1983

The Disimprisoned Epic: A Generic Study Of "the French Revolution"

Mark Douglas Cumming

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THE DISIMPRISONED EPIC:

A GENERIC STUDY OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

by

Mark Douglas Cumming

Department of English

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Graduate Studies.
The University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario
June, 1983

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Abstract

"The Disimprisoned Epic" attempts to offer the most comprehensive generic study to date of The French Revolution. It begins by considering the artistic experimentation and generic speculation prevalent in early nineteenth-century European literature and criticism, and their reflection in Carlyle's early critical essays. It then proceeds to examine how the genres discussed by Carlyle in his criticism reappear in paradoxical contexts in his own literary experiments, treating particularly the generic designations that Carlyle offers—though never simply or unproblematically—for his "novel" Sartor Resartus; his satire (or "pasquil") "Count Cagliostro," his "romance" "The Diamond Necklace," and his "epic" The French Revolution. After these preliminary investigations in Chapter One, this study moves in Chapter Two to a consideration of Carlyle's critical redefinition of the nature and purpose of epic. The following three chapters offer detailed analyses of The French Revolution from the perspective created by the opening chapters. Chapter Three examines Carlyle's use of mythical patterns, divorced from their classical and Judaeo-Christian contexts, and of explicit mythological allusions. Chapter Four studies Carlyle's inclusion of the widely varying genres of elegy, satire,
comedy, farce, and tragedy in a comprehensive epic vision.

Chapter Five investigates the conflicting structural elements of Carlyle's history: the clearly demarcated tripartite structure of the epic, the brief, static form of the prose emblem, and the confused, heterogeneous form of phantasmagory. In Chapter Six, which serves both to restate the paradoxical generic features of The French Revolution and to examine those features in a wider literary context, Carlyle's history is compared with a later nineteenth-century attempt to write a "disimprisoned" historical epic, Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass. The intention of the entire dissertation is to explore Carlyle's important and insistent use of genres and generic terms in his complex artistic treatment of ostensibly extraliterary subjects.
To my parents,

Ross and Alice Cumming,

with love and gratitude
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Preface

Questioning her society's inclination to esteem Carlyle's thought at the expense of his art, George Eliot commented in 1855 that Carlyle is "more of an artist than a philosopher."¹ Twenty-first-century studies by John Holloway, G. B. Tennyson, George Levine, and Albert J. LaValley (among others) continue to present the case for a consideration of Carlyle as a literary artist against a still influential and important tendency to regard him primarily as a thinker and social critic.² A crucial test of the validity and limitations of that case is the concept of genre. Carlyle's responses to literature and literary study are characterized, as the studies of Carlisle Moore, A. Abbot Ikeler, and Janet Ray Edwards demonstrate,³ by paradox, ambivalence, and contradiction. Carlyle deprecates fiction, where fiction is conceived to be an artifice established in opposition to actual existence, yet welcomes and uses fiction, where fiction is conceived to be a shaping principle developed from and found in human life: "the fiction of the poet is not falsehood," he states, "but the purest truth."⁴ Generic distinctions, assofar as they reflect the former conception of fiction as artifice, are exposed in Carlyle's aesthetic to the charge of being arcane, self-enclosed, and irrelevant to human concerns: having been fixed and circumscribed in the canons of criticism, genres are antithetical to the fluctuation of modern life, which it is the
function of the modern artist to represent. Yet insofar as genres reflect the latter conception of fiction as a shaping principle inherent in human life, they are a means of reforging the link between literature and life which literary convention, with its strong centripetal tendencies, insistently opposes. The degree to which Carlyle both uses and subverts inherited literary kinds is a key to his literary aesthetic and practice.

My intention in the present study is to give the most comprehensive study to date of the genre of a Carlyle text and to gather the many incidental generic comments on that text made by Carlyle's nineteenth- and twentieth-century critics. While I deal initially with genre in a variety of Carlyle's works, I take as my principal subject The French Revolution, partly for its centrality in Carlyle's canon, and partly for the complexity of its "historico-poetico" form. The poetical impulse of Carlyle's text is manifested in its concern with the generic designations of epic, tragedy, comedy, farce, emblem, and phantasmagory and their literary contexts, while its historical impulse is manifested in its use of memoirs, travel diaries, and histories of the French Revolution. The combination of these divergent impulses in the mixed generic form of The French Revolution signals Carlyle's manipulation of the fictive--shaping, not feigning--power of genres to create the "disimprisoned" epic of modern history.
Notes to Preface


6 Carlyle's use of "disimprisoned" is discussed below at the beginning of Chapter Two.
Chapter One

Carlyle and Genre

"All the classical poetical genres," writes Friedrich Schlegel at the end of the eighteenth century, "have now become ridiculous in their rigid purity."¹ The revaluation of established genres which Schlegel's statement heralds has made the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (in Claudio Guillén's words) a "great period of creative reassessment"² in the varied, challenging, and contentious field of genre study. In the twentieth century, this revaluation has prompted such contrasting responses as BenedettoCroce's attack on generic criticism and the widely varying defenses of genre study by Northrop Frye,³ Erich A. Hirsch,⁴ Tzvetan Todorov,⁵ Robert Scholes,⁶ and Alastair Fowler.⁷ It has motivated the attempts of Frye, Todorov, and Paul Hernadi to move (as Hernadi states) beyond "the illusory promise of unity and simplicity held out by most summary classifications" to "a polycentric conceptual framework":

We seem to need several systems of coordinates--Northrop Frye's Anatomy of Criticism alone employs at least three--lest we lose our way in the more-than-three-dimensional universe of verbal art. There are many ways in which literary works can be similar, and distinctions based on different types of similarities need not be mutually exclusive.⁸
Awareness of the limitations of traditional schemes of classification has suggested the possibility of new theories of genre framed in the light of historical, philosophical, sociological, and scientific thought: Georg Lukács's search "for a general dialectic of literary genres" founded on "a more intimate connection between category and history than he found in Hegel himself," Kenneth Burke's definition of literary forms as "symbolic structures designed to equip us for confronting given historical or personal situations," and Susanne K. Langer's re-definition of tragedy and comedy as the fundamental biological "rhythms" of life itself. 9

If generic criticism is a vital and invigorating aspect of twentieth-century literary study, it is especially so in the field of early nineteenth-century English literature. 10 The late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century perception by various artists of the obsolescence of the discrete genres of neoclassicism contributes to the vigorous formal experimentation that characterizes the literature of the early nineteenth century which, rather than disavowing the importance of genre, uses, alters, mixes and, often incongruously, perpetuates existing genres. Early nineteenth-century literature, far from supporting estimations (now rightly discredited) of the romantic period as an age of revolution against form, demands exacting formal study. The generic designation "lyrical ballad," to take a paradigmatic example from English romanticism almost contemporaneous with Schlegel's statement on the classical genres, possesses its radical impact only so long as the discrete genres of lyric and
ballad are retained in consciousness: it uses the distance between itself and established genres as an indication of its own modernity at the same time as it perpetuates the traditions of the two genres incorporated into its hybrid form. The "greater Romantic lyric," as M. H. Abrams shows, continues in an altered form the traditions of the Pindaric ode and of the eighteenth-century local poem. Brian Wilkie demonstrates that the epic appears during the romantic period in such varied poems as *The Prelude*, *The Revolt of Islam*, *Hyperion*, and *Don Juan*. Contesting the assumption "that the epic, moribund in the late eighteenth century, was dead by the beginning of the nineteenth" and rejecting "the familiar caricature of the Romantics as conscious rebels against the literary forms consecrated by the past and therefore, *a fortiori*, rebels against the epic, that most venerable of forms," Wilkie shows how "in their attempts at epic the Romantics proclaimed a progressive ideal in much the same way as had the great epic poets in earlier ages." And E. D. Hirsch, examining generic continuity and transformation from a more purely theoretical standpoint than Wilkie's, discusses *Don Juan* as a work that perpetuates epic tradition by a process of metaphoric extension in which "the unknown is assimilated to the known, and something genuinely new is realized":

When Byron said, "My poem's epic" he was relying on the reader's knowledge of traditional epic conventions, and he was also relying on traditional episodes as a schema for his own imagination. The storm at sea in *Don Juan* is there because sea storms belong in epics, and the Haidee episode is there because idyllic romances come after sea storms. Older genre conventions both guided Byron's invention and nourished it, but it is obvious that the genre idea of *Don Juan* is Byron's alone and is a new kind that had never existed before. 13
In this dissertation, I shall examine Thomas Carlyle's *The French Revolution* (1837) as a literary experiment which, like *Don Juan*, a poem that Carlyle much admired, uses, modifies, sometimes travesties, yet nevertheless perpetuates epic tradition, while remaining self-reflexively aware of its own modernity and atypicality. I shall consider this work in the light not only of nineteenth-century English literature and criticism but also of the artistic experimentation and theoretical speculation of the modern Germans which influenced Carlyle's thought throughout the eighteen-twenties and which contributed to the inception of his major artistic successes of the eighteen-thirties: *Sartor Resartus* (1833-4), "The Diamond Necklace" (1837), and *The French Revolution* itself. I shall justify my generic approach to Carlyle's work by showing how Carlyle uses generic terms insistently (and problematically) in his criticism and by showing, as G. B. Tennyson has done in reference to *Sartor Resartus*, how Carlyle's criticism complements and comments upon his artistic creation. 

Chapter One and Two are introductory: Chapter One treats the place of generic concepts in Carlyle's criticism and art, while Chapter Two explores Carlyle's theoretical comments upon the epic in the years leading up to the publication of *The French Revolution*. Chapters Three, Four, and Five present an analysis of the text based on the theoretical principles established in Chapters One and Two. Chapter Six considers Carlyle's achievement in relation to another nineteenth-century experiment in epic form, Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. 
While literary experimentation and innovation are features common to all European literatures in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the most important nation for critical theories of genre at this time is Germany, where generic speculations are made by such figures as Schiller, Goethe, August Wilhelm Schlegel, Friedrich Schlegel, Richter, Schelling, and Hegel. Schiller is, as Carlyle states, an "ambassador and mediator . . . between the Old School [of Criticism] and the New; pointing to his own Works, as to a glittering Bridge, that will lead pleasantly from the Versailles gardening and artificial hydraulic of the one, into the true Ginnistan and Wonderland of the other." In his "Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung," Schiller creates a polycentric scheme of classification by adding literary categories to those offered by the standard genres; he suggests a division of literature into the naive and the sentimental, and further proposes satire, elegy, and idyll as three "modes of perception" distinct from the genres of the same name. In his correspondence with Goethe, Schiller engages in a prolonged dialogue on the nature of epic and drama, which culminates in the collaborative essay "Über epische und dramatische Dichtung." Schiller's explorations in the naive and sentimental are continued in the Schlegels' discussions of the differences between Greek and modern, or classical and romantic, art. August Wilhelm Schlegel in his lectures on drama suggests a triadic division of literature (developed at great length by Hegel in his Aesthetik), into epic, "the calm quiet representation of an action in progress," lyric, "the musical expression of mental emotions by language," and drama,
a hybrid form which incorporates elements of epic and lyric.²⁰

Friedrich Schlegel, sensing the inadequacy of previous systems of classification, re-evaluates the status of generic criticism itself. "Should poetry simply be divided up," he asks:

Or should it remain one and indivisible? Or fluctuate between division and union? Most of the ways of conceiving a poetical world are still as primitive and childish as the old pre-Copernican ideas of astronomy. The usual classifications of poetry are mere dead pedantry designed for people with limited vision. Whatever somebody is capable of producing, or whatever happens to be in fashion, is the stationary earth at the center of all things. But in the universe of poetry nothing stands still; everything is developing and changing and moving harmoniously; and even the comets obey invariable laws of motion. But until the course of these heavenly bodies can be calculated and their return predicted, the true world system of poetry won't have been discovered. ²¹

Schlegel's inquiries into the nature of genre produce his innovative generic designations of novels as "the Socratic dialogues of our time," of the dialogue as a "garland of fragments," and of his own essay on Greek poetry as "a mannered prose hymn."²²

Modern generic complexity Schlegel sees as an additional instance of "the absolute difference between ancient and modern"; the romantic poetry of the modern age, he argues, champions the complication and transcendence of genres:

Other kinds of poetry are finished and are now capable of being fully analyzed. The romantic kind of poetry is still in the state of becoming . . . . It can be exhausted by no theory and only a divinatory criticism would dare try to characterize its ideal . . . . The romantic kind of poetry is the only one that is more than a kind, that is, as it were, poetry itself: for in a certain sense all poetry is or should be romantic. ²³
Richter, in his *Vorschule der Aesthetik*, continues the investigations of Schiller and the Schlegels into the differences between Greek and modern poetry. He denigrates theories of genre based on Plato's distinction between *mimesis* and *diagesis*:

If the poet himself speaks, we have epic & Co., e.g., elegy; if he lets others speak, we have drama. . . . But is there any more fluid division and partition of the poetic sea? Neither the intervention nor the concealment of the poet determines two poetic genres. How easy it would be to dissolve forms into forms if only the trifles of speaking or letting speak were decisive; the same dithyramb would become epic if the poet first said or sang that his song was another's, lyric if he said it was his own, dramatic if he inserted it without a word from himself into a tragic monolog. But mere formalities, at least in poetry, are not forms. 24

Richter restates the triadic division of literature into epic, drama, and lyric, maintaining that the "epic presents the event which develops out of the past, the drama the action which extends to the future, the lyric the feeling which is enclosed within the present." 25 He investigates the novel, the ode, the elegy, the idyll, and the fable, as well as their ironic and incongruous intermingling in modern literature.

For Carlyle, the spirit of change that motivates modern German criticism "is a European tendency, and springs from the general condition of intellect in Europe":

Among ourselves, for instance, within the last thirty years, who has not lifted up his voice with double vigour in praise of Shakespeare and Nature, and vituperation of French taste and French philosophy? who has not heard of the glories of old English literature; the wealth of Queen Elizabeth's age; the penury of Queen Anne's; and the inquiry whether Pope was a poet? A similar temper is breaking out in France itself, hermetically sealed as that country seemed to be against all foreign influences; and doubts
Nevertheless, only in Germany does Carlyle see "rigorous scientific inquiry" in criticism; there the results of the modern critical revolution are "embodied in elaborate laws, and profound systems have been promulgated and accepted; whereas with us . . . there has been as it were a Literary Anarchy; for the Pandects of Blair and Bossu are obsolete or abrogated, but no new code supplies their place; and, author and critic, each sings or says that which is right in his own eyes."\(^{27}\) Carlyle is never entirely sympathetic to the aesthetic speculations of the Germans. He remarks in a notebook entry of 1823 that he "is tired to death with [Schiller's] and Goethe's _palabra_ about the nature of the fine arts."\(^{28}\) And in _The Life of Schiller_ (1825) he censures the Germans' "minute and painful investigations of the origin of dramatic emotion, of its various kinds and degrees; their subdivisions of romantic and heroic and romantico-heroic, and the other endless jargon that encumbers their critical writings."\(^{29}\) Carlyle's "romantico-heroic" resembles numerous mixed designations employed by Schiller and Goethe: "kritisch-historisch-poetische," "dramatisch-epische," "rhetorisch sentimentale," and "klassischromantische."\(^{30}\) Yet, despite his mistrust of jargon, Carlyle uses such designations frequently in his criticism ("metaphysico-rhetorical, homiletic-exegetic rhapsody," "elegiaco-didactic," "elegiaco-tragical," "Domestic-Tragical," "beautiful, real-ideal, prose-idyl,"

The interest of the Germans in genre is reflected in Carlyle's critical writings of the eighteen-twenties and eighteen-thirties. In The Life of Schiller, Carlyle treats such traditional forms as tragedy, epic, lyric, ballad, and epigram; he discusses Schiller's intention to write a modern epic and devotes over one-third of his volume to criticism of Schiller's tragedies, which range in form from historical tragedy to "tragedy of common life."32

In German Romance (1827), Carlyle examines more varied and sometimes more characteristically modern forms such as the fragment, the "German Idyl," the "Märchen (Popular Tale)," the "Ritterroman (Chivalry Romance)," the "Fantasy-piece," and the "Kunstroman (Art-novel)."33 Carlyle's essays on Goethe afford the occasion for discussing a similar variety of genres. Goethe's "'Classico-romantic Phantasmagoria!" Helena he treats variously as a "Märchen (Fabulous Tale)," as a "fantasy-piece," and as a "Phantasmagory; not a type of one thing, but a vague fluctuating fitful admiration of many."34 In his discussion of Goethe's Das Märchen, as in his discussion of Helena, Carlyle distinguishes phantasmagory from allegory. "this is no Allegory," he states through the voice of Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, "which, as in the Pilgrim's Progress, you have only once for all to find the key of, and so go on unlocking: it is a Phantasmagory, rather; wherein
things the most heterogeneous are, with homogeneity of figure, emblemed forth; which would require not one key, to unlock it, but, at different stages of the business, a dozen successive keys." 35 *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*, conversely, Carlyle likens to Spenserian allegory: "And with this advantage, that it is an allegory not of the Seventeenth century, but of the Nineteenth; a picture... of what men are striving for, and ought to strive for, in these actual days." 36 *The Wanderjahre*, Carlyle further notes, "gives us the notion of a completed fragment." 37 The fragment, a favourite form of the modern Germans, is investigated in "Novalis" (1828): "All that [Novalis] has left is in the shape of Fragment," writes Carlyle: "detached expositions and combinations, deep, brief glimpses. 38

In his writings on German literature, Carlyle treats a variety of epic forms. "Early German Literature" (1831) examines the medieval German tale of Reynard the Fox as a work with "a genuine Epic spirit" and features of a "Comic Epos." "It is full of broad rustic mirth," writes Carlyle in an analysis reminiscent of the ironic interpretations favoured by the Schlegels and Richter:

inexhaustible in comic devices; a World-Saturnalia, where Wolves tonsured into Monks, and high starved by short commons, Foxes pilgrimings to Rome for absolution, Cocks pleading at the judgment-bar, make strange mummeries. Nor is this wild Parody of Human Life without its meaning and moral: it is an air-pageant from Fancy's dream-grotto, yet wisdom lurks in it; as we gaze, the vision becomes poetic and prophetic. A true Irony must have dwelt in the Poet's heart and head; here, under grotesque shadows, he gives us the saddest picture of Reality; yet for us without sadness; his figures mask themselves in uncouth bestial vizards, and enact, gambolling; their Tragedy dissolves into sardonic grins. 39
Carlyle offers a comparable epic interpretation of Goethe's modern rendition of the Reynard story:

Goethe's work is written in hexameters, in twelve books, like another Aeneid: a wondrous affair; imbued with the truest humour, full of marvellous imitations, grotesque descriptions, and manifold moralities. If beasts could speak, we should surely expect them to express their 'general views' as they are made to do in this epic: the ass here is a philosophical masticator of thistles and gorse; Bruin thinks, and talks, and acts, like a very bear; and 'Malapertus, the Fortress' is still redolent of murdered poultry. Nor is this strange mimicry the sole charm of the work; for there is method in its madness; across these marvellous delineations we discern a deeper significance. It is a parody of human life, as it were, a magic picture, with forms of the wildest mirth, which, while we gaze on them, sadden into serious and instructive, though still smiling, monitor. 40

Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea* is termed a "Civic Epos," while *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* is examined as a novel that "has a deeper object than many a poem which has called itself epic." 41

On at least two occasions Carlyle moves beyond the incidental uses of generic terminology cited above to a comprehensive overview of genre itself: the first of these occasions, in "Early German Literature," is historical; the second, in the opening paragraphs of "Count Cagliostro" (1833), is ahistorical. "Early German Literature" describes three successive historical periods and their corresponding literary forms. The first period is the age of Fancy (described elsewhere by Carlyle as the age of "young Wonder"), when "knights-errant tilted, and ladies' eyes rained bright influences; and suddenly, as at sunrise, the whole Earth had grown vocal and musical." 42 The characteristic forms of this age were troubadour's songs, epics, and chivalric tales. With the
eventual death of chivalry, "the world seems to have rhymed itself out; those chivalrous roundelay, heroic tales, mythologies, and quaint love-sicknesses, had grown unprofitable to the ear." The era of the Troubadours, writes Carlyle, gave way to the "Didactic"-age of Understanding, "for Literature now ceased to be a festal melody, and addressing itself rather to the intellect than to the heart, became as it were a school-lesson." The distinctive forms of this age were "Apologetes, Fables, Satires, Exhortations and all manner of edifying Moralities." "The Madrigal had passed into the Apologue," Carlyle writes: "The Heroic Poem, with its supernatural machinery and sentiment, into the Fiction of practical Life: in which latter species a prophetic eye might have discerned the coming Tom Joneses and Wilhelm Meisters; and with still more astonishment, the Minerva Presses of all nations.

The third period, which Carlyle sees as being heralded by modern German literature, is the age of Reason, which reunites the Fancy of the first age and the Understanding of the second.

While this diachronic version of genres shares the historical emphasis of Hegel and Lukács, Carlyle's second version of genres as arising from the basic rhythms of human life (a version compatible with the first) shares the synchronic viewpoint of Susanne K. Langer. In the opening paragraphs of "Count Cagliostro," Carlyle's frequent commentator on aesthetic matters, Gottfried Sauerteig, argues that every human life "is a Poem," perfect in all manner of Aristotelian requisites; with beginning, middle and end; with perplexities, and solutions; with its ... warfare against Fate, its elegy and battle-singing, courage marred by crime, everywhere the two tragic elements of Pity and Fear.
above all, with supernatural machinery enough,—for was not the man born out of NONENTITY; did he not die and miraculously vanishing return thither? 45.

