As such his personal tragedy epitomises the wider proletarian tragedy. Although the bourgeois narrating voice of the poem tries to distract from this disconcerting fact through a pseudo-harmonious ending – the tailor is made to die against the backdrop of an evening setting – Weerth's implicit irony sharply exposes the dishonesty of this endeavour:

Er wußte nicht – es tönte
Der Abendglocken Gesumm.
Der Schneider starb um halber acht
Und Niemand weiß warum. (Weerth 1971, 63)

The aposiopesis in the first line of this final stanza hints that the tailor might even have had a full *anagnorisis* in his final moments, an insight that the narrator is all too willing to bury under false sentimentality. Yet, when the last line provocatively states – varying

withholding the concrete reason for the tailor's suicide achieves a much more comprehensive indictment of capitalism.

the chorus – that "Niemand weiß warum", then the onus is clearly placed on the reader to become conscious of the underlying reasons for the tailor killing himself as well as of those for the narrator's attempt to distract from them through his falsely idyllic description of the tailor's end.

The crucial importance of this hidden attack against the hypocritical sentimental sympathy of the bourgeoisie with the proletariat becomes even more evident when one considers how the exposure of this tendency formed part of the mission of the *Gesellschaftsspiegel*, in which Weerth's poem was published. As Heß sarcastically asserts in the editorial to its first issue, such idealising bourgeois sympathy for proletariat will never lead to any genuine improvement of the latter's social condition. On the contrary, such sentimental sympathy is hypocritical since its main purpose is to disguise the cynical bourgeois indifference towards proletarian misery which only temporarily abates when proletarian unrest threatens society:

Solche idealisirende Sentimentalität trägt wohl heuchlerisch ihre Theilnahme an den Leiden der Menschheit zur Schau, wenn dieselben einmal zum *politischen Scandal* geworden sind, – wie wir bei Gelegenheit der schlesischen Unruhen plötzlich alle Zeitungen und Zeitschriften von sogenanntem Socialismus überströmen sahen – sobald aber die *Unruhen* aufhören, läßt man die armen Leute wieder *ruhig* verhungern. (Heß 1971 I, n. p; Heß' emphasis)

I would suggest that "Es war ein armer Schneider" (as well as several others of Weerth's poems) forms a direct riposte to the sentimentalising and idealising depiction of proletarian misery which characterised the majority of contemporary socially critical poetry. With his poem about the poor tailor Weerth might in particular relate back to Thomas Hood's popular social ballad *The Song of the Shirt*.¹⁷² First published in the

¹⁷² Weerth was not the only German poet to engage with Hood's ballad. In 1847 Ferdinand Freiligrath freely translated it into German under the title "Das Lied vom Hemde: Nach Thomas Hood" (see Freiligrath 1973a, 89-92).

Christmas 1843 issue of the satirical journal *Punch*¹⁷³ it unmask in a melodramatic fashion the exploitation of the seamstresses. While it vividly depicts the destitution and socio-economic violence inherent in the seamstress' exploited labour as well as the mental stultification and the physical degeneration it causes, it does not call for a development of a proletarian consciousness, as Weerth's poem does. Instead, it appeals to the sympathies and the compassion of the bourgeois readers as the last stanza clearly proves, when the narrator exclaims: "Would that its tone could reach the Rich!" When Engels ironically comments in *Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England* on Hood's poem, which in his words "manche, mitleidige, aber nutzlose Träne den Augen der Bourgeoisietöchter entlockte" (*MEW* II, 428), he regards this appeal as the poem's greatest ideological shortcoming:

"Work – work – work!
From weary chime to chime,
Work –work – work –
As prisoners work for a crime!
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Seam, and gusset, and band,
Till the heart is sick, and the brain benumb'd
As well as the weary hand.

[...]
With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread –
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
In poverty, hunger and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch,

¹⁷³ Weerth was an avid reader of this journal and also refers to it regularly throughout his works, for instance in the article "Punch, Harlequin und Henneschen" (*Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, No. 182/ December 30th 1848), which indicts the increasing middle-class tendency of this publication. The article "Die Wohlthaten des Herzogs von Marlborough" (first published under the title "Nachrichten und Notizen aus Bradford, Yorkshire, im Februar" in *Gesellschaftsspiegel* (1), May 1845) is even directly based on an article in *Punch*.

Would that its tone could reach the Rich!

She sang this "Song of the Shirt"! (Hood 2000, 64 & 65)

Weerth, in contrast to Hood, not only precludes such an appeal to bourgeois sympathy but also exposes the hollowness of such a move that substitutes proletarian tragedy with melodrama. In fact he attacks such a strategy head on. I would go as far as to suggest that the pseudo-idyllic ending of "Es war ein armer Schneider" directly exposes the illusory nature of the idyll that the seamstress conjures up in order to escape her grim living and working conditions. Instead of having to work "From weary chime to chime" (a sharp contrast to the melodious "Abendglocken Gesumm" in the last stanza of Weerth's poem), she longs "For only one short hour" for relief from her unrelenting workload in an idealised rural surrounding: a longing which however – as she herself half admits – would provide no solution to her state:

"Oh! but to breathe the breath
Of the cowslip and the primrose sweet –
With the sky above my head,
And the grass beneath my feet,
For only one short hour
To feel as I used to feel,
Before I knew the woes of want
And the walk that costs a meal!

"O but for one short hour!
A respite however brief!
No blessed leisure for Love or Hope,
But only time for Grief!
A little weeping would ease my heart,
But in their briny bed
My tears must stop, for every drop
Hinders needle and thread!" (Hood 2001, 64-65)

What Weerth deliberately eschews in his poetic depictions of proletarian tragedy are such sentimental palliative moments that not only belittle the scale of the proletarian misery but also imply that there might be other solutions to ease it than proletarian social revolution. Tellingly, in contrast to Hood's seamstress who is prevented from crying as it will keep her from working, Weerth's tailor starts weeping, shortly before he begins the preparations to hang himself. After another week of monotonous toil, we are told in the poem's second stanza, "Da fing er wohl zu weinen an / Und wußte nicht warum" (1971, 63). As these two lines strongly suggest, for Weerth grief alone constitutes an impotent palliative for proletarian misery. For crying without knowing the reasons for it does not bring about an increased awareness of the social being nor does it offer a way out of the suffering. Unlike in Hood's case, Weerth's readers are further directed not to succumb to the emotions evoked by the sentimental description of proletarian suffering. Weerth's use of the epic device of showing rather than telling, urges his reader to *think* about his character's fate rather than to merely *commiserate* with it, as Hood does.

To sum up, in his poems about proletarians after 1845, Weerth ruthlessly reveals the extent of proletarian misery, while at the same time precluding the possibility of a purely emotional sympathetic response on the part of his readers. This process aims to induce a socio-revolutionary consciousness in the reader. However, to achieve this, it is necessary first to become fully conscious of the extent of proletarian exploitation and alienation, a revolutionary dialectic that Heß programmatically spells out in the editorial to the *Gesellschaftsspiegel* and that Weerth enacts in his poems about the proletariat:

Wem eine so schonungslose Enthüllung der bisher größtentheils gleißnerisch übertünchten oder verhüllten Zustände unserer industriellen sowohl wie ackerbauenden und übrigen Bevölkerung – wem eine so offene Darlegung unseres ganzen gesellschaftlichen Zustandes, wie sie der "Gesellschaftsspiegel" zu geben beabsichtigt, etwa zu viel Kopf- und

Herzweh macht, um sich mit diesem Unternehmen befreunden zu befreunden, der mag bedenken, daß der Muth, der dazu gehört, einem Uebel in's Antlitz zu schauen, und die Beruhigung, welche aus einer klaren Erkenntnis entspringt, am Ende doch noch wohlthätiger auf Geist und Gemüth wirkt, als die feige Sentimentalität, welche in der Lüge ihres Ideals, – das weder existirt noch *existiren kann*, weil es auf *Illusionen* gebaut ist – Trost sucht, Angesichts einer trostlosen Wirklichkeit! (Heß 1971 I, n.p.; Heß' emphasis).

In order to change the contemporary world by revolution, it is first necessary to gain an authentic consciousness of its tragic social conditions, "des ganzen gesellschaftlichen Zustandes", devoid of any illusions. Only such an *anagnorisis*, this "Erkenntnis", will lead to a manifestation of proletarian socio-revolutionary spirit, Weerth believes as much as Heß. This becomes obvious in some of his other poems about the proletariat, one of which, "Der alte Wirth in Lancashire", I will discuss next.

3.3. *Anagnorisis, Catharsis, Peripeteia* in the Proletarian Revolutionary Drama

Discussing the structure of tragedy, Aristotle in the *Poetics* posits that ideally *anagnorisis*, the shift from unawareness to awareness and *peripeteia*, the reversal of fortune and turning point of the action, should happen simultaneously:

Die Wiedererkennung [*anagnorisis*] ist, wie schon die Bezeichnung andeutet, ein Umschlag von Unkenntnis in Kenntnis, mit der Folge, daß Freundschaft oder Feindschaft eintritt, je nachdem die Beteiligten zu Glück oder Unglück bestimmt sein. Am besten ist die Wiedererkennung, wenn sie zugleich mit der Peripetie eintritt, wie es bei der im *Ödipus* [von Sophokles] der Fall ist. (Aristotle 1994, 35; chapter 11)

While Weerth similarly stresses the crucial role of insight, self-knowledge and self-recognition, the plot of the proletarian drama, the ensuing reversal of fortune is diametrically opposed to one that occurs in a classical Greek tragedy such as Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. In the latter the terrible implications that arise from the transformation of ignorance into knowledge directly lead to the drama's final catastrophe. By contrast, in Weerth's socialist poetics of revolution the proletariat's realisation of its social condition and hidden powers causes a reversal of the tragic plot and leads the action towards an eventual positive resolution. *Anagnorisis* redresses the false consciousness of proletarian misery as an immutable and pre-ordained fate, causes the recognition of its determining factor identified as the present socio-economic order and subsequently leads towards socio-revolutionary action. Furthermore, in Greek tragedy a fall of the tragic hero occurs that results in a dramatic loss of social status – Oedipus' social role changes from King of Thebes to a blind beggar – whereas the socialist proletarian drama pictures this class achieving an equally dramatic rise in social position: from the dehumanised pariah of mankind to the revolutionary vanguard in the social liberation of

man that reverses alienation and social misery. In a parallel to Greek tragedy the plot structure and the outcome of the proletarian drama is presumed to have been known in advance, as is the eventual destiny of the protagonists who are either seen "zu Glück" (the proletarians) or "Unglück bestimmt" (the bourgeois capitalists). Although in later rigid interpretation of Historical Materialism the element of pre-determination in the world historic drama features almost as strongly in Greek tragedy, the German communists of 1840s, among them Heß, Marx, Engels and Weerth, decisively highlight the crucial role that the active formation of a proletarian self-consciousness plays in precipitating the climax of the drama: the proletarian social revolution.

One of the most lucid formulations of this intimate connection between proletarian social self-consciousness, socio-revolutionary action and the reversal of the social order in Weerth's oeuvre can be found in the revised version of his article on English proletarians. Highlighting the seminal role that the working-class press, in particular the Chartist mouthpiece *The Northern Star*,¹⁷⁴ is playing in this process of furthering proletarian self-awareness he comments:

Es ist rührend, wenn man sieht, wie jene den Arbeiterinteressen gewidmeten Zeitungen nie müde werden, die Leiden jeder Stadt, jedes Dorfes ans Licht zu bringen, wie sie nicht verschmähen, die kleinsten Details jener Ereignisse aufzunehmen, welche doch endlich den Arbeiter zum Bewußtsein und den Besitzenden zur Verzweiflung bringen müssen. (Weerth 1957 III, 211)

The moment of recognition of the social condition is the instant when the proletarian actions take on a socio-revolutionary dimension. It forms the turning-point in the

¹⁷⁴ *The Northern Star* (1837-1852) was crucial for disseminating the Chartist ideology across Britain and propagating the movement's campaign for political and social rights of the working classes. During the years when Weerth stayed in Bradford it had a nation-wide circulation of around six thousand to nine thousand copies per week. (For a recent collection of essays on the Chartist press, see Allen & Ashton 2005.) One of *The Northern Star*'s editors George Julian Harney was a friend of both Weerth and Engels. Acting as the paper's German correspondent, Engels contributed several articles to the paper between 1844 and 1845. Walter Grab and Uwe Friesel further state that Weerth also wrote several essays for it (1973, 196): a claim that was impossible for me to either corroborate or refute.

proletarian tragedy, its *peripeteia*. The "Drama" of current proletarian suffering, which one may read "auf jeder Seite eines Blattes [i.e. *The Northern Star*], das sich überhaupt um das Volk kümmert" (cf. Weerth 1845, 31), will be ended through a proletarian social revolution, Weerth is convinced.

Several of Weerth's proletarian poems depict this turning point of the proletarian drama at which resignation gives way to incipient socio-revolutionary action. Without relating it back to the tradition of poetics, Jürgen Fohrmann has identified this shift as *the seminal characteristic of most of Weerth's proletarian poems*:

In die Dauer, die Passivität, die Resignation bricht eine andere Zeit ein: der *Augenblick* des Widerstands, die *Gelegenheit* der Solidarität. Was Georg Weerth inszeniert, ist der Ruck, das an den Moment gebundene Okkasionelle, das das individuelle, disparate Leiden zu einem aktionsbereiten Körper zusammenschließen läßt. (Fohrmann 1993, 65-66; Fohrmann's emphasis)

What Fohrmann crucially fails to mention in his otherwise very astute depiction of the structure of Weerth's proletarian poems, is that this reversal of action, the drama's *peripeteia*, is preceded by an insight into the proletarian social condition.

Among Weerth's proletarian poems it is arguably "Der alte Wirth in Lancashire" (first published in the *Gesellschaftsspiegel* in 1845) that stages this shift from resignation to resistance both most dramatically and paradigmatically.¹⁷⁵ As the title suggests it is set in an inn in the heartland of British industrialisation, Lancashire, and it deals with the fate of four of the innkeeper's proletarian patrons. Complaining about their social condition over their "jämmerliches Bier", they realise that in spite of the different nature of their professions – day labourer, woollen weaver, agricultural labourer and coal-miner – they are as proletarians exposed to the same socio-economic

¹⁷⁵ The central importance of this poem for the cycle of *Die Lieder aus Lancashire* is also underlined by the fact that when it was republished in the *Rheinische Jahrbücher* in the same year, its title was changed to "Lied aus Lancashire", for Fumio Takaki strong evidence "daß das Gedicht im Mittelpunkt des Zyklus stehen sollte" (1993, 75).

violence. All four have experienced a similar degree of alienation and exploitation of their labour with the parallels in their life-stories highlighted by the fact that form and syntax of stanza 4 to 6 are identical:

Der Erste von dem armen Pack,
Das ist der bleiche, stille Jack.
Der spricht: "Und was ich auch begonnen –
Hab nimmer Seide dabei gesponnen!"

Und Tom begann: "Schon manches Jahr
Spann ich die Fäden fein und klar;
Das wollene Kleid mocht' manchem frommen –
Bin selbst aber nie in die Wolle gekommen!"

Und Bill darauf: "Mit treuer Hand
Führt ich den Pflug durch brittisch Land;
Die Saaten sah ich lustig prangen –
Bin selbst aber hungrig nach Bett gegangen!"

Und weiter schallt's: "Aus tiefem Schacht
Hat Ben manch Fuder Kohlen gebracht;
Doch als sein Weib ein Kind geboren –
God-dam, – ist Weib und Kind erfroren!" (Weerth 1971, 64-65)

In a poetic form that resembles that of the folk- or a broadside-ballad,¹⁷⁶ Weerth here shows a Marxist view of the proletarian tragedy through presenting an analysis of exploited proletarian labour. As such it is highly reminiscent of Shelley's proto-Marxist

¹⁷⁶ Broadside-ballads were printed ballads "sold in the streets, at fairs and markets by vendors who would sing out their ballads in order to attract the crowds" (Palmer 1974, 10). Hence this genre mixes in a particular way the oral and the written. Thematically, they often dealt with sensational news about heinous crimes or spectacular executions, yet also included social and political issues. Although this tradition dated back to the sixteenth century, broadside ballads reached the height of their popularity during the 19th century, when many "hundreds of thousands of broadside ballads were printed and sold" (Palmer 1974, 14). Among them exist some that resemble Weerth's "Der alte Wirth in Lancashire". These stage a similar process of their proletarian characters gaining consciousness of their social condition through discussing their respective experiences and observations. For instance in a "New Dialogue and Song on the Times" from the 1840s, two proletarians who carry the same names as two of the characters in Weerth's poem, Bill and Jack, also gain a comparable awareness of the capitalist being their class enemies. It is the "big cotton masters of Lancashire" and the "Factory Masters" who exploit them (quoted in Palmer 1974, 218-219).

analysis in his "Song to the Men of England" (1819) (discussed in chapter 1) to which Weerth's poem also intertextually relates back.¹⁷⁷ However, in sharp contrast to Shelley's work, in Weerth's poem there is no bourgeois speaker present who explains to the proletarians the wider ideological and socio-economic background of their immediate experience of exploitation, thus trying to endow them with a socio-revolutionary consciousness from above. Unlike Shelley, Weerth credits the proletarians themselves with gaining these insights and subsequently taking socio-revolutionary action. All his characters forcefully expose the alienation of the producers from their products as a major cause for proletarian deprivation and destitution and thus prove that they do not need a bourgeois authority to enlighten them.

In spite of these key differences concerning the acquisition of proletarian social awareness, there are further parallels between the critique of capitalism in Weerth's "Der alte Wirth" and in Shelley's 1819 poems. For instance, the reduction of the labourers to the status of tools and machines, of which both "SME" and *The Mask of Anarchy* try to make the labourers aware, is also indirectly indicted in Weerth's poem. As I have indicated in my analysis of the poem, the Shape in *TMoA* reveals to her lower-class listeners that they are being "made / Loom, and plough, and sword, and spade" (ll. 163-164) by their exploiters. In "Der alte Wirth" it is the proletarians themselves who highlight this role in the process of production. As Bill asserts when he recounts that "Mit treuer Hand / Führt ich den Pflug durch brittisch Land" without reaping the harvest he has sown, he just constituted an extension of the plough, the tool he uses.

¹⁷⁷ For instance, Shelley's speaker asks his listeners in stanza 1: "Men of England, wherefore plough / For the lords who lay ye low?" (ll. 1-2) In stanza 5 he declares: "The seed ye sow, another reaps" (l. 17). In stanza 5 of Weerth's poem, Bill similarly recounts that: "Mit treuer Hand / Führt ich den Pflug durch brittisch Land; / Die Saaten sah ich lustig prangen – / Bin selbst aber hungrig nach Bett gegangen!". Furthermore, the rhetorical question of Shelley's speaker – "Wherefore weave with toil and care / The rich robes your tyrants wear?" (ll. 3-4) and the observations made in stanza 5 of "SME" – "The robes ye weave, another wears" (l. 18) – are echoed by Tom's lament in stanza 4 of Weerth's poem: "Schon manches Jahr / Spann ich die Fäden fein und klar; / Das wollene Kleid mocht' manchem frommen – / Bin selbst aber nie in die Wolle gekommen!"