Having equated human existence with literary form (as defined in the Poetics, the locus classicus of generic criticism), Sauerteig demonstrates how every life is "a small strophe . . . composed by the Supernal Powers":

Heroic strophes some few are; full of force and a sacred fire, so that to latest ages the hearts of those that read therein are made to tingle. Jeremiads others seem; mere weeping laments, harmonious or disharmonious. Remonstrances against Destiny; whereat we too may sometimes profitably weep. Again, have we not flesh-and-blood strophes of the idyllic sort,—though in these days rarely, owing to Poor-Laws, Game-Laws, Population-Theories and the life! Farther, of the comic laughter-loving sort; yet ever with an unfathomable earnestness, as is fit, lying underneath: for, bethink thee, what is the mirthfullest grinning face of any Grimaldi, but a transitory mask, behind which quite otherwise grins—the most indubitable Death's head! However, I say farther, there are strophes of the pastoral sort . . .; of the farcic-tragic, melodramatic, of all named and a thousand unnameable sorts there are poetic strophes, written, as was said, in Heaven, printed on Earth, and published (bound in woollen cloth, or clothes) for the use of the studious. Finally, a small number seem utter Pasquils, mere ribald libels on Humanity: these too, however, are at times worth reading. 46.

Sauerteig finds in life the sources and analogies of the literary forms of epic, tragedy, comedy, farce, pastoral, idyl, and satire. Most importantly, for our purposes, he makes the "mighty world-old Rhapsodia of Existence" ("what some one names 'the grand sacred Epos, or Bible of World-History'") analogous to the inclusive form of epic which encompasses all smaller forms.

Carlyle's insistent and problematic use of generic terms in his criticism corresponds to an equally problematic use of generic
forms in his own writings. Even in his smaller periodical pieces, the problem of form poses itself. The formal complexity of Carlyle's social criticism can be demonstrated by reference to his "Characteristics" (1831), which suggests at least three different generic designations at three levels of its organization. At the level of the whole work, it invites comparison with the Charakteristik, a form of the essay developed by the Schlegels and encountered by Carlyle in his reading of their Charakteristiken und Kritiken. 47 At the level of the paragraph, it suggests the seventeenth-century prose character; Carlyle writes, for example, of the logician:

in mere Speculation itself, the most ineffectual of all characters . . . is your dialectic man-at-arms; were he armed cap-a-pie in syllogistic mail of proof, and perfect master of logic-fence, how little does it avail him! Consider the old Schoolmen, and their pilgrimage towards Truth: the faithfulest endeavour, incessant unwearied motion, often great natural vigour; only no progress: nothing but antic feats of one limb poised against the other; there they balanced, somersetted, and made postures; at best gyrated swiftly, with some pleasure, like Spinning Dervishes, and ended where they began. So is it, so will it always be, with all System-makers and builders of logical card-castles . . . 48

At the level of the single sentence, "Characteristics" uses the prose emblem, a form which is, as we shall see in Chapter Five, one of Carlyle's artistic preoccupations: Carlyle makes the pictura of the emblem typify a particular modern state of mind when he says that Friedrich Schlegel "flies back to Catholicism; as a child might to its slain mother's bosom," or when he tells how Byron, "without heavenly loadstar, rushes madly into the dance of meteoric lights that hover on the mad Mahlstrom; and goes
down among its eddies."^49

Carlyle's repeated use of a particular genre can be traced in his experiments with the fragment. Developed by the Schlegels and Novalis and adopted by Carlyle as a dominant mode of composition in *Sartor Resartus*,^50* the fragment appears during the two decades after *Sartor* in less obviously fictive and imaginative contexts. In "On History Again" (1833) Carlyle, speaking in the person of Oliver Yorke (the fictitious editor of *Fraser's Magazine*, in which the work appears), presents an essay on history as a "singular fragment" from an "Inaugural Discourse" delivered by Diogenes Teufelsdröckh. By adopting the singular form of the fragment, Oliver Yorke allows the singular ideas of Teufelsdröckh to appear without considerable apology or acquiescence on the part of the journal. Furthermore, by purporting to present only one portion of a larger address, the editor offers the speaker's focussed views on a single topic while maintaining the illusion of a more encyclopedic frame of reference. In the notorious "Occasional Discourse" (1849), Carlyle uses an even more striking form for more controversial ideas. This fragment of a lecture, conveyed to the publisher by the "respectable unfortunate landlady" of the disreputable Doctor Phelim McQuirk, the "Absconded Reporter" and "last traceable source" for the discourse, arrives with "no speaker named, no time or place assigned, no commentary of any sort given," and ends abruptly with the words "Explicit MS": the progress of the speaker's strange discourse is marred by the dissent, derision, and ultimate departure of his audience.

Finally, in "The Opera" (1852), Carlyle uses the fragment as a
vehicle for criticizing British culture. Here the fragment is introduced not by Oliver York, but by Carlyle himself who, apologizing to the editor for his inability to contribute some writing of his own, offers something written by Professor Ezechiel Peasemal, "a distinguished American" recently honoured by the "Phi Beta Kappa Society of Buncombe." As in "On History Again," the speaker is a foreigner, and the fragment given is part of a larger work (Doctor Peasemal's Conspectus of England). The use of a naive foreign observer to criticize native society, as in Montesquieu's Lettres Persanes and Goldsmith's Citizen of the World, gives Carlyle an alien but telling perspective from which to view modern life. The presentation of the fragment as a "fraction" of an "encyclopedical work" suggests that the particular social activity examined, the opera, is in some sense emblematic of the entire society. The title of the Conspectus suggests a comprehensive work like "Characteristics" which examines all major areas of social existence in light of a central vision. The excerpted fragment presents in petto the meaning of the entire work: Peasemal's contention that "Music has, for a long time past, been avowedly mad, divorced from sense and the reality of things," suggests the delusion and folly of modern society in general.

If formal criticism contributes to an understanding of these occasional pieces, it promises even greater rewards for a consideration of Carlyle's more overtly imaginative works. In order to explore the applicability of generic terms to these texts, I shall examine Sartor Resartus as a novel, "Count Cagliostro" as a
satire (or "Pasquil"), "The Diamond Necklace" as a romance, and
The French Revolution as an epic. In none of these three instances
is the generic designation arbitrarily chosen, for Carlyle himself
uses these designations, though never simply or unproblematically,
for their respective works. Carlyle's designation of Sartor as
novel appears in a letter of 1833 recommending the work to Fraser's,
its eventual publisher. "It is put together in the fashion of a
kind of Didactic Novel," writes Carlyle; "but indeed properly like
nothing yet extant. I used to characterize it briefly as a kind of
'Satirical Extravaganza on Things in General' . . . ."55 The
problematic nature of Carlyle's statement appears in its tone of
qualification ("in the fashion of a kind of"), in its juxtaposition
of a tentative generic identification with an assertion, apparently
antipathetic to the idea of genre, that the work is "like nothing
yet extant," and its subsequent offering of an alternative generic
label ("Satirical Extravaganza") that is itself a mixed desig-
nation, inasmuch as it yokes satire with an often lyric extravagance.
Furthermore, the meaning of the single word "Novel" in Carlyle's
statement is itself problematic. Does Carlyle intend a minimal
definition of novel as a modern prose fiction, or a more exalted
conception of the novel as Kunstrroman (as, for example, in Goethe's
Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, which Carlyle translated)? Does
Carlyle have in mind the novel form of Richter, which he praises
by stating that "the name Novelist, as we in England must under-
stand it, would ill describe so vast and discursive a genius" as
Richter's: "for, with all his grotesque, tumultuous pleasantry,
Richter is a man of truly earnest . . . character; and seldom writes
without a meaning far beyond the sphere of common romancers?\textsuperscript{56}

How much of our modern conception of the novel can we justifiably locate in Carlyle's use of the term?

This problem of definition becomes evident in modern criticism of \textit{Sartor Resartus}: G. B. Tennyson calls the work "an unorthodox novel by an inventive and original mind," and "a novel that is also an anti-novel." He wisely acknowledges Carlyle's own description of the work in stating "that \textit{Sartor} is a novel but, of course, not like any other;\textsuperscript{57}" Gerry H. Brookes argues that "\textit{Sartor} is not a novel because its narrative is not consistent, because its characters and other fictions do not have the intrinsic and sustained interest that fictions have in a novel," and maintains instead that \textit{Sartor} "is a form of persuasive essay."\textsuperscript{58} George Levine states that \textit{Sartor} "can only be regarded as a novel in a very special sense." \textit{Sartor}, he writes,

is a fiction whose form is not governed by the demands of either plot or character development. It is not concerned with verisimilitude, or with the construction of social modes or manners. Rather it is controlled thematically and by means of symbols and images; it is concerned exclusively with subjective states; and its aim is largely satirical and therefore didactic. I prefer, therefore, . . . to consider \textit{Sartor} as a fiction belonging to the complex class of "confession-anatomy-romance." \textsuperscript{59}

If Levine's attempt to classify \textit{Sartor} is more successful than those of Tennyson and Brookes, it is so only because his designation "confession-anatomy-romance" is, like Carlyle's "Didactic Novel" and "Satirical Extravaganza," complex and multifaceted.

For Carlyle, the use of a single generic term, inadequate in itself to comprehend a modern idiosyncratic work, is an invitation
to examine the nature of that work; it initiates, rather than concludes, generic exploration.

In "Count Cagliostro," a complex generic designation appears in the opening of the work itself, where Carlyle, after listing the genres of which "the grand sacred Epos, or Bible of World-History" is composed, indicates that his historical depiction of the charlatan Cagliostro will take the satiric form of a "human Pasquil." This mixed form (permeated, as Carlyle notes, by Germanic "world-irony") combines "Historical Fact" with "dramatic Fiction," "Stern Accuracy" with "bold Imagination," and a realistic purpose with the features of a poem (the "genuine Shadow of a Reality"). The fictive and imaginative aspect of Carlyle's mixed form appears in his application of the elevated and ennobling patterns of epic, romance, and tragedy to an essentially degraded and unworthy subject. Throughout "Count Cagliostro," Carlyle incongruously juxtaposes the "heroic" and the "pasquillic": within the inclusive framework of the "Grand Bible of Universal History," he claims, his "Pasquillant verse" is "wondrously and even indispensably connected with the Heroic" facets of life. Consequently, Carlyle adopts Cagliostro as his hero, and makes "the rise, progress, grandeur and decadence of the Quack of Quacks" his heroic theme. Since Cagliostro is a complete apostate from truth, the clearest epic analogue for him is, as Carlyle repeatedly suggests, Milton's Satan: "if Satan himself has in these days become a poetic hero," Carlyle observes, "why should not Cagliostro, for some short hour, be a prose one?" Just as the romantic conception of Satan as hero is an inversion of Paradise Lost and the
Bible, "Count Cagliostro" is an inverted reading of the epic or Bible of world-history from the ironic standpoint of Cagliostro, "the unattainable ideal and type-specimen" of charlatanism. The ironic epic analogue of Cagliostro as a Satanic hero is supplemented by the depiction of Cagliostro as a hero of romance, moving "deep down into the lugubrious-obscure regions of Rascaldom, like a Knight to the palace of his Fairy," and as the hero of a tragedy that moves through "catastrophe" and "apotheosis" to a final disintegrative movement in which 'Cagliostro's 'red coppery splendour darkens more and more into final gloom.'

In "The Diamond Necklace," described in its opening chapter as "the following small Romance," Carlyle again begins with a self-reflexive identification of the genre of his work. Moreover, by opening his text with a chapter entitled "Age of Romance," which begins with the statement that the "Age of Romance has not ceased" and contains the contentious assertion that romance exists "in Reality alone," Carlyle renders that genre problematic. We read, for example, that "no age ever seemed the Age of Romance to itself":

Charlemagne, let the Poets talk as they will, had his own provocations in the world: what with selling of his poultry and pot-herbs, what with wanton daughters carrying secretaries through the snow; . . . it seems to me that the Great Charles had his temper ruffled at times. Roland of Roncesvalles too . . . found rainy weather as well as sunny; knew what it was to have hose need darning; got tough beef to chew, or even went dinnerless; was saddle-sick, calumniated, constipated (as his madness too clearly indicates) . . . . Only in long subsequent days, when the tough beef, the con-
stipation and the calumny had clean vanished, did it all begin to seem Romantic, and your Turpins and Ariostos found music in it. 64
Here, everyday and unromantic facts such as illness and constipation are with deliberate incongruity included in a discussion of what is "Romantic" in life. Because the opening chapter of "The Diamond Necklace" both identifies and radically redefines its genre, Carlyle's designation of the work as a "small Romance" cannot be regarded as casual or haphazard. At its least definitive level, the term "romance" is synonymous with prose fiction, cognate with the French roman and the German Roman (as used, perhaps, in the title of German Romance). But Carlyle's references to Charlemagne and Roland, as well as his important phrase "the Romance of Life," show that Carlyle is thinking of romance in a broader, pre-generic sense, as a principle of beautiful, ideal, and desirable life, commonly understood (though not by Carlyle) to exist only in the past fictions of the chivalric romance, or Ritterroman.

Since the rhetorical thrust of Carlyle's initial chapter is clearly in opposition to a belief that romance can exist in fantastic narratives alone, a definition of Carlyle's view of romance might properly include an account of the fantastic narratives that he is resisting. In Musaeus's "Dumb Love," for example, the first work translated in German Romance, appear many of the features that occur in a conventional modern definition of romance. A wealthy young man loses his riches; he desires a beautiful young woman, but encounters resistance from her unwilling mother; he sets out on a journey, from which he subsequently returns; on his way he faces tests, first from an eccentric knight, then from a Goblin Barber; following instructions by the latter,
he awaits a mysterious benefactor on a bridge at the autumn equinox; learning from this benefactor the location of some treasure, buried all the time in his father's garden, he returns triumphantly to his home town and marries the young woman. Whereas Musaeus's Märchen is characterized by freedom from the restrictions of probability, the "Romance" of "The Diamond Necklace" is committed to a presentation of modern historical fact, which will demonstrate that "this our poor old Real world" is "Hypermagical." And whereas Musaeus's tale is characterized by a largely unobtrusive narrator and by a willingness that its blatant conventions appear baldly and without comment, Carlyle's "small Romance" is marked from its opening sentence by the intrusions of its narrator and by a self-conscious analysis of its own literary techniques. Indeed, Carlyle emphasizes his own part in the work by making dramaturgy, or controlled illusion, the dominant metaphor of his text.

What further complicates Carlyle's artistry is the reacceptance into his "multiform" historical work of elements which the polemic of his opening chapter would seem, at first glance, to exclude. The complexity of Carlyle's treatment of romance results not from a wish to abolish the strange and the wondrous, but from a desire to exhibit the "Hypermagical" nature of life in a radically displaced, historical setting. Throughout his critical essays, Carlyle repeatedly denigrates the "clear, metallic heroes, and white, high, stainless beauties" of popular fiction. He deprecates The Monk, The Mysteries of Udolpho, Frankenstein, and their German counterparts, which "dwell with
peculiar complacency among wizards and ruined towers, with mailed knights, secret tribunals, monks, spectres and banditti," and which demonstrate "an undue love of moonlight, and mossy fountains, and the moral sublime." Yet Carlyle introduces to his problematic small romance many of the elements that he elsewhere rejects as maudlin conventional fictions. Marie Antoinette he apotheosizes as a goddess who "issues, like the Moon . . ., down the Eastern steeps." Other characters he portrays as "spectres" surrounded by mysterious threats:

Walk warily, Countess de Lamotte; for now, with thickening breath, thou approachest the moment of moments! Principalities and Powers, Parlement, Grand Chambre and Tournelle, with all their whips and gibbet-wheels; the very Crack of Doom hangs over thee, if thou trip. Forward, with nerve of iron, on shoes of felt, like a Treasure-digger, in silence, looking neither to the right nor left,--where yawn abysses deep as the Pool, and all Pandemonium hovers, eager to rend thee into rags!  

And, for all his apparent dislike of nocturnal settings in popular fiction, Carlyle makes the night scene in the "Park of Versailles" chapter, with its deception, disguise, and mystery, one of the most striking in the entire work:

The flowers are all asleep in Little Triançon, the roses folded-in for the night; but the Rose of Roses still wakes. O wondrous Earth! O doubly wondrous Park of Versailles, with Little and Great Trianon,--and a scarce-breathing Monseigneur! Ye Hydraulics of Lenôtre, that also slumber, with stop-cocks, in your deep leaden chambers, babble not of him, when ye arise. Ye odorous balm-shrubs, huge spectral Cedars, thou sacred Boscage of Hornbeam, ye dim Pavilions of the Peerless, whisper not!" Moon, lie silent, hidden in thy vacant cave; no star look down: let neither Heaven nor Hell peep through the blanket of the Night,
to cry, Hold, hold!—The Black Domino? Ha! 'Yes!—
with stouter step than might have been expected,
Monseigneur is under way; the Black Domino had only
to whisper, low and eager: 'In the Hornbeam Arbour!'
And now, Cardinal, O now!—'Yes, there hovers the
white Celestial . . . . 73

While it cannot be disregarded, Carlyle's designation of "The
Diamond Necklace" as a romance is deliberately problematic,
inspiring rather than closing off questions about the work's
literary kind. Being a "Real-Phantasmagory" or, as Carlyle says
in his letters, a "True Fiction,"74 "The Diamond Necklace"
accommodates both its factual attention to historical reality and
the romance patterns of its inherited fictions in its dialogic,
heterogeneous, and deliberately incongruous surface.

The complexities posed by the designation "romance" for "The
Diamond Necklace" appear on a larger scale with the designation
of "epic" for The French Revolution, a work that similarly mediates
between an historical theme and conventional fictions. In treating
the relation of The French Revolution and epic, I shall first
examine Carlyle's own uses of the term "epic" in reference to
The French Revolution. Then I shall consider in detail the con-
temporary reviews of the work, discussing both the favourable
reviews, which tend to accept the work as a modern historical
prose epic, and the unfavourable reviews, which tend to emphasize
its idiosyncrasy and atypicality. Finally, I shall examine uses
of the term by several later critics.

Writing to John Stuart Mill on 24 September 1833, Carlyle
expresses a tentative belief that "the right History . . . of the
French Revolution were the grand Poem of our Time."75 A month
later, Carlyle poses to Mill the question of whether Poetry is "the essence of Reality . . ., and true History the only possible Epic," adding: "What limits my affirmative answer should have, are yet nowise clear." By the summer of 1834, Carlyle's "affirmative answer" has clearly begun to take shape. To John Alexander Carlyle he expresses his intention "to make an artistic Picture" of the French Revolution. In September 1834 he announces to the same reader that his work will be "Quite an Epic Poem of the Revolution: an Apotheosis of Sansculottism!" Carlyle's epic claim for The French Revolution poses two important questions. First, how can a prose work, not composed according to "the three superannuated unities of Aristotle, or the French School" and consequently, in the words of Carlyle's own description of it to Ralph Waldo Emerson, "a wild savage ruleless very bad Book," be accepted by its readers as a valid continuation of epic tradition? Second, how can a work so avowedly personal and idiosyncratic be said to fulfill the grand public function of epic; in other words, how can a modern Kunstpoes like Carlyle's possess the social centrality previously held by the Volkspoes? The problematic nature of the work, recognized and even highlighted by Carlyle himself, poses a challenge for contemporary reviewers: either they must accept the oxymoron of a "ruleless," highly personal, prose epic or they must depict the work as something set apart from received categories. The challenging form of The French Revolution makes the work's critical fortunes predictable to Carlyle: "I rather conjecture," he writes to his mother on 19 May 1837, "that all the small fry of critics (a set
of the despicablest mortals living) will be afflicted at the thing; and the better kind of critics on the whole, pleased: which is exactly as it ought to be."\(^{80}\) Carlyle is correct in anticipating a radical separation between the most hostile reviews in the *Athenaeum* of 20 May 1837 and the *Literary Gazette* of 27 May and the later more favourable reviews in the *London and Westminster Review* and *Fraser's Magazine* in July of the same year.

What Carlyle does not foresee is the accuracy with which the hostile critics, in deprecating Carlyle's effort, identify many of the praiseworthy aspects of his artistry which contribute to making the book wild, savage, and ruleless.

The favourable attitude of the reviews by Carlyle's friend and confidant John Stuart Mill in the *London and Westminster Review* and by J. A Heraud in *Fraser's Magazine*, the journal of Carlyle's publisher, is unsurprising, as is their acceptance of Carlyle's epic claim for *The French Revolution*. Mill's review, described by Carlyle as "the best review a man could wish of himself,"\(^{81}\) begins by announcing that *The French Revolution* "is not so much a history, as an epic poem."\(^{82}\) The review proceeds to defend Carlyle's style as "of surpassing excellence; excelled, in its kind, only by the great masters of epic poetry; and a most suitable and glorious vesture of a work which is itself . . . an epic poem." By accepting Carlyle's history as an "epic poem," Mill accepts the apparent incongruity of a poem written in prose; by regarding the work both as a poem and as "the truest of histories," he acknowledges Carlyle's belief, put forward in the letter of October 1833, that poetry is "the essence of Reality";
by comparing Carlyle favourably to Hume, Robertson, and Gibbon, he tacitly accepts Carlyle's distinction between the "Artist" historian and the "Artisan" historian, a distinction that is the underlying principle of "The Diamond Necklace" and The French Revolution. All in all, Mill's review shows considerable sympathy with Carlyle's programme for modern literature, in which the principles of poetry are to be embodied in a factually true narrative. Mill writes:

It is indeed a favorite doctrine of Mr. Carlyle, and one which he has enforced with great strength ..., that all poetry suitable to the present age must be of this kind: that poetry has not naturally anything to do with fiction, nor is fiction in these days even the most appropriate vehicle and vesture of it; that it should, and will, employ itself more and more, not in inventing unrealities, but in bringing out into even greater distinctness and impressiveness the poetic aspect of realities .... In every real fact, in which any of the great interests of human beings are implicated, there lie the materials of all poetry; there is, as Mr. Carlyle has said, the fifth act of a tragedy in every peasant's deathbed; the life of every heroic character is a heroic poem, were but the man of genius found, who could so write it! 84

To his defence of Carlyle's style and artistic method Mill adds praise for Carlyle's theme and its generic inclusiveness: The French Revolution, Mill states, has "a theme the most replete with every kind of human interest, epic, tragic, elegiac, even comic and farcical, which history affords." 85

Heraud's review, written like Mill's in response to the attacks of the Athenaeum and the Literary Gazette, defends Carlyle on similar grounds. Carlyle's intention, argues Heraud, is to be a "prose poet" writing poetic history:
looking on the whole world as a poem, and this portion of its history as essentially poetic (which indeed it is), and familiar with poetic composition, though wanting himself "the accomplishment of verse," he is more solicitous to seize on the poetic aspects than the technically historical. Consider that the earliest historians were poets; and deprive them of their rhymes, and you have the kind of historian—the prose poet, so to speak, which Mr. Carlyle was desirous of becoming. 86

"Such being the idea of the composition," the review continues, "in its realisation you find the author not dealing in dissertations and carefully selected narrative,—but you are at once thrown dramatically, or epically, into the midst of things . . . ." 87 Heraud, like Mill, accepts Carlyle's view of the genre of the work (which is, "though in prose, the real epic of these revolutionary times") and suggests the generic inclusiveness of Carlyle's work by describing it as "a series of paintings, or plays tragic and comic." 86 Heraud's strongest reservations are for the work's structure:

Our opinion is, that, the plan of this work being considered as permissible, some one character should have been chosen as the hero for each division, and all the rest, even with some little violence, made to fall into diminished importance around, and subsidiary to that. We know not but that this principle may have been observed as far as practicable—having as yet only read the work once . . . . 89

Heraud looks for a more clearly defined architectonic structure than the variegated surface of Carlyle's text affords. But he nevertheless accurately identifies the repeated appearances of Napoleon throughout the three volumes as an important structuring agent: "what the true critic will principally admire," he states, "is the artist-manner in which the dawning Napoleon is introduced
upon the canvass [sic] never but in a subordinate character, yet always with a sort of budding halo round his brow, prophetic of the future hero."  

The French Revolution's epic claim is accepted by a variety of other reviewers with less of a vested interest in the work. The *Examiner* of 17 September 1837 calls Carlyle's history "a book conceived in the Epic spirit, and written from the innermost heart of the writer." While the *Examiner* wishes "that the style had not been in every place as it is," it defends Carlyle's artistry in general on the grounds that an original work must have its own form:

> It is not to be forgotten that this is a history of a very different order from any that has yet been attempted in our language, and in which the usually approved style of historical narrative, the nervous simplicity of Hume, or the gorgeous march of Gibbon, would have been, not to say misplaced, but actually impossible of application. Every original thing must speak its own language. Consider the work as much a poem as a history, and the singular groupings and inversions of words will no longer seem singular.

The *New Yorker* of 10 March 1838 describes the French Revolution as a "remarkable prose epic" that "is indeed poetry":

D'Israeli's 'Wondrous Tale of Alroy', does not more ridiculously violate, than this 'History' sublimely sets at naught, all the settled rules of prose composition. To 'parse' its sentences would puzzle the most learned college of grammarians. The usual components are oftener 'understood' than 'expressed.' Nouns and expletives are heaped together in a most glorious melee, and to parade them into serried columns would shatter the nerves of the most assiduous tactician. And yet, when we come closely to consider the grand design of the author, order rises out of chaos, and system rolls around system, with a regularity which indicates the operation of a master-mind.
W. H. Channing in the _Boston Quarterly Review_ of October 1838 argues for treating Carlyle as a poet and his work as "a mode of historical composition, wholly original, which must revolutionize the old modes of historicising".

We for ourselves call this French Revolution an Epic Poem; or, rather say the root, trunk, and branches of such a poem, not yet fully clothed with rhythm and melody indeed, but still hanging out its tassels and budding on the sprays. And here, by the way, may it not be asked whether Carlyle is not emphatically the English poet of our epoch? Is he not Shelley and Wordsworth combined, and greater than either? Thus far indeed we have seen this luminary in a critical phase chiefly. But it is [sic] not because he has read, in the life of the men he has apotheosized, true poems, incarnations of that ideal he worshipped? It seems to us an accident, that prose and criticism, not odes and positive life have been his vein. Had he but form and tune what a poet was there! This book we say is a poem, the most remarkable of our time. 93

Finally, John Sterling, Carlyle's friend and exacting critic, writes in the _London and Westminster Review_ of October 1839:

This history is, in fact, a genuine breathing epic. Complete and fixed in its design, it thrills with life-blood through and through. It shows how the most golden fancy, and the most vivifying imagination, may be exercised, in all their glory and fullest flood, within the bounds of the literally true, of that which was transacted in the lives of our fathers, and which filled with its jar and smoke, and diurnal apparitions, the pages of hundreds of newspapers. 94

The favourable reviews of _The French Revolution_ are agreed on accepting the work as a form of prose epic. They are amenable to Carlyle's displacement of the functions of poetry into the form of prose and to his equation of poetry and history. They are insistently aware of the respects in which the work's form transgresses "the usually approved style of historical narrative" and
"the settled rules of prose composition." Nevertheless, they are willing to accept the work's stylistic irregularities, either as positive virtues or as minor flaws in an impressive overall design. The hostile reviewers, however, in examining the same stylistic irregularities, are willing to make no such allowances. Lady Sydney Morgan, leading the attack on Carlyle in the Athenaeum of 20 May 1837, begins from critical principles similar to those used by Carlyle's favourable reviewers. "Language is a natural fluent," she argues, "and to arrest its course is as undesirable as it is difficult"; hence, "the theory of a permanent Augustan age" is impracticable. "Style," she continues, "must bear a certain relation to the mind from which it emanates; and when new ideas and new sciences change the national character, the modes of national expression must change also"; "received ideas . . . of classical styles" she therefore dismisses as "narrow and unphilosophic." Early in her argument, however, Lady Sydney Morgan appears to lose all patience with Carlyle's artistic outlook. "When . . . great changes arrive suddenly and unprepared," she states, "they produce, not reforms merely, but revolutions; and in revolutions, literary as well as political, there occurs between the overthrow of the old and the creation of the new, an epoch of transition in which all monstrous and misshapen things are produced in the unguided search of an unknown and unimagined beauty." The "quaintness, neologism and . . . whimsical coxcombry" of Carlyle she rejects as an attempt "to engraft the idiom of Germany into the king's English," and a menace to "the barriers which separate prose from verse, in our language." The Literary
Gazette of 27 May 1837 doubles the attack on Carlyle's Germanism, and declares his history to be "a triple revolution:—1st, allowing the French Revolution itself to be one; 2nd, there is the Revolution of Mr. Carlyle, two; and 3d, the Revolution of the English language, three."  

The most striking feature of these two unfavourable reviews, apart from their hostile stance and virulent tone, is the closeness of their descriptions of The French Revolution to statements made in personal letters by Carlyle himself. By judging the style of Carlyle's work as an indication of his own personal state and by placing the work in the historical context of radical change, Lady Sydney Morgan adopts critical principles similar to Carlyle's own and potentially sympathetic to his work; her belief that style reflects mind (later paralleled by The Examiner's statement that "Every original thing must speak its own language") might conceivably be used as a defence of Carlyle's method: his theme being "huge" and "hideous," his work (necessarily mimetic) must be huge and hideous.  

The Literary Gazette, by denouncing the work as a "triple revolution," comes close to Carlyle's statement to John Sterling that "It is a wild savage Book, itself a kind of French Revolution."  

The view held by the Athenæum and the Literary Gazette that the form of The French Revolution, as well as its topic, is revolutionary supports Carlyle's own contention that the work is "the most radical Book that has been written in these late centuries."
While subsequent criticism of The French Revolution does not match the early critical reviews in intensity and breadth of interest, some valuable contributions to the study of its genre have been made. In a turn-of-the-century survey of Carlyle's works, Frederic Harrison reiterates the conception of The French Revolution as epic. The work, he says,

is usually, and very properly, spoken of and thought of, as a prose poem, if prose poem there can be. It has the essential character of an epic, short of rhythm and versification. Its "argument" and its "books"; its contrasts and "episodes"; its grouping of characters and dénouement,—are as carefully elaborated as the Gerusalemme of Tasso, or the Aeneid of Virgil. And it produces on the mind the effect of a poem with an epic or dramatic plot. 100

Harrison calls the work "an historical poem," typified by "passion, energy, colour, and vast prodigality of ineffaceable pictures." He argues that the poetical impetus of Carlyle's artistry sometimes works against his historical intent: Carlyle's point of termination is chosen for artistic rather than historical reasons, Harrison contends, while the work's "dramatic rapidity" and "inexhaustible contrasts . . . fatally pervert its truthfulness as authentic history." Although Carlyle's work "is not to be accepted as historical authority," concludes Harrison, it should be praised as "a lyrical apologue" or "an historical phantas-magoria." 101 The value of Harrison's treatment, aside from its attention to structure and to the contrasting needs of poetry and history, is its offering of a variety of generic designations for The French Revolution: "prose poem," "epic," "historical poem," "dramatic poem," "lyrical apologue," and "historical
phantasmagoria." Harrison's term "lyrical apologue," like many of Carlyle's generic terms a mixed designation, reflects the tension in *The French Revolution* between the lyric or celebratory function (which corresponds in Carlyle's historical treatment of the genres to the age of Fancy) and the didactic or hortatory function (which corresponds to the age of Understanding); at the same time, it suggests an accommodation of both functions to a single text (which corresponds to Carlyle's age of Reason, that unites Fancy and Understanding). His term "historical phantasmagoria" reflects Carlyle's interest in phantasmagory, which is expressed in the text of *The French Revolution* itself as well as in the critical essays cited above. Most importantly, Harrison's suggestive offering of a multiplicity of designations accords with Carlyle's own critical method (as manifested, for example, in his varied descriptions of Goethe's *Helena*) in following a pluralistic approach to a multi-faceted modern text.

Two decades after Harrison, Louis Cazamian presents a similar treatment of *The French Revolution* as epic:

The book is a genuine epic, the greatest modern epic, as has often been said, embracing as well as Paris—the volcano of the Revolution—the rumbling, provinces, the frontiers, centres of loyalist conspiracies. It is a frank and ardent book, the product of an inspiration rising from heroic deeds, in which truth and a legendary value are inseparable. The book is more than just an epic: the poet's feeling spurs forth in apostrophes, in lyrical cries, and his ardent and serious intelligence expresses itself in meditations which are sublime. Never was a more stirring text accompanied by a more vibrant commentary.
But Cazamian also points up the dramatic nature of the work (which Carlyle himself highlights with his frequent dramatic metaphors) by describing its three volumes as "three acts" from a "great drama," with the third volume presenting "the climax and the dénouement of the tragedy." Cazamian further states, in a manner reminiscent of Harrison's "lyrical apologue," that Carlyle's history "is at once a drama and a sermon." Cazamian, like Harrison, offers a variety of generic terms for Carlyle's work, examining it as "epic," "drama," "sermon," "nightmare-piece," and "modern apocalypse." 104

The most extensive twentieth-century treatment of The French Revolution as epic is made by Albert J. LaValley. LaValley writes:

[Carlyle] certainly intended to write an epic for the modern age, one that would be both ultimate and full in its recognition of man's deepest drives but would also be different from all previous epics, unresolved and problematic, like the process of history itself. The resemblance of The French Revolution to traditional epic is overt, and Carlyle underscores this quality by the frequency of his allusions to the epics of Homer, Virgil, Milton, and Dante and by his highly conscious imitation of their epic devices. It is part of his intention that all the traditional purposes of the old epic shall be subsumed into the new . . . . 105

LaValley lists a variety of epic devices employed by Carlyle:

"direct quotations from Homer and Dante," "geographical allusions to exotic places," "heroic epithets or phrases," the identification of leaders with mythological gods or heroes, a tripartite world, and "epical machinery" for a scientific age." 106 Because he believes that these "parallels exist fundamentally to point out [the] difference" between modern and traditional epic, LaValley lists such anti-epic features of Carlyle's history as its lack of "room
for supernatural action," its presentation of a universe "more of one piece," and "its problemática quality." LaValley describes The French Revolution as a "mock-epic, a true epic-in-reverse, in which the Titans war upon the Olympian gods and dethrone them forever," and as an "anti-epic."\(^{107}\) His use of the three terms "epic," "mock-epic," and "anti-epic" affords a further instance of the inadequacy of a single noun to encompass the varied verbal processes of Carlyle's text.

The epic nature of The French Revolution is treated in a more incidental manner in recent studies by Sara Gragg, Brian John, and John P. Farrell. Gragg follows LaValley in listing epic conventions employed by Carlyle: the epic guide, "broad and inclusive" scope, catalogues, epic similes, machinery, and formal speeches; she argues that Carlyle treats "Sansculottism as a folk" and "organizes his work around the birth, infancy, adolescence, maturity, triumphant deeds, and final decline and death of Sansculottism."\(^{108}\) John writes that Carlyle creates "history as part of the Creation, Fall, and Redemption; history in the epic, biblical, and Miltonic sense."\(^{109}\) Farrell, examining Carlyle's "strange but meaningful juxtaposition of dissimilar genres," states that "Carlyle exploited the idea of genre by intimating, on the one hand, that there are separable and ideal structures, and, on the other, that life is a conflation of the distinct realities that literary forms abstract from experience." While he explores the interaction of epic and tragedy in The French Revolution as an instance of this conflation, Farrell argues that tragedy is the more important form in Carlyle. "The French
Revolution did not achieve epic harmony as a political event," he concludes, "and it does not do so in Carlyle's symbolic re-telling either."110

With Carlyle, as with any consciously modern author, the question of genre is a vexed one. On the one hand, the illusion of fixed and discrete genres is for Carlyle a residual inheritance from an eighteenth-century world view incompatible with the disturbed nineteenth century whose "grand Poem" he wishes to write. As a critic, Carlyle sees that the great poetic genres of the past must be radically altered to the prose forms of the modern era: for him, Rousseau's Confessions must be considered "an elegiaco-didactic Poem," the Vicar of Wakefield an idyl, and Boswell's Life of Johnson "a kind of Heroic Poem."111 As an artist attempting to imitate the variegated texture of modern life, he adopts a hybrid form of "Farce-Tragedy,"112 which is as threatening to generic decorum as the "lyrical ballad" of Wordsworth and Coleridge. On the other hand, Carlyle's art and criticism alike depend heavily on established forms, both the classical genres of epic, tragedy, and comedy and the more recently acknowledged genres made familiar to Carlyle by his German reading: the fragment, the Märchen, and the Kunstroman. An accurate estimation of Carlyle and genre must therefore encompass both his dependence on and his resistance to established forms. Carlyle hints at many genres, but rests with none; he makes manipulation, displacement, and combination of established forms represent the modern world whose complexity he imitates. For Carlyle, literary form is less like a "coat" than a "skin," "verily the product and close kins-
fellow of all that lies under it; exact type of the nature of the beast: not to be plucked off without flaying and death." As we shall see in the following chapter, the form which Carlyle selects as the "exact type" of the French Revolution is the "dis-imprisoned" epic of modern history.
Notes to Chapter One

1 Friedrich Schlegel's "Lucinde" and the Fragments, trans. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1971), p. 150. All quotations from this book (referred to hereafter as Fragments) are taken from Schlegel's Fragment.


6 See Structuralism in Literature (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1974) for Scholes' views on Frye (pp. 118-27), Todorov (pp. 128-9), and genre study in general (pp. 128-41).

7 Kinds of Literature (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1982). Fowler attempts to refute both Frye and Todorov when he states: "Discourse is an order of words, but literature is an order of works" (p. 5).


10 By insisting on the phrase "early nineteenth-century English literature," I do not intend to suggest that generic experimentation is not a feature of literature later in the century. Rather I wish to make clear that my emphasis, at least for the first five chapters of my dissertation, is on the early part of the century to 1837.


13 Hirsch, p. 106.

14 Works', XXVI, 269.

15 Tennyson, pp. 167-8.

16 In my surveys of German criticism throughout this dissertation, my concern is to show the general compatibility of German generic criticism with Carlyle's, rather than to examine the question of specific influence; I therefore include both works which Carlyle knew, such as Schiller's treatise on the naive and sentimental, the correspondence of Goethe and Schiller, the lectures of the Schlegels, and Richter's *Vorschule der Aesthetik*, and works which Carlyle probably did not know, such as Hegel's *Aesthetik*. For the principal studies of Carlyle and the Germans, see Charles Frederick Harrold, *Carlyle and German Thought* (1934; rpt. London: Archon Books, 1963); René Wellek, "Carlyle and German Romanticism," in *Confrontations* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 34-81; and Hill Shine, *Carlyle's Early Reading* (Lexington, Ky.: Margaret I. King Library, 1953).

17 Works, XXVII, 171.


19 This dialogue on epic and drama, discussed in detail in Chapter Two of this dissertation, appears in the third volume of the *Briefwechsel zwischen Schiller und Goethe* (Stuttgart, 1829).


21 Fragments, p. 237.

22 Fragments, pp. 143, 145, 170.

23 Fragments, pp. 175-6.


25 Richter, p. 196.
26 These two quotations are from *German Romance* (Works, XXI, 261) and "State of German Literature" (Works, XXVI, 53).

27 These two quotations are from *German Romance* (Works, XXI, 261) and "State of German Literature" (Works, XXVI, 52).


29 Works, XXV, 47.

30 The adjective "klassichromantische" appears in the subtitle of Goethe's *Helena*. The other designations appear in the *Briefwechsel*, III, 66, 84, 385.

31 Works, XXVII, 387; XXVIII, 49, 148, 157, 199, 201, 433; *French Revolution*, I, 253; II, 5-6, 87, 134, 191. Throughout this dissertation references to *The French Revolution* (which occupies Volumes II, III, and IV of the Collected Works) will be made to the individual volumes of the work itself, not to the numbers of the series of Collected Works.

32 Works, XXV, 38.

33 Works, XXI, 3-4.

34 Works, XXVI, 163, 196; XXVII, 385.

35 Works, XXVII, 449.

36 Works, XXVI, 233.

37 Works, XXVI, 232-3.

38 Works, XXVII, 28.

39 Works, XXVII, 325-6.

40 Works, XXIII, 19.

41 Works, XXIII, 19-20.

42 Works, XXVII, 275-6, 344.

43 Works, XXVII, 280.

44 Works, XXVII, 283, 302.

45 Works, XXVIII, 249.

46 Works, XXVIII, 250.
47 For a discussion of the Schlegels' use of the form, see René Wellek, A History of Modern Criticism, II (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press), 35. For Carlyle's awareness of the form, see Works, XXVI, 61, 231. Both the title and the breadth of reference of Carlyle's essay suggest also Shaftesbury's Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times. See Letters, I, 51n.

48 Works, XXVIII, 6.

49 Works, XXVIII, 31-2.

50 Tennyson, pp. 223-30.

51 Works, XXVIII, 167-76.

52 Works, XXIX, 348-83.

53 Works, XXIX, 397-403.

54 Works, XXVII, 98.

55 Letters, VI, 396.

56 Works, XXVI, 9.

57 Tennyson, pp. 9, 173.

58 The Rhetorical Form of Carlyle's "Sartor Resartus" (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1972), pp. 8-9.


60 Works, XXVIII, 255-6, 259, 265, 267, 317. The phrases "historical Fact" and "dramatic Fiction" are applied by Carlyle to Goethe's earlier treatment of Cagliostro in Der Gross-Koptha.

61 Works, XXVIII, 252, 317-8.

62 Works, XXVIII, 255, 318. For further references to Milton, the Devil, and celestial and internal angels, see pp. 301, 303, 306, 317.

63 Works, XXVIII, 276, 291, 302, 315.

65 Works, XXVIII, 325.


67 Works, XXVIII, 385.

68 Letters, VIII, 316.

69 Works, XXVI, 213.

70 Works, XXVI, 37-8.

71 Works, XXVIII, 383.

72 Works, XXVIII, 368.

73 Works, XXVIII, 370.

74 Works, XXVIII, 328; Letters, VII, 245.

75 Letters, VI, 446.

76 Letters, VII, 24.

77 Letters, VII, 244.

78 Letters, VII, 306.


80 Letters, IX, 206.

81 Letters, IX, 288.


83 Works, XXVII, 90.

84 Seigel, p. 57.

85 Seigel, p. 58.

97 Heraud, p. 100.
98 Heraud, p. 101, 104.
100 Heraud, p. 102.
102 "New Yorker," 4 (1890), 813.
103 Boston Quarterly Review, I (1838), 410, 412.
109 Letters, IX, 193.
111 Harrison, pp. 50-4.
112 For references to phantasmagory in The French Revolution, see Chapter Five below.
114 Cazamian, pp. 157, 158, 167.
115 LaValley, p. 139.
116 LaValley, pp. 141-2, 145.
117 LaValley, pp. 142, 144.