However, again the crucial difference lies in the way this insight is acquired. In contrast to *TMoA*, in which the proletarians are made to listen to the Shape's lecture, with the aim of inducing an awareness of their degraded social role and status, in "Der alte Wirth" the proletarians reach such *anagnorisis* – the sudden reversal of unconsciousness to consciousness – by listening to each other's stories. As they gain an insight into the causes for their tragic suffering under the capitalist system independently from the bourgeoisie, they manage to achieve an authentic awareness of their social condition. In fact one might argue that Bill, when he stresses the role that his faithful "Hand" has played over the years in the process of production, reflects the seminal fact that the "Industrial Revolution replaced the servant and man by the 'operative' and the 'hand'" (Hobsbawm 1999, 63). This reduction of the workers to their productive body parts which are being exploited – in Bill's case his hand – effectively relegates them to the status of objects or machines. Recognising their de-humanised status Weerth's proletarians realise how under industrial capitalism reckless competition has disabled the ideology of moral economy and placed them into a matter-of-fact relationship with the capitalists. The ethical quality of 'Faith', which Bill attributes to his working hands, no longer plays any role. For, in contrast to earlier times, labour relations are no longer influenced by any morally-patriarchal obligations the master was supposed to feel towards his servants,¹⁷⁸ but now are purely dictated by the rationale of market economics, a development that Weerth reveals not only in this poem but also in the revised version of his article on the English workers. The manufacturer now regards his worker as "hands" – even more cheaply replaceable than a machine – whereas before the advance of bourgeois capitalism the master would still have had a closer

¹⁷⁸ Cf. for instance Eric Hobsbawm's differentiation between the labourer before the advance of industrial capitalism and the modern proletarian: " [...] the proletarian, whose only link with his employer is a 'cash-nexus', must be distinguished from the 'servant' or pre-industrial dependant, who has a much more complex human and social relationship with his 'master', and one which implied duties on both sides, though very unequal ones" (1993, 63).

relationship to his workers comparable to that the farmer has to his ox, the former being responsible for the latter's welfare. As Weerth pointedly states, farmer and ox "stehen eigentlich in innigern Verhältnis wie die erstern", i.e. capitalists and workers, which form the protagonists and antagonists in the drama of class struggle:

Außer dem Interesse, was der Besitzer eines Ochsen an der augenblicklichen Arbeit dieses Tieres nimmt, muß ihm auch noch an dem körperlichen Wohlbefinden seines Zugtieres gelegen sein; er muß ihn konservieren, um ihn desto länger ins Joch spannen zu können. Der Fabrikant sieht dagegen in seinem Arbeiter nur eine Maschine, an deren augenblicklicher Benutzung ihm nur gelegen ist und deren Verschleiß ihm deswegen durchaus gleichgültig sein kann, da sie ja jeden Tag anderweitig, und zwar ohne weitere Kosten, zu ersetzen ist. Wenn der Fabrikant von seinen Arbeitern spricht, da redet er auch niemals von Menschen: er titulierte seine Arbeiter schlechtweg "hands", Hände. (Weerth 1957 III, 219)¹⁷⁹

To sum up, all four proletarians in "Der alte Wirth" recognise their status as machines, as tools for the capitalists to increase their profit, which compounds their alienation from the product of their labour. As the coal-miner Bill particularly poignantly realises, his status as a tool in an alienated process of production is directly responsible for the tragic death of his wife and new-born child. Although Bill daily lifts coal from the mine shaft, both die for the lack of fuel. Hence their death is as cynically ironical as it is indicative of the logic of the capitalist mode of production, in which – as

¹⁷⁹ In his speech at the 'Free Trade Congress' in Brussels (September 16th-17th 1847) Weerth repeated these allegations against the capitalists (for an article on this speech and a comparison between the French versions and their German translations, see Füllner 1997). Taking the terms 'hands' as an illustration both of the de-humanised view of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie and the alienating effects of capitalism, he calls for a fundamental change in the laws that govern contemporary socio-economic relations: "Und wahrlich, die Arbeiter haben großen Anspruch auf etwas mehr Großmut, als ihnen bisher zuteil geworden. Man hat sie bisher in der ökonomischen Wissenschaft so wie in der industriellen Praxis behandelt: nicht wie lebende, fühlende Menschen, ja nicht einmal so gut wie Lasttiere, sondern lediglich wie einen Ballen irgendeiner Ware. Man hat ihr Los abhängen lassen nicht von ihren menschlichen Bedürfnissen, sondern von einem starren Gesetze, von den unbarmherzigen Zufällen der Nachfrage und Zufuhr. Ja, in England hat sich diese Anschauungsweise in der Bourgeoisie so entschieden eingewurzelt, daß die dortigen Fabrikanten nicht sagen: Ich beschäftige 100 Leute, sondern 200 Hände (hands)" (Weerth 1956 II, 128-129).

Marxism maintains – the capitalists directly profit from depriving the producers of their products.

Weerth's poem, however, does not end with such a profound proletarian *anagnorisis* into the workings of capitalism, but goes beyond it. The proletarians' accounts of their tragic suffering further have a cathartic effect on them, which leads them towards socio-revolutionary action. This is possible since they find themselves in a double role. As labourers and workers they are protagonists in the proletarian tragedy. However, when they listen to the stories of suffering and exploitation which they are being told by their fellow proletarians, they also become spectators of this drama. This double role – as audience and protagonists – also explains why the strong emotions (the characteristic of *catharsis*) awakened by these tales, immediately lead to *peripeteia*. In the final stanza this sudden reversal of action takes place, when passive resignation gives way to an angry expression of a socio-revolutionary attitude. Telling their stories of exploitation and constant deprivation to each other engenders the crucial recognition that the proletarian tragedy is not preordained but instead caused by specific social factors and the actions of a particular social class, the oppression of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie through the socio-economic system of capitalism.

These insights make them – unlike the peasants in the poem "Die Winzer" discussed earlier – abandon any belief both that their fate is being determined by divine powers and that a higher justice exists. This disillusionment with religion is indicated by Bill's curse "God-dam" in stanza 6 with which he expresses his wrath about the death of his wife and child. At the same time this curse marks the poem's turning-point, the shift from proletarian despair to socio-revolutionary anger. In the final stanza this strong emotion takes hold of the other three characters, erupting in a choric curse against the capitalists and the rich bourgeoisie. In the instant that all four proletarians expose any

belief in divine justice as illusory by literally damming God, they also shed all delusions about what causes their suffering and how to overcome it.¹⁸⁰ This ideological disillusionment leads them to confront their true antagonists, their class enemies, whom they recognise as being directly responsible for their tragic socio-economic status as proletarians:

Und Jack und Tom und Bill und Ben –
Sie riefen allesamt: "God-dam!"
Und selbe Nacht auf weichem Flaume
Ein Reicher lag in bösem Traume. – (Weerth 1971, 64-65)

Although the four-fold curse is reminiscent of the three-fold curse in Heine's "Die armen Weber", the target of their damnation differs markedly. In Weerth's poem the proletarians' curses are clearly directed against the capitalists and the bourgeoisie, whereas in Heine's poem this social class is spared and it is highly ambiguous against whom their anger is directed, as I have discussed in chapter 2.2.4. However, "Die armen Weber" is not the only Heine ballad Weerth recalls in "Der alte Wirth". Clearly alluding to the final lines of Heine's revolutionary ballad "Belsatzar" (1822) – "Belsatzar ward aber in selbiger Nacht / Von seinen Knechten umgebracht" (Heine 1997 I, 56), – Weerth's poem conjures up the *menetekel* for the bourgeoisie. As the dash at the end of the poem's last line suggests,¹⁸¹ the proletarian casting curses on the capitalists and the bourgeois nightmares about murdering proletarians only marks the prelude to the drama

¹⁸⁰ One might argue that Weerth here engages with Marx's notion of religion as "das *Opium* des Volks" (MEGA II, 171; Marx's emphasis) as the latter develops it in his "Einleitung Zur Kritik der Hegel'schen Rechts-Philosophie" (1844). Indeed the process of ideological disillusionment that the characters in Weerth's poem undergo closely resembles what Marx posits as the necessary theoretical preconditions for proletarian socio-revolutionary action: "Die Aufhebung der Religion als des *illusorischen* Glücks des Volkes ist die Forderung seines *wirklichen* Glücks. Die Forderung, die Illusionen über seinen Zustand aufzugeben, ist die *Forderung, einen Zustand aufzugeben, der der Illusionen bedarf*. Die Kritik der Religion ist also im *Keim* die *Kritik des Jammerthales*, dessen *Heiligenschein* die Religion ist. [...] Die Kritik der Religion enttäuscht den Menschen, damit er denke, handle, seine Wirklichkeit gestalte, wie ein enttäuschter, zu Verstand gekommener Mensch [...]" (MEGA II, 171; Marx's emphasis).

¹⁸¹ Bruno Kaiser omits this seminal typographical sign in the version of this poem that he included in his edition of Weerth's collected works (see Weerth 1956 I, 202).

of the proletarian social revolution.¹⁸² Consciousness of socio-economic exploitation combined with the revolutionary anger that this realisation produces constitutes the necessary precondition for the proletarian social revolution, Weerth insists in his poetics of revolution.

That Weerth genuinely views this shift towards socio-revolutionary action both in terms of an Aristotelian poetics of drama and Marx's emphasis on the seminal role of social consciousness in this process becomes even more evident when one compares "Der alte Wirth in Lancashire" to the concluding scene of the original version of his article on English proletarians. In it he evokes a similar moment of potentially socio-revolutionary proletarian awakening as he is depicting Chartist meetings, the contemporary British mass movement that campaigned for political and social emancipation of the working-classes. At one of those meetings – Weerth reports – the then "undisputed leader of the movement" (Brown 1998, 47), Feargus O'Connor (1796-1855), indicted the disastrous profit-minded negligence of the mine owners, by drawing the audience's attention to a recent a mining disaster "in den Bergwerken von Haswell" in County Durham on September 28th 1844. Although the explosion killed around one hundred miners it was followed by the usual white-wash that absolved the mine owner from any responsibility for their deaths by presenting the accident as fate, an act of God.¹⁸³ The audience – like the characters in "Der alte Wirth" – no longer believe such

¹⁸² Weerth in the speech he gave at the 'Free Trade Congress' in Brussels (September 16th-17th 1847) also harks back to such bourgeois nightmare scenarios about barbarous murdering proletarians. Echoing Blanqui's famous defence speech of 1831 (see chapter 3 of this thesis), he warns the capitalist of the proletarian social revolution, "den Krieg der Armen gegen die Reichen". Like Blanqui, he implies that this impending civil war is a direct result of capitalist exploitation: "Denn nicht mehr feindliche Einfälle der Kosaken haben Sie zu fürchten, aber den Krieg Ihrer Arbeiter gegen Sie, den Krieg der Armen gegen die Reichen, den Krieg der weißen Sklaven gegen ihre Unterdrücker. Die Arbeiter sind satt der Versprechungen ohne Erfüllung; sie wollen nichts mehr wissen von den nimmer bezahlten Anweisungen auf den Himmel" (Weerth 1956 II, 133).

¹⁸³ In a footnote to his poem "Die hundert Männer von Haswell" (1845) which deals with the same mining disaster, Weerth also highlights the bourgeois strategy to cover up the lack of safety in the mines by presenting it as an act of God (cf. Weerth 1971 I, 63). Engels mentions the same accident in *Der Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England* (1845) too claiming that all these "Unglücksfälle [...] rafften jährlich, nach

transparent attempts to blame higher powers and not the capitalists for the proletarian tragedy. Indeed the listeners' reaction to the news of the miners' deaths closely resembles that of the proletarian characters when they hear about the death of Ben's wife and child. Expressing their solidarity in resisting further capitalist exploitation, the latter in the poems last stanza "riefen allesamt: "'God-dam". A similar socio-revolutionary awakening and mobilisation occurs with the audience at the end of the meetin. Upon hearing the news of the mining disaster and of the reckless methods of capitalist profiteering, the audience is united in cursing their exploiters:

Als [O'Connor] zum Schluß erzählte, daß in den letzten Tagen, wiederum in den Bergwerken zu Haswell, hundert Menschen auf einen Schlag ums Leben gekommen seien und das Verdict wie gewöhnlich: "*Visitation of God*" gelautet habe, da war es mit der Geduld der Leute zu Ende, sie entfernten sich, und ein Fluch klang aus jedem Munde. (Weerth 1845, 325)

Weerth suggests through his depiction of Chartist meetings that the theatrical staging of the proletarian tragedy induces a socio-revolutionary consciousness. As he emphasises:

Das ist der Ort, wo der Arbeiter zum hellsten Bewußtsein erwacht, wo er fühlt, daß er ein Mensch ist, daß er ein Recht als Mensch hat, ein Recht auf sich selbst, wie auf die alte ewige Erde! (Weerth 1845, 324 325)

dem "Mining Journal", etwa 1400 Menschenleben dahin" (MEW II, 464). He maintains that these disasters "kommen direkt auf Rechnung des Bourgeoisie-Eigennutzes" (463) and also exposes the biased verdicts of the coroner's jury: "Fast in allen Bezirken sind die Totenschau-Juries in allen Fällen von den Grubenbesitzern abhängig, [...] daß das Verdict auf "*Tod durch Zufall*" lautet. [...] Aber der Ch[ildren's] E[mployment] Rep[ort] nimmt keinen Anstand die Besitzer der Grube geradezu für die große Mehrzahl dieser Fälle verantwortlich zu machen" (MEW II, 464). For a contemporary critique of the exploitative practices in the mining business on the occasion of this explosion, see also the article "The Haswell Murder", published in *The Northern Star* on October 12th 1844. Although it also, very aggressively, attacks the bias of the coroner's juries and the profit-minded negligence of the miner owners, it calls – in contrast to Engels and Weerth – not for social revolution, but social reform. In particular it demands practical improvements in the mining business "that the survivors will have the satisfaction to know that at least their poor fellow-labourers, have not died in vain, if their "accidental" death procures something like "SECURITY" for the future" (see Anonymous 1844, 5).

Weerth here clearly alludes to Marx's thesis about a dialectics between a consciousness of proletarian alienation and social revolution. As the latter argues in the "*Einleitung Zur Kritik der Hegel'schen Rechts-Philosophie*" (1844), since being a proletarian means "*der völlige Verlust des Menschen*", [das *Proletariat*] also nur durch "*völlige Wiedergewinnung des Menschen* sich selbst gewinnen kann" (*MEGA* II, 182; Marx's emphasis). Weerth depicts the Chartist meeting as the place where such a Marxist socio-revolutionary consciousness is practically acquired. The awareness that under capitalism the proletariat is being forcefully alienated from its human state will eventually lead to a proletarian social revolution, Weerth suggests here. He thus shares Marx's view as the latter expresses it in his article "Kritische Randglossen" (1844). For both, a "*sociale Revolution*" marks a fundamental "Protestation des Menschen gegen das entmenschte Leben", as Marx puts it (*MEGA* II, 462; Marx's emphasis).

For Weerth, taking part in the drama of the Chartist meeting, becoming an active member of the working-class movement, forms a first step towards this radical revolution both in consciousness and in the material world. The proletarian who consciously starts fighting for his social emancipation is transformed from a seemingly half-dead depraved creature to a brilliant revolutionary orator, from victim of exploitation to an instigator of a shift in social awareness.

Am Sonntag Morgen um zehn und Abends um halb sieben Uhr werden diese chartistischen Versammlungen gehalten. Männer und Weiber, in verdammt schlechten Röcken, drängen sich durch die niedrige Thür. Die Männer nehmen den großen Raum ein, die Frauen und Mädchen setzen sich auf die Brettererhöhung rings um den Redner herum. Nach vielem Scharren und Spucken entsteht endlich eine Todtenstille. Der Redner spricht entweder über die bekannten chartistischen Prinzipien oder wählt einen Text aus den Begebenheiten des Tages. Derselbe Mensch, den man in Lumpen auf der Straße sah, den man für ein halbtodtes, verkommenes Geschöpf hielt, hier trifft man ihn auf der Rednerbühne, und eine Sprache fließt ihm von den Lippen, die bald die Versammlung zu jauchzender Wuth

begeistert, bald alle Herzen mit einer Wehmut erfüllt, daß heiße Thränen an den Wangen hinablaufen. (Weerth 1845, 325)

The proletarian's dramatic performance elicits from the audience, which is seated around the "Rednerbühne" like an audience in a theatre, a truly cathartic response that has the potential to develop into socio-revolutionary action. Like the spectators of Greek tragedy, the proletarian audience of this staging of proletarian tragedy clearly experiences the profound emotions of *eleos* and *phobos* that Aristotle singles out as the dialectic cathartic feelings to be engendered by the staging of tragedy. As Manfred Fuhrmann explains, *eleos*, which one might best translate into German as "Jammer" or "Rührung", denoted

[...] stets einen heftigen, physisch sich äußernden Affekt und wurde oft mit den Ausdrücken für Klagen, Zetern und Wehgeschrei verbunden. Die aristotelische *Rhetorik* verlieh dem Begriff eine ethische Komponente: Eleos sei der Verdruss über ein großes Übel, daß jemanden treffe, der es nicht verdient habe; wer Eleos empfinde, nehme an, daß das Übel auch ihn selbst oder eine ihm nahestehende Person treffen könne (2,8). Diese Definition entspricht genau der Auffassung, die sich aus Kap. 11 und 13 der *Poetik* ergibt: die drei Merkmale des schweren Übels, der Unverdienetheit und des Rückbezugs auf den Anteilnehmenden kehren dort als Erfordernisse der tragischen Handlung wieder. (Fuhrmann 1994, 162)

The passage quoted above illustrates how the same affects, which according to Aristotle tragedy ought to induce, are also caused by the performance of the Chartist meeting. The Chartist's rousing speech induces the strong physical emotion of *eleos*: "jauchzehnd[e] Wuth", "Wehmut" and "heiße Thränen". At the same time the three ethical categories of what causes these strong affects also apply. From Weerth's Communist perspective, proletarian suffering clearly constitutes a great evil that is not only undeserved but also afflicts – or at least could potentially afflict – any member of the audience.

The Chartist audience also experiences the other cathartic emotion of *phobos*, which denotes a strong state of excitement, originally meaning "ein durch Erschrecken bewirktes physisches Tun" (Fuhrmann 1982, 162). When in a different speech O'Connor is depicting the events of the unsuccessful rebellion in Manchester in 1842, such a strong physical-emotional reaction that induces action can clearly be discerned among the members of the audience:

O'Connor schilderte bei dieser Gelegenheit den letzten Aufstand in Manchester. Da blitzten alle Augen, die Adern schwollen auf den Stirnen auf und manche Faust ballte sich wie zum schrecklichen Schlage. (Weerth 1845, 325)

However, the action that O'Connor's account of the recent revolt triggers with his listeners is not yet socio-revolutionary, but merely has the potential to become so in the future. As the simile "wie zum schrecklichen Schlage" highlights, the clenched proletarian fist does not strike at their class enemies yet.

This observation suggests that as he was adopting an increasingly Marxist perspective on social revolution Weerth became more and more aware that the English proletariat had not yet reached a socialist revolutionary consciousness. In spite of his often enthusiastic descriptions of the resilience and the spirit of resistance among the English proletarians, from his perspective they still lacked at least two major insights that might translate such gestures of social protest into actual socio-revolutionary action. Firstly, they had not fully realised the nexus between exploitation and capitalism that this socio-economic system *invariably* produces proletarian misery which neither social reform, nor proletarian actions short of violent social revolution (such as strikes, demonstrations, meetings, petitions etc.) will ever decisively alleviate let alone abolish. This view emerges for instance in Weerth's essay "Geschichte der Chartisten von 1832 bis 1848", in which in a long passage he exposes – as what he regards – the futility of

"passiven Widerstand" (1957 III, 355). Although Weerth expresses great admiration for the bravery of the striking workers, he presents them as ultimately being deluded. In particular, he regards strikes as a waste of socio-revolutionary energies, which would better be employed in trying to oust their capitalist masters in the first place. The struggle of the striking workers is regarded as tragically misconceived since it does not challenge the capitalist system as such, but rather hopes to improve the proletarian condition within its confines. While the workers do in some case achieve temporary victories in the form of concessions by the capitalists, the *hamartia* of the proletarian tragic hero in his struggle eventually leads to drama's final catastrophe, to his being crushed by "der Wucht seines Schicksals":

Im anderen Fall bricht aber der mutige Paria unter der Wucht seines Schicksals zusammen. Weiber und Kinder hungerten schon seit Wochen; der Herd der Hütte erlosch, das Bett ist verschwunden; gebeugt und ermüdet bis zum Tod, schleicht er endlich mit seinen Kameraden vor die Türe des Herrn – es ist aus, und man erklärt sich für besiegt. Dies ist die Art und Weise des Kampfes, den Arbeiter und Herrn seit den letzten fünfzig Jahren mit einer Ausdauer und Erbitterung geführt haben, die kaum ihresgleichen kennen. [...] Welche Energie, welche Ausdauer und welcher Mut wird in ihnen verschwendet! (Weerth 1957 III, 355-356)

Secondly, he criticises the insular dimension of the British working-class movement. It centred on its own, highly national, struggle for social reform and socio-political improvement which Chartism almost exclusively represented.¹⁸⁴ Consequently it misses

¹⁸⁴ For instance Richard Brown highlights that "Chartism was a remarkably insular movement" (1998, 101). One of the few exceptions was the London-based international association 'The Fraternal Democrats', which was founded by the physical force Chartist George Julian Harney, a friend of Weerth as well as of Marx and Engels, in 1845. It adopted the slogan "All Men are brethren" as its motto, which it shared with the 'Bund der Kommunisten' in London, to which it also maintained close ties. Weerth in his "Geschichte der Chartisten" stresses these links and the important role of Harney for the formation of an international workers' movement: "Harney, der glänzende Redner, der ausgezeichnete Schriftsteller, war es, der dem unter Leitung dreier Deutscher, Schapper, Bauer und Moll, in London bestehenden deutschen Arbeiter-Klub zuerst als Engländer die Hand bot, und dadurch unter britischen und deutschen Arbeiter jene feste Verbrüderung herbeiführte, die in der Gesellschaft der 'Fraternal Democrats' ihr Zentrum gefunden" (Weerth 1957 III, 373-374).

out on the wider European picture, on the trans-national dimension of proletarian misery as well as of the proletarian struggle against it. Such an international perspective, which Marx and Engels were developing from the mid 1840s onwards, foregrounds both the trans-national dimension of proletarian exploitation and resistance. It insists that only simultaneous proletarian revolution in all capitalist countries will bring about decisive social change.¹⁸⁵

Another of Weerth's 'English' poems, "Sie saßen auf den Bänken" (first published in October 1846 in Püttmann's *Album*)¹⁸⁶, in which the revolutionary gesture of the proletarian clenched fist from the article "Proletarier in England" re-emerges, strongly articulates such Marxist tenets. Structurally it follows the same pattern as "Der alte Wirth in Lancashire" and the dramatic depiction of the Chartist meetings in "Proletarier in England". A cathartic *anagnorisis* that its proletarian characters experience causes a reversal from inaction to potentially socio-revolutionary action. Constituting Weerth's poetic reaction to the crushed Silesian Weaver's Revolt of 1844, it tells how a group of drinking English workers recognise their fraternity with their German counterparts. Realising that as proletarians they are oppressed and exploited in the same manner under any bourgeois system irrespective of the country, they are beginning to develop a trans-national proletarian class consciousness. Additionally the English proletarians are also becoming aware that despite the Silesian weavers' tragic defeat the proletarian socio-revolutionary spirit has been gaining momentum across Europe. As the poem's last stanza dramatically expresses, their change from passivity to action is the result of these combined insights:

¹⁸⁵ For example Gregory Claeys points out that during this time Marx and Engels reached the opinion that "'local communism' [...] was an impossibility and that revolution had to sweep through the industrialized countries simultaneously" (1985, 456).

¹⁸⁶ The revised version of Heine's poem on Silesian Weavers' Revolt, "Die schlesischen Weber", was published in this anthology as well.

Sie saßen unter der Erle
Schön war des Sommers Zier –
Wilde, zorn'ge Kerle
Aus York und Lancashire
Sie sangen aus rauhen Kehlen,
Sie saßen bis zur Nacht,
Sie ließen sich erzählen
"Von der schlesischen Weberschlacht."

Und alles sie alles wußten
Tränen vergossen sie fast,
Aufführen die robusten
Gesellen in toller Hast.
Sie ballten die Fäuste und schwangen
Die Hüte im Sturme da;
Wälder und Wiesen klangen:
"Glück auf, Silesia!" (Weerth 1956 I, 204, italics in text)

The cathartic feeling of *eleos* and *phobos* that listening to the drama of the Silesian Weavers' Revolt, the heroic "[...] *schlesischen Weberschlacht*", induces, leads to a manifestation of the dormant socio-revolutionary awareness of the English worker. With Marx, who in the "Kritischen Randglossen" (1844) claims "daß *kein einziger* der französischen und englischen Arbeiter-Aufstände einen so *theoretischen* und *bewußten* Charakter besaß, wie der schlesische Weberaufstand", one might argue that the account of this revolt also engenders in the English proletarians "das Bewußtsein über das Wesen des Proletariats", which – according to Marx – their Silesian counter-parts have already reached (*MEGA* II, 459; Marx's emphasis).¹⁸⁷ Swallowing their tears about the tragic defeat of the Silesian weavers, the English workers rise from the benches with a

¹⁸⁷ Like Weerth Marx also seems to be developing a poetics of proletarian social revolution, when in the same article he casts the Silesian revolt as a tragic event. It produces in the proletariat at once an insight into its social being and strong physical emotions reminiscent of ancient Greek tragedy. Identifying the song of the rebellious weavers' song as a highly socially conscious poetic work, he regards "Das Blutgericht" as a "kühne *Parole* des Kampfes, worin Herd, Fabrik, Distrikt nicht einmal erwähnt werden, sondern das Proletariat sogleich seinen Gegensatz gegen die Gesellschaft des Privateigenthums in schlagender, scharfer, rücksichtsloser, gewaltsamer Weise herausschreit" (*MEGA* II, 459; Marx's emphasis).

sudden start, clench their fists in anger and express their solidarity with the rebellious Silesian weavers. This international proletarian fraternisation, which transcends national boundaries as much as professions, is rhetorically celebrated in the poem's last line. Against all laws of verisimilitude, the English workers hail the socio-revolutionary struggle of the Silesian weavers with the German miners' greetings which the English proletarians combine with the English term for the region where the revolt took place: "*Glück auf, Silesia!*"

Weerth here seems to develop a Marxist scenario of a dramatic European social revolution, which will triumph through simultaneous proletarian rebellions in all industrialised countries. While Florian Vaßen has rightly claimed that Weerth in this poem clearly anticipates the Marxist internationalist perspective of the *Manifest* (see 1971, 78-79), one must also point out that Engels and Marx were developing such a trans-national outlook at roughly the same time as Weerth. For instance, Engels concludes his first article on the Silesian uprising in *The Northern Star* on June 29th 1844 by pointing out – like Weerth in his depiction of the "Wilde, zorn'ge Kerle / Aus Lancashire" – that the English proletarians in "Lancashire and Yorkshire" possess the same socio-revolutionary potential as the German weavers:

Thus it is evident that the consequences of the factory system, of the progress of machinery, etc., for the working classes are quite the same on the continent as they are in England: oppression and toil for the many, riches and wealth for the few; insecurity of fortune, discontent, and riot exist among the hills of Silesia, as well as in the crowded cities of Lancashire and Yorkshire. (*MEGA* III, 609)

For both Engels and Weerth the drama of the Silesian revolt also highlights how England forms a socio-revolutionary powder-keg. Even more clearly than in "Sie saßen auf den Bänken" this view emerges in a letter that Weerth wrote from Bradford to his

brother Wilhelm on December 24th 1844. Discussing the impact of Silesian Weavers' Revolt, Weerth maintains that when the class consciousness of the English proletarians matures further – moving even further towards a socialist position – and two subsequent bad harvests will fall together with one of the cyclical commercial crises, then the British proletarian social revolution will break out:

Die sozialistischen Ideen greifen hier in England auf eine erstaunliche Weise um sich. Wir brauchen hier nur zwei Jahre hintereinander eine Mißernte zu haben, außerdem irgendein Pech in der kommerziellen Welt, und die Revolution ist fertig, – eine Revolution nicht gegen königliche Gewalt, gegen parlamentarische Albernheiten oder gegen die Religion, sondern gegen das Eigentum. Der Arbeiter, der durch chartistische Umtriebe, durch Petitionieren und aufrührerische Meetings nie zu seinem Ziel kam, wird hintereinander den Nerv der jetzigen Gesellschaft zerschneiden und das Geld anfassen. (Weerth 1989 I, 282)

I would argue that Weerth's insistence on the specifically social character of the envisaged English revolution also betrays an implicit criticism of Heine's "Die armen Weber". As I have discussed in detail in chapter 2.2.4., in Heine's poem the weavers' anger is portrayed as being directed "dem König der Reichen" und "dem Gotte, dem Tauben" and against the undemocratic German states. Weerth, however, explicitly dismisses this notion that the proletariat would rise up for political ends, "gegen königliche Gewalt, gegen parlamentarische Albernheiten oder gegen die Religion". Instead he argues the conscious proletariat would fight for its own social emancipation by attacking private property, "das Eigentum". As the interpretation of the Silesian Weavers' Revolt as "*der schlesischen Weberschlacht*" implies, Weerth in "Sie saßen auf den Bänken" regards this confrontation as a consciously socio-revolutionary battle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. This perspective, which he shares with the vanguard of the German socialist movement, sets him apart from Heine in "Die armen Weber". As illustrated in chapter 2.2.4. Heine goes to great lengths to depict the

revolution as being directed against an anachronistic feudal system and state which is still dominated by the aristocracy.

Weerth is convinced that with the maturing of their proletarian class consciousness the English workers – like the Silesian weavers – will also realise that nothing short of proletarian revolution can release them from their terrible suffering: "Dieser erbärmliche Zustand, daß man bei lebendigem Leibe schier verwest" (1989 I, 282). As in "Sie saßen auf den Bänken", in this letter he also relates the impending English social revolution back to the recent weavers' revolt in Silesia:

Ich bin davon überzeugt, daß in kurzem derselbe Spektakel hier losbricht, wie Ihr ihn in Schlesien gehabt habt, und der Unterschied wird nur zwischen diesen beiden Ereignissen der sein, daß in Schlesien der Arbeiter ins Loch kommt und hier der Arbeiter an's Ruder.
(Weerth 1989 I, 282)

Probably drawing upon his first-hand experiences of the high level of organisation of the British working-class movement, the considerably higher number of proletarian activists and of the advanced proletarianisation of the British working class, Weerth optimistically maintains that Britain and not Germany will be the place where a successful proletarian revolution will soon take place. Unlike the drama of the crushed Silesian rebellion, the "Spektakel" of the English proletarian revolt will not have a tragic outcome, but will achieve its goal. When the English worker "an's Ruder [kommt]", this will mean a major step towards the universal emancipation of the proletariat, Weerth prophesies. The Silesian revolt, although crushed, which forms an early stage in this proletarian drama will be followed by the next act in England, Weerth implies. Such a view on the Silesian Weavers' Revolt is not unique to Weerth, but is also voiced by Wilhelm Wolff who in his article "Das Elend und der Aufruhr in Schlesien" (1845)

identifies this rebellion as the first act or least, the prelude, in a universal, international proletarian socio-revolutionary drama:

Wenden wir uns jetzt dem Eulengebirge zu, an dessen Fuße sich der erste blutige Akt, mindestens ein Vorspiel in dem unaufhaltbaren Proletarierdrama, im Kampfe des niedergetretenen, von der Macht des Geldes und der schlaun Berechnung zur Maschine erniedrigten Menschen um Wiedergewinnung seiner Würde, im Kriege der Besitzlosen gegen die Tyrannei und Selbstsucht des Privateigentums, zu Anfang dieses Monats entwickelt hat. (Wolff 1965, 168)

Weerth is convinced that the next scene in the socio-revolutionary drama will take place. For instance as he writes in a letter to his uncle (January 22th 1845) to the industrialist Friedrich aus'm Weerth, England seems to be "das Terrain [...], auf dem nächste Revolution wächst; denn nirgends ist die Armut und die Unzufriedenheit brennender als hier". As in "Sie saßen auf den Bänken" "Wilde, zorn'ge Kerle / Aus York und Lancashire", in the letter he also expects the workers "in Lancashire und Yorkshire" to become the vanguard of social revolution which will cause "eine totale Umwälzung" and produce "eine Höllenmaschine, die den größten Teil der jetzigen Gesellschaft in die Luft springen wird". Again drawing a link to the Silesian Weavers' Revolt, Weerth regards all the signs as pointing to a more auspicious outcome of this expected large-scale proletarian revolt in England than the localised Silesian one: "so ist auch anzunehmen, daß der englische Arbeiter besser reüssieren wird wie der schlesische bei seinem kleinen Versuch" (cf. Weerth 1989 I, 287-288).

The extent of Weerth's socio-revolutionary optimism in relation to Britain accounts for his bitter disappointment when even in 1848, the year of the European revolutions, the English proletarian revolution failed to take place. The disillusionment with the course of these revolutions, as I will argue in the next subchapter, formed a key factor for the notion of farce becoming increasingly important in the Marxist poetics of

revolution. As chapter 3.4.2. will illustrate for Weerth the lack of a proletarian social revolution in Britain additionally contributed to the notion of farce gaining prominence in his poetics of revolution

3.4. The Revolutionary Drama between Tragedy and Farce: Marx's and Weerth's Poetics of the Revolutions of 1848/49

3.4.1. Marx's Shifting Poetics of Revolution from 1844 to 1852

In the concluding sections of this thesis I will illustrate that the development of a Socialist poetics of the revolutions of 1848/49 was a common project of the German Communists around Marx. Recent Marx and Engels scholarship has been foregrounding the major role that Weerth played in Marx's revolutionary newspaper *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* (June 1848 to May 1849),¹⁸⁸ attributing several articles in its political section to Weerth which previously have been thought to have been written by Marx or Engels. Consequently, as in particular François Melis has conclusively shown (2001, 2005 & 2006), the established image of Weerth as the paper's leading satirist who lent his sharp wit solely to its art section cannot be upheld and must be reconsidered.¹⁸⁹ As Melis maintains, in the course of this process it becomes evident "dass die über 150 Jahre tradierte Einschätzung als "Feuilletonchef" nur eine Seite seines journalistischen Wirkens in der Revolution von 1848/49 darstellte" and "dass er der den politischen Teil des Blattes aktiv mitgestaltet hat" (2006, 182).

A re-evaluation similar to that which has been taking place in respect of Weerth's importance for the journalistic project of the *NRhZ* must also be undertaken in respect of his contribution to the development of a Marxist poetics of revolution. In fact this was a shared project that involved several Communist writers (Weerth, Freiligrath etc.) not

¹⁸⁸ Subsequently I will use the established acronym *NRhZ* to refer this most important left-wing newspaper of the German Revolution. Besides Marx as the editor-in-chief and Weerth in charge of the arts section, it counted Engels, Ernst Dronke and Ferdinand Freiligrath among its journalists.

¹⁸⁹ This view dates back to Engels who wrote in an article on Weerth in *Dem Sozialdemokrat* in 1883: "Nach der 1848er Märzrevolution fanden wir [Marx, Weerth und Engels] uns alle in Köln zur Gründung der "Neuen Rheinischen Zeitung" zusammen. Weerth übernahm das Feuilleton, und ich bezweifle, ob je eine andere Zeitung so ein lustiges und schneidiges Feuilleton hatte" (*MEW* XXI, 6).

just the Dioscuri Marx and Engels. The traditional starting point for discussing the notions of tragedy and farce in the Marxist poetics of revolution has been Marx's *Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte* (1852).¹⁹⁰ Analysing and dissecting the revolutions of 1848/49 and their aftermath in this seminal work, Marx pointedly casts the political spectacle that the bourgeoisie was staging during these years as a farcical repetition of the tragedy of the French Revolution:

Hegel bemerkt irgendwo, daß alle großen weltgeschichtlichen Thatsachen und Personen sich so zu sagen zweimal ereignen. Er hat vergessen hinzuzufügen: das eine Mal als große Tragödie, das andre Mal als lumpige Farce. Caussidiere für Danton, Louis Blanc für Robespierre, die Montagne von 1848-51 für die Montagne von 1793-95 und der Londoner Konstabler¹⁹¹ mit dem ersten besten Dutzend Schulden beladener Lieutenants für den kleinen Korporal [Napoleon Bonaparte] mit seiner Tafelrunde von Marschällen! Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Idioten für den achtzehnten Brumaire des Genies! (MEGA XI, 96)

History repeats itself and in doing so, the genre in which it is enacted changes from tragedy to farce.¹⁹² As this passage highlights, Marx maintains that the history of the European revolutions is characterised by such a paradigm shift. The French Revolution

¹⁹⁰ Of course Marx is not the first political writer to depict revolutionary events in the terms of drama. Edmund Burke's polemic *Reflections on the Revolution in France* casts the revolutionary events as one great drama that veers between sublime tragedy, low comedy and melodrama. For Burke this revolution is staged as "a monstrous tragic-comic scene" which evokes within the spectator the following conflicting emotions: "alternate contempt and indignation; alternate laughter and tears; alternate scorn and horror" (cf. 1969, 92-93). Burke's poetics of revolution represent an important influence on Marx's own – ideologically diametrically opposed – notion of revolution as veering between tragedy, comedy and farce. However due to the limitation of this thesis, this link cannot be investigated here. The same constraints also rule out a discussion of whether Georg Büchner could already be said to anticipate Marx's poetics of revolution. One might argue that in *Dantons Tod* Büchner also casts the bourgeois revolution as farce which its actors try to present as a great tragedy, while the real tragedy is the absent proletarian social revolution. However, proving this hypothesis would require a detailed comparative analysis between Marx's poetics of revolution as he develops in *Der Achtzehnte Brumaire* and Georg Büchner's that also takes into account the different socio-historical context. It would also need to take into account the changes in socialist discourse that took place between 1835 and 1848, and the different revolutions they both engage with: Büchner with the French Revolution and the 1830 July Revolution, Marx with the French Revolution and the 1848/49 Revolutions.

¹⁹¹ Marx alludes here to the fact that in April 1848 during the time of the major Chartist demonstrations Louis Bonaparte, the later French Emperor Napoleon III, enlisted as one of the many thousands 'special constables' which the British Government recruited to prevent the European revolutions from spreading to Britain.

¹⁹² For a discussion of the cultural-political and philosophical implications of this thesis of history as repetition, see Said 1976.

was acted out "als große Tragödie", whereas the bourgeois revolutions of 1848/49 were staged "als lumpige Farce".¹⁹³ The characters of the former revolutionary drama reappear as their epigonic parodies in the latter play: "Caussidiere für Danton, Louis Blanc für Robespierre, die Montagne von 1848-51 für die Montagne von 1793-95".

It would be wrong to claim that that this passage only contains a brilliant aperçu. Neither is it sufficient to regard it merely as a clue to the rhetorical mode of Marx's representation of the events from the Februar Revolution 1848 to Bonaparte's coup in December 1851, as for instance Hayden White does. When he maintains that "Marx's problem was a literary one; he had to present 'what really happened' in a convincing narrative" which he found in "the mode of Satire" (White 1973, 320 & 321), then he disregards the seminal ideological tenets that Marx's expresses through his in his satiric depiction of revolution degenerating from tragedy to farce.¹⁹⁴ As I will show, his poetics of revolution is inextricably linked to the concepts of political and social revolution.

From Marx's historical-materialist perspective the crucial difference between 1789-1799 and 1848-1851 consists in the fact the French Revolution had not only a

¹⁹³ Some of the most popular contemporary plays on the Austrian and German Revolution of 1848/49, such as Nestroy's *Freiheit in Krähwinkel* (1848), *Lady und Schneider*, *Judith und Holofernes* (1849), actually belong to the dramatic genre of the farce. However, in contrast to Marx, Nestroy in his farces suggests that *all* social classes are shown to stage the revolution as a farce, not merely the bourgeoisie. For criticism that engages with the depiction of revolution as farce in Nestroy, see for instance Berghaus 1977 & 1985, MacKenzie 1985 & 2001, Perraudin 2000, 101-132 and Häusler, 1987, 94-101.