111 Works, XXVI, 214; XXVIII, 49, 75.

112 "Farce-Tragedy" is discussed in Chapter Four below.

113 Letters, IX, 218.
Chapter Two
Carlyle and Epic

In the 1858 "Proem" to Frederick the Great, Carlyle's fictitious literary theorist Gottfried Sauerteig declares that "All History is an imprisoned Epic, nay an imprisoned Psalm and Prophecy." Carlyle responds to his persona's statement by wishing that Sauerteig "had disimprisoned it in this instance," instead of merely discoursing on "how and it would be if disimprisoned."¹ Carlyle's vision of a disimprisoned epic in this late work is a practical outcome of Sauerteig's much earlier thesis that "History ... is the true Poetry; that Reality, if rightly interpreted, is grander than Fiction."² Viewed in the context of this thesis, the disimprisonment of epic encompasses two closely related movements: the first of these, based on Sauerteig's equation of history and poetry, is the presentation in a highly wrought, contineuous form of "the Romance of Life,"³ which underlies and unites all historical events; the second, based on Sauerteig's assertion of the supremacy of reality over fiction, is the liberation of the central romantic vision of epic from the fictional encrustations placed upon it by recalcitrant literary convention. Sauerteig's literary aesthetic, enunciated in various essays of the early eighteen-thirties, is explored most fully in "Biography" (1832), which is, not coincidentally, Carlyle's
fullest examination of the epic genre. In this essay, Carlyle introduces "Professor Gottfried Sauerteig's Aesthetische Springwurzeln; a Work, perhaps, as yet new to most English readers."

"The Professor and Doctor," states Carlyle, "is not a man whom we can praise without reservation; neither shall we say that his Springwurzeln (a sort of magical picklocks, as he affectedly names them) are adequate to 'start' every bolt that locks-up an aesthetic mystery: nevertheless, in his crabbed, one-sided way, he sometimes hits masses of the truth." As in Sartor Resartus, Carlyle adopts the stance of an English editor introducing an unknown German with whose ideas he is only partially in agreement. But here the German persona is not Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, whose interests cover the wide range of German thought, but Gottfried Sauerteig, whose interests are more narrowly focussed on the relation of aesthetics to reality. The name of Carlyle's persona, coupling the dignified "Gottfried" with the deflationary "Sauerteig," indicates, as do the names of Diogenes Teufelsdröckh and More's Raphael Hythlodaeus, the presence of a paradoxical vision. Sauerteig denounces fictional machinery, yet he himself is, as both Carlisle Moore and George Levine point out, a fiction; he denigrates artificial epics, yet his aesthetic views are designed to make possible the writing of a believable modern epic through the union of fictive forms and historical fact. In short, Sauerteig's paradoxical stance deprecates fiction as "feigning" at the same time as it supports the perpetuation of fiction as a shaping principle with which to express the reality of modern life.
In Carlyle's view, all "Fictitious Narratives . . . from the highest category of epic or dramatic Poetry, in Shakespeare and Homer, down to the lowest of froth Prose in the Fashionable Novel" are "mimic Biographies," attempts to record "the grand secret wherewith all hearts labour oppressed: The significance of Man's Life." Sauerteig therefore condemns fictions which have disjoined themselves from their origin in human life. "Fiction," he states,

while the feigner of it knows that he is feigning, partakes, more than we suspect, of the nature of lying; and has ever an, in some degree, unsatisfactory character. All Mythologies were once Philosophies; were believed: the Epic Poems of old time, so long as they continued epic, and had any complete impressiveness, were Histories, and understood to be narratives of facts. In so far as Homer employed his gods as mere ornamental fringes, and had not himself, or at least did not expect his hearers to have, a belief that they were real agents in those antique doings; so far did he fail to be genuine; so far was he a partially hollow and false singer; and sang to please only a portion of man's mind, not the whole thereof.

Sauerteig's distrust of feigning in general determines his specific denunciation of epic machinery:

It is thus that I judge of the Supernatural in an Epic Poem; and would say, the instant it has ceased to be authentically supernatural, and become what you call "Machinery": sweep it out of sight . . . ! Of a truth, that same "Machinery," about which the critics make such hubbub, was well named Machinery; for it is in very deed mechanical, nowise inspired or poetical. Neither for us is there the smallest aesthetic enjoyment in it; save only in this way; that we believe it to have been believed,—by the Singer or his Hearers; into whose case we now laboriously struggle to transport ourselves; and so, with stinted enough result, catch some reflex of the Reality, which for them was wholly
real, and visible face to face. Whenever it has come so far that your "Machinery" is avowedly mechanical and unbelievned,—what is it else . . . but a miserable, meaningless Deception, kept-up by old use-and-wont alone? If the gods of an Iliad are to us no longer authentic Shapes of Terror, . . . but only vague-glittering Shadows,—what must the dead Pagan gods of an Epigoniad be, the dead-living Pagan-Christian gods of a Lusiad, the concrete-abstract, evangelical-metaphysical gods of a Paradise Lost? Superannuated lumber! Cast raiment, at best; in which some poor mime, strutting and swaggering, may or may not set forth new noble Human Feelings (again a Reality), and so secure, or not secure, our pardon of such hoydenish masking; for which, in any case, he has a pardon to ask.

Sauerteig denounces imitative epics "from Virgil's Aeneid downwards" as "artificial, heterogeneous things; more of gumflowers than of roses." In the modern world, he claims, "the partially living modern Novel" replaces "the wholly dead modern Epic"; "the very name of Epic sets men a-yawning" and "the announcement of a new Epic is received as a public calamity." Having despaired of previous fictions, Sauerteig asserts the continuing possibility of vision for a future poet "working more and more on REALITY, and evolving more and more wisely its inexhaustible meanings." In examining Sauerteig's views on epic in "Biography," which is in many ways a theoretical blueprint for The French Revolution, I shall treat several aspects of his thought as they figure in other of Carlyle's writings: the radical accountability of literature to life, the need for modern literature to treat contemporary society, the recalcitrance of literary convention and the obsolescence of fictional machinery, the modifications of form required in a convincing modern epic, the identification of history and epic, and the evolution of the epic into the novel.
By treating "Fictitious Narratives" as "mimic Biographies," Sauerteig posits an intimate association between literary forms and human life. This association is reflected in various of Carlyle's phrases that speak of life in terms of a literary genre ("the world-old Rhapsodia of Existence," "Life-Epos," "the Romance of Life," "the lordliest Real-Phantasmagory, which men name Being," "the beautiful, real-ideal, prose-idyl of a Literary Life," "the grand unrhymed Romance of [Burn's'] earthly existence") and in his theory of genre itself: the poet, writes Carlyle,

can never have far to seek for a subject: the elements of his art are in him, and around him on every hand; for him the Ideal world is not remote from the Actual, but under it and within it: nay, he is a poet, precisely because he can discern it there. . . . Is there not the fifth act of a Tragedy in every death-bed, though it were a peasant's, and a bed of heath? And are wooings and weddings obsolete, that there can be Comedy no longer? Or are men suddenly grown wise, that Laughter must no longer shake his sides, but be cheated of his Farce? Man's life and nature is, as it was, and as it will ever be.

This intimate association of literature and life determines the aesthetics of veracity which is central to Sauerteig's assertions in particular and to Carlyle's artistic and critical writings of the eighteen-thirties in general. In 1833, the year after "Biography" and the year before the beginning of the composition of The French Revolution, Carlyle expresses to John Stuart Mill his opinion that "it is . . . the intense and entire sincerity of the Bible that makes it still the Book of Books." Carlyle extends his criterion of "entire sincerity" to the epic, a form closely related to the Bible in his thought. "Is not all Poetry the essence of Reality," he asks Mill, "and true History the only
possible Epic?"  

Carlyle's criterion of veracity generates his demand for a poetry of contemporary life. According to Carlyle, the literature of the eighteenth century "had sunk from its former vocation: it no longer held the mirror up to Nature; no longer reflected, in many-coloured expressive symbols, the actual passions, the hopes, sorrows, joys of living men; but dwelt in a remote conventional world, in Castles of Otranto, in Epigoniads and Leonidas, among clear, metallic heroes, and white, high, stainless beauties, in whom the drapery and elocution were nowise the least important qualities."  

The "ordinary poet" of the nineteenth century, Carlyle maintains, similarly locates poetry in "some past, distant, conventional heroic world." "Hence our innumerable host of rose-coloured Novels and iron-mailed Epics, with their locality not on the Earth, but somewhere nearer to the Moon," Carlyle says: "Hence our Virgins of the Sun, and our Knights of the Cross, malicious Saracens in turbans, and copper-coloured Chiefs in wampum, and so many other truculent figures from the heroic times or the heroic climates, who on all hands swarm in our poetry."  

The true poet of the nineteenth century must, in Carlyle's estimation, reconcile the romantic principle of poetry with contemporary facts, rejecting the maudlin irrelevance of "rose-coloured Novels and iron-mailed Epics" for a poetry based on "the hopes, sorrows, joys of living men." Two modern poets who, for Carlyle, recognize the poetic possibilities of modern life are Goethe and Burns. "The poetry of Goethe," Carlyle states,
[is] Poetry, sometimes in the very highest sense of that word; yet it is no reminiscence, but something actually present and before us; no looking back into an antique Fairyland, divided by impassable abysses from the real world as it lies about us and within us; but a looking round upon that real world itself, now rendered holier to our eyes, and once more become a solemn temple, where the spirit of Beauty still dwells, and is still, under new emblems, to be worshipped as of old. With Goethe, the mythologies of bygone days pass only for what they are: we have no witchcraft or magic in the common acceptation; and spirits no longer bring with them airs from heaven or blasts from hell; for Pandemonium and the steadfast Empyrean have faded away, since the opinions which they symbolised no longer are. Neither does he bring his heroes from remote Oriental climates, or periods of chivalry, or any section either of Atlantis or the Age of Gold; feeling that the reflex of these things is cold and faint, and only hangs like a cloud-picture in the distance, beautiful but delusive, and which even the simplest must know to be a delusion. The end of Poetry is higher: she must dwell in Reality, and become manifest to men in the forms among which they live and move. 10

And of Burns Carlyle writes:

A Scottish peasant's life was the meanest and rudest of all lives, till Burns became a poet in it, and a poet of it; found it a man's life, and therefore significant to men. A thousand battle-fields remain unsung; but the Wounded Hare has not perished without its memorial; a balm of mercy yet breathes on us from its dumb agonies, because a poet was there. Our Halloween had passed and repassed, in rude awe and laughter, since the era of the Druids; but no Theocritus, till Burns, discerned in it the materials of a Scottish Idyl. . . . 11

Carlyle's awareness of the need for a poetry of contemporary life is heightened by his sense of the recalcitrance of literary convention and the tendency towards obsolescence of literary forms. Epic machinery, says Sauerteig, shows only "some reflex of the Reality, which for [the epic's original auditors] was wholly real, and visible face to face." In terms of the theory of the symbol
developed in *Sartor Resartus*, the machinery, or symbolic vesture, becomes an end in itself, detached from the reality that it was originally intended to symbolize. Carlyle's attempt to confront the problem of obsolescence in epic can be traced in his reactions over many years to the work of Homer, for him the most important and compelling of epic authors. In 1820 Carlyle responds to a letter from Robert Mitchell containing the following disparaging remarks about Homer:

To speak of the merits of the Maeonian Bard from one perusal only may be deemed presumption—yet I may be allowed to say that my Enjoyment fell far short of Expectation. I found, & I am ashamed to say it, little to please and much to offend—The Morals of his Divinities are those of St Giles—their language that of Billingsgate or Wapping—His Nestors are garrulous beyond endurance—the Valour of his Heroes little else than savage Cruelty—Milton is more sublime, Byron more vigorous, Campbell more pathetic & Scotts Novels a thousand times more interesting—We tolerate him not because he is a good Poet but because he wrote a thousand years ago. 12

Carlyle concurs with Mitchell by stating that, with the elimination of unmerited adulation of Homer, "a very inconsiderable item would remain." Importantly, however, Carlyle's extensive response to Mitchell's critique centres not on the issue of Homer's immorality or indecorousness, but rather on the issue of his obsolescence. "Maeonides has had his day," Carlyle states:

at least the better part of it; the noon was five and twenty centuries ago; the twilight (for he set in 1453) may last for other five and twenty centuries—but it too must terminate. Nothing that we know of can last forever. . . . The ideas about which poetry is conversant must differ in every different age and country. The Poetry of a Choctaw, I imagine, would turn chiefly on the pains of hunger, and the pleasures
of catching bears or scalping Chicasaws. In like manner tho' some of the affections which Homer delineates are coexistent with the race, yet in the progress of refinement (or change) his mode of delineating them will appear trivial or disgusting--and the very twilight of his fame will have an end. 13

Over a decade later, in Sartor Resartus, Teufelsdröckh similarly maintains that Homer's epics, however much they are to be admired, are prone to an inevitable obsolescence with the passage of time:

Homer's Epos has not ceased to be true; yet it is no longer our Epos, but shines in the distance, if clearer and clearer, yet also smaller and smaller, like a receding star. It needs a scientific telescope, it needs to be reinterpreted and artificially brought near us, before we can so much as know that it was a Sun. 14

Carlyle's longstanding critical concern with literary obsolescence prompts in turn his practical artistic problem of how to deal with traditional machinery in a modern work of art. Carlyle confronts this problem repeatedly in his dramatic criticism. Schiller's Braut von Messina he criticizes as "an attempt to exhibit a modern subject and modern sentiments in an antique garb." 15

The spirits of Werner's dramas he denigrates as being "of a mongrel nature, neither rightly dead nor alive":

These three supernaturals [from the drama Martin Luther] hover about in very whimsical wise, cultivating flowers, playing on flutes, and singing dirge-like epithalamiums over unsound sleepers: we cannot see ... what such jack-o'-lantern personages have in the least to do with so grave a business. If the author intended by such machinery to elevate his subject from the Common, and unite it with the higher region of the Infinite and the Invisible, we cannot think that his contrivance has succeeded, or was worthy to succeed. These half-allegorical, half-corporeal beings yield no contentment
Anywhere: Abstract Ideas, however they may put on fleshly garments, are a class of characters whom we cannot sympathise with or delight in. Besides, how can this mere embodiment of an allegory be supposed to act on the rugged materials of life, and elevate into ideal grandeur the doings of real men, that live and move amid the actual pressure of worldly things? At best, it can stand but like a hand in the margin; it is not performing the task proposed, but only telling us that it was meant to be performed.

The problem of machinery in the epic, which figures so prominently in Sauerteig's diatribe against fictions, Carlyle encounters in The Life of Schiller, where he discusses Schiller's intention to write a modern epic. After stating how epics, "since the time of the Epigoniad, and Leonidas," have "become a mighty dull affair," and establishing that "Schiller aimed at something infinitely higher than these faint and superannuated imitations," Carlyle quotes Schiller on the problem of machinery in a modern epic:

'An epic poem in the eighteenth century should be quite a different thing from such a poem in the childhood of the world. . . . Our manners, the finest essence of our philosophies, our politics, economy, arts, in short, of all we know and do, would require to be introduced without constraint, and interwoven in such a composition, to live there in beautiful harmonious freedom, as all the branches of Greek culture live and are made visible in Homer's Iliad. Nor am I disinclined to invent a species of machinery for this purpose; being anxious to fulfil, with hairsbreadth accuracy, all the requisitions that are made of epic poets, even on the side of form. Besides, this machinery, which, in a subject so modern, in an age so prosaic, appears to present the greatest difficulty, might excite the interest in a high degree; were it suitably adapted to this same modern spirit.'

While Carlyle does not advance Schiller's precise solution to the problem of epic machinery, he does share his awareness of the formal modifications necessary to an epic of a modern, prosaic age.
He demonstrates this awareness by showing how the epic must be accommodated to modern facts and forms. He speaks of Boswell's Life of Johnson as "a kind of Heroic Poem" or "English Odyssey":

The Johnsoniad of Boswell turns on objects that in very deed existed; it is all true. So far other in melodiousness of tone, it vies with the Odyssey, or surpasses it, in this one point: to us these read pages, as those chanted hexameters were to the first Greek hearers, are, in the fullest deepest sense, wholly credible.

"The fit Odyssey of our unheroic age," he concludes, "was to be written, not sung; of a Thinker, not a Fighter..." 18 In "Corn-Law Rhymes" Carlyle declares that "Tools and the Man" should replace "Arms and the Man" as the theme of a modern epic; he describes the rhymes themselves as epic, containing "rudiments of a truly great idea; great though all undeveloped".

The Rhapsody of 'Enoch Wray' is, in its nature and unconscious tendency, Epic; a whole world lies shadowed in it. What we might call an inarticulate, half-audible Epic! The main figure is a blind aged man; himself a ruin, and encircled with the ruin of a whole Era. Sad and great does that image of a universal Dissolution hover visible as a poetic background. Good old Enoch! He could do so much; was so wise, so valiant. No Ilium had he destroyed; yet somewhat he had, so built up: where the Mill stands noisy by its cataract, making corn into bread for men, it was Enoch that reared it, and made the rude rocks send it water; where the mountain Torrent now boils in vain, and is mere passing music to the traveller, it was Enoch's cunning that spanned it with that strong Arch, grim, time-defying. Where Enoch's hand or mind has been, Disorder has become Order; Chaos has receded some little handbreadth, had to give up some new handbreadth of his ancient realm. Enoch too has seen his followers fall round him (by stress of hardship, and the arrows of the gods), has performed funeral games for them and raised sandstone memorials, and carved his Abilis ad Plures thereon, with his own hand. The living chronicle and epitome of a whole century: when he departs, a whole century will become dead, historical. 19
When Carlyle writes in a similarly incongruous vein of Burns that "the Farmer's commendation of his Auld Mare, in plough of in cart, may vie with Homer's Smithy of the Cyclops, or yoking of Priam's Chariot," he points up, rather than hides, the apparent incongruity of viewing modern facts from an epic perspective. 20

The source of this incongruity is Carlyle's attempt to identify reality with romance and history with epic. In "Biography," Sauerteig counters the commonplace conception of epic as a work containing supernatural machinery with a definition of epic as a factual, historical narrative. The basis of Sauerteig's definition of epic as history is Carlyle's belief in history as "an imprisoned Psalm and Prophecy," a belief shared with such German thinkers as Fichte, Novalis ("the whole of history is an Evangel"), 21 and Schelling ("History is an epic composed in the mind of God"). 22 By defining the epic as an historical narrative, Carlyle disavows any recognition of Aristotle's distinction between poetry's "general truths" and history's "particular facts," 23 which is received as a commonplace by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century epic theorists. Moreover, he calls upon himself the disapproval that marks the responses of those theorists to such historical epics as the Pharsalia of Lucan, the Lusiad of Camões, and the Henriade of Voltaire. Sir William Davenant criticizes Lucan for attempting "to record the truth of Actions" instead of seeking "truth in the Passions," and for giving "a selected Diary of Fortune" rather than "the general History of Nature." He distinguishes "Truth narrative and past," which is the concern of historians, from "truth operative," which is the concern of poets. 24
Thomas Hobbes repeats D'Avénant's distinction by stating that poetry deals with "manners feigned, as the name of Poésy imports, not found in men." Sir Richard Blackmore maintains that the epic should treat "a devis'd Probability of Actions and Circumstances, and not a relation of real Events; for otherwise it would not be an imitation of Nature, but Nature it self [sic]." Lord Kames observes that no writer after Voltaire "will think of erecting an epic poem upon a recent event in the history of his own country." Even the historian Edward Gibbon writes that the epicist renders history "rather as it ought to have been, than as it actually was." He observes of the Aeneid, for example, that its historical basis is the "flight of a band of refugees; their squabbles with a few villagers, and the settling of a paltry town." Hugh Blair states "that it is the business of a poet not to be a mere annalist of Facts, but to embellish truth with beautiful, probable, and useful fictions." William Belsham argues that an epicist may write on an historical theme, "since there is no reason why many real facts may not be capable of that artful disposition and happiness of arrangement, in regard to which he may justly be esteemed a poet"; yet he questions Lucan's choice of an historical subject, inasmuch as "the proximity of time, and the notoriety of the events, left him no scope for the exercise of invention."

Faced with the problem of "the proximity of time, and the notoriety of the events" in the modern historical theme that he advocates for a modern epic, Carlyle must define how "artful disposition and happiness of arrangement" can be achieved without recourse to invented fictions. In "On History" (1830), he makes practical observations on the problem of historical writing which
are crucial both to his theory of the art of history and to his attempt to write epic history in *The French Revolution*. 32 Carlyle distinguishes between the "Seer" (or "Artist") and the "Onlooker" (or "Artisan") in historical writing: "the Artist in History may be distinguished from the Artisan in History," he states, "for here, as in all other provinces, there are Artists and Artisans; men who labour mechanically in a department, without eye, for the Whole, not feeling that there is a Whole; and men who inform and ennoble the humblest department with an Idea of the Whole, and habitually know that only in the Whole is the Partial to be truly discerned." The practical problem of how to demonstrate "an Idea of the Whole" he frames by distinguishing between the simultaneous and the successive and between action and narrative. "The most gifted man," writes Carlyle, "can observe, still more can regard, only the series of his own impressions: his observation, therefore, ... must be successive, while the things done were often simultaneous; the things done were not a series, but a group." While the artisan historian writes "Narrative" (which is "of only one dimension; only travels forward towards one, or towards successive points"), the artist historian must write "Action" (which is "extended in breadth and in depth, as well as in length" and "based on Passion and Mystery"). Whereas "Narrative is linear," Carlyle states, "Action is solid." The result of Carlyle's attempts to find a form which treats action, not narrative, the simultaneous, not the successive, and the solid, not the linear, is the form of "True Fiction" 33 which Carlyle attempts in "The Diamond Necklace" and most fully develops in
The French Revolution: a form which combines the factual basis of an historical narrative with the shaping structures of epic and other fictions.

An important context for this form is the relationship of the epic and the novel, the final aspect of Sauerteig's views on the epic to be discussed. In the modern age, claims Sauerteig, "the partially living modern Novel" replaces "the wholly dead modern Epic." This "coupling of epic and novel in Carlyle's thought," writes John Loofbourow in discussing Sauerteig's statement, manifests "a radical change in the concept of contemporary fiction" by allowing to the novel greater potentialities than are demonstrated in the popular fiction which Carlyle repeatedly denigrates. 34 In light of Sauerteig's claim, and in light of Carlyle's statement, quoted above in Chapter One, that "the Heroic Poem, with its supernatural machinery" evolved "into the Fiction of practical Life, in which latter species a prophetic eye might have discerned the coming Tom Joneses and Wilhelm Meisters," Carlyle's theoretical observations on the epic can be profitably illuminated by both previous and subsequent critical treatments of the relationship of epic and novel. 35

The epic nature of Wilhelm Meister is discussed by Schiller in his letters to Goethe. Schiller finds that Goethe's novel "in several instances resembles an epic poem" and "is imbued both by an epic and a philosophical spirit." He sees the novel's form as occupying an intermediary position between poetry and prose:
The form of your Meister—as indeed the form of every novel—is in fact not poetical; it lies wholly within the domain of the understanding, is subject to all its demands, and is likewise affected by all its limits. But owing to a truly poetical spirit having made use of this form, and having expressed the most poetical circumstances in this form, the result is a strange wavering between a prosaic and a poetical mood, for which I cannot find any appropriate name. 36

The epic nature of Fielding's fiction is defined by Fielding himself in his description of the "comic romance," or "comic epic-poem in prose." In the Preface to Joseph Andrews, Fielding follows Aristotle in stating that the "EPIC, as well as the DRAMA, is divided into tragedy and comedy." He then argues that epic "may be likewise either in verse or prose," so long as it is epic in its "fable, action, characters, sentiments, and diction."

Fielding subsequently defines the "comic romance" as "a comic epic-poem in prose; differing from comedy, as the serious epic from tragedy: its action being more extended and comprehensive; containing a much larger circle of incidents, and introducing a greater variety of characters." 37 Fielding's contention that the essence of epic lies in "extended and comprehensive" action rather than in metrical form is clearly compatible with Carlyle's critical awareness of the modern displacement of verse forms into prose, and with the views of the early reviewers of The French Revolution who accept the work as a prose epic. Richter, in his Vorschule der Aesthetik, similarly disallows verse form as a defining characteristic of epic. He calls *Don Quixote*, an important work for both Fielding and Carlyle, "Cervantes's epic novel"; he describes the *Odyssey* as "the original epic novel,
since it is restricted to a single hero, [and] substitutes the number of countries for the number of actors." Richter divides the novel genre into the "epic novel" and the "dramatic novel," defining the former as a novel which "describes life as episodic." Hegel, in his *Aesthetik*, described the "romantic novel" as the "Epopaea of modern society":

In this we possess, on the one hand, in all its completeness and variety, an epic prodigality of interests, conditions, characters, and living relations, the extensive background in fact of an entire world. We have also the epic exposition of events. What fails us here is the primitive world-condition as poetically conceived, which is the source of the genuine Epos. The romance or novel in the modern sense pre-supposes a basis of reality already organized in its prosaic form, upon which it then attempts, in its own sphere, so far as this is possible from such a general point of view, both in its treatment of the vital character of events and the life of individuals and their destiny, to make good once more the banished claims of poetical vision. For this reason one of the most common collisions in the novel, and one most suitable to it, is the conflict between the poetry of the heart and the prose of external conditions, antagonistic to it.

The relationship of epic and novel is explored in the twentieth century by two critics working within the Hegelian tradition of genre criticism, Georg Lukács and Mikhail Bakhtin. Like Carlyle, Lukács rejects "the question of whether a work is written in verse or prose" as a "decisive genre-defining criterion." Like Carlyle, he sees the epic and the novel as the characteristic forms of successive historical periods. Lukács describes the epic and the novel as "two major forms of great epic literature, [which] differ from one another not by their
authors' fundamental intentions but by the given historico-
philosophical realities with which the authors were confronted."

"The novel is," in Lukács's view, "the epic of an age in which
the extensive totality of life is no longer directly given, in
which the immanence of meaning in life has become a problem, yet
which still thinks in terms of totality." Lukács's contention
that "the fissures and rents which are inherent in the historical
situation must be drawn into the form-giving process" of the
novel is clearly compatible with Carlyle's insistence that the
radical form of his text must accord with the radical nature of
his age. 40 Bakhtin follows Lukács in seeing the novel as the
appropriate form of the modern age, "the only genre born of this
new world and in total affinity with it." The novel, he claims,
"sparks the renovation of all other genres" and "infects them
with its spirit of process and inconclusiveness." These genres
"become more free and flexible," Bakhtin argues:

their language renews itself by incorporating extra-
literary heteroglossia and the 'novelistic' layers
of literary language, they become dialogized, per-
meated with laughter, irony, humor, elements of self-
parody, and finally--this is the most important thing--
the novel inserts into these other genres an
indeterminacy, a certain semantic openedness, a
living contact with unfinished, still-evolving con-
temporary reality (the open-ended present).

The epic is, for Bakhtin, "a congealed and half-moribund genre"
which exists "beyond the sphere of possible contact with the
developing, incomplete and therefore re-thinking and re-evaluating
present." To portray an event on the same time-and-value plane
as oneself and one's contemporaries" is therefore, for him, "to
undertake a radical revolution, and to step out of the world of epic into the world of the novel."\textsuperscript{41} Carlyle's problematic conception of the modern epic and his artistry in The French Revolution both encompass the novelistic features identified by Bakhtin: dialogic form (or heteroglossia), indeterminacy, self-awareness, and contemporaneity.

A particular form of the novel that has clear relevance to Carlyle's theory and practice of epic history is the historical novel. "Since the social reality which [the historical novel] depicts is," as Lukacs points out, "closer to the world of epic than to that of the modern novel, it is obvious that some of its motifs may bear a strong affinity to the old epic."\textsuperscript{42} Carlyle himself does not identify his work with the form of the historical novel, which he tends to regard as an attempt to portray modern sentiments in an inappropriate historical dress: he speaks in The Life of Schiller of "that half-illicit species of composition, the historic novel," while he elsewhere likens the form to "a pasteboard Tree, cobbled together out of size and waste-paper and water-colours; altogether unconnected with the soil of Thought, except by mere juxtaposition."\textsuperscript{43} He censures the Waverley novels of Sir Walter Scott as being directed more towards pleasure and profit than towards historical accuracy. He does, however, make the fictitious historian Dryasdust, as Scott does, the rhetorical enemy of his artistry, and he does come close to identifying Scott's artistic purposes with his own when he acknowledges Scott's perception "that the bygone ages of the world were actually filled by living men, not by protocols, state-papers, controversies and
abstractions of men."\(^{44}\)

Most studies of Carlyle's relationship to the tradition of the historical novel treat the influence of The French Revolution on Dickens' A Tale of Two Cities. Avrom Fleishman writes: "A Tale of Two Cities is not, any more than is The French Revolution, verifiable history, but it is on a par with Carlyle's work as historical art in establishing a mythic pattern for the event which shows it transforming the lives of social groups as well as of individuals."\(^{45}\) John Maynard, convinced that Fleishman "overstates Dickens' merits as a historian," argues that "all comparison really ends in the perception that Carlyle has written a great work of history which could also be read, if it were not intended as actual history, as the greatest epic historical novel in English and Dickens has written a good novel, but one that fails alike as history or historical fiction."\(^{46}\) Andrew Sanders argues that Dickens rejects "the elemental and determining hero" which Carlyle creates in the figure of Napoleon. In Dickens, concludes Sanders, "reactions to historical events are determined by an inner response rather than by any new political or historical awareness."\(^{47}\) While the context of A Tale of Two Cities is an important one, as Dickens' praise of "Mr. CARLYLE's wonderful book" in the Preface to that work indicates, Carlyle's attempt to define and write historical, or "True" fiction suggests as well the context of other historical novels. Carlyle shares with Tolstoy in War and Peace and Stendhal in Le Rouge et le noir the problem of how to relate grand historical events artistically to the lives of individuals. Carlyle faces the same problem with his historical
figures, Desmoulins and Mirabeau, which Tolstoy faces with
Napoleon and Kutuzov: how to portray prominent individuals with
a proper balance between character and circumstance. Where he
differs from Tolstoy is in his unwillingness to create the en-
dearing but fictional Andrei, Natasha, and Pierre (the
corresponding characters to Dickens' Charles, Lucy, and Sidney).

A final comparison must be made between Carlyle's conception
of the disimprisoned epic and the experimental form of the nine-
teenth-century novel. As a variety of commentators point out, the
nineteenth-century novel is, partly because of Carlyle's influence,
a mixed form, which attempts to encompass a wide variety of
fictitonal forms and impulses: social criticism, philosophical
speculation, autobiography, and romance. George Levine sees in
Sartor Resartus a characteristic mid-nineteenth-century willingness
(apparent also in The French Revolution, which Levine does not
discuss in detail) to accommodate the form of fiction to the
competing and often incongruous desires of the modern age. "We
see through the example of Carlyle," he writes, "how fiction tended
to open experience, not close it; to increase tolerance, not
diminish it; to transcend moral conventions, not succumb to them." 48
Kathleen Tillotson, who rates Carlyle's influence on the mid-
nineteenth-century novel as considerable, states that because of
Carlyle "the poetic, prophetic, and visionary possibilities of the
novel are fully awakened," and "the rift between the 'prophetic'
and the merely entertaining novel widens." 49 Edwin Eigner sees
Carlyle's work as belonging to a form defined by Bulwer-Lytton,
the butt of Carlyle's satire in Sartor but Carlyle's subsequent
critical ally, as the "metaphysical novel," a mixed form which "wanders from the exact probability of effects, in order to bring more strikingly before us the truth of causes" (Bulwer) and which combines "positivist and visionary strains" (Eigner). 50 Finally, Richard Brodhead's description of the novels of Hawthorne and Melville, two American authors discussed by Eigner as writers in the "metaphysical novel" tradition, closely resembles Carlyle's mixed form of the historical prose epic:

Hawthorne's and Melville's novel form is insistently a mixed medium. Instead of trying to subsume varied material into a unifying and homogeneous narrative mode they compose novels by bringing together and placing alongside of one another different kinds of fiction. These authors are fundamentally unwilling to delegate to any one style of vision or organization the exclusive right to represent their world. As a result they generate in their works a conflict of fictions, and the reality of their imagined world, rather than lying in any one of these fictions, comes into existence in their interaction. 51

Sauerteig's conception of the modern epic, with its "conflict of fictions" and "heteroglossia," must be examined in the further context of European epic theory. Carlyle is largely unsympathetic to many of the most prominent epic theorists: he criticizes Tasso, Le Bossu, Boileau, Kames, and Blair at various times for advancing arid and limiting literary systems. 52 Of Tasso's discourses on the epic, Carlyle states that he cannot imagine how "from so complicated and generally so barren a system of rules [Tasso] modulated so harmonious a whole as the Gerusalemme." 53 Le Bossu, author of the tremendously influential Traité du poème épique (1675), he depicts as a restrictive figure measuring literary genius "with
his scales and compasses." Nevertheless, Carlyle's argument for an expansion of what epic form and epic theme can include is fully comprehensible only in light of the progressive broadening of the term "epic" in the criticism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The backgrounds and development of English epic criticism, as well as its reception of Continental theorists, are well treated in the judicious surveys of Graham Hough, A. F. B. Clark, Raymond Dexter Havens, and Donald M. Foerster. I shall use only some of the authors examined in these surveys, pointing up their significance as analogues and predecessors of Carlyle's conception of epic. I shall adopt Foerster's division of the centuries in question into four distinct but continuous phases of epic criticism: the neoclassical period (to approximately 1750), the latter half of the eighteenth century, the romantic period (to approximately 1832), and the Victorian period, whose beginning is roughly contemporaneous with "Biografía" and The French Revolution.

The English neoclassical attitude to epic, as evidenced by Dryden's "Dedication of the Aeneis" (1697), the critical writings of John Dennis, and Pope's Preface to the Iliad (1715), is heavily indebted to the approach and precepts of Le Bossu: a methodical examination of fable, action, characters, sentiments, and expression; a belief in the priority of the epic's moral to the fable that expresses it; and an emphasis on the prosperous actions of a single exemplary hero. Dryden, for example, follows Le Bossu in emphasizing the moral function and architectonic craftsmanship of epic:
A Heroic Poem, truly such, is undoubtedly the greatest work which the soul of man is capable to perform. The design of it is to form the mind to heroic virtue by example; 'tis conveyed in verse, that it may delight, while it instructs. The action of it is always one, entire, and great. 56

Dryden adopts Le Bossu's (rather than Aristotle's) hierarchy of the-genres by making epic rather than tragedy the predominant literary kind. He maintains a restrictive conception of "epic" by denying its applicability to such vernacular, modern compositions as The Faerie Queene and Paradise Lost. Spenser would have been justly considered an epicist, writes Dryden, "had his action been finished, or had been one."

And Milton, if the Devil had not been his hero, instead of Adam; if the giant had not foiled the knight, and driven him out of his stronghold, to wander through the world with his lady errant; and if there had not been more machining persons than human in his poem. 57

Dennis follows Le Bossu by making the epic's moral prior to its fable: an epic, he writes, "is a Discourse invented with Art to form the Manners by Instructions disguis'd under the Allegory of an Action." Maintaining strictly that the hero's fortunes be prosperous, Dennis (like Dryden) names Satan the hero of Paradise Lost. 58

The questioning of such orthodox critics as Dryden, Dennis, and Pope arises from within neoclassicism itself. As Foerster argues, the willingness of English critics to modify their emphasis on "rules, conscious artistry, universality, structural arrangement and ethical import" with an "abundant allowance for the
poetic qualities which were to be so highly esteemed by later schools of critical thought" causes English neoclassical criticism to contain "the seeds of its own destruction." 59 The seeds of destruction are evident in Addison's Spectator papers on Paradise Lost (1712), in Sir Richard Blackmore's "Essay on the Nature and Constitution of Epick Poetry" (1716), and in Voltaire's"Essay on Epick Poetry" (first written and published in English [1727]). Addison disagrees with Le Bossu "that an epic writer first of all pitches upon a certain moral, as the groundwork and foundation of his poem, and afterwards finds out a story to it." And in considering "Mr. Dryden's reflection, that the devil was in reality Milton's hero," he questions the very necessity of a hero in an epic poem:

The Paradise Lost is an epic, or a narrative poem, and he that looks for an hero in it, searches for that which Milton never intended; but if he will needs fix the name of an hero upon any person in it, 'tis certainly the Messiah who is the hero, both in the principal action, and in the chief episodes. Paganism could not furnish out a real action for a fable greater than that of the Iliad or Aenid, and therefore an heathen could not form a higher notion of a poem than one of that kind, which they call an heroic. 60

Blackmore expresses profound dissatisfaction with Le Bossu's notion "that the Pet must in his first Intention be dogmatical and pitch upon some considerable Moral, and then contrive his Fable suitable to that Design," and cites Le Bossu's insistence that the hero's fortunes prosper as an "Instance of the Submission which the Poets and Commentators have made to naked Authority." 61 Voltaire, questioning the predilection of Le Bossu and his followers for universal rules, argues for critical receptiveness to differences
in epics' temporal, national, and personal predispositions. He counters Le Bossu, "who bids an Epic Poet invent, and dispose the Constitution of his Fable, before he thinks of the Name of his Heroe" by arguing that epics "generally pitch upon a Subject, and a Hero well known, whose single Name must strike the Reader with Awe, and command his Attention." He identifies as the hero of Paradise Lost Adam, whose "unhappy" fortune "demonstrates against all the Criticks, that a very good Poem may end unfortunately, in Spight of all their pretended Rules." 62

Critics of the second half of the eighteenth century follow these writers in their increased attention to the individual poetic imagination, in their awareness of historical and national differences, and in their extension of the term "epic" to cover a wider range of literary forms. In his Letters on Chivalry and Romance (1762), Richard Hurd establishes the important principle that "the general plan of a work ... must be governed by the subject-matter itself," rather than by externally imposed rules; he argues that a "Gothic" work such as The Faerie Queene should not be judged by "Classic" standards. 63 Hugh Blair decries in his Lectures (second edition, 1785) the "pedantry of Criticism" which perpetuates inadequate and restrictive definitions of epic: Le Bossu's notion of the priority of moral to fable he dismisses as "one of the most frigid, and absurd ideas, that ever entered into the mind of a Critic." Blair argues for a definition of "epic" that includes not only the "regular" classical epics, but also any other "recital of some illustrious enterprise in a Poetical Form".
We can give exact definitions, and descriptions of minerals, plants, and animals; and can arrange them with precision, under the different classes to which they belong, because Nature affords a visible un-varying standard, to which we refer them. But with regard to works of taste and imagination; where Nature has fixed no standard, but leaves scope for beauties of many different kinds, it is absurd to attempt defining, and limiting them, with the same precision. Criticism, when employed in such attempts, degenerates into trifling questions about words and names only. I therefore have no scruple to class such Poems, as Milton's Paradise Lost, Lucan's Pharsalia, Statius's Thebaid, Ossian's Fingal and Temora, Camoen's Lusiad, Voltaire's Henriade, Cambray's Telemachus, Glover's Leonidas, Wilkie's: Epigoniad, under the same species of Composition with the Iliad and the Aeneid; though some of them approach much nearer than others to the perfection of these celebrated Works. They are, undoubtedly, all Epic; that is, poetical recitals of great adventures; which is all that is meant by this denomination of Poetry.

William Hayley, in his Essay on Epic Poetry (1782), derides the "cold comments" of the "Gallio judge" Le Bossu as impediments to the inspiration of modern poetry:

"Laughs not the spirit of poetic frame,  
However slightly warm'd by Fancy's flame,  
When grave Bossu by System's studied laws  
The Grecian Bard's ideal picture draws,  
And wisely tells us, that his Song arose  
As the good Parson's quiet Sermon grows;  
Who, while his easy thoughts no pressure find  
From hosts of images that crowd [sic] the mind,  
First calmly settles on some moral text,  
Then creeps--from one division--to the next?"

In welcoming the efforts of potential modern epicists, Hayley challenges those systematic theorists who suggest that the age of epic has been terminated by "the benumbing touch of modern Time":

"What! is the Epic Muse, that lofty Fair,  
Who makes the discipline of Earth her care!  
That mighty Minister, whom Virtue leads  
To train the noblest minds to noblest deeds!
Is she, in office great, in glory rich,
Degraded to a poor, pretended Witch,
Who rais'd her spells, and all her magic power,
But on the folly of the favoring hour?
Whose dark, despis'd illusions melt away.
At the clear dawn of Philosophic day? 65

The tendencies of these late-eighteenth-century critics are perpetuated in the romantic period, which is, as Foerster argues, typified by extreme critical pluralism and by intense reaction against neoclassical views of genre:

In a world that now seemed typified by change, by difference, by growth and decay, it was inconceivable that literature could be set apart from other products of the human spirit and treated as though it alone were subject to immutable principles. Neo-Aristotelian laws and formulae—emphasizing architectural construction from without in place of evolution from within, objective presentation of external action in place of psychological reaction or emotion and thought as they blend and interanimate one another, sharp, logical distinction in place of biological—nuance—were now regarded not as being founded on the nature of things but as being really contrary to it. 66

The status of the epic is devalued in this period, as Foerster further maintains, for a variety of reasons: emphasis on particular works rather than on genres; a biographical and psychological approach to literature that emphasizes individual emotion rather than universal form; an uncertainty as to the precise meaning of "epic," and the increasing vogue of the lyric and the novel. According to Foerster, what criticism of the epic does exist appreciates far different aspects than those isolated for praise by the Augustans, since epics are read with an eye more to particular beauties than to overall architectonic structure, and since epic heroes are regarded more as examples of exquisite
feeling and sensibility than as examples of virtues. The romantic period sees an increasing regard for the writers of modern vernacular epics, and a corresponding devaluation of Virgil who, perceived as archaic and imitative rather than emotional and original, is held to possess many of the features of the rejected English Augustans.