¹⁹⁴ This one-sided emphasis on the formal instead of the ideological implications of Marx's poetics of revolution in *Der achtzehnte Brumaire* characterises not only White's account but most literature written on this topic. Commenting on the passage I have quoted above, John Paul Riquelme insists that it "is self-reflexive in its focus on the relationship of Marx's writing to a philosophical tradition, to a literary tradition of genres, and to a repetition in time" (1980, 58), but fails to delineate the ideological importance of these references. In respect to the dramatic genres in *Der achtzehnte Brumaire* he is even more obsessed with sole formal distinctions when he differentiates not only "Tragedy" and "Farce" (calling the latter also "significant comedy"), but further argues that Marx dialectically synthesises them to form another dramatic genre, which he confusingly terms "Comedy (absolute comedy or tragicomedy)" (see 1980, 67-72). In my opinion such schematic neo-structuralist categories contribute little towards understanding the sophisticated ideology of Marx's poetics of revolution. Thomas Kamber (1996) also investigates the significance of tragedy for Marx. However, he is more concerned with Marx as a tragic hero, with the "tragic Marx" (cf. 105), than with the role the poetological category of tragedy plays in his oeuvre and in his theory of revolution. Nevertheless, he accurately claims that in *Der achtzehnte Brumaire* Marx's "mixing of political analysis and tragedy reaches a crescendo as his entire description of the events in France is characterized in terms of the mimetic processes of drama" (1996, 104). Yet, focusing solely on the notion of tragedy, Kamber misses out on the importance of its antithesis, the revolutionary farce.

political but also pronounced social dimension. Marking the turning-point from an aristocratic-feudal to a bourgeois-capitalist society, it tackled both the socio-political and socio-economic tasks of its time, whereas the bourgeois political revolutions of 1848/49 totally failed in this respect. Instead the revolutionaries of 1848/49 invoked the heroic ghosts of the past when they anachronistically tried to imitate the political struggles of past bourgeois revolutions. Admittedly, due to the repetitive structure of history and the weight of tradition and events of the past,¹⁹⁵ previous revolutionary movements also resorted to conjuring up "die Geister der Vergangenheit" and to borrowing past "Namen, Schlachtparole, Kostüme". However, when they dialectically recalled the past, they performed "in dieser altherwürdigen Verkleidung und mit dieser erborgten Sprache die neue Weltgeschichtsszene" (cf. *MEGA* XI, 97). This new scene in world history constituted laying the foundation for bourgeois society and capitalism, its socio-economic system. This places previous revolutionary transformations in sharp contrast to the bourgeois political revolutions of 1848/49 which were entirely derivative and created nothing new in world-historical terms since the society and the socio-economic system that this class incorporated had already long been established as the dominant one. The tragedy of the French Revolution was followed by its parody in farce the bourgeois revolution of 1848 in a manner analogous to Athenian drama in which tragedy was followed by satyr play that took up the former's tragic plot and action and satirised it¹⁹⁶:

[...] die Revolution von 1789-1814 drappirte sich abwechselnd als römische Republik und als römisches Kaiserthum, und die Revolution von 1848 wußte nichts Besseres zu thun, als

¹⁹⁵ Marx regards the determination of present human action through the past as a fundamental law of history: "Die Menschen machen ihre eigene Geschichte, aber sie machen sie nicht aus freien Stücken unter selbstgewählten, sondern unter unmittelbar vorhandenen, gegebenen und überlieferten Umstände. Die Tradition aller toten Geschlechter lastet wie ein Alp auf dem Gehirne der Lebenden" (*MEGA* XI, 96-97).

¹⁹⁶ As for instance P. E. Easterling points out, in the Dyonisiac dramatic festival, "tragedy [...] was inseparable from satyr drama" (1997, 37).

hier 1789, dort die revolutionäre Ueberlieferung von 1793-95 zu parodieren. (*MEGA* XI, 97).

In *Der achtzehnte Brumaire* revolution as tragedy and revolution as farce are not merely separated by "the difference of a time between two masks" that forms the dividing line "between tragedy and comedy [sic], between the revolution on the march and what installs it in parody", as Jacques Derrida erroneously glosses this passage (cf. 1994, 113). The seminal distinguishing feature between these two genres of revolution consists in the fact that the action of the revolutionary tragedy enfolds both on a political *and* social level, whereas the plot of the revolutionary farce is limited to politics. The irony, however, lies for Marx in the fact that the actors in the revolutionary are not conscious of the limitations of the play they stage, but instead think that they are enacting a new scene in the social history of the world.

For Marx, these characteristics of the revolutionary farce – its limited political content, its anachronistic nature as well as the delusions of its actors regarding the importance of their role – apply not just to the French, but to the entire European bourgeois revolutionary movement of 1848/49. If anything, due to the socio-political backwardness of Germany, the political bourgeois German Revolution of 1848/49 constitutes an even more pathetic and anachronistic parody of previous bourgeois revolutions (the French Revolution and the English Revolution of 1648) than its French equivalent, as Marx suggests in the lead article of in *NRhZ* (No. 169) on December 15th 1848:

Die Februarrevolution [1848 in Paris] hatte das konstitutionelle Königtum in der Wirklichkeit und die Bourgeois Herrschaft in der Idee *abgeschafft*. Die preußische Märzrevolution sollte das konstitutionelle Königtum in der Idee und die Bourgeois Herrschaft in der Wirklichkeit *schaffen*. Weit entfernt, eine europäische *Revolution* zu sein, war sie nur die verkümmerte Nachwirkung einer europäischen

Revolution in einem zurückgebliebenen Lande. Statt ihrem Jahrhundert voraus, war sie hinter ihrem Jahrhundert um mehr als ein halbes Jahrhundert zurück. [...] Es handelte sich nicht um die Herstellung einer neuen Gesellschaft, sondern um die Berliner Wiedergeburt der zu Paris verstorbenen Gesellschaft [...] Während 1648 und 1789 das unendliche Selbstgefühl hatten, an der Spitze der Schöpfung zu stehn, bestand der Ehrgeiz der Berliner 1848 dann, einen Anachronismus zu bilden. Ihr Licht glich dem Lichte der Sterne, das uns Erdenbewohnern erst zukömmt, nachdem die Körper, die es ausgestrahlt, schon 100.000 von Jahren erloschen sind. Die preußische Märzrevolution war im kleinen, wie sie alles im kleinen war, ein solcher Stern für Europa. Ihr Licht war das Licht eines längst verwesten Gesellschaftsleichnams. (*MEW* VI, 108; Marx's emphasis)

The Prussian bourgeois revolution constitutes a blatant anachronism in political terms too when it tried to establish after the March Revolution a constitutional monarchy whose concepts had received their mortal blow through the overthrow of Louis Philippe in the February Revolution. However, the major instance of dramatic irony consists in the social naivety of bourgeois revolutionary actors which they share with their French counterparts. The German attempt to establish the unchallenged rule of the bourgeoisie resembles the pan-European farcical attempt to resurrect a dead and decaying social body, "eines längst verwesten Gesellschaftsleichen", as Marx implies through a complex extended metaphor that hyperbolically likens the ideal of bourgeois society to the light of a dead and extinct star. As such the even more apparent delusions of German bourgeoisie also cast a light on the pretensions of the French bourgeoisie to stage world history in its revolutionary actions in 1848. The act of dissecting the diminutive German bourgeois revolution magnifies the farcical errors in the judgment of the entire European bourgeoisie.

The same dialectical relationship to the European development applies to Marx's assertion during that German revolutionary bourgeoisie has become an actor in a revolutionary farce, too. Pathetically in 1848, both the Prussian and French bourgeoisie tried to establish the unchallenged rule of the bourgeoisie in a revolution in which the

proletariat had become a main actor by forcefully articulating its separate social interests. This view becomes perhaps most obvious in the following sarcastic-satirical passage from the same editorial by Marx:

Die deutsche Bourgeoisie hatte sich so träg, feig und langsam entwickelt, daß im Augenblicke, wo sie gefahrdrohend dem Feudalismus und Absolutismus gegenüberstand, sie selbst sich gefahrdrohend gegenüber das Proletariat erblickte [...]. Und nicht nur eine Klasse *hinter* sich, ganz Europa sah sie feindlich *vor* sich. Die preußische Bourgeoisie war nicht, wie die französische von 1789, die Klasse, welche die *ganze* moderne Gesellschaft den Repräsentanten der alten Gesellschaft, dem Königtum und dem Adel, gegenüber vertrat [...], sondern [...] eine nicht zum Durchbruch gekommene Schichte des alten Staats. Sie war zu einer Art von *Stand* herabgesunken, ebenso ausgeprägt gegen die Krone als gegen das Volk, oppositionslustig gegen beide, unentschlossen gegen jeden ihrer Gegner einzeln genommen, [...] Phrasen statt Ideen, eingeschüchtert vom Weltsturm, den Weltsturm exploitierend – Energie nach keiner Richtung, Plagiat nach allen Richtungen, gemein, weil sie nicht originell war, originell in der Gemeinheit – [...] ohne weltgeschichtlichen Beruf – ein vermaledeiter Greis, der sich dazu verdammt sah, die ersten Jugendströmungen eines robusten Volks in seinem eigenen altersschwachen Interesse zu leiten und abzuleiten – ohn' Aug! ohn' Ohr! ohn' Zahn, ohn' alles – so fand sich die *preußische Bourgeoisie* nach der Märzrevolution am Ruder des preußischen Staates. (MEW VI, 108-109; Marx's emphasis)

Marx suggests in this passage that the reason for the bourgeoisie playing such a sorry part in the German revolutionary farce is that it is no longer the class that is acting at the height of the tragedy of world history. Forming anachronistically an order of society ("Stand") rather than a genuine class, it is "ohne weltgeschichtlichen Beruf". In truth, the proletariat now holds this profession. All across Europe stirring in its "ersten Jugendströmungen" it is taking over the tragic-revolutionary part from the bourgeoisie that has turned into a mere "vermaleideiter Greis". The bourgeoisie has become a shadow, an actual parody of its former youthful self, as Marx suggests especially effectively through an allusion to Jaques' famous speech 'The Seven Ages of Men' from Shakespeare comedy *As You Like It* (1600). Slightly misquoting Shakespeare, Marx implies that the bourgeoisie has reached its "letzte[n] Akt, mit dem / Die seltsam

wechselnde Geschichte¹⁹⁷ schließt", the senile stage which is a parody of its youth: "zweite Kindheit, gänzliches Vergessen, / Ohn' Augen, ohne Zahn, Geschmack und alles" (II, 7; cf. Shakespeare 1964, 39).

In sharp contrast to this revolutionary farce of 1848/49 in which the bourgeoisie has been playing the part of an actor long past his prime stands its role in the high tragedy of the French Revolution. Now the bourgeoisie is staging a lowly farce, whereas at the time of the French Revolution it acted with youthful vigour "auf der Höhe der großen geschichtlichen Tragödie", as Marx insists at the beginning of *Der Achtzehnte Brumaire*. He even regards the French Revolution as a social revolution when he insists that its protagonists, its heroes, established the "bürgerliche Gesellschaft". Although for Marx bourgeois society is essentially "unheroisch", its birth act nevertheless was enacted as heroic high drama. Its protagonist created bourgeois society in the sublime tragedy of the French Revolution which displayed the strongly tragic elements "der Aufopferung, des Schreckens, des Bürgerkriegs" (cf. *MEGA* XI, 97-98):

Bei der Betrachtung jener weltgeschichtlichen Todtenbeschwörungen [1789-1814 und 1848-1851,] zeigt sich sofort ein springender Unterschied. Camille Desmoulins, Danton, Robespierre, St. Just, Napoleon, die Heroen wie die Parteien und die Masse der alten französischen Revolution vollbrachten in dem römischen Kostüme und mit römischen Phrasen die Aufgabe ihrer Zeit, die Entfesselung und Herstellung der modernen *bürgerlichen* Gesellschaft. Die Einen schlugen den feudalen Boden in Stücke und mähten die feudalen Köpfe ab, die darauf gewachsen waren. Der Andre [Napoleon] schuf im Innern von Frankreich die Bedingungen, in denen erst die freie Konkurrenz entwickelt, das parzellirte Grundeigenthum ausgebeutet, die industrielle Produktivkraft der Nation verwandt werden konnte [...] (*MEGA* XI, 97; Marx's emphasis)

¹⁹⁷ The multiple senses that the term 'history' here carries – as the sequence of past, present and future events, history-play and life-story – emerge much more clearly in the English original of Jaques' speech: "Last scene of all, / That ends this strange, eventful history, / Is second childishness and mere oblivion, / Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything" (II, 7, ll. 162-165; Shakespeare 1997, 1623).

The revolutionaries of the French Revolution were at the height of their time, as they aimed to overthrow both the contemporary ruling class, the aristocracy, and its socio-economic system, feudalism. By achieving these goals, they provided the basis for the bourgeoisie becoming the ruling class itself and capitalism the dominant socio-economic system across the entire Western world.

Marx had already voiced this notion already several years earlier in the *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei* (February 1848). Published shortly before the outbreak of the French February Revolution, the pathos with which Marx and Engels prophesy the advent of the proletarian social revolution differs distinctly from the satirically-disillusioned tone with which Marx analyses the 1848/49 revolutions in *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*. In spite of this differences, both texts agree that "die Bourgeoisie in der Geschichte eine höchst revolutionäre Rolle gespielt [hat]" (MEW IV, 464):¹⁹⁸

Die Bourgeoisie, wo sie zur Herrschaft gekommen, hat alle feudalen, patriarchalischen, idyllischen Verhältnisse zerstört. Sie hat die buntscheckigen Feudalbande, die den Menschen an seinen natürlichen Vorgesetzten knüpften, unbarmherzig zerrissen und kein anderes Band zwischen Mensch und Mensch übriggelassen als das nackte Interesse, als die gefühllose 'bare Zahlung'. [...] Sie hat die persönliche Würde in den Tauschwert aufgelöst und an die Stelle der zahllosen verbrieften und wohlerworbenen Freiheiten die *eine* gewissenlose Handelsfreiheit gesetzt. Sie hat, mit einem Wort, an die Stelle der mit religiösen und politischen Illusionen verhüllten Ausbeutung die offene, unverschämte, direkte, dürre Ausbeutung gesetzt. (MEW IV, 464-465; emphasis in original)

¹⁹⁸ Later in the same year, in the *NRhZ* (No. 169/ December 15th 1848), Marx voiced again this notion that the previous bourgeois revolutions were also social revolutions. Including the British so-called 'Bloody Revolution' of 1648 and foregrounding less strongly the dramatic aspect of this transformation, the tragedy of revolution than *Der Achtzehnte Brumaire*, he similarly casts them as world historic social transformation at the height of their time: "Die Revolutionen von 1648 und 1789 waren keine *englischen* und *französischen* Revolutionen, sie waren Revolutionen *europäischen* Stils. Sie waren nicht der Sieg einer *bestimmten* Klasse der Gesellschaft über die *alte politische Ordnung*; sie waren *die Proklamation der politischen Ordnung für die neue europäische Gesellschaft*. Die Bourgeoisie siegte in ihnen; aber der Sieg der Bourgeoisie war damals der Sieg einer neuen Gesellschaftsordnung [...]" (MEW VI, 107; Marx's emphasis)

With the successful conclusion of this radical bourgeois socio-economic revolution – Marx and Engels allege – the bourgeoisie has exhausted all its revolutionary potential.

At the same time, however, the bourgeoisie's radical transformation of the economic and the societal system has laid the foundations for a new tragically revolutionary constellation to emerge in the drama of world history. Establishing reckless exploitation of a dominated class as the basis of its socio-economic system, the bourgeoisie has in effect been producing a new class that has become the socio-revolutionary antagonist of the bourgeois ruling class: the proletariat. Claiming that among all the classes, "welche heutzutage der Bourgeoisie *gegenüberstehen*, ist nur das Proletariat eine wirklich revolutionäre Klasse" (*MEW* IV, 472; my emphasis) the latter forms the sole protagonist of the revolutionary tragedy of the times. It is the proletarian social revolution that will form its climax. It will occur – as Marx earlier had suggested in the "Einleitung *Zur Hegel'schen Rechts-Philosophie*" (1844) – at the point when the relationship of the classes to each other is no longer "episch" as in Germany of 1844 but "dramatisch" (cf. *MEGA* II, 180). By an epic class relationship he understands that there is no direct confrontation taking place which is limited to just two antagonistic classes but instead a multitude of various class confrontations is happening simultaneously.¹⁹⁹ A dramatic class relationship for Marx is one in which two classes are directly opposed as protagonist and antagonist in one single action: a desideratum for the tragic genre which Aristotle famously spells out in his *Poetics*.²⁰⁰ In the *Manifest* Marx and Engels

¹⁹⁹ Marx insists that in Germany "jede Klasse, sobald sie den Kampf mit der über ihr stehenden Klasse beginnt, in den Kampf mit der unter ihr stehenden verwickelt ist. Daher befindet sich das Fürstenthum im Kampf gegen das Königthum, der Buraukrat im Kampf gegen den Adel, der Bourgeois im Kampf gegen sie alle, während der Proletarier schon beginnt, sich im Kampf gegen den Bourgeois zu befinden" (*MEGA* II, 181). Thus in German society in 1844 no class has to potential to play at the level of drama of world history, but instead its classes are staging a second-rate play that is deeply anachronistic, "antiquirt" as soon as it is being performed: "die Gelegenheit einer großen Rolle [ist] immer vorüber [...], bevor sie vorhanden war" (cf. 181).

²⁰⁰ Marx in his understanding of 'epic' and 'dramatic' seems to refer back to Aristotle's definition of the latter term in the *Poetics*. In chapter 18 he demands: "Man [...] darf kein episches Handlungsgefüge zu einer Tragödie machen (unter 'episch' verstehe ich Handlungsvielfalt), wie wenn jemand die gesamte

prophecy that this moment is approaching rapidly when modern revolutionary tragedy will come close to the tragic ideal of unity of action:

Unsere Epoche, die Epoche der Bourgeoisie, zeichnet sich jedoch dadurch aus, daß sie die Klassengegensätze vereinfacht hat. Die ganze Gesellschaft spaltet sich mehr und mehr in zwei große feindliche Lager, in zwei große, einander direkt gegenüberstehende Klassen: Bourgeoisie und Proletariat. (*MEW IV*, 463)

Marx and Engels further maintain that now in 1848 even in Germany, which Marx in 1844 had seen as severely lagging behind most European countries in its socio-economic development, the relationship between proletariat and bourgeoisie is so highly polarised that the proletarian social revolution is imminent. Accurately realising that "Deutschland am Vorabend einer bürgerlichen Revolution steht", they wrongly predict that after the German bourgeois political revolution the proletarian social revolution will immediately follow. For the German bourgeois revolution will be occurring "mit einem viel weiter entwickelten Proletariat" than existed in France of the 18th century (cf. *MEW IV*, 493). Again using a metaphor from the field of drama, they proclaim that "die deutsche bürgerliche Revolution also nur das unmittelbare Vorspiel einer proletarischen Revolution sein kann" (493). The bourgeois revolution is the prologue of the revolutionary tragedy before the masses become its main protagonists, a notion in his poetics of revolution that Marx seems to directly take and adapt from Aristotle's *Poetics*.²⁰¹ This tragedy will result, as Marx and Engels claim in the *Manifest*, in the inevitable downfall of the bourgeoisie and the simultaneous triumph of the proletariat. Since, through its socio-economic exploitative, system the bourgeoisie has been

Handlung der *Ilias* behandeln wollte" (1994, 59). To achieve a dramatic effect "die Nachahmung einer einzigen, und zwar einer ganzen Handlung" is vital (chapter 8; 1994, 29).