Criticism of the epic in the Victorian period is, according to Foerster, continuous with the romantic period in its heterogeneity, its lack of "a discernible core, a basic premise or group of integrable premises." On the one hand, there is a strong tendency, encouraged by a Benthamite-positivist prejudice against verse, to regard the epic as irrelevant in a modern, scientific age. On the other hand, there is in mid-century an effort, led notably by Thomas Arnold and his son Matthew, to restore the epic's prestige, and to restore critical order after what is perceived to be an unreasonably strong reaction against neoclassical principles in the romantic period. Romantic criticism, writes Foerster,

had been largely antagonistic towards epic poetry. It had confused the genres hopelessly, it had rendered the definition of "epic" next to impossible, it had unearthed no values in heroic poetry which were peculiarly its own. It had often overrated the lyric exuberance of passages in poems, and underrated the ethical worth and the form of the poem as a whole. It had often focused upon the personal, the intense, the sentimental, and the dramatic at the expense of the objective, the intellectual, the pathetic, and the deliberate. It had often attached undue significance to the primitive or the modern or the Christian or the "romantic," and it had "just as often neglected the permanent, the central, and the "classical." It had often favored Dante and Milton because of their religious idealism or their sheer emotionalism and individuality, and just as often opposed Virgil as a plagiarist and Homer as a "barbarian."
The heterogeneity of Victorian epic criticism is evidenced by divided, contradictory reactions to individual epicists. While the romantic criticisms of Virgil as a self-conscious, imitative artist persist—notably in Carlyle himself—, the reassertion of some neoclassical principles means a reinstatement of Virgil as an honoured epic poet. Criticism of Homer sees continued debate over the hypotheses of Wolf and other scholars who posit the multiple authorship of the Homeric epics, and while Carlyle is (in Foerster's estimation) "clearly the most important" of Wolf's champions in Britain, he demonstrates marked inconsistencies in his comments on Homer, speaking of him sometimes as a single person, sometimes as several. While the reputation of Dante increases in the Victorian period, partly because of the regard extended to him in On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History, Victorian evaluation of Milton is typified by "an irremediable conflict," evident in the responses of Carlyle, between a view of him as "a man of strong convictions, of dauntless courage and resolution, of profound spiritual faith" and a contrasting view of him as "an egocentric Puritan."

Having traced the development of English epic criticism, we can briefly examine Carlyle's relation to that development. In his desire to write the "grand Poem" of his time, Carlyle shares some of the central principles of neoclassical epic theory: the predominance of epic among literary forms, the "one, entire, and great" action (or, in Sauveteig's phrase, the "complete impressiveness") of epic, and the centrality to epic of moral truth. Nevertheless, Carlyle's approach to epic (given its fullest expression in a fragment of an essay on "Biography" rather than in a sustained
treatise) does not accord well with the systematic, prescriptive treatments of epic characteristic of the rigorous neoclassicists. Carlyle's attempt to locate an epic theme in the "Bible of World-History" is, moreover, profoundly unsympathetic to the notion of a contrived fiction that is central to the views of Le Bossu and his followers. Consequently, Carlyle's conception of the epic must be understood in the context of the insistent questioning of neoclassical rules and the correspondent enlargement of the scope of epic, that predominates in late-eighteenth and early nineteenth-century criticism. "Carlyle, whose paradoxical conception of epic reflects an awareness both of the limited definition of epic as a fiction contrived to present a moral and the broader definition of epic as 'in Blair's words) "the recital of some illustrious enterprise in a Poetical Form," works towards an accommodating form that includes both a single great action and a prose recitation of an illustrious historical enterprise.

The survey of English epic criticism given above must be supplemented by a consideration of epic criticism in Germany in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. During the seventeen-nineties, Schiller, as Carlyle rightly states in his biography, studies "the modern writers on subjects of taste, Aristotle, the ancient poets" and "carefully endeavour[s] to extract the truth from each, and to amalgamate their principles with his own." In 1797 he and Goethe carry on, in conjunction with a mutual reading of Aristotle's Poetics, an extensive dialogue on the nature of epic and dramatic poetry. Goethe notes that, since the epic "is ever going forwards and backwards," "all
retarding motives are epic," and concludes that "all such plots as proceed direct towards the end ought to be utterly rejected" by the epic poet. 74 Schiller responds that the epic poet "describes to us merely tranquil existence, and the working of things in accordance with their natures; his object is contained in every point of his movement; therefore we do not hurry on impatiently towards a goal, but linger lovingly at every step":

The dramatic action moves on before me [writes Schiller], but I myself move round the epic action; which, so to say, is at a standstill. . . . If I see the incident moving before me, my attention is strongly riveted to the present, my imagination loses all its freedom, there arises and continues within me a feeling of persistent restlessness, I feel myself obliged to give my attention to the object before me, and all looking back, all reflection is denied to me, because I am following a foreign power. But if I move round the incident which cannot escape from me, I feel that I need not keep up a regular pace, I can stop for a longer or shorter time according to my subjective necessity. . . . 75

The result of Schiller's and Goethe's dialogue is the essay "Über epische und dramatische Dichtung" (published with their correspondence), which differentiates between epic as an external action set in the past and drama as an internal action set in the present, and which identifies "Retrogressive" stylistic features "which draw the action away from its goal" as characteristic of epic. 76 In his Vorschule der Ästhetik Richter similarly explores epic and drama with respect to their temporal setting ("epic depicts only a past and an external world, while drama depicts the present and inner conditions"), pace ("epic is long and slow, broad and creeping; drama runs through a short course with wings"), and scope:
In drama an individual rules and draws down the bolt from the cloud upon himself; in the epic the world and the human race rule. Drama sends down taproots, the epic broad horizontal roots. The epic spreads the enormous whole before us and transforms us into gods contemplating a world; drama carves the life of a single man from the universe of times and spaces and lets us poor ephemeral beings play in the sunbeam between two eternities; it calls us back to ourselves, while the epic envelops us in its world. Drama is the raging fire with which a ship explodes or the tempest which relieves an oppressively hot day; the epic is a display of fireworks including cities, exploding ships, storms, gardens, wars, and decorative monograms of heroes. 77

Friedrich Schlegel speaks of the epic as "a mirror of the whole circumambient world" and as "the source from which every other form of poesy branches off and derives its inspired waters":

the living play of its billows, as they sweep along with full and undivided flood, bears with it all the magic treasures of fancy; and like the world-encircling ocean, with its ever-changing undulations, it flows around all the ages and epochs of nature and humanity. The epos, in short, is poesy itself. In it preeminently the very essence of poetry is present, and there also are its truest manifestations. Every other form of poetic art constitutes but a special kind, and as compared with this pure original is, so to speak, a mixed or applied poetry. 78

Schlegel writes in addition that epic "belongs altogether to the world which has gone before us." "That poet of any refined and polished age," writes Schlegel, "who dares to be a poet after the manner of the minstrels of antiquity—to be truly epic—will always be looked upon as a remarkable exception; he will be honoured and reverenced by all posterity, as a high gift of nature to the age and country in which he appears." 79 Madame de Staël, a confidante of the German aestheticians and an important inter-
préter of their work for Carlyle and other English speakers, writes in a similar vein:

Les Allemands n'ont pas plus que nous de poème épique; cette admirable composition ne paraît pas accordée aux modernes, et peut-être n'y a-t-il que l'Iliade qui réponde entièrement à l'idée qu'on se fait de ce genre d'ouvrage: il faut, pour le poème épique, un concours singulier de circonstances qui ne s'est rencontré que chez les Grecs, l'imagination des temps héroïques et la perfection du langage des temps civilisés.

Un poème épique n'est presque jamais l'ouvrage d'un homme, et les siècles mêmes, pour ainsi dire, y travaillent: le patriotism, la religion, enfin la totalité de l'existence d'un peuple ne peuvent être mis en action que par quelques-uns de ces événements immenses que le poète ne crée pas, mais qui lui apparaissent agrandis par la nuit des temps; les personnages du poème épique doivent représenter le caractère primitif de la nation.

The relationship of the epic to the age in which it is written, discussed by Friedrich Schlegel, Madame de Staël, and other commentators, figures prominently in the most exhaustive early nineteenth-century treatment of epic in Hegel's Aesthetik, which offers a provocative and nearly contemporary analogue to the critical problems discussed in "Biography" and worked out artistically in The French Revolution. Hegel states that the content of an epic is "the entirety of a world in which an individual action is eventuated":

it is not a single isolated action which is accomplished in the true epic event; the subject of the narrative is not, in short, a wholly accidental occurrence, but an action which is dove-tailed into the entire complexus of a particular age and national circumstances, which in consequence can only be placed before us with success as a constituent part of an extensive world, demanding as it does the reflection of such a world in its entirety.
The epic, Hegel writes, usually treats the fortunes of a single nation in a state of war, "an enterprise of national significance, in which the entire compass of a national spirit can express itself in the bloom and freshness of its heroic condition." Civil war and social revolution (Carlyle's theme) Hegel regards as being suited better to drama than to epic. Hegel argues further that, in spite of the temporal separation of the epic writer from his subjects, "some intimate bond of association must exist between the poet and his subject-matter." "If . . . the personal life of the artist is essentially of a different order to that by virtue of which the historical and national life depicted came into actual being," he states, "we must necessarily become conscious of a cleft in the artistic result which will disturb and injure its effect:

We shall have, in short, scenes placed before us of a previous condition of history, combined with modes of thought, opinions, and views more pertinent to other periods; and, in consequence of this, the configuration of primitive beliefs will, in its contact with the more developed reflection of a later time, lose the warmth of conviction, become, in short; a mere superstition, an empty embellishment of the mere poetical instrumentation, from which all the vitality of its actual life has vanished.

In the Aeneid, for example, a work listed by Sauerteig as the first of the "artificial, heterogeneous" modern epics, we are reminded by every single hexameter that the general outlook of the poet is totally different from the world, which it is his endeavour to depict; and the gods more particularly have lost the freshness of their original vitality. Instead of being living persons in their own selves, actual witnesses to us
of their existence, they have rather the appearance of being mere creations of the poet and external instruments, which it is neither possible for the poet or his audience to take quite seriously, although there is an open pretence made that they have been taken thus seriously. . . . The divine figures of Virgil float before our vision as so many invented wonders, as members of an artificial system. 84

In the Lusiad, spoiled for Sauerteig by its "dead-living Pagan-Christian gods," "we are still conscious of a real barrier between the subject that is national and an artistic culture which is partly borrowed from the ancients and in part from the Italians, and which impairs its impression as a truly original epic." 85

Modern society, Hegel concludes, is incompatible with epic:

If we try to discover really epic compositions in our own day we shall find ourselves in an atmosphere totally different from that of the genuine Epopeia. The general condition of the world to-day has assumed a form, which, in its prosaic character, is diametrically opposed to everything which we found indispensable to the genuine Epos, while the revolutions, which have been imposed upon the actual social conditions of states and nations, are still too strongly riveted in our memory as actual experiences, that they should be able to receive an epic type of art. 86

The context of European criticism shows precisely how problematic and deliberately incongruous Sauerteig's theory and Carlyle's practice of the modern epic are. English and French neoclassicists, operating on the "obsolete or abrogated" assumptions of Le Bossu, argue for a deliberately crafted action designed "to form the mind to heroic virtue by example." Carlyle, as concerned as the neoclassicists with the epic's ethical importance, nevertheless finds the theme of a believable modern
epic to lie not in a manufactured fable but in the "Bible of World-History." German criticism sees the epic as the integrated, harmonious poem of a nation in its youth, and insists that the epic be set in the past. The Germans argue, as do the neo-classicists, for a tranquil dependence of the form employed on the world portrayed. Carlyle, adopting for his theme an almost contemporary event from modern history, depicts the youth of modern man; the specific nation whose epic he relates, France, is both a foreign nation and a profoundly unsettling nation to him. In place of epic tranquillity, he adopts a disturbed literary form for a volcanic, revolutionary world. As we shall see in Chapter Three, the modern epic which Carlyle writes encompasses within itself all of the contradictions that Friedrich Schlegel, Madame de Staël, and Hegel see as hindrances to a modern epic: Carlyle's history becomes a "new Mythus" of modern society by making its heterogeneous, dialogic form the "exact type" of Europe in revolution.
Notes to Chapter Two

1 Works, XIJ, 17.

2 Works, XXVIII, 79.

3 Works, XXVIII, 325.

4 Works, XXVIII, 47-53. All quotations from Carlyle in the remainder of this paragraph and in the following paragraph are taken from these pages.

5 Moore, p. 170; Levine, p. 19.

6 Works, XXVI, 272, 291; Letters, IX, 66.


8 Works, XXVI, 213.

9 Works, XXVI, 271.

10 Works, XXVI, 273-4.

11 Quoted in Letters, I, 232n.


15 Works, XXV, 172.


17 Works, XXV, 118.

18 Works, XXVIII, 75, 78, 85.

20 Works, XXVI, 276.

21 For a general discussion of Carlyle and the Germans on history as revelation, see Harrold, pp. 164-8. The Novalis quotation is from Werke, ed. H. Friedemann (Berlin, 1908), III, 192, and is quoted in Harrold, p. 167.


36 Correspondence Between Schiller and Goethe, trans. L. Dora Schmitz (London: George Bell, 1877), I, 189-90, 243, 420.


38 Richter, pp. 165, 171, 172, 181.


43 Works, XXV, 61; XXVI, 253-4.


52 In addition to the references listed below, see Works XXI, 261 (Le Bossu and Blaire); XXVI, 52-3 (Le Bossu, Boileau, and Blair); XXVIII, 24 (Le Bossu and Kames).

53 Two Note Books, p. 125.


57 Essays, II, 165.


59 Foerster, pp. 6-7.


61 Blackmore, pp. 77, 79.
62 In Curran, pp. 39, 54, 120.
65 Ed. Sister M. Celeste Williamson (Gainesville: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1968), I, 229-40; V, 10-20.
66 Foerster, p. 31.
67 Foerster, p. 139.
68 Foerster, pp. 155-6.
69 Foerster, p. 122.
70 Foerster, p. 152.
71 Letters, VI, 446.
72 Works, XXVIII, 250.
73 Works, XXV, 117.
74 Correspondence, p. 313.
75 Correspondence, pp. 314, 454-5.
77 Richter, pp. 165, 170.
81 Hegel, pp. 119, 153.
82 Hegel, pp. 129, 131, 134.
83 Hegel, pp. 114-5.
84 Hegel, pp. 147-8.
85 Hegel, p. 190.
86 Hegel, p. 191.
Chapter Three

Epic and Myth

To read *The French Revolution* as an epic is necessarily to engage in a process of generic redefinition, for many of the characteristic features of traditional epic are either missing or severely displaced in Carlyle's text. *The French Revolution* does not have, as most previous epics do, a single principal protagonist representative of the fortunes and ethos of his nation or race: even the much-admired Mirabeau is, for Carlyle, a "Tragic" rather than an "Epic" hero (II, 147), who disappears from the text when the action is but half completed. Neither does it present protracted battles and repeated instances of physical valour, since much of the struggle depicted in the work is of "the modern lingual or Parliamentary-logical kind" rather than of "the ancient or manual kind in the steel battlefield" (II, 15). Furthermore, while *The French Revolution* has at its centre an epic struggle between dying royalty and nascent revolution, it does not champion the cause of one party against the other as traditional epics do, but rather treats the action of the French Revolution from the perspective of modern European man in general. *The French Revolution* is written in prose rather than in verse, and is characterized by rapid changes in tone and point of view rather than by a detached, elevated, and
homologized epic voice. And while Carlyle uses (or travesties) such specific conventions as the epic simile, the catalogue, the invocation, and epic debates and festivals, the paucity of their appearances in the text serves more often to counter than to foster any sense that Carlyle is making a concerted effort to follow epic convention.

The complexity of The French Revolution's relation to epic tradition is evident in its opening sentence: "President Hénault, remarking on royal Surnames of Honour how difficult it often is to ascertain not only why, but even when, they were conferred, takes occasion, in his sleek official way, to make a philosophical reflection." This sentence does not, of course, give any indication of being part of a traditional epic disclosure, since it suggests no statement of theme, no epic question, and no invocation of a muse. Rather than beginning with the broad universal reference of an "Arma virumque cano" or an "Of Man's First Disobedience," it opens with the unexplained and unadorned surname of a person almost inconsequent in the remainder of the text. If the absence of the specific conventions of an epic opening is problematic, the more general question of whether the work begins in medias res is equally so. In his Ars Poetica, Horace states that the epic poet "quickly goes on to the upshot, and hurry's his hearer / Into the heart of the story, just as if / He knew it already."¹ For the mainstream epics of Western civilization, beginning with the heart of the story entails a disjunction between events as ordered in the narrative and events as ordered in time, since
the first event narrated is chronologically posterior to events narrated subsequently. Carlyle's text has no such disjunction, since the narrative order accords with the chronological order: "The Bastille," "The Constitution," and "The Guillotine," like the Inferno, Purgatorio, and Paradiso of Dante (who is himself atypical of epic tradition), are arranged in a straightforward linear progression. Nevertheless, some truth does lie in J.A. Heraud's observation (quoted in Chapter One) that in the French Revolution the reader is "at once thrown dramatically, or epically, into the midst of things." Carlyle's opening chapter (eschewing, as Heraud notes, general "dissertations") begins with a specific consideration of the honorary surname bestowed upon Louis XV, whose death initiates the action of the entire work.

His second chapter, "Realised Ideals," traces the complete cycle of the growth and decay of symbols, of which Louis' surname, Louis' death, and the ultimate death of kingship in France form but a part: like the imbedded retrospective narratives of Odysseus and Aeneas, this explanatory chapter links the point in the action which is first narrated to the larger course of history.

A complexity similar to that found in the opening of The French Revolution results from Carlyle's repeated explicit references to epic forms and practices. In narrating the important procession of 4 May 1789 in the first volume, Carlyle states:

suppose we too, good Reader, should, as now without miracle Muse Clio enables us,—take
our station also on some coin of vantage;
and glance momentarily over this Procession,
and this Life-sea; with far other eyes than
the rest do, namely with prophetic? We can
mount, and stand there, without fear of falling.
(I, 134-5)

Here the muse of history is credited with the functions proper to
the epic muse, the relation of the specific to the universal and
of the past and present to the future. Nevertheless, the special
perspective that she offers is removed from any suggestion of
heavenly insight, and derives instead from powers of
retrospection given by the inevitable passage of time. Her
function is performed "without miracle," since in Carlyle's
modern epic delineation must be founded "on Belief and provable
Fact, or have no foundation at all" (III, 31). Elsewhere,
Carlyle manifests an equally ironic stance toward epic tradition
when he depicts as epic machinery a band of brigands,

an actual existing quotient of persons; who,
long reflected and reverberated through so many
millions of heads, as in concave multiplying
mirrors, become a whole Brigand World; and, like
a kind of Supernatural Machinery, wondrously
move the Epos of the Revolution. The Brigands
are here; the Brigands are there; the Brigands
are coming! Not otherwise sounded the clang of
Phoebus Apollo's silver bow, scattering
pestilence and pale terror: for this clang too
was of the imagination; preternatural; and it
too walked in formless immeasurability, having
made itself like to the Night

(I, 126)

Carlyle's suggestion that this band operates as a kind of epic
machinery is seemingly reinforced by the allusion to and
quotation from Homer: the "pestilence and pale terror" aroused
by the sound of the invisible Apollo's bow (in the vehicle of the implied epic simile) images the agitation of the French people over the anticipated arrival of the brigands (in the implied simile's tenor). But while the Homeric analogue suggests a comparable stature of the two phenomena compared, their equality stems from their both being "of the imagination." As Carlyle's subsequent suggestion that the somewhat gullible French nation "will see Shapes enough of Immortals . . . and never want for Epical Machinery" implies, the power of the brigands is perhaps better imaged by the human delusions of Don Quixote than by the divine enchantments of the Iliad (I, 127). In yet another instance, Carlyle writes of Marie Antoinette's new wardrobe, needlessly prepared for the imminent flight to Varennes, as a sort of epic new clothes:

New Clothes are needed; as usual, in all Epic transactions, were it in the grimmest iron ages; consider 'Queen Crimhilde, with her sixty sempstresses,' in that iron Nibelungen Song! No Queen can stir without new clothes. Therefore, now, Dame Campan whisks assiduous to this mantua-maker and to that: and there is clipping of frocks and gowns, upper clothes and under, great and small; such a clipping and sewing as—might have been dispensed with.

(II, 157)

Whatever elevation is achieved by Carlyle's allusion to the Nibelungenlied and by the stately doublets "frocks and gowns, upper clothes and under, great and small" is destroyed by the triviality of the subject discussed, underclothing, and by the deflationary final phrase "might have been dispensed with."
The complexity of The French Revolution's relation to epic tradition is further evidenced by its treatment of the theme and image of war. Discussing the insurrection of women, Carlyle asserts, in epic fashion, the superiority of his own subject over the subjects treated by earlier authors of epics; like Milton, he shows disaffection with war as "the only Argument / Heroic deem's": ²

Battles, in these ages, are transacted by mechanism; with the slightest possible development of human individuality or spontaneity; men now even die, and kill one another, in an artificial manner. Battles ever since Homer's time, when they were Fighting Mobs, have mostly ceased to be worth looking at, worth reading of or remembering. How many wearisome bloody battles does History strive to represent; or even, in a husky way, to sing:--and she would omit or carelessly slur-over this one. Insurrection of Women? ³

Elsewhere, in describing the superiority of the fall of the Bastille to the fall of Troy, Carlyle nevertheless appears to be celebrating military struggle:

The Siege of the Bastille, weighed with which, in the Historical balance, most other sieges, including that of Troy Town, are gossamer, cost, as we find, in killed and mortally wounded, on the part of the Besiegers, some Eighty-three persons: on the part of the Besieged, after all that straw-burning, fire-pumping, and deluge of musketry, One poor solitary Invalid, shot stone-dead... on the battlements! The Bastille Fortress, like the City of Jericho, was overturned by miraculous sound. ⁴

But what most amazes Carlyle about the siege of the Bastille is the remarkably unmilitary nature of its success. Hence, the
Homer's struggle that Carlyle finds analogous to this "anomalous" siege is no heroic human battle, but rather "the war of Pygmies and Cranes" (I, 191), in which "the cranes embodied fly, / With noise, and order, through the midway sky," bringing "To pigmy nations wounds and death." 3

Confronted with the evidence of Carlyle's text, a critic concerned with ensuring that generic labels are not applied in an indiscriminate manner might with good reason argue that The French Revolution is not an epic, but (as the work's own subtitle suggests) a history, which uses in an inconsistent though occasionally brilliant manner scattered features of traditional epic. He might sensibly point out that epic is only one genre--farce, comedy, and tragedy are others--that Carlyle offers as an analogy for his form of artistic history. At the most, this hypothetical critic might accord Carlyle's work the position of a "tertiary epic" (as Richard Jenkyns terms Don Juan), 4 an epic that, rather than faithfully following the conventions of primary epic as secondary epic does, makes those conventions the object of self-conscious examination and burlesque.

Another critic might with equally good reason argue that The French Revolution is, despite its deviation from tradition in accidental features, epic in essence. This second hypothetical critic might conceivably be sympathetic to Brian Wilkie's position that "epic is a tradition rather than a genre," and "operates through propagated family resemblances rather than in obedience to more abstract laws." 5 Or he might adopt the
stance (anathema to the first critic) that these "propagated family resemblances" are-themselves sufficient for defining the epic genre. In defence of this last position, he might demonstrate that The French Revolution clearly manifests the predominant features of epic, as defined, for example, in Thomas Greene's excellent study The Descent from Heaven: expansiveness, "humanistic awe," and a theme of political struggle. Greene (who of course might agree or disagree with the application of his conceptions to Carlyle's text) writes that the predominant feature of the epic mind is "expansiveness, the impulse to extend its own luminosity in ever widening circles":

Epic answers to man's need to clear away an area he can apprehend, if not dominate, and commonly this area expands to fill the epic universe, to cover the known world and reach heaven and hell. Epic characteristically refuses to be hemmed in, in time as well as space; it raids the unknown and colonizes it. It is the imagination's manifesto, proclaiming the range of its grasp, or else it is the dream of the will, indulging its fantasies of power.6

The epic, he further states, "replaces divine worship with humanistic awe," which "springs from the realization that a man can commit an extraordinary act while still remaining limited.7 The theme of epic, Greene maintains, is "the two-fold concern of politics--the establishment of control through violence and the right use of control in government":

The focus in epic is upon violence rather than administration, but violence needs some frame of ulterior meaning... Action is most fully realized through changes of institutions.
or regimes, changes which extend its consequences throughout society and throughout time. Thus the epic is the great poem of beginnings and endings. The Aeneid is typical, beginning with an ending and ending with a beginning. 8

Carlyle presents a cataclysmic struggle of cosmic importance and, like Virgil (in Dryden's description of the Aeneid), portrays "one empire destroyed, and another raised from the ruins of it." 9

The expansiveness of Carlyle's treatment, the gravity of his presentation, and the importance of his theme must be regarded, by the second critic, as epic.

These two critical positions, argued from quite different assumptions about the nature of genre, must both be taken into account in a generic consideration of The French Revolution. The first, which resists the inauspicious application of the same generic label to works widely divergent in form, asserts the priority of previous epics in defining the epic genre. The second, which shares Friedrich Schlegel's resistance to obsolete and rigid categories, allows the right of a modern work to modify inherited forms according to the deep inherent principles of generic tradition. The provocative form of The French Revolution, in which Carlyle approaches epic tradition with the same refreshing perversity that typifies his approach to chivalric romance in "The Diamond Necklace," affords room for both responses. The most valuable function of the generic critic of The French Revolution is, therefore, neither to affirm nor to reject the work's epic status—either of which would be a valid
conclusion of a generic study—but to acknowledge the degree to which Carlyle's text challenges its readers to a reconsideration of generic principles and uses generic complexity to image the complexity of its modern theme.

Because of the problematic nature of Carlyle's relation to epic tradition, no generic study that consists only of a search for a preselected group of specific literary conventions will be adequate for *The French Revolution*. Carlyle's use of epic conventions and patterns, as well as his allusions to and quotations from epics, is everywhere marked by the contradictions inherent in his theories of a modern historical epic, and is therefore not susceptible to simple enumeration. In this chapter and in the two chapters that follow, therefore, I shall deal with three general areas in which Carlyle has most clearly entered into a dialogue with epic tradition. The remainder of the present chapter will be devoted to the relationship between epic and mythology in Carlyle's history. Chapter Four will treat the inclusive form of *The French Révolution* (which encompasses a wide variety of human experience, and hence a wide variety of literary modes), while Chapter Five will consider its relationship to traditional epic structure. The underlying assumption of all three chapters is a belief in Carlyle's simultaneous reaffirmation and radical redefinition of epic tradition.

In traditional epic there is an harmonious relationship between the argument, which presents a broad, significant
movement of concern to human society, and the sustaining myth, which relates that movement to universal power and truth: the argument of Odysseus' wanderings, for example, is shaped and sustained by the myth of the Olympian deities who influence his destiny. Carlyle's choice of a modern argument, the French Revolution as "the crowning Phenomenon of our Modern Time" (I, 212), generates the artistic problem of finding an appropriate modern myth capable of displaying the French Revolution's universal significance. Throughout his works, Carlyle identifies this problem of finding a credible myth as one of the central difficulties of modern life. In the "Everlasting Yea" chapter of Sartor Resartus, Teufelsdröckh describes how Voltaire has demonstrated that "the Mythus of the Christian Religion looks not in the eighteenth century as it did in the eighth." Having granted Voltaire the correctness of his views on the obsolescence of Christianity, he then proceeds to outline a new effort "to embody the divine Spirit of that Religion in a new Mythus," and bravely declares: "what are antiquated Mythuses to me?" A desire to have done with "antiquated Mythuses" is fundamental to Carlyle's writings, for much as he approves of the lost age of faith (and writes most eloquently of it in the second part of Past and Present and elsewhere), he deprecates any turning to obsolete beliefs, whether "in the divine right of Game-destroyers" or "in consecrated dough-wafers," and the godhood of a poor old Italian Man" (I, 149). By rejecting "antiquated Mythuses," Carlyle makes
unavailable to himself the mythic trappings of previous classical and Christian epics and forces himself to find a "new Mythus" capable of sustaining his argument.

Because Carlyle's search for a new epic mythology arises from a rejection of traditional poetic mythologies, it must be seen in the context of the nineteenth-century debate over the preference for contemporary or antique subjects for poetry. The best-known argument for antique or especially poetic subjects appears in Matthew Arnold's 1853 Preface to his Poems. Arnold argues that, since poetry belongs to "the domain of our permanent passions," the "modernness or antiquity" of a subject is irrelevant to its value:

... Achilles, Prometheus, Clytemnestra, Dido,—what modern poem presents personages as interesting, even to us moderns, as these personages of an 'exhausted past'? We have the domestic epic dealing with the details of modern life which pass daily under our eyes; we have poems representing modern personages in contact with the problems of modern life, moral, intellectual, and social; these works have been produced by poets the most distinguished of their nation and time; yet I fearlessly assert that Hermann and Dorothea, Childe Harold, Jocelyn, The Excursion, leave the reader cold in comparison with the effect produced upon him by the latter books of the Iliad, by the Oresteia, or by the episode of Dido. And why is this? Simply because in the three last-named cases the action is greater, the personages nobler, the situations more intense: and this is the true basis of the interest in a poetical work, and this alone.11

Walter Bagehot, in an 1859 review of Tennyson's Idylls of the King, supports Arnold in his approbation of classical subjects:
Poets are frequently advised to make choice of modern subjects: it is said that ancient ones are worn out; that all which can correctly be said of them has been said; that a new world, with ardent life, and tender grace, and bold energy, is around us; that in it we should seek the topics of our art; and especially the themes of our poetry. Yet the practice of our poets does not as yet conform itself much to the teaching of this criticism. They seem to have ... a restraining instinct which disinclines them to act on the exhortation; they undoubtedly have an impelling tendency which incites them to select their subjects from the older world. One of our poets has said, in answer to the critics, 'a great action' is a great action anywhere; surely it is as good if it happened in former ages as if it had happened yesterday.

The reason for a poet's inclination towards past ages, contends Bagehot, is his licence "to select" and "to exaggerate" in a depiction of a previous era:

A few parts of life are chosen out of many, and those few are heightened in colour and augmented in size. ... If King Arthur existed, there were peasants in his time, and these peasants had wives, and these wives had children, and these children had measles; but no one wishes to hear of the peasants, the wives, or the babies, but of Queen Guinevere and Lancelot, of the king himself, and all the 'Table Round'. In the modern world it is difficult, everything runs into everything else; every detail suggests an approximate detail; every fact another fact.

The heterogeneous modern facts that are so appropriate to the novel, Bagehot concludes, have "an unintended influence and a disenchanted effect" in poetry. William Morris, despite his insistent concern with the problems of modern society, manifests a similar preference for poetic subjects. In News from Nowhere,
Clara asks old Hammond: "How is it that though we are so interested with our life for the most part, yet when people take to writing poems or painting pictures they seldom deal with our modern life, or if they do, take good care to make their poems or pictures unlike that life?" Old Hammond replies:

It was always so, and I suppose always will be, ... however it may be explained. It is true that in the nineteenth century, when there was so little art and so much talk about it, there was a theory that art and imaginative literature ought to deal with contemporary life; but they never did so; for, if there was any pretence of it, the author always took care ... to disguise, or exaggerate, or idealise, and in some way or another to make it strange; so that, for all the verisimilitude there was, he might just as well have dealt with the times of the Pharaohs.

And, in response to a further query, old Hammond acknowledges that imaginative literature stems from "the childlike part of us," thereby giving some legitimacy to the time-honoured separation of literature from the facts of immediate life. 13

Each of these arguments for antique or poetic subjects gives evidence of a strong counter-argument for a poetry of contemporary life. The nature of that counter-argument is clearly outlined by Lionel Stevenson and Richard Jenkyns in their surveys of the status of poetry in the nineteenth century. Stevenson cites Jeremy Bentham's observation that "the game of push-pin is of equal value with ... music and poetry" as representative of the intense questioning of the function of poetry during the eighteen-twenties and eighteen-thirties; he correctly makes Carlyle an ally in this matter of Bentham and the Utilitarians,
his rhetorical enemies in Sartor, since Carlyle in "Biography"
and elsewhere questions the utility of poetic fictions.
Stevenson further outlines three responses of poets to the
attacks of Bentham, Carlyle, and others: the use of traditional
subjects for modern purposes (as in "Ulysses" and the Idylls),
the presentation of modern states of mind (as in In Memoriam,
"Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day," "Dipsychus," and "The Scholar-
Gipsy"), and the factual presentation of contemporary life (as
in Maud, Aurora Leigh, and Modern Love). This last-stated
response most clearly represents Carlyle's vision of a credible
modern poetry. Certain lines of Aurora Leigh, correctly
identified by Richard Jenkyns as showing clear signs of
indebtedness to Carlyle, demonstrate the impact of this.
alternative on mid-nineteenth-century poets. "The critics",
declares Aurora Leigh, "say that epics have died out / With
Agamemnon and the goat-nursed gods":

I'll not believe it. I could never dream.
That Homer's heroes measured twelve feet high.
They were but men!—his Helen's hair turned
grey
Like any plain Miss Smith's, who wears a
front.
All men are possible heroes: every age
Looks backward and before, expects a morn
And claims an epos.

An epic, she concludes, can be based upon "this live, throbbing
age," since "King Arthur's self / Was commonplace to Lady
Guenever; / And Camelot to minstrels seemed as flat / As Regent
Street to poets." These lines, a versification of ideas found
in the opening chapter of "The Diamond Necklace" and elsewhere in Carlyle, suggest the extent to which Carlyle is an apologist for, rather than just a critic of, the use of poetic techniques in the modern age: for, just as Sauerteig in "Biography" calumniates epic fictions in order to facilitate the writing of a credible modern epic, the Carlyle of the "Age of Romance" chapter criticize[s] the poetic themes of Carolingian romance in order to present a vision of a new poetry based on the only possible poetic subject, human life (which includes, Carlyle would add, Bagehot's peasants, wives, children, and measles). Carlyle does believe in the epic potentiality of human history and in a mythic universe, but for him the informing myth of a modern epic must be consistent with the epic's basic nature as a narrative of facts.

Having considered the nineteenth-century context of Carlyle's "new Mythus," we can now proceed to an examination of the form of that mythus as it appears throughout Carlyle's works. Carlyle's myth of modern man presents four consecutive historical stages of man's relationship to the universe. In the first stage, an age of faith (represented, for example, by Abbot Samson in Past and Present), man exists in an harmonious relationship with the external world, which for him reflects transcendental spiritual realities. In the second stage, an age of cant (represented by the Arch-Quack Cagliostro), man allies himself with obsolete symbols and formulas that have become separated from the reality that they originally signified. In the third stage, an age of
doubt (represented at various sub-stages by the demythologizer Voltaire, the Wertherean Byron, and the young Goethe), man recognizes the vacancy of his inherited symbols, and either ridicules or mourns their vacancy. In the fourth stage, an age of renewed faith (represented by Goethe, in whose works we see a "mind working itself into clearer and clearer freedom"16), man redisCOVERS in the temporal and conditional world symbols of the transcendental. This cyclical movement from faith through doubt to a renewed faith underlies all of Carlyle's periodical essays on French and German subjects. It is clearly reflected in Sartor in Book II, where Teufelsdröckh moves from an idyllic childhood, through a stage of doubt and wandering, to an eventual realization that the "Universe is not dead and demoniacal . . . ; but godlike, and [his] Father's,"17 and in Book III, with the theories of "Natural Supernaturalism" and "Organic Filaments."

The version of Carlyle's "new Mythus" that most clearly depicts Carlyle's mythic view of the universe and that most clearly prepares us for the informing myth of The French Revolution is found in the essay "Characteristics." The mythic cosmology of "Characteristics" depicts human consciousness as being precariously placed over a deeper and more powerful unconsciousness:

Boundless as is the domain of man, it is but a small fractional proportion of it that he rules with Consciousness and by Forethought: what he can contrive, nay, what he can altogether know and comprehend, is essentially the mechanical, small; the great is ever, in one sense or other, the vital; it is essentially
the mysteries, and only the surface of it can be understood. But Nature, it might seem, strives, like a kind mother, to hide from us even this, that she is a mystery: she will have us rest on her beautiful and awful bosom as if it were our secure home; on the bottomless boundless Deep, whereon all human things fearfully and wonderfully swim, she will have us walk and build, as if the film which supported us there... were no film, but a solid rock-foundation.18

Unconscious acceptance of the universe characterizes the primeval harmonious state of children and primitive man:

most of us, looking back on young years, may remember seasons of a light, aerial translucency and elasticity and perfect freedom; the body had not yet become the prison-house of the soul, but was its vehicle and implement... We knew not that we had limbs, we only lifted, hurled and leapt; through eye and ear, and all avenues of sense, came clear unimpeded tidings from without, and from within issued clear victorious force; we stood as in the centre of Nature, giving and receiving, in harmony with it all... our whole being was as yet One, the whole man like an incorporated Will... [Life was] a pure, perpetual, unregarded music; a beam of perfect white light, rendering all things visible, but itself unseen, even because it was of that perfect whiteness, and no irregular obstruction had yet broken it into colours.19

If harmony with the universe keeps in being a state of "paradisaic Unconsciousness," ratiocination brings about a fall from Paradise:

The beginning of Inquiry is Disease; all Science, as it must have originated in the feeling of something being wrong, so it is and continues to be but Division, Dismemberment, and partial healing of the wrong. Thus, as was of old written, the Tree of Knowledge springs from a root of evil, and bears fruits of good and evil. Had Adam remained
in Paradise, there had been no Anatomy and no Metaphysics. 20

Consequently, self-consciousness becomes the besetting evil of modern man, as man becomes alienated from his universe:

Belief, Faith has well-nigh vanished from the world. The youth on awakening in this wondrous Universe no longer finds a competent theory of its wonders. . . . Werterism, Byronism, even Brummelism, each has its day. . . . the Thinker must, in all senses, wander homeless, too often aimless, looking up to a Heaven which is dead for him, round to an Earth which is deaf.

[Previously] the God-like stood embodied under many a symbol in men's interests and business; the Finite shadowed forth the Infinite; Eternity looked through Time.

[Now] the Divinity has withdrawn from the Earth; or veils himself in that wide-wasting Whirlwind of a departing Era, wherein the fewest can discern his goings. Not Godhead, but an iron, ignoble circle of Necessity embraces all things; binds the youth of these times into a sluggish thrall, or else exasperates him into a rebel. 21

The regeneration of modern man occurs when "the eternal fact begins again to be recognised, that there is a Godlike in human affairs; that God not only made us and beholds us, but is in us and around us; that the Age of Miracles, as it ever was, now is." 22 With that regeneration, the cycle of "paradisaic Unconsciousness," doubt, and redemption is completed.

The French Revolution, like "Characteristics," uses a variety of deeply-rooted mythic patterns, divorced from their traditional classical and Judaeo-Christian contexts. The first of these patterns is the presentation of a mythic
cosmology, in which the temporal and the spatial realms are evidences of a transcendent power. Expressing what he himself characterizes as a form of "Transcendentalism," Carlyle exhorts his reader in *The French Revolution*:

Understand it well; this Thing thou beholdest, that Thing is an Action, the product and expression of exerted Force: the All of Things is an infinite conjugation of the verb To do. Shoreless Fountain-Ocean of Force, of power, to do; wherein Force rolls and circles, billowing, many-streamed, harmonious; wide as Immensity, deep as Eternity; beautiful and terrible, not to be comprehended: this is what man names Existence and Universe; this thousand-tinted Flamé-image, at once veil and revelation, reflex such as he, in his poor brain and heart, can paint, of One Unnameable, dwelling in inaccessible light! From beyond the Star-galaxies, from before the Beginning of Days, it billows and rolls, round thee, may thyself art of it, in this point of Space where thou now standest, in this moment which thy clock measures. (II, 103)

As in "Characteristics," Carlyle portrays the known world as being precariously built on the unknown: "all Knowledge and all Practice," he writes, "hang wondrous over infinite abysses of the Unknown, Impracticable; and our whole being is an infinite abyss, over-arched by Habit, as by a thin Earth-rind, laboriously built together" (I, 38). But, also as in "Characteristics," the world portrayed is a symbolic world, where the known images the unknown; thus, the principal theme of *The French Revolution* is the making and unmaking of symbols, or "Realised Ideals," that "grow; and, after long stormy growth, bloom out mature, supreme; then quickly (for the blossom is brief) fall into decay; sorrowfully dwindle;
and crumble down, or rush down, noisily or noiselessly, disappearing" (I, 10).

This cycle of making and unmaking is reflected in the second major mythic pattern of *The French Revolution*, the cycle of birth, growth, decay, and death. "All things are in revolution," writes Carlyle: "in this Time-World of ours there is properly nothing else but revolution and mutation, and even nothing else conceivable" (I, 211). The French Revolution occurs, he maintains, in an age when "Belief and Loyalty have passed away, and only the cant and false echo of them remains; and all Solemnity has become Pageantry; and the Creed of persons in authority has become one of two things: an Imbecility or a Machiavelism" (I, 10). The Revolution is, for Carlyle, "the open violent Rebellion, and Victory, of disimprisoned Anarchy against corrupt worn-out Authority."

Anarchy breaks prison; bursts-up from the infinite Deep, and rages uncontrollable, immeasurable, enveloping a world; in phasis after phasis of fever-frenzy;—till the frenzy burning itself out, and what elements of new Order it held (since all Force holds such) developing themselves, the Uncontrollable [is], if not reimprisoned, yet harnessed, and its mad forces [are] made to work towards their objects as sane regulated ones. (I, 211-2)

The cataclysmic change of the French Revolution, which signals the death of one world and the birth of another, is imaged in the Phoenix, whose mode of procreation makes her a fitting emblem of change:
When the age of Miracles lay faded into the distance as an incredible tradition, and even the age of Conventionalities was now old; and Man's Existence had for long generations rested on mere formulas which were grown hollow by course of time; and it seemed as if no Reality any longer existed, but only Phantasms of realities, and God's Universe were the work of the Tailor and Upholsterer mainly, and men were buckram masks that went about becking and grimacing there,—on a sudden, the Earth yawns asunder, and amid Tartarean smoke, and glare of fierce brightness, rises Sansculottism, many-headed; fire-breathing, and asks: What think ye of me?... The age of Miracles has come back! 'Behold the World-Phoenix, in fire-consummation and fire-creation: wide are her fanning wings; loud is her death-melody, of battle-thunders and falling towns; skyward lashes the funeral flame, enveloping all things: it is the Death-Birth of a World.' (I, 212-3)

Within the symbolic universe depicted by Carlyle, the mythic pattern of growth and disintegration is enacted as the making and unmaking of symbols.