²⁰¹ As Aristotle defines it in chapter 12, the prologue is the whole part of the tragedy "vor dem Einzug des Chors" (cf. 1994, 37). Furthermore in chapter 18, he demands that one has to assign to the chorus the same role as an actor: the chorus "muß Teil des Ganzen sein und sich an der Handlung beteiligen" (cf. 1994, 59).

producing its own "Totengräber",²⁰² the proletariat, its "Untergang und der Sieg des Proletariats sind gleich unvermeidlich" (*MEW* IV, 474).

The course of the revolutions of 1848, however, shattered all such hopes that a successful proletarian social revolution was imminent. It also caused a decisive shift in the Marxist poetics of revolution. The fact that the proletarian social revolution either failed to happen or – as in case of the Parisian 'June Revolution' – was utterly defeated, led to a revision of Marx's revolutionary poetics. Since the proletarian social revolution ended in catastrophe and not with the triumph of the hero as it is predicted in *Das Manifest der kommunistischen Partei*, it is described in terms of a tragic spectacle. As I will briefly illustrate later, such a view is strongly expressed by Marx's famous editorial about the June Revolution (*NRhZ* No. 29/ June 29th 1848), which casts the defeated Parisian proletarians with strong pathos as the greatest tragic heroes of the entire revolution, a verdict that is strongly reiterated in *Der Achtzehnte Brumaire* when Marx compares this proletarian defeat with subsequent defeats of the various bourgeois factions by the counter-revolutionary forces. For Marx the only moment of truly world-historic dimensions in 1848 lies in the tragic defeat of the proletariat in the failed social revolution in June 1848, which contrasts starkly with the farcical action of the bourgeois political revolutions:

Mit dieser Niederlage tritt das Proletariat in den *Hintergrund* der revolutionären Bühne. [...] Aber wenigstens erliegt es mit den Ehren des großen weltgesichtlichen Kampfes; nicht nur Frankreich, ganz Europa zittert vor dem Junierdbeben, während die nachfolgenden Niederlagen der höheren Klassen so wohlfeil erkaufte werden, daß sie der frechen

²⁰² It is conceivable that Marx and Engels here allude to the 'grave-digger scene' (V, 1) from *Hamlet*. Commenting on the confident class consciousness of the socially low gravediggers – the stage directions describe them as "*Clowns*" i.e. peasants (Shakespeare 1982, 376) – Hamlet spells out the danger that the lower classes pose to the ruling class, the aristocracy. The robust peasants are already treading on the heels of the courtiers who have become effeminate with decadence and over-sophistication: "How absolute [strict] the knave is. We must speak by the card [accurately] or equivocation will undo us. By the Lord, Horatio, this three years I have took note of it, the age has grown so picked [refined] that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier he galls his kibe [sore]" (V, I; ll. 133-138; Shakespeare 1982, 384).

Uebetreibung der siegenden Partei bedürfen, um überhaupt als Ereignisse passiren zu können, und um so schmachvoller werden, je weiter die unterliegende Partei von der proletarischen entfernt ist. (*MEGA* XI, 105; Marx's emphasis)

3.4.2. The Farce of Chartism According to Weerth: The Betrayal of Britain's Socio-Revolutionary Proletariat in 1848

While from Marx's perspective the June Revolution was the decisive turning point in the revolutionary drama of 1848/49, the first tragic reversal in fact happened several months earlier. Although it was an infinitely less bloody repression of the potential proletarian social revolution than the military defeat of the June Revolution which claimed the lives of several thousand Parisian workers, Weerth in hindsight identifies the suppression of Chartist protests in London in April 1848 as the first turning-point in the revolutionary drama. Albeit in a considerably less dramatic and in a much more petty fashion than in France in June, for Weerth this is the first time that the high drama of the proletarian struggle is transformed into a bourgeois farce when it is hijacked and betrayed by the bourgeoisie.

As I have shown in the previous subchapter, as early as December 1844 Weerth had regarded the British proletarian revolution as imminent, an expectation history did not fulfil either in 1848 or at any other time in the 18th and 19th centuries.²⁰³ In 1846, in an excerpt from an anonymous letter in the *Gesellschaftsspiegel* that is most likely to have been taken from one of Weerth's letter to Moses Heß, this revolution is still expected. Only its outbreak is postponed as the final phrase of the excerpt suggests: "Allmählig steuern wir auf eine lustige Krise zu" (Heß 1971 II, 70). In the unpublished essay "Geschichte der Chartisten von 1832 bis 1848", which he continued writing at least until early 1848, his views seem slightly more cautious. However, Weerth still expects that the impressive "Schauspiel" (cf. 1957 III, 375) of Chartist agitation will eventually climax in a proletarian social revolution. Praising their leader Feargus

²⁰³ For a discussion of this fact and possible reasons for it, see Royle 2000, 139-198.

O'Connor as the champion of the people and a dramatic impersonator of its revolutionary spirit,²⁰⁴ Weerth highlights the fact that it was due to these qualities that O'Connor managed to be elected as the MP for Nottingham to the House of Commons in 1847. There he acts as the representative of unrepresented lower classes resembling a hero of Shakespearean tragedy, "den man zwischen die Capulets und die Montagues stellte" (376), as Weerth writes quoting from an article from the *Daily News* from December 1847. Yet the real revolutionary tragedy, which will end with the liberation of the proletariat and the fall of the bourgeoisie, can only be enacted by the proletariat itself not by O'Connor's dramatic speeches in parliament. The concluding paragraph of "Die Geschichte der Chartisten" clearly expresses such a conviction:

Wird man seiner [O'Connors] mahnenden Stimme gehorchen? Vielleicht ist es nötig, daß auch erst durch die Londoner Gassen der schreckliche Ruf "aux armes!" erklingt,²⁰⁵ um seinen Forderungen den richtigsten Nachdruck zu geben. (Weerth 1957 III, 376)

Weerth's positive verdict on O'Connor did not survive the revolutions of 1848/49. In fact by 1849 Weerth had utterly changed his views on him,²⁰⁶ as the satire "Die Langeweile, der Spleen und die Seekrankheit" proves (*NRhZ*, March 6th to 29th 1849).

²⁰⁴ Weerth states that O'Connor possesses the same character traits as "das Volk, dieser gewaltige, ungeschliffene Riese". He casts him as its mirror-image stating that "in seinem O'Connor sieht das englische Volk sich selbst. O'Connor ist das Volk in einer Person, ausgestattet mit all seinen Tugenden und behaftet mit all seinen Lasten" (Weerth 1957 III, 310). O'Connor's theatrical skills become evident, when Weerth portrays him acting out various roles: from the sophisticated poet, "von Liebe lispelnd wie Heine und Hafis", the lowly bawdy writer, "in barbarischen Zoten sich ergehend trotz Meister Franz Rabelais" to the plebeian role, when he acts "grob und plump gleich einem Shakespearschen Stallknecht" (cf. 310-311). Most evidently, however, O'Connor's function as a dramatic impersonation of the proletariat's revolutionary power becomes evident in a depiction of one of his speeches (see 1957 III, 313-316). In it Weerth clearly likens O'Connor's performance on the rostrum to the enactment of a bloody revolutionary battle, "dem Gemetzel der Bataille" (cf. 314).

²⁰⁵ This sub-clause seems to allude to events of the Parisian February Revolution (February 22nd-24th 1848) and thus suggests that Weerth finished his essay only after these events had taken place.

²⁰⁶ Bernd Füllner has shown how Weerth's view of O'Connor changes rapidly in the course of the articles he wrote for the *Kölnische Zeitung* and the *Deutsche Zeitung* between March and April 1848 (1999, 93-95).

Now in an utterly disrespectful sarcastic manner²⁰⁷ O'Connor is presented not only as a traitor to the Chartist movement, but also to the cause of the proletarian social revolution. For Weerth it has become obvious that O'Connor, like the villain in a drama, misled its hero, the proletariat. Weerth insinuates that he was only acting the role of the champion of the proletarian cause in order to increase his fame. His cowardly and treacherous stance has turned the British worker movement from being the most advanced player in the European revolutionary tragedy²⁰⁸ into an actor in a "Farce", as Weerth alleges:

Klar ist es endlich, daß O'Connor zwar nicht wie der alte Dan das Volk für bares Geld verriet, daß er aber deswegen die ganze Bewegung der englischen Arbeiter durch seinen allmächtigen Einfluß stets in eine Farce verwandelte, weil er vor dem Äußersten zurückschreckte, weil er nicht jenen offenen Kampf wagte, ohne den keine Bewegung der Welt zu einem Resultat zu bringen ist. (Weerth 1957 IV, 230)

Repeating the action of his precursor and sponsor, the leader of the Irish Repeal movement Daniel O'Connell, O'Connor also incurs "den Fluch" of his followers. The moment in 1843, "als das Volk über sein [O'Connells] Treiben die Augen öffnete" (cf. 1957 IV, 230), about the motives for opposing revolution as a means to gain the repeal of the Union of Britain and Ireland, reoccurs in 1848 in respect to O'Connor and the Chartist rank and file. The British proletariat experiences a profound *anagnorisis* about

²⁰⁷ Bernd Füllner points out the stark difference between the largely euphoric tone of Weerth's correspondence articles in March and April 1848 and the sarcastic one of his satire in the *NRhZ* in 1849. He argues that the "eigentliche euphorische Phase in Georg Weerths Revolutionsdarstellungen endet schließlich mit der London-Korrespondenz vom 14. April in der *Deutschen Zeitung*." He regards that this shift in the tenor of Weerth's depiction of the revolutionary events in 1848 as being motivated by his "Enttäuschung über den Ausgang der revolutionär zugespitzten Ereignisse" in London (cf. 1999, 95). For an annotated version of Weerth's London correspondence articles for *Die Deutsche Zeitung*, which are missing in Kaiser's edition, see Füllner 1985.

²⁰⁸ Weerth's hopes for a successful proletarian social revolution were closely linked to his expectation that the Chartists whom he regarded as the European socio-revolutionary vanguard would start the British revolution. This view emerges clearly in Weerth's first article for the *Kölnische Zeitung* from London (March 31st 1848), in which he optimistically declares: "Da geschehen plötzlich die Ereignisse in Paris, in Wien und Berlin, und wie aus Wut, daß alle anderen Völker sie im Revolutionieren überbieten, machen sich jetzt die Chartisten auf, um nicht hinter allen anderen zurückzubleiben" (Weerth 1957 IV, 28).

the true motives both for O'Connor's current and past refusal to condone revolutionary violence. It realises that his almighty sway over Chartism, his will for absolute power over his proletarian followers, constitutes the main reasons why the British proletarian social revolution had been forestalled several times within the last ten years. Through his repeated calls to refrain from violence, he always managed to transform the socio-revolutionary stirrings of the British proletarian movement into a farce. While already at the Chartist uprisings of 1839 in Wales and 1842 in Lancashire his moderate stance was more than suspicious, it was in spring 1848 on the occasion of the Chartist mass meeting on April 10th (estimates of the numbers assembled vary widely from 20,000 to 400,000)²⁰⁹ on Kennington Common²¹⁰ that O'Connor revealed his true colours. On this occasion he showed to the world his hypocrisy when he again discouraged revolutionary action:

Verdächtig war es, daß O'Connor hinüber nach Irland reiste, als im Jahre 1839 der Aufstand in Wales begann; verdächtig war es, daß er im Jahre 1842 nicht losschlug, als die Chartisten ganz Manchester besetzt und ganz Lancashire in ihrer Hand hatten – aber zu einem bloßen Polterer sank der große Agitator hinab, als endlich der Frühling von 1848 die revolutionäre Bewegung von halb Europa brachte und als der 'wilde Feargus' die Wut der Arbeiter zu nichts anderem benutzte als zu jenem unglückseligen Meeting des 10. April auf Kennington Common, wo er die schlagfertige Masse beschwor, keinen Tropfen Blut zu vergießen, und wo er in seiner Zeitung, im "Northern Star", erklärte, *daß er nie wieder eine Nacht ruhig in seinem Bette schlafen würde, wenn ein einziger Arbeiter durch die von ihm angefachte Bewegung ums Leben komme.* (Weerth 1957 IV, 231; italics in original)

²⁰⁹ Already Weerth himself, writing from London as the correspondent for the *Kölnische Zeitung* on April 11th 1848 points out the ideologically motivated discrepancies in the reports of the numbers of demonstrators: "Die Zahl der Leute, welche sich gestern gegen das Verbot des Gouvernements auf Kennington Common zusammenfanden, wird von der "Times" auf 20000, von den meisten Seiten auf 50000 bis 60000 Mann geschätzt" (1957 IV, 30).

²¹⁰ For a photograph of the meeting see image IV in the appendix.

The meeting on Kennington Common had the potential to mark the first act of the high drama of the European proletarian social revolution.²¹¹ Instead O'Connor's cheap intrigue, his honeyed words with which he stopped "die schlagfertige Menge", transformed this gathering into a pathetic fiasco, into the first act of the revolutionary farce of 1848/49. When he swears to his proletarian audience that he will never sleep soundly again if one single worker is killed as a consequence of the movement he started, he has no longer the stature of a Shakespearean actor as before, not even that of a villain, but has sunk to a ham actor in a second-rate play. Not merely from a Marxist angle, but also from the perspective of his earlier speeches in which O'Connor indicted the socio-economic violence of capitalism that has caused the death of a thousands of workers,²¹² the hollow bourgeois hypocrisy of this statement becomes evident. Turning – to borrow Marx's words from *Der Achtzehnte Brumaire* – the potential "große Tragödie" of proletarian social revolution into a "lumpige Farce", O'Connor crucially retarded the European socio-revolutionary momentum. Hence, he started the process of degradation that marked the European revolutionary drama in 1848/49.

²¹¹ The question of how much a revolutionary threat the Chartist gathering posed has been as hotly debated by historians as the role that O'Connor played in its failure. For a short overview of Chartism in 1848 and the critical debate from the 19th century to the present, see Brown 1998, 104-113. For crucial contributions to the ongoing discussion see for instance Belchem 1982 & 2001, Saville 1987 and Royle 2000, 123-138.

²¹² Weerth has for instance highlighted O'Connor's harsh indictment of the lethal consequences of capitalist exploitative practices in respect to the explosion in the Haswell Colliery. As I have pointed out earlier, in "Proletarier in England" he reports that O'Connor at the end of his speech in Bradford told his audience, "daß in den letzten Tagen, wiederum in den Bergwerken zu Haswell, durch Nachlässigkeit der Grubenbesitzer, hundert Menschen auf einen Schlag ums Leben gekommen seien und das Verdict wie gewöhnlich: *"Visitation of God"* gelautet habe" (1845, 325).

3.4.3. Marx, Weerth and the Farce of the German Bourgeois Political Revolution

The Marxists – among them foremost Weerth and Marx – identified the development of the high revolutionary drama degenerating into a lowly farce all across Europe in the course of 1848. While the European revolutions started out as revolutionary tragedies, with the proletariat achieving the initial victory over the old forces,²¹³ its betrayal at the hands of the bourgeoisie and the subsequent usurpation of the lead role in revolutionary drama by the bourgeoisie led to the action turning farcical.²¹⁴

²¹³ Irrespective of their ideological differences, nearly all modern historians agree that proletarians (workers, apprentices and journeymen) formed by far the largest faction in the street-battles in Berlin on March 18/ 19th (see for instance Siemann 1985, 68-69, Grab 1998, 7, Blackbourn 2003, 107). Frank Lorenz Müller maintains that out of the "900 Berliner, die zwischen dem 13. und 19.3. vom Militär getötet, verletzt oder verhaftet wurden, gehörten mehr als 85% den Unterschichten an" (2002, 59). For tables listing the dead according to profession and social group see Obermann 1950, 289 and Siemann 1985, 69. Müller emphasises how the triumphs of the March Revolution were purchased "mit dem Blut von Arbeitern und Handwerkern" (2002, 59).

Although no such precise lists exist in respect to the casualties of the Viennese March Revolution and their social makeup, Wolfgang Häusler points out that "Handwerksgesellen und Arbeiter" constituted the vast majority of those killed (1979, 149). His seminal study about the importance of the social question and the beginnings of the workers' movement in the Viennese Revolution proves how the increasingly politicised lower classes were the driving force not only behind the initial revolution in March 1848, but also constituted the social group which most determinedly resisted the counter-revolutionary forces throughout the revolution. For the role of the proletariat, its socio-revolutionary demands and its clash with the bourgeoisie in Vienna see also Häusler 1986, Bruckmüller 2001, 267 and Reinalter 2002, 288.

The February Revolution in Paris (22nd to 24th) differed considerably insofar as the rebellious workers were joined by the bourgeois National Guard. However, this unity was very short-lived and soon crumbled under the strongly emerging class tensions (see e.g. Langewiesche 1986, 73-74, Lévêque 2001, 97-101 and Hachtmann 2001, 352-353). Not entirely convincingly, Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Friedrich Lenger contest such a view (2001, 630-635). Marx in his famous editorial in the *NRhZ* (No. 29/ June 29th 1848) about the June Revolution, ironically dubs the February Revolution "die schöne Revolution, die Revolution der allgemeinen Sympathie, weil die Gegensätze, die in ihr gegen das Königtum eklatierten, *unentwickelt*, einträchtig nebeneinander schlummerten, weil der soziale Kampf, der ihren Hintergrund bildete, nur eine luftige Existenz gewonnen hatte, die Existenz der Phrase, des Worts" (*MEW* V, 134; Marx's emphasis).

For a comparative view of the course of the 1848 revolutions in the European capital cities, see Hachtmann 2001.

²¹⁴ Wolfram Siemann's seminal study of the German Revolution has particularly highlighted the pivotal contribution of the lower classes to what has often been considered a solely bourgeois revolution. Siemann distinguishes two subsequent revolutions which were opposed in their goals: the sub-bourgeois "Basisrevolution" with "sozialrevolutionäre Töne" that paved the way for the liberal bourgeois revolution (cf. 1985, 59). Manfred Gailus has conclusively proven how the majority of the Berlin lower classes kept on fighting and protesting for their socio-economic goals throughout 1848 and 1849 (1990). For further studies of lower-class socio-revolutionary protest and the role of the lower classes in the German Revolution see for instance Bergmann 1986, Siemann 1986, Weber 2000, Haupt & Lenger 2001 and Gailus 2001.

Analysing the course of the German Revolution in a series of articles in the *NRhZ* in December 1848, Marx exposes the – in his opinion – utterly pathetic role that the Prussian liberal bourgeoisie played in the German revolutionary farce. For him, in its insistence on a constitutional monarchic system, which the February Revolution had just abolished in France, this class was clearly enacting an anachronistic farce. Its ambition was, "einen Anachronismus zu bilden" (*MEW* VI, 108). In contrast to its French counterpart that established a republic, the German bourgeoisie supported the monarchy, which forms the political expression of the rule of the aristocracy, its class enemy. Ironically, when the bourgeoisie tried to assume the throne that the proletarian March Revolution had aimed to overthrow it sabotages its own power basis and thus facilitates the eventual return of the *ancien regime*.²¹⁵ The strategy behind the so-called 'Vereinbarungstheorie' that posits that the German bourgeoisie must form an alliance with the old aristocracy, its former adversaries, totally backfired. Aimed at combating the dangerous socio-revolutionary tendencies of the proletariat, it not only heightened the proletarian aversion towards the bourgeoisie, but also enabled the aristocracy to fight the bourgeoisie in secret, while officially pretending to be its ally. In short, the bourgeoisie's blatant misapprehensions paved the way for the victory of the reactionary forces. As Marx alleges in the following passage from the editorial of December 16th 1848 (No. 170), when the architects of the 'Vereinbarungstheorie', the Prussian minister president Ludolf Camphausen and his finance minister David Hansemann, "die Öl und Wollhändler",²¹⁶ thought they were ascending to the vacant throne, they were totally deluded over their actual role in the revolutionary farce:

²¹⁵ Cf. Marx's analysis of this development in the *NRhZ*'s leader of December 16th 1848 (No. 170): "Die Märzrevolution hat den Souverän von Gottes Gnaden keineswegs dem Volkssouveräne unterjocht. Sie hat nur die Krone, den absolutistischen Staat, gezwungen, sich mit der Bourgeoisie zu verständigen, sich mit ihrem alten Rivalen zu *vereinbaren*" (*MEW* IV, 109; Marx's emphasis).

²¹⁶ The banker Ludolf Camphausen, Prussian minister president from March to June 1848, had earlier in his career traded in oil. David Hansemann was besides Camphausen politically the most powerful among

Die Öl und Wollhändler, welche das erste Ministerium nach der Märzrevolution bildeten, gefielen sich in der Rolle, die bloßgestellte Krone mit ihren plebejischen Fittichen zu decken. Sie schwelgten in dem Hochgenusse, hoffähig zu sein und widerstrebend, von ihrem rauhen Römertum aus reiner Großmut ablassend – von dem Römertum des Vereinigten Landtags²¹⁷ –, die Kluft, welche den Thron zu verschlingen drohte, mit dem Leichnam ihrer ehemaligen Popularität zu schließen. Wie spreizte sich der Minister *Camphausen* als *Wehmutter* des konstitutionellen Thrones.²¹⁸ Der brave Mann war offenbar über sich selbst, über seine eigne Großmut gerührt. Die Krone und ihr Anhang duldete widerstrebend diese demütigende Protektorschafft, sie machte *bonne mine à mauvais jeu* in Erwartung beßrer Tage. (*MEW* VI, 110; Marx's emphasis)

Marx here in his article series "Die Bourgeoisie und die Konterrevolution" anticipates a key thesis from *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*. As he will do in respect to the French bourgeoisie in the latter work, Marx alleges that the Prussian bourgeoisie is conjuring up the spirit of the Roman Republic to distract from the pathetic nature of its revolutionary performance. Camphausen is not only an atrociously bad actor, when he publicly displays how touched he is about his own magnanimity in sharing powers with the monarchic forces, but is ideologically deluded when he believes that forging such an alliance with the old powers against the proletariat will secure the victory of the German bourgeoisie. Marx voices this conviction as early as June 1848 in the editorial on the fall of Camphausen's cabinet (No. 23/ June 22nd 1848) in the *NRhZ*, in which he predicts such an outcome of the German Revolution. At the same time he forcefully exposes the

the "liberale Repräsentanten der rheinischen Großbourgeoise" (Wehler 1989, 722). Finance minister from March to September 1848, Hansemann after Camphausen's resignation under the weak president von Auerswald effectively ran the government until he was himself toppled. Marx here alludes to the fact that Hansemann who came from an impoverished pastor's family made his fortune as wool trader in Aachen.

²¹⁷ The 'Vereinigte Landtag' was prior to the revolution the only (unelected) representational organ in Prussia.

²¹⁸ In "Trotz Alledem!" (*NRhZ* No. 6/ June 6th 1848) Ferdinand Freiligrath describes the take-over of the proletarian March Revolution by the liberal bourgeoisie in similar terms to Marx, as a farce. Instead of the aristocracy, Germany is now ruled by "die Bourgeoisie am Thron" which does everything to imitate the aristocracy it has replaced (cf. Freiligrath 1973b, 21). To write a more comprehensive history of the Marxist poetics of revolution in 1848 one would need to investigate Freiligrath's 1848 poems too, in particular his seminal poem "Die Todten an die Lebenden" (July 1848). However, due to the constraints of this thesis, this cannot be undertaken here.

pathetic nature of the entire German revolutionary farce, when he draws attention to the horrid acting skills that, in his opinion, the German bourgeoisie displays on the "Staatsbühne":

Das Ministerium Camphausen sucht noch einige Pfennige Popularität zu erhaschen, das öffentliche Mitleid rege zu machen durch die Versicherung, daß es als *Dupe* von der Staatsbühne abtritt. Und sicher ist es ein betrogener Betrüger. Im Dienst der großen Bourgeoisie mußte es die Revolution um ihre demokratischen Früchte zu prellen suchen, im Kampf mit der Demokratie mußte es sich mit der aristokratischen Partei verbünden und das Werkzeug ihrer kontrerevolutionären Gelüste werden. Sie ist genug erstarkt, um ihren Protektor über Bord werfen zu können. *Herr Camphausen hat die Reaktion gesät im Sinne der großen Bourgeoisie, er hat sie geerntet im Sinne der Feudalpartei.* Das war die gute Absicht des Mannes, das sein böses Geschick. Einen Pfennig Popularität für den enttäuschten Mann. (*MEW V*, 97; Marx's italics)

The bourgeoisie pictures itself as the tragic actor in a great world-historic tragedy. Fate, "sein böses Geschick", has caused Camphausen's tragic fall, the latter claims, while in Marx's eyes his performance merely earns him the place of a character in the German revolutionary farce. Echoing this judgment in his lead article from December 10th 1848 (cf. *MEW VI*, 104). Marx further points to the delusion behind the bourgeoisie's tough stance against the revolutionary masses. Instead of securing the bourgeois revolution, as Marx pointedly maintains, the military action of the Prussian bourgeoisie against the proletariat, these "einzigen Heldentaten der preußischen Bourgeoisie nach dem März, die oft blutigen Schikanen der Bürgerwehr gegen das unbewaffnete Proletariat" only played into the hands of the reconstituting forces of reaction: "der Armee", "der Bürokratie" and even "der Feudalherren" (cf. 110). After cheating the proletariat of its revolutionary victory against the old forces, the entire class finally ends as "die düpierte Bourgeoisie" (*MEW VI*, 123): the duped swindler, the part which Camphausen as the "düpierte Schwindler" (*MEW V*, 97) had already enacted in June 1848 when he stepped

down as Prussian State Minister. The bourgeoisie's dramatic performance does not extend beyond second-rate stage tricks, worthy only of "schauspielernden Eskamoteurs" (cf. *MEW* VI, 112), of fairground conjurers who harbour pretensions to become first rate actors. Hence, instead of playing the part in the tragedy of world history as they thought, the liberal bourgeois politicians only acted as minor characters, as proxies of a class with a self-inflated ego, in the farce of German political revolution, as Marx highlights in his leader on December 10th in the *NRhZ* (No. 165):

Man täusche sich indes nicht; man schreibe einem Camphausen, einem Hanseemann, diesen Männern untergeordnetster Größe, keine weltgeschichtliche Initiative zu. Sie waren nichts als die Organe einer Klasse. Ihre Sprache, ihre Handlungen waren nur das offizielle Echo einer Klasse, die sie in den Vordergrund gedrängt hatte. Sie waren nur die große Bourgeoisie – im Vordergrunde. (*MEW* VI, 104)

Weerth strongly shared Marx's crushing verdict on the most prominent exponents of bourgeois revolution. Like Marx, he also exposes them as pathetic actors in the pathetic play of the German revolutionary farce. In fact, one could argue that in several of his 1848 satires which were published in the *NRhZ* some months *before* Marx's ruthless reckoning with the role of the liberal bourgeoisie in revolutionary politics Weerth clearly anticipates Marx's poetics of the German Revolution. In the same vein as him, Weerth unmaskes the world-historic pretensions of that class. Most tangible are the similarities to Marx in Weerth's mock epic poem "Kein schöner Ding ist auf der Welt, als seine Feinde zu beißen" (No. 114-116/ October 12th-14th 1848) and in the last published chapter (No. 36/ July 6th 1848) of his *Humoristische Szenen aus dem deutschen Handelsleben* (1845-1848), which is tellingly entitled: "Das Dasein des Herrn Preiss gewinnt eine welthistorische Bedeutung". In the poem the narrator, who – as Weerth's alter ego – is a journalist with the *NRhZ*, has to flee Cologne after the

imposition of martial law and the temporary suppression of the paper at the end of September 1848. But even in his hide-out the police hunt him down. Trying to trick the rather dim-witted policemen, the narrator stages an elaborate role play that parodies several well-known figures from the German bourgeois revolution. Among them are the former wool and oil traders turned politicians Camphausen and Hanseman whom Weerth merges into one character. Like Marx later, he exposes them as pathetic actors in the farce of the German Revolution, who are massively deluded about their role in world historic terms:²¹⁹

Da hob ich mich würdig empor und sprach:
"Ich heiße Charlemagne!
Wollhändler bin ich in Aachen und trink
Recht gerne den Wein der Champagne.

Ich spekuliere in Trüffeln und Öl,
Mein Bankier empfängt mich prächtig."
Da sprach der erste Gendarme: "Mein Herr,
Dies ist ausnehmend verdächtig!"

Ich aber fuhr fort: "Auch Spiritus
Verkauf ich von hoher Reinheit,
Nahm Aktien auf jede Luftschiffahrt
Sowie auf die deutsche Einheit.

Bei Tage besorge ich mein Geschäft,
Doch nachts, da treibe ich Späße." –
Da sprach der zweite Gendarme: "Mein Herr,
Wo haben Sie Ihre Pässe?" (Weerth 1956 I, 281)

Hansemann/Camphausen is living a double life doing business by day and contributing to the revolutionary farce with his "Späße", their ridiculous political actions, by night.

²¹⁹ As far as I can see this parallel has not been pointed out yet, not even Bernd Füllner, who has published a very well annotated edition of the poem in the version as it appeared in the *NRhZ* (see 1987).

This places him into a relation of similarity and opposition to the narrator alias Weerth. For the latter in his double existence as a capitalist businessman at day, and communist revolutionary at night, there is "Kein schöner Ding [...] auf der Welt, / Als seine Feinde zu beißen, / Als über all die plumpen Gesellen / Seine lustigen Witze zu reißen", as he declares in the first stanza of this poem (1956 I, 269).²²⁰ Exaggerating the monarchic aspirations of his bourgeois capitalist enemies, Weerth's narrator further claims to be "Charlemagne", one the most powerful European monarchs of all time. As Marx will do some months later, Weerth here exposes and ridicules the ambitions of the Prussian to become figures of world-historic statue and succeed the monarch as rulers of Germany.²²¹

At the same time Weerth here is anticipating another one of Marx's criticisms of the liberal bourgeoisie: that the German bourgeoisie, misjudging the socio-political situation, regarded the proletarian victory in the March Revolution predominantly as a welcome opportunity to increase their capital, both in political as well as in material terms. This stinging allegation is contained in the lines that I quoted above from "Kein schöner Ding", in which the narrator in the guise of the liberal businessman turned politician boasts how he took out stocks in every "Luftschiffahrt / Und die deutsche Einheit". The irony here consists in the suggestion that the belief in the success of the

²²⁰ The social historian Wolfgang Häusler, who quotes these opening lines from Weerth's poem in an essay on political satire, is – as far as I can see – the only critic who points out the affinity of this poem with Marx's sarcastically satiric poetics of revolution as they emerge most prominently in *Der achtzehnte Brumaire* (see 1987, 85-86). Häusler maintains that the opening stanza of this poem "des mit Marx befreundeten ersten sozialistischen Satirikers Weerth [...] auch als Motto zu Marxens publizistischen Werk stehen [könnten]" (1987, 86).

²²¹ At the same time the name "Charlemagne" also alludes to beginning of Caput III of Heine's *Deutschland: Ein Wintermärchen* (1844), an intertextual reference that has eluded Weerth critics until now. The ironic modesty of Heine's narrator, who pretends that he would rather be a marginal regional German poet than this great European emperor, contrasts sharply with the equally ironic megalomania of Weerth's narrator. When he claims, while masquerading as Hansemann/Camphausen, to be Charlemagne, the intertextual dialogue with Heine's poem highlights even more strongly how the latter two in spite of their world-historic ambitions must not be confused with the great figures from history: "Zu Aachen, im alten Dome, liegt / Carolus Magnus begraben / (Man muß ihn nicht verwechseln mit Karl / Mayer, der lebt in Schwaben.) // Ich möchte nicht tot und begraben sein / Als Kaiser zu Aachen im Dome / Weit lieber lebt ich als kleinster Poet / Zu Stukkert am Neckarstrome" (ll. 1-8; Heine 1997 IV, 581).

political revolution constitutes as idle a dream as the faith in the immediate commercial success of aeronautics. Indeed the entire bourgeois political revolution can be seen in terms of an ill-advised capitalist speculation that has gone massively wrong. Such a view of the revolution is later repeated by Marx in his editorial in the *NRhZ* from December 16th 1848 (No. 170):

Es war klar. Die preußische Bourgeoisie hatte nur noch eine Aufgabe, die Aufgabe, sich ihre Herrschaft bequem zu machen, die störenden Anarchisten zu beseitigen, "Ruhe und Ordnung" wiederherzustellen und die Zinsen wieder einzubringen, die während des Märzsturms verlorengegangen waren. Es konnte sich nur noch darum handeln, die *Produktionskosten* ihrer Herrschaft und der sie bedingenden Märzrevolution auf ein Minimum zu beschränken. (*MEW* VI, 110-111; Marx's emphasis)

Metaphorically shifting the ground from politics to business, Marx alleges that from the angle of the liberal capitalist politicians of the so-called 'Märzministerien' the March Revolution presented itself mainly as a commercial crisis, the fallout of which had to be minimised at all cost. Building the actions of their revolutionary farce on these false premises, they crucially suppress the fact that the proletariat barricade-fighters of the March Revolution – at least semi-consciously – also rebelled against the capitalist system, the socio-economic violence of which they have experienced first hand.

Very pointedly Weerth satirises this deluded attitude of bourgeoisie – regarding the March Revolution as a commercial crisis that has to be transformed into a business opportunity – in the figure of Herr Preiss, the protagonist of his *Humoristischen Szenen aus dem deutschen Handelsleben*. Drawing connections to Marx and Engels, the historian Wolfgang Büttner has already very compellingly shown how in those chapters of the *Szenen* that appeared in the *NRhZ* in June and July 1848 the figure of the businessman Preiss forms a satire on the Prussian-Rhenish "Großkaufmann schlechthin"

(1993, 130)²²² and on Hansemann and Camphausen in particular (130-135). Here, it remains for me to show how Weerth links this satirical depiction of the liberal bourgeoisie to the Marxist poetics of revolution.

In the figure of Herr Preiss Weerth exposes the utter absurdity of the farce that the German bourgeoisie is performing in the aftermath of the European revolutions, thus anticipating in the satirical dissection of Preiss' action Marx's equally satirical reckoning with the pathetic behaviour of the liberal bourgeoisie. In chapter X, "Herr Preiss in Nöten" (*NRhZ* No. 1-4 / June 1st to 4th 1848), the titular hero's business opportunities are rocked by the European Revolution. "Die Produktionskosten und die Betriebsspesen müssen bis auf ein Minimum reduziert werden", announces Preiss (Weerth 1956 II, 454), thus providing the obvious source for Marx's later assertion that the actions of the liberal bourgeoisie aimed "die *Produktionskosten* ihrer Herrschaft und der sie bedingenden Märzrevolution auf ein Minimum zu beschränken" (*MEW* VI, 111; Marx's emphasis). From the bourgeois perspective the revolutions have to be reduced to the status of mere business crises to surpress the fact that these dramatic events enacted on the "Bühne der Welt" (Weerth 1956 II, 455) challenge not only overtly the political but also implicitly the socio-economic status quo.

Preiss' reaction to the news of "jener welterschütternden Nachricht der Berliner Revolution" (455) is telling in respect to this bourgeois delusion about the socio-political importance of the March Revolution. He is most concerned about the impact it will have on his business and does not realise the potential threat that it poses to society. This essential bourgeois fear is subconsciously present, but remains largely unacknowledged, buried under the pathetic fears for the well-being of his business. During the night that follows the day when he hears the news of the March Revolution

²²² One might argue that this function of the character of "Preiss" is already alluded to through his name, which seems to be constructed from "Preis", expressing the mercantile obsession of all his actions, and "Preiß", the Bavarian word for a Prussian which often carries extremely derogative connotations.

his anxiety rises indirectly proportionally to his falling stocks.²²³ "seine Angst stieg um 20 Prozent" (455). However, a disturbing nightmare which culminates in a scene in which the socio-revolutionary war between the numbers, the proletariat, and the zeros, the bourgeoisie and aristocracy, raises the spectre of the doomsday of contemporary society. Yet, even this very explicitly symbolic dream is misinterpreted by Preiss as being about the crisis of business rather than an essential crisis of bourgeois society. Preiss is as deluded about the true importance of this spectre of proletarian social revolution as is the entire Prussian bourgeoisie from Marx's perspective. As the narrator ironically comments:

Aber Herr Preiss erkannte gar nicht die welthistorische Bedeutung seines Traumes. In der Empörung der Zahlen gegen die Nullen seines Kapitalkontos sah er einzig und allein eine Gefährdung seiner kommerziellen Interessen. (Weerth 1956 II, 464)

But Preiss would not have been a proper incarnation of the Prussian bourgeoisie if he did not try to arrange his mercantile interests with the liberal-political ideology that largely dominated the politics of the bourgeois revolutionary. In chapter XII "Wie sich der Herr Preiss nach den Zeitverhältnissen richtet" (*NRhZ* No. 18/ June 18th 1848), he tries to come up with business plans to use the changed socio-political situation after the March Revolution for his advantage to revive his ailing business. The seemingly ingenious idea that he eventually devises is to produce shrapnel shells, since – as Wolfgang Büttner points out – unlike other weapons that can be turned against the authorities they can only be used by the military against the people. As such they formed an essential weapon in the liberal government's campaign to suppress any socio-

²²³ How seriously Preiss is shaken by the dramatic drop in the values of his stocks in the wake of the European revolutions, becomes evident in the following passage from chapter XI "Der Buchhalter Lenz als Bürgergardist" (*NRhZ* No.16 / June 16th 1848): "Die Februarereignisse berührten ihn wie eine Ohrfeige; die Märzrevolution traf ihn wie der Donner Zeus', des unsterblichen. 'Von heute an will ich alle Bettelungen in österreichischen Metalliques-Coupons bezahlen!' rief der schmerzlich bewegte Mann aus, 'da bin ich sicher, daß ich nicht zuviel gebe. Meine Bons auf die Insel Sandwich sind nur zu Fidibus [Feuerholz] gut; meine Eisenbahn- und Bergwerksaktien – hol sie der Teufel. Sela!'" (1956 II, 466)

revolutionary tendencies of proletariat (see Büttner 1993, 134-135), a fact that Preiss in chapter XIV "Das Dasein des Herrn Preiss gewinnt welthistorische Bedeutung" very cynically reflects. For him it was obvious that the "Schrapnellfabrikation" had to appeal to the Prussian government and prove an economic success, especially since "wir die mörderischen Dinger 'Pillen gegen das souveräne Volk' nennen" (1956 II, 483).

However, the strategy of the liberal government of repressing the people and their freedom in order to rule absolutely backfired, because it only helped to re-empower the old aristocratic forces and the staple of its power, the military and the police. As pointed out earlier, Marx writes in December 1848 that "[u]nter dem Minister der Tat *Hansemann-Pinto*²²⁴ wurde die alte Polizei neu eingekleidet und ein ebenso erbitterter, als kleinlicher Krieg der Bourgeoisie gegen das Volk geführt" (*MEW* VI, 103-104), only to make it all the easier for the old forces to employ the modernised police apparatus to regain power once the liberal bourgeois governments had been replaced by conservative counter-revolutionary ones by the end of September 1848. Only a slight change in the costumes and props was necessary to restore the pre-revolutionary order "Es gehörte dazu nur noch ein – Schnurrbart und ein Säbel statt eines Kopfes" (104). Paradoxically, the bourgeoisie in their revolutionary farce were using the same old actors as the old aristocratic forces, "die alte Polizei", only dressed up in new costumes to combat the various forms of political freedom that brought them to power in the first place. While they believed – in the same way as the Prussian government in den *Szenen* – that in combatting the rebellious lower classes with shrapnel shells, the "'Pillen gegen das souveräne Volk'", the liberal bourgeoisie were ironically destroying their very "Waffen [...] in ihrem Kampfe gegen die feudale Gesellschaft":

²²⁴ Isaac Pinto was an 18th-century Dutch merchant, stock speculator and economist (See *MEW* VI, 719).

Die Waffen, welche die preußische Bourgeoisie in ihrem Kampfe gegen die feudale Gesellschaft und deren Krone unter der Firma des Volks in Anspruch zu nehmen sich gezwungen sah, Assoziationsrecht, Preßfreiheit etc., mußten sie nicht zerbrochen werden in den Händen eines betörten Volks, das sie nicht mehr *für* die Bourgeoisie zu führen brauchte und *gegen* sie zu führen bedenkliche Gelüste kundgab? Der *Vereinbarung* der Bourgeoisie mit der Krone, *davon war sie überzeugt*, dem Markten der Bourgeoisie mit dem alten, in sein Schicksal ergebenen Staate, stand offenbar nur noch ein Hindernis im Wege, ein einziges Hindernis, das Volk – *puer robustus sed malitiosus*, wie Hobbes sagt. Das *Volk* und die *Revolution!* (MEW VI, 111; Marx's emphasis)

Limiting the liberal achievements of the right to assemble freely, to have freedom of press etc. in order to pre-empt the danger of socio-revolutionary unrest was a farcical action, since it did not save the bourgeois government but only helped to bring the old forces back into power, Marx maintains. Crucially, in his article in *NRhZ* from December 16th 1848 Marx employs the same metaphor of politics as a business deal ("Firma des Volks", "dem Markten der Bourgeoisie") as Weerth does in the *Szenen* about half a year earlier.

Herr Preiss also falls prey to similar delusions as the Prussian bourgeoisie did in Marx's eyes. Although his business idea of producing shrapnel shells to repress the socio-revolutionary leanings of the people even earns him an invitation in Berlin "zur Bildung eines neuen Ministeriums", his belief that he will be playing a world-historic role in the German revolutionary drama is as mistaken as is the self-assessment of the entire bourgeoisie about their historic role in the political revolutions of 1848. Like them, the Camphausens and Heinemanns, he is only about to be cast as an actor in Germany's revolutionary farce:

"Ist es ein Wunder, daß man auch *mich* aus dem Dunkel des Geschäftslebens herausreißt, um meinen Fähigkeiten den Platz anzuweisen, der ihnen im Buche des Schicksals bestimmt war?"

"Sie sind ein großer Mann!" murmelte der Buchhalter. "Schon durch ihre Ölspekulationen haben Sie sich weit und breit bekannt gemacht." (Weerth 1956 II, 485; emphasis in original)

Clearly marked out as a satire on Camphausen through the allusion to the latter's former oil business (see Büttner 1993, 133), Preiss' ascent to the heights of world history is abruptly brought to a halt by the following incident, with which *Die humoristischen Szenen aus dem deutschen Handelsleben* in the *NRhZ* end. The proletariat – "das Volk – *puer robustus sed malitiosus*, wie Hobbes sagt" (*MEW* VI, 11), a robust but malicious youth – forms the obstacle that stops Preiss' ministerial career in its tracks:

Auf das ganz unbegründete Gerücht hin, daß der Herr Preiss Ministerpräsident werde, warfen ihm rohe Proletarier aber noch selbigen Abends die Fenster ein. (Weerth 1956 II, 485)

In this final paragraph of Weerth's satire, the farce of bourgeois political revolution is interrupted by the spectre of the proletarian social revolution. While Büttner highlights that the smashing of windows by workers alludes to a real incident during Camphausen's visit to Cologne (1993, 133), the importance of this final scenario of Weerth's satire extends far beyond this – in world-historical terms – rather marginal instance of proletarian resistance. Firstly, it echoes the last lines of Weerth's poem "Der alte Wirth in Lancashire" (1845): "Und selbe Nacht auf weichem Flaume / Ein Reicher lag in bösem Traume –" (1971, 64-65). As I have argued earlier these final lines of the poem prophesy the eventual triumph of the future proletarian social revolutionary, a meaning that the similar lines which conclude *Die humoristischen Szenen* also take on. Secondly, there is a further crucial reference implicit in this paragraph: the allusion to the tragedy of the failed June Revolution (June 23rd to 26th 1848), which was an event that was still the top news when this chapter was published in *NRhZ* on June 6th 1848.

3.4.4. Towards a New Poetics of Proletarian Social Revolution: 1848/49 as Tragedy and Anti-Tragedy

The June Revolution constituted the largest and most important socio-revolutionary uprising not merely in the European revolutions of 1848/49, but also in the entire history of revolutions up to that date. It was triggered when on June 21st 1848 the provisional government of the French Republic closed the national workshops which had been established in the wake of the February Revolution to provide work for the large number of unemployed workers. The announcement of their closure resulted in four days of fierce street-fighting in which the army under the command of the republican General Cavaignac in conjunction with the bourgeois *Guard National* finally defeated the rebellious workers, not without having to resort to barbaric measures such as firing cannons directly into the crowds.²²⁵ With more than three thousands Parisian workers killed and up to ten thousand persecuted, executed and deported in the ensuing anti-proletarian backlash, the June Revolution was a drama of infinitely greater world-historic proportions than any other of the many battles of the Revolutions of 1848/49.²²⁶ According to Marx's verdict in his famous editorial about the June Revolution in the *NRhZ* (No. 29/ June 29th 1848), this insurrection formed the first large-scale attempt of a proletarian social revolution. In contrast to all previous revolutions, the French Revolution, the July Revolution of 1830 and the February Revolution in 1848, the proletariat did not fight to achieve a victory for the bourgeoisie and their class interests, but for the first time the proletariat's fight was an attempt "seine *allereigensten*

²²⁵ With strong Communist revolutionary pathos, but in factually correct terms, Marx comments on the fiercely determined resistance of the Parisian proletariat as follows: "Ohne andre Führer, ohne andre Mittel als die Empörung selbst, widerstand es der vereinigten Bourgeoisie und Soldateska länger, als je eine französische Dynastie, mit allem militärischen Apparat versehen, einer mit dem Volk vereinigten Fraktion der Bourgeoisie widerstand" (*MEW* V, 133).

²²⁶ For a photograph of fighting at one of the barricades in June Revolution and the corresponding woodcut, see images V and VI in the appendix.

Interessen *selbständig* zu vertreten" (MEW V, 136; Marx's emphasis). As such it also formed the first conscious challenge to the bourgeois order and its socio-economic system of capitalism:

Keine der zahllosen Revolutionen der französischen Bourgeoisie seit 1789 war ein Attentat auf die *Ordnung*, denn sie ließ die Herrschaft der Klasse, sie ließ die Sklaverei der Arbeiter, sie ließ die *bürgerliche Ordnung* bestehen, sooft auch die politische Form dieser Herrschaft und dieser Sklaverei wechselte. Der Juni hat diese *Ordnung* angetastet. Wehe über den Juni! (MEW V, 135; Marx's emphasis)

The repercussions of the June Revolution stretched far beyond France. From a bourgeois perspective it raised the fear of the spectre of proletarian social revolution all across Europe. In the Marxist poetics of revolution it forms the climax of the revolutionary drama of 1848/49 and its failure constitutes the major tragedy of these years against which the entire European farce of the bourgeois political revolutions pales. In spite of the enormous setback that this defeat marked for any hopes of a successful proletarian revolution, from a Marxist point of view this catastrophe of the revolutionary tragedy at the same time produced a major revelation for its spectators. The insight that the class war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie (and hence also further attempts at proletarian social revolution) was inevitable in modern bourgeois society exposed the ideological delusions of a concept of political revolution: that these two antagonistic classes could peacefully co-exist in a republican system which would guarantee absolute *political* but not *social* equality. In fact Marx stresses that its tragic hero, the Parisian proletariat, has achieved exactly such a decisive ideological victory despite its military defeat. Although outnumbered and routed by the troops of the bourgeois republic the Parisian workers have fundamentally exposed the ideological delusions on which the myth of the solely political, republican revolution is built. In the manner of the hero or heroine in a tragedy of Weimar Classicism (maybe

most paradigmatically Maria in Schiller's *Maria Stuart*), the Parisian proletarians as tragic heroes have with their failure at the same time achieved a moral and ideological victory:

Die Pariser Arbeiter sind *erdrückt* worden von der Übermacht, sie sind ihr nicht *erlegen*. Sie sind *geschlagen*, aber ihre Gegner sind *besiegt*. Der augenblickliche Triumph der brutalen Gewalt ist erkaufte mit der Vernichtung aller der Täuschungen und Einbildungen der Februarrevolution, mit der Auflösung der ganzen alt-republikanischen Partei, mit der Zerklüftung der französischen Nation in zwei Nationen, die Nation der Besitzer und die Nation der Arbeiter. Die trikolor Republik trägt nur mehr *eine Farbe*, die Farbe der Geschlagenen, die *Farbe des Bluts*. Sie ist zur *roten Republik* geworden. (MEW V, 133; Marx's emphasis)

Employing a syntactically parallel construction and using verbs that are near synonyms, Marx creates a pronounced contrast between the momentary catastrophic failure of proletarian social revolution and the longer-term ideological victory over the concept of bourgeois political revolution, its antithesis. Though defeated, "*erdrückt*" by the numerical strength of the hostile troops, the proletariat is not "*erlegen*", it has not succumbed to its antagonist. On the contrary, Marx insists in a seemingly paradoxical statement, although the proletariat has been beaten, "*geschlagen*", its enemies are defeated, "*besiegt*". Even in its utter downfall the proletariat as the tragic hero has revealed and dismantled the entire ideological superstructure of the concept of the bourgeois political revolution. The momentary triumph of bourgeoisie comes at the cost of the destruction "aller Täuschungen und Einbildungen der Februarrevolution". The idea that a democratic republic could form the panacea to society's ills which is the premise of the concept of the merely political revolution has been utterly discredited. Its symbol, the tricolour of the French republic, has been dyed red with the blood of the slain workers. Genuine "Fraternité", the slogan both of the French Revolution and the February Revolution of 1848, can never exist in a bourgeois republican system since

this will always only be the fake "Brüderlichkeit der entgegengesetzten Klassen, von denen die andere exploitiert" (*MEW* V, 133). This can only be achieved, Marx implies, in a socialist republic. Its eventual victory is already symbolically anticipated in the image of the republican flag, the tricolour being transformed into the socialist red flag due to blood spilt by Parisian workers. After the June Revolution the bourgeois republican notion of brotherhood between the opposing social classes has revealed itself as utter "Anachronismus" (136), whereas the socialist notion of transcending the class system through fighting out the class struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie has emerged as the revolutionary concept of the future. While before the June Revolt the hollow phrase of fraternity was still widely employed by "Pendants der alten revolutionären Überlieferung von 1793, [...] Republikaner, welche die ganze alte bürgerliche Ordnung mit Abzug des gekrönten Kopfes verlangten" (134) and so on, now it is now only conjured up by the worst actors in the bourgeois revolutionary farce, "jene elende Utopisten und Heuchler", who are now even hissed at by the majority of the bourgeois National Assembly (cf. 136). For Marx, this obvious bankruptcy of the notion of fraternity in a republican system has revealed that genuine fraternity is only possible in the "roten Republik", a socialist republic. This in turn can only be achieved through a proletarian social revolution which will not only change the socio-economic system, but also has to supersede class divisions altogether, even at the cost of great further tragic bloodshed. "Die Kollisionen, welche aus den Bedingungen der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft selbst hervorgehen, sie müssen durchkämpft, sie können nicht wegphantasiert werden", Marx insists (*MEW* V, 136), thus confirming Raymond Williams' claim that for Marx "tragedy occurs at those points where the conflicting forces must, by their inner nature, take action, and carry the conflict through to a transformation" (1966, 135). This is the *anagnorisis* that Marx tries to generate by his

paradoxical portrayal of the June Revolution as a simultaneously tragic and non-tragic event. Although a momentary catastrophe for the proletariat as the hero of revolutionary drama, Marx tries to reveal how, at the same time, it marks the starting point of a dialectic reversal of the tragic plot, a *peripetia* that puts Marx's poetics in sharp contrast to the one of Greek tragedy where the reversal of action leads to ultimate catastrophe.²²⁷

Marx tries to produce these insights in his readers not merely through the logic of his argument but also crucially by evoking the dialectic cathartic emotions of *eleos* and *phobos*, "Jammer und Schauder" (cf. Aristotle 1994, 36), in the face of the tragic catastrophe. In Greek tragedy dramatic devices used to induce these emotions include "schwere[s] Leid" and "schmerzliches Geschehen" with "Todesfälle auf offener Bühne, heftige Schmerzen, Verwundungen und dergleichen mehr" (cf. Aristotle 1994, 37). Marx aims to achieve this effect in his readers by shifting markedly from satire, the hallmark of most of his articles in the *NRhZ*, to tragic pathos. The parodistic tone that is characteristic of Marx's depiction of the farce of the bourgeois revolution is notably absent when he depicts the tragic defeat of the proletariat's first attempt at social

²²⁷ Here I disagree fundamentally with Hayden White who plays down the importance of tragedy for Marx's poetics of revolution. He maintains that the "defeat of the June insurgents was thus characterized as a lamentable, but hardly Tragic, event, inasmuch as their resistance to the bourgeoisie was not informed by a clear notion of their aims or by any realistic assessment of their prospects for victory" (1973, 323). These reasons that he gives for considering the failure of the June Revolution as non-tragic are White's own assertions and not backed up by any statements of Marx, neither in his editorial on the June Revolution nor the passages in *Der achtzehnte Brumaire* in which he also engages with this event. On the contrary, in both texts Marx casts the Paris proletarians as tragic heroes when he emphasises the doomed heroism of their defiant resistance. White's misreadings are informed by a more general misapprehension of the role of tragedy and comedy in Marx's poetics of history. Simplistically, White aligns the two genres in Marx's poetics with the history of antagonistic classes: "while Marx emplotted the history of the bourgeoisie as a Tragedy, that of the proletariat is set within the larger framework of a Comedy, the resolution of which consists in the dissolution of all classes and the transformation of humanity into an organic whole" (1973, 313). While it is true that, as I have pointed out, Marx assumes the proletarian drama resolve itself in a non-tragic manner, to term it "Comedy" means to belittle the strongly tragic dimension to the proletariat's struggles that lead to the eventual non-tragic resolution. By contrast Marx regards the history of the bourgeoisie merely as tragic as long as it was still a socio-revolutionary class, from the 'Bloody Revolution' in England in 1648 to the end of the French Revolution. After the latter revolution, for Marx the genre in which this class enacts its history is farce and not tragedy. Therefore the bourgeoisie's eventual downfall will amount to a pathetic but hardly tragic event.

revolution. As Marx meta-textually points out, a shift has happened from the bourgeois political revolution in February 1848 which he ironically entitles "die schöne Revolution" to the proletarian social revolution in June 1848, "die häßliche Revolution":

Die *Februarrevolution* war die schöne Revolution, die Revolution der allgemeinen Sympathie, weil die Gegensätze, die in ihr gegen das Königtum eklatierten, *unentwickelt*, einträchtig nebeneinander schlummerten, weil der soziale Kampf, der ihren Hintergrund bildete, nur eine luftige Existenz gewonnen hatte, die Existenz der Phrase, des Worts. Die *Junirevolution* ist die *häßliche* Revolution, die abstoßende Revolution, weil an die Stelle der Phrase die Sache getreten ist, weil die Republik das Haupt des Ungeheuers selbst entblößte, indem sie ihm die schirmende und versteckende Krone abschlug. (MEW V, 134; Marx's emphasis)

Again using a metaphor originating from theatre, Marx maintains that "der soziale Kampf" has moved from the "Hintergrund" of the revolutionary stage to centre stage.

This transformation from political to social revolution also necessitates a change in the rhetoric and poetological approach of the representation of revolution. No longer does the socialist writer through pointed irony need to expose the hidden social dimension behind that were mainly fought at the level of rhetoric and language during the February days. Since the battle in June has has openly revealed the deep-structure of the revolutionary struggle, the social class conflict, when it manifested itself in material actions, it is no longer necessary to tease out the veiled social content divisions behind the political phrases. In June when the hidden class, "der soziale Kampf", has vividly materialised itself in the slaughter on the street of Paris, the commentator instead has to employ tragic pathos to emphasis the world-historic importance of this dramatic event. This change in Marx's rhetoric from irony to pathos becomes very evident in following passage with which Marx exposes the major illusions of the bourgeois political revolution, the brotherhood beyond social class. The socio-economic class war, "der Krieg der Arbeit und des Kapitals", erupts in "Bürgerkrieg, in seiner schrecklichlichsten

Gestalt". For the representation of this sublime revolutionary conflict the satiric mode is inadequate. The momentary catastrophe which the proletarian hero experiences is dramatised in the language of tragic pathos:

Die Fraternité, die Brüderlichkeit der entgegengesetzten Klassen, von denen die eine die andere exploitiert, diese Fraternité, im Februar proklamiert, mit großen Buchstaben auf die Stirne von Paris geschrieben, auf jedes Gefängnis, auf jede Kaserne – ihr wahrer, unverfälschter, ihr prosaischer Ausdruck, das ist der – *Bürgerkrieg*, der Bürgerkrieg in seiner furchterlichsten Gestalt, der Krieg der Arbeit und des Kapitals. Diese Brüderlichkeit flammte vor allen Fenstern von Paris am Abend des 25. Juni, als das Paris der Bourgeoisie illuminierte, während das Paris des Proletariats verbrannte, verblutete, verächzte. (MEW V, 134; Marx's emphasis)

Very pointedly Marx in this passage contrasts the satiric and the tragic modes of representation, between he switches throughout this article. Describing the night the June Insurrection was defeated Marx further invokes a sharp contrast between two revolutionary spectacles that are being staged simultaneously: a farce and a tragedy. The farcical bourgeois revolution finds its apotheosis not in the crushing of the proletarian revolt, but ironically in the absurd celebration of a victory which – as Marx suggests throughout his article – contains the seeds of the future downfall of this class. By contrast the suffering of the dying proletariat is cast in the tragic mode, as the almost melodramatic double alliteration "verbrannte, verblutete, verächzte" illustrates. However, the reflection of these fires in all the windows of Paris also casts an almost grotesque light on the scene of the bourgeois celebrations of victories and serves as a powerful reminder that the spectre of proletarian social revolution still looms large.

Marx is not the only German socialist author who reaches such a dialectical poetics of revolution between in the course of the 1848/49 Revolutions. Weerth in the

concluding paragraphs to the book version²²⁸ of his picaresque satirical novel *Leben und Taten des berühmten Ritters Schnapphanski* (1848/49) conjures up a similar dramatically sharp contrast between the bourgeois political and the proletarian social revolution as Marx does in this passage, between the "Paris der Bourgeoisie" which celebrates its Pyrrhic victory over the crushed proletarian revolution and the "Paris des Proletariats" in which the proletarian revolutionaries are simultaneously dying an agonising death. In the final chapter (XXII) of *Schnapphanski*, entitled "Der Gürzenich", Weerth depicts in a highly satirical and amusing manner the meal that took place in the eponymous venue in Cologne on August 15th 1848 to celebrate the occasion of the 6th "Dombaufest" of the Cologne Cathedral. For Weerth this enormously popular celebration of national-liberal revolutionary propaganda marked the climax of the bourgeois revolutionary farce which already carried all the seeds of the eventual counter-revolution in it. As he scathingly reveals in the first paragraph that he added for the book version in 1849, under the cloak of the propagandistic bourgeois revolutionary lies all the atrocities of the counter-revolution were already planned:

Ja, vorrüber war die große kölnische Domfarce, bei der all die hohen Herrn mit den schönsten Phrasen im Munde, aber den Groll im Herzen, unter dem Jubel des törichtten Volkes all die feinen Pläne ersannen, welche bald in den standrechtlichen Erschießungen Wiens, in der Oktroyierung der preußischen und österreichischen Verfassung und in dem Lächerlichwerden der Frankfurter Versammlung so treffliche Früchte tragen sollten.
(Weerth 1957 IV, 488)

Weerth here unmasks the irresolvable paradoxes and ideological delusions of the bourgeois revolution as least as sharply as Marx, claiming that they will necessarily lead to the counter-revolutionary spectacle. Furthermore, like Marx, Weerth also constructs an opposition between the phrases, "den schönsten Phrasen" of the bourgeoisie, on the

²²⁸ Most of the chapters appeared in serialised form in the *NRhZ* and often differed quite considerably from their book versions. The novel was published in 1849 by 'Hoffmann & Campe' in Hamburg.

surface, and their hidden content, their anti-proletarian ideology. While in August 1848 the jubilation of the deluded "törichten Volkes" still obscured the content, the consequences manifested themselves in a mixture of tragic and comical events, ranging from public executions to the National Assembly making a fool out of itself, its "Lächerlichwerden". However, even this tragic-comic failure of the bourgeois revolutions, which in Weerth's Marxist view had been an anachronism from the beginning, would still have been a matter for satire and laughter, if it had not included at the same time the brutal and tragic defeat of the proletarian social revolutionaries in Paris, Vienna and Berlin:

Ja, vorüber war dies Fest des widerlichsten Kokettierens mit dem dummen souveränen Michel, und wir würden vielleicht noch darüber lachen, wenn uns durch den schimmernden Haufen dieser "volksfreundlichen" Fürsten, dieser feilen Knechte und dieser düpierten Volksrepräsentanten nicht die kugelzerrissenen Leichen der Proletarier von Paris, von Wien und Berlin angrinsten, [...] doch genug! der Humor ist versiegt; das Buch ist zu Ende.
(Weerth 1957 IV, 488)

In the same manner as Marx's editorial on the June Revolution, this final passage of Weerth's *Schnapphanski* not only merges the satiric tone with gothic pathos, but also sharply contrasts revolutionary farce and tragedy. While the bourgeois "düpierten Volksvertreter" are part of the revolutionary farce, "die kugelzerissenen Leichen der Proletarier" belong to the genre of revolutionary tragedy. The grotesque image of the revolutions of 1848/49 which Weerth evokes comprises both the tragic and the anti-tragic. This uneasy mixture emerges most strikingly in the depiction of the facial expressions of the proletarian bodies. In the death they seem to be unearily alive, when their distorted faces appear to be grinning at the spectators ("angrinsten").²²⁹ While their

²²⁹ Weerth here also seems to hark back to Freiligrath's gothic socio-revolutionary poem "Die Todten an die Lebenden" (July 1848). In this poem the appearance of the mutilated bodies of the dead proletarian revolutionaries is described in grim detail in to incite the living to socio-revolutionary action.

dying face seems to poke fun at the duped bourgeoisie, it also serves as a horrible reminder that the proletarian social revolution – at least for the moment – has been tragically defeated. While the farce of the bourgeois political revolution can only be adequately dealt with in the satiric mode, in respect to the proletarian revolutionary tragedies, humour is insufficient.²³⁰ The satirist Weerth notices like the satirist Marx that in the face of the defeat of the proletarian social revolution, at the sight of "die kugelzerrissenen Leichen der Proletarier von Paris, von Wien und Berlin", the tragic mode of revolutionary pathos is required. Although Weerth ventures into this very mode in this final paragraph of his great satiric novel on the German bourgeois revolution, he acknowledges that his book cannot deal with the tragic aspects of the revolutions of 1848/49. This is only possible through outright revolutionary pathos, as the final paragraph of Marx's editorial on the June Revolution displays:

Aber die Plebejer, vom Hunger zerrissen, von der Presse geschmäht, von den Ärzten verlassen, von den Honetten Diebe gescholten, Brandstifter, Galeerensklaven, ihre Weiber und Kinder in noch grenzenloseres Elend gestürzt, ihre besten Lebenden über die See deportiert – ihnen den Lorbeer um die drohend finstere Stirn zu winden, das ist das *Vorrecht*, das ist das *Recht der demokratischen Presse*. (MEW V, 137; Marx's emphasis)

The ending of Weerth's *Schnapphanski*, like Marx's editorial on the June Revolution, foregrounds the pivotal importance of the momentary catastrophe of the proletarian social revolution and also exposes how the myth of the political bourgeois political revolution, which acted as the driving force for the high drama and tragedy of the French Revolution, had become an anachronistic lowly farce in 1848/49. However, it

²³⁰ Bernd Füllner also comments on Weerth's remarks on the inadequacy of his satirical style to deal with the socio-political situation after the failure of 1848/49: "Der ursprünglich vorhandene Glaube und die Hoffnung, mit Hilfe einer offenen Schreibart und literarischen Technik, bei der Ironie und Satire ein wesentliches Moment darstellen, die (historische) Gegenwart einzuholen, ist inzwischen durch die gesellschaftliche und politische Entwicklung der Revolutionsjahre 1848/49 eingeholt und überholt worden (2001, 370-371).

does not display Marx's firm conviction that the eventual victory of the proletarian social revolution was inevitable. Marx celebrates in his editorial about the momentary catastrophe of the proletarian social revolution already its final victory, which becomes obvious in the final rhetorical gesture when he crowns the "finster-drohende Stirn" of the defeated proletarians with a laurel wreath, the adornment traditionally bestowed onto the triumphant victor. As I have pointed out, the grin of Weerth's dead proletarians is much more ambiguous, since it is not clear whether they grinning at the duped bourgeoisie, the victorious forces of reaction or whether the grin in fact forms just an expression of the pain of their death throes.

Yet this ambiguity at the end of *Schnapphanski* does not necessarily mean that Weerth in 1849 with the defeat of the revolutions abandoned all hope in the proletarian social revolution, as it has been maintained by some Weerth critics.²³¹ Pivotally, he voices a belief in proletarian social revolution in his last political article in the final number of the *NRhZ* (No. 301/ May 19th 1849), which significantly was printed entirely in red, the colour of socialism. Writing about Great Britain, he reaffirms his shattered faith in the English proletariat as the socio-revolutionary vanguard of Europe. Whereas during "dem Zuge der Revolution durch Italien, durch Frankreich, durch Deutschland und dem Osten Europas" (Weerth 1957 IV, 277), Britain was often not worth turning one's attention to, now after the drama of the European revolutions is over, Britain is again regarded as the place of revolutionary hope, as the starting place of the future European proletarian social revolution:

Doch was auch von der Donau bis Rheine geschah, wir vergessen darüber nicht das geringste Ereignis in der *Weiterentwicklung jenes großen Landes, das mit seiner chartistischen Arbeiterbevölkerung dazu bestimmt ist, einst in der revolutionären*

²³¹ See for instance Kurt Holzapfel's verdict that after 1848/49 Weerth became an unpolitical dandy in style of a Baudelaire (1976, 111-113). For differing views see Zemke 1972, 191 and Büttner 1993, 144.

Bewegung der Welt den Ausschlag zu geben. [...] Immer verzweifelter greift die Bourgeoisie nach den letzten Mitteln, die sie retten können. Bald wird sie sich vergeblich nach neuen Auswegen umsehen, und die eherne Notwendigkeit wird dann jenen Sieg der Chartisten herbeiführen, der das Signal der sozialen Umwälzung der alten Welt ist. [...] Der Sturz Alt-Englands ist der Sturz der modernen bürgerlichen Gesellschaft, der Sturz der Bourgeois-Herrschaft, der Sieg der arbeitenden Klasse. (Weerth 1957 IV, 277 & 279-280; Weerth's emphasis)

When the Chartists have overthrown the socio-economic order in Britain, then the drama of the proletarian social revolution will also begin in the other European states, Weerth asserts. Hence in May 1849, even after the failure of the revolutions of 1848/49, Weerth seems as convinced as Marx and Engels were in *Das Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei* (February 1848) that through "ihre revolutionäre Vereinigung durch die Assoziation" (cf. *MEW* IV, 474) the proletarians eventually will manage to break the chains that their exploitative and alienated labour in the capitalist process of productions imposes on them. As I have indicated in the first chapter, Shelley in "Song to the Men of England" had illustrated how the capitalist process of production forced the English proletarians to dig their own grave as well as that of the pre-industrialist society:

With plough and spade, and hoe and loom,
Trace your grave and build your tomb,
And weave your winding-sheet, till fair
England be your sepulchre. (ll. 29-32)

Thirty years later, the Communist Weerth declares that the heirs of Shelley's proletarians will no longer put up with exploitation, with working themselves to death. Instead of burying – as did their ancestors – the last remains of a pre-industrial social order in which the system of moral economy was believed to have reigned, their heirs are now sounding the death-knell to bourgeois capitalism. Not only will the English

proletarians rise up and destroy the capitalist system in Britain but they will also give the "Signal der Umwälzung der alten Welt". "Der Sturz Alt-Englands" will mark the beginning of the drama of the world-wide proletarian social revolution which will end with the "Sturz der modernen bürgerlichen Gesellschaft, de[m] Sturz der Bourgeois-Herrschaft, de[m] Sieg der arbeitenden Klasse" (Weerth 1957 IV, 280). By standing up in trans-national, united socio-revolutionary action the proletarians will stop digging their own graves, as they have done so far through their exploited work, and turn into the "Totengräber" of bourgeois society instead, as Marx and Engels assert in the *Manifest*. Like them, Weerth is also convinced – even after the experience of the failure of the June Revolution in 1848 – that the bourgeoisie's "Untergang und der Sieg des Proletariats sind gleich unvermeidlich" (cf. *MEW* IV, 474). Unlike earlier revolutions the proletarian social revolution will not conjure up the ghost of previous revolutions, but rather lay them to rest, Marx insists.

To depict this novel type of revolution, however, a new poetics of revolution is required that no longer looks back to traditional models. Neither the established categories of comedy, tragedy and farce will suffice to describe the radical break with the revolutionary tradition, Marx asserts in *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*:

Die soziale Revolution des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts kann ihre Poesie nicht aus der Vergangenheit schöpfen, sondern nur aus der Zukunft. Sie kann nicht mit sich selbst beginnen, bevor sie allen Aberglauben an die Vergangenheit abgestreift hat. Die früheren Revolutionen bedurften der weltgeschichtlichen Rückerinnerungen, um über ihren eigenen Inhalt zu betäuben. Die Revolution des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts muß die Todten ihre Todten begraben lassen, um bei ihrem eignen Inhalt anzukommen. Dort ging die Phrase über den Inhalt, hier geht der Inhalt über die Phrase hinaus. (*MEGA* XI, 101)

The social content of the revolutionary drama takes centre stage in the proletarian revolution over the political forms in which it previously had been expressed. This

requires a new poetics as well as a new literary representation of revolution, eine new "Poesie" of revolution, which Marx practically attempts through the literary and poetic approach that characterises his social and economic analysis of the 1848/49 Revolutions in *Der achtzehnte Brumaire*.

Weerth who in his revolutionary poetry tried to revive traditional forms such as the ballad and the epic poem for his socialist revolutionary aims shares Marx opinion that after the 1848/49 a novel kind of socio-revolutionary literature is needed. Rather than in the poetical apotheosis of the revolutionary event it finds its *raison d'être* in the literary analysis of socio-economic developments. Weerth implies such a paradigm shift for future socialist revolutionary literature, in a letter to Ferdinand Lassalle from May 3rd 1851, in which he emphatically announces: "Der Handel ist für mich das weiteste Leben, die höchste Poesie" (Weerth 1989 II, 606). As he asserts in a letter to Karl Marx (April 28th 1851), which has often been quoted as a proof for Weerth's utter disillusionment with the idea of revolutionary change and his final departure from socialism, the satirical depiction of the bourgeoisie in what traditionally has been considered literary texts is no longer productive after the the failure of the 1848/49 Revolutions:

Ich habe in der letzten Zeit allerlei geschrieben, aber nichts beendet, denn ich sehe gar keinen Zweck, kein Ziel bei der Schriftstellerei. Wenn *Du* etwas über Nationalökonomie schreibst, so hat das Sinn und Verstand. Aber *ich*? Dürftige Witze, schlechte Späße reißen, um den vaterländischen Fratzen ein blödes Lächeln abzulocken – wahrhaftig ich kenne nichts Erbärmlicheres! Meine schriftstellerische Tätigkeit ging entschieden mit der "Neuen Rheinischen Zeitung" zugrunde. (Weerth 1989 II, 600; Weerth's emphasis)

Alluding to the first stanza of his eponymous mock-epic on the German revolutionary farce – "Kein schöner Ding ist auf der Welt / Als seine Feinde zu beißen, / Als über all die plumpen Geselln / Seine lustigen Witze zu reißen" (Weerth 1956 I, 269) – Weerth

implies that post 1848/49 both a new poetics and new type of revolutionary literature is needed. This new form of socialist revolutionary literature he identifies in Marx's poetic essays on national economy. Unlike any new satirical or socio-revolutionary poems that he could write, Marx's socio-economic texts do not form an anachronism, but contain the revolutionary poetry of the future, Weerth implies

Conclusion

This thesis has shown that the shift from a concept of political revolution to one of social revolution constitutes a key characteristic of the entire range of German and British revolutionary discourse in the period from 1819 to 1848/49 (pamphlets, newspaper articles, poetry, plays, socio-philosophical essays etc.) and thus addressed a major lacuna in the study of 19th-century revolutionary literature. The fruitfulness of an inter-discursive, intertextual and interdisciplinary method has been demonstrated. For instance it proved pivotal in refuting some prevalent critical misconceptions such as the myth of Heine as a socio-revolutionary poet, or the view of Börne as an anachronistic Jacobin republican writer.

While, as I have pointed out, social historians such as Walter Grab and Wolfgang Büttner have often very successfully overcome the boundaries separating history and literature in their analysis of revolutionary writing of the period, literary critics have proven very reluctant to go beyond the realm of non-fictional, non-literary texts. However, this thesis has made the case that to appreciate the inter-discursive nature of the contemporary revolutionary discourse it is vital to exchange traditional philology for a radical socio-historical and political-ideological approach. In this epoch literature and history overlap to such a degree that it is impossible to have recourse to a traditional literary aesthetic. As Ludwig Börne announces in programmatic statement, history now determines the poetics of political literature. Going a long way towards anticipating Hayden White's thesis of historiography and literature as two closely related textual genres, Börne radically denies to political literature any autonomous aesthetic laws: "Die Poesie der Zeit ist in die Geschichte getreten. Sie fliegt nach einem anderen Rhythmus als den sechsfüßigen [...]" (Quoted in Hinderer 1974. 361). Sharply, Börne's

statement also highlights the need for a novel critical approach to texts beyond traditional philology: one that engages with a wide range of different texts, irrespective of whether they are classified as 'literary', 'historical', 'economical' or 'political'. Since revolutionary discourse decisively transcends any of the artificial disciplinary boundaries imposed by academia, any future analysis and investigation of it must do the same.

However, in order to realise the full potential of the interdisciplinary method that the revolutionary literature of this period calls for, increased collaboration between the disciplines of literature, social and political history, economics and political science is necessary. Many shortcomings of this thesis arise from the fact that I, as literary and cultural critic, had to rely on research of social historians and political economist and theorists without being able to evaluate and judge it critically. Moreover, it was unfortunately not possible to draw upon the personal expertise of specialists from the respective fields, let alone for a social historian or a political theorist to become a co-author of this study. However, if one was to make a truly inter-disciplinary contribution to the research of revolutionary discourse, working together with specialists disciplines other than literary or cultural studies will prove vital. As for instance the social historian Wolfgang Häusler, who himself transgressed closely-guarded disciplinary boundaries (e.g. 1987 & 2001), prophetically demands with respect to Nestroy's revolutionary farces, such collaborations are crucial for the further investigation of political literature:

Die Überprüfung des Realitätsgehalt der Nestroyschen Gestalten anhand der zeitgenössischen Publizistik ist eine noch von Literaturwissenschaftlern und Sozialhistorikern gemeinsam zu lösende Aufgabe. (Häusler 1979, 91)

This thesis has strongly shown the need for such future interdisciplinary research projects in respect to all the authors treated. While literary critics may have most to gain

from the expertise of scholars from other disciplines in their analysis of political literature, the profit is not uni-directional. As my approach to reading Marx not only as a seminal theorist of revolution, but also as a writer of revolutionary literature has shown, textual criticism can reveal a hitherto neglected poetic dimension in what have traditionally been considered as merely fictional socio-philosophical and socio-political texts. Reciprocally, my investigation of Weerth's revolutionary literature has challenged the commonly-held view of him as being a more or less gifted socialist poet. Instead it has revealed how he is seminal both for the development of a Marxist cultural aesthetic and the ideological advancement of Marxist socio-political theory.

The cultural and the socio-political, the aesthetic and the ideological realms merge perhaps most closely in what I have termed 'The Poetics of Revolution'. While I have dealt with it primarily in the context of Marx's and Weerth's writings since the parallels between their contemporary concepts are the most tangible, this area constitutes a vast field for further collaborative interdisciplinary and comparative research. As I have hinted occasionally, one ought to move chronologically backwards and for instance investigate in how far Georg Büchner in his depiction of the bourgeois revolutionary actions as "Affenkomödie" (Büchner 2002 II, 377) and his representation of the abortive proletarian socio-revolutionary attempts in *Dantons Tod* and *Leonce und Lena* as tragic, anticipates the Marxist antithesis of farce and tragedy. The opposite move, chronologically forwards into the 20th century, appears to me to be equally called for. It would be worthwhile discussing whether for instance Peter Weiß in his revolutionary drama *Die Verfolgung und Ermordung des Jean Paul Marats* (1965) is engaged in developing a poetics of revolution for his time, when he discusses the antithesis of political and social revolution in a manner closely reminiscent of *Dantons Tod*. The questions of socio-political consciousness and unconsciousness, of the tragic

and the non-tragic in historical and socio-economic processes raised by Marx's and Weerth's poetics of revolution point towards Brecht, who in plays such as *Mutter Courage and ihre Kinder* (1941), *Das Leben des Galilei* (1943) etc. problematises these views. One could argue that Brecht was also participating in the wider project of establishing a Marxist poetics of history and revolution. Leaving the Marxist paradigm, one might also investigate ideologically different poetics of revolution. As for instance Mary Jacobus has illustrated (1983), the conservative Romantic poets, such as the later Wordsworth and Coleridge, in their reaction to the French Revolution, as well as its most prominent contemporary critic Edmund Burke in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) also establish a poetics of revolution that revolves around dramatic metaphors.²³² For Burke the French Revolution constitutes a drama that oscillates between the sublime and the pathetic, high tragedy and the burlesque farce. The conservative poetics of the French Revolution in the epoch discussed in this study also often deal with this event through drama metaphors. For instance, Thomas Carlyle in his history *The French Revolution* (1837) casts the revolutionary events as a lamentably and sublimely tragic spectacle. For example, when he presents the fall of Danton as high tragedy, then this portrait contrasts sharply with Büchner's contemporary, much more ironic, fictionalisation of this event in *Dantons Tod* as a tragic-comedy or even farce.

However, before such political-aesthetic textual criticism can gain wider currency, a different critical paradigm has to be established first. It is pivotal to depart from the traditional – but still widely adhered to – aesthetic of literary criticism that privileges the analysis of the aesthetic over the ideological. This thesis constitutes a first step towards such a shift towards a new critical paradigm, which requires greater inter-discursive, trans-literary and inter-disciplinary collaboration. It is my conviction

²³² The political scientists Paul Hindson and Tim Gray (1988) have further shown how his conception of political events as drama forms a cornerstone of Burke's political theory.

that this approach is the only responsible means for assessing and appreciating historical contexts as well as the reciprocally elucidating literature they generate. In my opinion it is high time that the often invoked 'cultural turn' is followed by 'socio-historical', 'socio-political' and 'ideological' turns in literary criticism. Especially in the face of the resurgence of virulent struggles between ideologies which has made a complete mockery of any theses proclaiming the end of history after the Cold War, cultural criticism that engages with the politics and the ideology of the cultural artifact seems more relevant than ever.

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