The remaining mythic patterns of The French Revolution are all related to this symbolic universe, where persons, places, and times become endowed with special significance. In The French Revolution, as in "The Diamond Necklace," persons are given special significance by Carlyle's transformation of them into gods and heroes. Carlyle's portrayal of Marie-Antoinette, for example, adopts the mythic pattern of apotheosis. Early in Volume I, "the fair young Queen, in her halls of state, walks like a goddess of Beauty, the cynosure of all eyes" (I, 32). Later, during the Parlement of Paris, she appears as a deity of light caught in eclipse. "Her dwelling-place is so bright to the eye," writes Carlyle, "and confusion and black
care darkens it all" (I, 93-4). During the insurrection of women, she enters the banqueting-hall of Versailles, "issuing from her State-rooms, like the Moon from clouds, this fairest unhappy Queen of Hearts; royal Husband by her side, young Dauphin in her arms" (I, 247). And later she again appears with the Dauphin, "like a bright Sky-wanderer or Planet with her little Moon" (II, 61). If the divine attributes of Marie-Antoinette are beauty and light, the heroic attributes of the leaders of the Revolution are power and fire. When first introduced, "the world-compeller" Mirabeau "steps proudly along, . . . and shakes his black chevelure, or lion's mane; as if prophetic of great deeds." Through his "shaggy beetle-brows, and rough-hewn, seamed, carbuncled face," writes Carlyle, "there look natural ugliness, small-pox, incontinence, bankruptcy,—and burning fire of genius; like comet-fire glaring fuliginous through murkiest confusions" (I, 137). The "Son of the Morning" Camille Desmoulins "glitter[s] with a fallen, rebellious, yet still semi-celestial light; as is the starlight on the brow of Lucifer" (I, 236).

As their portraits suggest, Mirabeau and Desmoulins are transitional figures, caught between deity and spectrehood. The French Revolution, which reads more often like a demonology than like a theogony, is peopled by demons, spectres, and shades as well as by gods and heroes. Louis XV's minister Maupeou is one of the "subterranean Apparitions" that "vanish utterly,—leaving only a smell of sulphur" (I, 4).
Madame Dubarry is called variously "the scarlet Enchantress," "Witch Dubarry," and a "false Sorceress" (I, 3, 15, 22). Jean Paul Marat is an "obscene Spectrum," and a "swart unearthly Visual-Appearance" (III, 65). Doctor Guillotin, notorious for his "cunningly devised Beheading Machine," becomes a wandering shade. "For two-and-twenty years," writes Carlyle, "he, unguillotined, shall hear nothing but guillotine, see nothing but guillotine; then dying, shall through long centuries wander, as it were, a disconsolate ghost, on the wrong side of Styx and Lethe" (I, 143-4). The various patrols, parlements, and tribunals of the revolutionaries are peopled by spectres:

Patrols of the newborn National Guard, bearing torches, scour the streets, all that night; which otherwise are vacant, yet illumined in every window by order. Strange-looking; like some naphtha-lighted City of the Dead, with here and there a flight of perturbed Ghosts; (I, 183)

Quick is the movement here! And then so confused, unsubstantial, you might call it almost spectral: pallid, dim, inane, like the Kingdoms of Dis! Unruly Linguet, shrunk to a kind of spectre for us, pleads here some cause that he has ... (II, 240)

Dim, dim, as if in disastrous eclipse; like the pale kingdoms of Dis: Plutonic Judges, Plutonic Tinville; encircled, nine times, with Styx and Lethe, with Fire-Phlegethon and Cocytus named of Lamentation! The very witnesses summoned are like Ghosts: exculpatory, inculpatory, they themselves are all hovering over death and doom (III, 194-5)

A resigning ministry, abdicating its responsibility for restraining the menacing Fédérés, becomes a ministry of ghosts:
It is true, some ghost of a War-minister, or Home-minister, for the time being, ghost whom we do not name, does write to Municipalities and King's Commanders, that they shall, by all conceivable methods, obstruct this Federation, and even turn-back the Féderes by force of arms: a message which scatters mere doubt, paralysis and confusion; irritates the poor Legislature; reduces the Féderes, as we see, to thin streaks. But being questioned, this ghost and the other ghosts, What it is then that they propose to do for saving the country?--they answer, That they cannot tell; that indeed they, for their part, have, this morning, resigned in a body, and do now merely respectfully take leave of the helm altogether. . . . Other complète Cabinet-ministry there will not be; only fragments, and these changeful, which never get completed; spectral Apparitions that cannot so much as appear!

(II, 268-9)

Subsequently, "thin streaks of Féderes wend Paris-ward through a paralytic France," which is "all enchanted, spellbound by unmarcning Constitution, into frightful conscious and unconscious Magnetic-sleep" (II, 269-70).

Carlyle's portrayal of persons as gods, heroes, and spectres renders a mythic texture to his narrative, especially in scenes depicting the encounters of principal figures of the Revolution. These encounters are written in the form of phantasmagories, where mysterious figures arrive, meet, and mysteriously depart. The meeting of Mirabeau and Marie-Antoinette is depicted as a fortunate encounter of the gods "under the void canopy of Night":

Mirabeau and the Queen of France have met; have parted with mutual trust! It is strange! secret as the Mysteries; but it is indubitable. Mirabeau took horse; one evening; and rode
westward, unattended,—to see Friend Clavière in that country-house of his? Before getting to Clavière's the much-musing horseman struck aside to a back gate of the Garden of Saint-Cloud: some Duke D'Aremberg, or the 'like, was there to introduce him; the Queen was not far; on a 'round knoll, rond point, the highest of the Garden of Saint-Cloud,' he beheld the Queen's face; spake with her, alone, under the void canopy of Night. What an interview; fateful, secret for us, after all searching; like the colloquies of the gods! (II, 123)

The meeting of General Dumouriez and Marat at the house of the actor Talma is shaped, in a contrasting manner, by the mythic motif of the unwelcome spectral visitant:

Dumouriez is in Paris; lauded and feasted; paraded in glittering saloons, floods of beautifullest blonde-dresses and broadcloth-coats flowing past him, endless, in admiring joy. One night, nevertheless, in the splendour of one such scene, he sees himself suddenly apostrophised by a squalid unjoyful Figure, who has come in uninvited, nay despite of all lackeys; an unjoyful Figure! The Figure is come 'in express mission from the Jacobins,' to inquire sharply, better then than later, touching certain things: 'Shaven eyebrows of Volunteer Patriots, for instance?' Also, 'your threats of shivering in pieces?' Also, 'why you have not chased Brunswick hotly enough?' Thus, with sharp croak, inquires the Figure.—'Ah, c'est vous qu'on appelle Marat, You are they call Marat!' answers the General, and turns coldly on his heel.—'Marat!' The blonde-gowns quiver like aspens; the dresscoats gather round; Actor Talma, . . . and almost the very chandelier-lights, are blue: till this obscene Spectrum, swart unearthly Visual-Appearance, vanish, back into its native Night. (III, 64-5)

The fatal encounter of Chârlotte Corday with Marat (III, 164-72) is portrayed as the meeting of two spirits, one "beautiful," the other "squalid." The "fair Apparition" Charlotte appears
on the scene "suddenly like a Star; cruel-lovely, with half-
angelic, half-daemonic splendour; to gleam for a moment, and in
a moment be extinguished: to be held in memory, so bright-
complete was she, through long centuries!" She is both a
creature of light (being "like a Star") and a creature of
darkness (coming from "Cimmerian coalitions"): in her, "the
little Life burns forth so radiant, then vanishes swallowed of
the Night." While the "angelic-daemonic" Charlotte comes "from
Caen in the utmost West," Marat comes "from Neuchâtel in the
utmost East": their contrasting geographical origins reflect
the polar opposition of their characters, for in character,
as in appearance, the "fair Figure" is most unlike the "swart
bird" (see I, 249) who "croaks" and goes, like the mythological
heroes of classical epic, "to the shades below."

As these scenes demonstrate, places as well as persons
are endowed with special significance in The French Revolution.
Myths characteristically designate certain places as being
holy and protected, and others as being enchanted and
dangerous. Carlyle depicts throughout his history a series
of places that appear to be havens for established
institutions, but that prove to be enchanted and subject to
destruction. At the beginning of the work, Madame Dubarry and
other parasites of royalty make Versailles a sanctuary for
Louis XV:

And so have these individuals (verily by black-
art) built them a Domdaniel, or enchanted
Dubarrydom; call it an Armida-Palace, where
they dwell pleasantly; Chancellor Maupeou 'playing blind-man's-buff' with the scarlet Enchantress; or gallantly presenting her with dwarf Negroes;--and a Most Christian King has unspeakable peace within doors, whatever he may have without. (I, 3-4)

But the sense of "unspeakable peace" that this sanctuary affords is severely undercut by the image of the "Armida-Palace, where the inmates live enchanted lives; lapped in soft music of adulation; waited on by the splendours of the world;--which nevertheless hangs wondrously as by a single hair" (I, 4). With the cutting of the "single hair" (that is, with the imminent death of Louis), "the wonderfulest talisman" of Versailles is destroyed, and "all Dubarrydom rushes off, with tumult, into infinite Space" (I, 4). The "Versailles Galaxy," with its "new ever-shifting Constellations," becomes haunted by "the pale grinning Shadow of Death, ceremoniously ushered along by another grinning Shadow, of Etiquette" (I, 18). The motif of the Dance of Death, which traditionally represents the unwelcome intrusion of a personified Death into the lives of even the wealthiest and most prosperous, reflects the tenuousness of Louis' sanctuary:

Yes, poor Louis, Death has found thee. No palace walls or life-guards, gorgeous tapestries or gilt buckram of stiffest ceremonial could keep him out; but he is here, here at thy very life-breath, and will extinguish it. Thou, whose whole existence hitherto was a chimera and scenic show, at length becomest a reality: sumptuous Versailles bursts asunder, like a dream, into void Immensity; Time is done, and all the scaffolding of Time falls
wrecked with hideous clangour round thy soul: the pale Kingdoms yawl open; there must thou enter, naked, all unking'd, and await what is appointed thee! ... Wert thou a fabulous Griffin, devouring the works of men; daily dragging virgins to thy cave;--clad also in scales that no spear would pierce: no spear but Death's? A Griffin not fabulous but real! (I, 20)

Images of wondrous palaces and constellations give way to images of grinning shadows and griffins. Versailles becomes haunted by "the growl of Chapel Organs, ... proclaiming, as in a kind of horrid diabolic horse-laughter, Vanity of vanities, all is Vanity" (I, 18); "the very heaven blackens; battering rain-torrents dash, with thunder; almost drowning the organ's voice; and electric fire-flashes make the very flambeaux on the altar pale" (I, 24). Consequently, at the end of Volume I after the death of Louis, Versailles is severely threatened: "Boundless Chaos of Insurrection presses slumbering round the Palace, like Ocean round a Diving-bell; and may penetrate at any crevice" (I, 277).

At the beginning of Volume II, when the royal family has been forced to relocate to Paris, another locus amoenus is found in the Tuileries, as a much different nautical image indicates: "the Château of the Tuileries is repainted, regarnished into a golden Royal Residence; and Lafayette with his blue National Guards lies encompassing it, as blue Neptune (in the language of poets) does an island, wooingly" (II, 2). This new sanctuary offers the protection of a hortus conclusus.
Arthur Young has witnessed the strangest scene: Majesty walking unattended in the Tuileries Gardens; and miscellaneous tricolor crowds, who cheer it, and reverently make way for it: the very Queen commands at lowest respectful silence, regretful avoidance. Simple ducks, in the royal waters, quack for crumbs from young royal fingers: the little Dauphin has a little railed garden, where he is seen delving, with ruddy cheeks and flaxen curled hair; also a little hutch to put his tools in, and screen himself against showers. What peaceable simplicity! (II, 3)

But the pastoral images of the gardens, the ducks, and the beautiful youth, as well as the images of protection offered by the "little railed garden" and the "little hutch," are deceptive, for the Tuileries, like Versailles, is doomed:

Medicean Tuileries, how changed since it was a peaceful Tile-field! Or is the ground itself fate-stricken, accursed; an Atreus' Palace; for that Louvre window is still nigh, out of which a Capet, whipt of the Furies, fired his signal of the Saint Bartholomew! (II, 5)

The image of an Atreus' Palace, with its associations of cannibalism, murder, and revenge, is prophetic of the upheaval that will threaten the pastoral simplicity of the Tuileries Gardens. 23

Times, as well as persons and places, are endowed with special mythic significance in The French Revolution. The upheaval of the Revolution, the victory of subterranean darkness over terrestrial and celestial light, is represented by a detailed mythology of Night. Carlyle repeatedly refers to the Revolution as a manifestation of the powers of "Chaos
and Nox" (II, 112) and "Atropos . . . and Nox" (II, 291); and
describes it as the time when "Night and Orcus . . . have burst
forth . . . from their subterranean imprisonment: hideous,
dim-confused" (III, 27). Indeed, he peoples his history with
an entire progeny of Night. In Hesiod's Theogony, we read that
Chaos gave birth to "Erebos, the dark, / and black Night," and
that Night, in turn,

bore horrible Moros, and black Ker,
End and Fate,
and Death, and Sleep, and she bore also
the brood of Dreams,
she, dark Night, by herself,
and had not been loved by any god,
and then again she bore mocking Momos
and painful Oizys,
and the Hesperides, who across
the fabulous stream of the Ocean
keep the golden apples
and the fruit-bearing orchards,
and she bore the destinies, the Moirai,
and the cruelly never-forgetful
Fates, Klotho, Lachesis, and Atropos,
who at their birth
bestow upon mortals their portion
of good and evil,
and these control the transgressions
of both men and divinities,
and these goddesses never remit
their dreaded anger
until whoever has done wrong
gives them satisfaction.
And she, destructive Night, bore Nemesis,
who gives much pain
to mortals; and afterward cheating Deception
and loving Affection
and then malignant Old Age
and overbearing Discord.24

In The French Revolution, Night produces a similarly
repugnant modern progeny. Carlyle designates revolutionnaires
as "Sons of Darkness" and "Sons of Night" (II, 114; III, 40, 237), and calls Marat "a living fraction of Chaos and Old Night" (III, 74). Of the lawyers, or "Attorney class," of the Revolution, he states: "Such figures shall night, from her wonder-bearing bosom, emit; swarm after swarm" (II, 19). And the Revolution itself he terms "the newest Birth of Nature's waste inorganic Deep, which men name Orcus, Chaos, primeval Night" (III, 223).

 Appropriately, many of the most mysterious and important scenes of the Revolution have a nocturnal setting. Of the night of 13 July 1789, the eve of the taking of the Bastille, Carlyle writes:

> What a Paris, when the darkness fell! A European metropolitan City hurled suddenly forth from its old combinations and arrangements; to crash tumultuously together, seeking new... With clangour and terror: from above, Broglie the war-god impends, preternatural, with his redhot cannon-balls; and from below, a preternatural Brigand-world menaces with dirk and firebrand: madness rules the hour...

> Let fencible men, each party in its own range of streets, keep watch and ward, all night. Let Paris court a little fever-sleep, confused by such fever-dreams, of 'violent motions at the Palais Royal'—or from time to time start awake, and look out, palpitating, in its nightcap, at the clash of discordant mutually-unintelligible Patrols; on the gleam of distant Barriers, going up all too ruddy towards the vault of Night. (I, 178-9)

Here, night is depicted as the time of an imminent fatal encounter not fully understood. The following night, when that encounter has taken place but is still not yet comprehended,
is similarly mysterious. The defeated royalist general, Besenval "marches, with faint-growing tread, down the left bank of the Seine, all night,—towards infinite space":

The Versailles Ball and lemonâde is'done; the Orangerie is silent except for nightbirds, Over in the Salle des Menus Vice-President Lafayette, with unsnuffed lights, 'with some Hundred or so of Members, stretched on tables round him,' sits erect; outwatching the Bear.

In the Court, all is mystery, not without whisperings of terror; though ye dream of lemonade and epaulettes, ye foolish women! His Majesty, kept in happy ignorance, perhaps dreams of double-barrels and the Woods of Meudon. Late at night, the Duke de Liancourt, having official right of entrance, gains access to the Royal Apartments; unfolds, with earnest clearness, in his constitutional way, the Job's news. 'Mais,' said poor Louis, 'c'est une révolte, Why, that is a revolt!'—'Sire,' answered Liancourt, 'it is not a revolt,—it is a revolution.' (I, 199-200)

During the Insurrection of Women, when "Insurrectionary Chaos lies slumbering round the Palace, like Ocean round a Diving-Bell," we read:

Menadism, Sansculottism has cowered into guardhouses, . . . to the light of cheerful fire; falling that, to churches, officehouses, sentry-boxes; wheresoever wretchedness can find a lair. The troublous Day has brawled itself to rest: no lives yet lost but that of one war-horse. . . .

Deep sleep has fallen promiscuously on the high and on the low; suspending most things, even wrath and famine. Darkness covers the Earth. But, far on the North-east, Paris flings-up her great yellow gleam; far into the wet black Night. (I, 275-6)

In each of these instances, a nocturnal setting is used as the
backdrop of a mysterious transaction. The sense of sleep as leveller, falling "on the high and on the low," contradicts the severe divisions of the state, while the sense of peace that night brings is strangely at odds with the violence of revolutionary France. The presence of night, which in Carlyle's mythic cosmology often represents communion with the unconscious and with the power of Nature, serves as a reminder of the universal stage on which the historical drama is being played.

In these night scenes and elsewhere, Carlyle adopts a mythic use of time that appears frequently in traditional epic: the correspondence between the solar and astronomical cycles and terrestrial human activity. Examples from previous epics include Homer's epithet of the rosy-fingered dawn, Dante's meticulous references to astronomy and the signs of the zodiac, and Milton's temporal setting for the crucial beginning of Book IX of Paradise Lost:

The Sun was sunk, and after him the Star
Of Hesperus, whose Office is to bring
Twilight upon the Earth, short Arbiter
Twixt Day and Night, and now from end to end
Night's Hemisphere had veil'd the Horizon round... 25

A comparable example from The French Revolution is the following striking passage in the closing pages of the final volume:

Meek continual Twilight streaming up, which will be Dawn and a Tomorrow, silvers the
Northern hem of Night; it wends and wends there,
that meek brightness, like a silent prophecy,
along the great ring-dial of the Heaven.

(III, 283)

This mythic use of time figures significantly in the episode of
the flight to Varennes, where Carlyle presents one of the most
significant actions (and failures) of the French royal family
against the backdrop of a complete solar revolution from
midnight to day to midnight. On the night of 20 June 1791,
Louis and his family set out on a planned escape from Paris
when "Midnight clangs from all the City-steeples" and "most
mortals are asleep" (II, 161). The night is an "ambrosial
night," when Paris is "silent except for some snoring hum" (II,
162); but the night is also, as we are ominously reminded, a
"precious night, the shortest of the year" (II, 163). As
night fades, the royal family rides on, surrounded by "the
great slumbering Earth" and regarded by "the great watchful
Heaven":

All slumbers save the multiplex rustle of our
new Berline. Loose-skirted scarecrow of an
Herb-merchant, with his ass and early greens,
toilsomely plodding, seems the only creature
we meet. But right ahead the great Northeast
sends up evermore his grey brindled dawn:
from dewy branch, birds here and there, with
short deep warble, salute the coming Sun.
Stars fade out, and Galaxies; Street-lamps of
the City of God. (II, 163-4)

The dawn holds promise for Louis and his family. But as "the
day bends ever more westward" (II, 170), little progress is
made, and night once again approaches:
Wearied mortals are creeping home from their field-labour; the village-artisan eats with relish his supper of herbs, or has strolled forth to the village-street for a sweet mouthful of air and human news. Still summer-eventide everywhere! The great Sun hangs flaming on the utmost Northwest; for it is his longest day this year. The hill-tops rejoicing will ere long be at their ruddyest, and blush Good-night. The thrush, in green dells, on long-shadowed leafy spray, pours gushing his glad serenade; to the babble of brooks grown audibler; silence is stealing over the Earth. (II, 172-3)

The night of 21 June (also the "shortest of the year"):!

descends, as "the ruddy evening light" gives way to the "thick shades of Night" (II, 174, 176-7). The royal family moves forward, surrounded by mystery, to its imminent capture:

Thus go they plunging; rustle the owlet from his branchy nest; champ the sweet-scented forest-herb, queen-of-the-meadows spilling her spikenard; and frighten the ear of Night.

But hark! towards twelve o'clock, as one guesses, for the very stars are gone out: sound of the tocsin from Varennes? Checking bridle, the Hussar Officer listens: 'Some fire undoubtedly!'—yet rides on, with double breathlessness, to verify. (II, 178)

Meanwhile, Varennes "lies dark and slumberous," "the rushing of the River Aire singing lullaby to it" (II, 179).

To this point in my discussion, I have treated certain well-established mythic patterns that Carlyle uses in his mythic recreation of the French Revolution. I have purposely delayed discussing another crucial aspect of Carlyle's artistry, his use of specific allusions to established literary mythologies. Carlyle is a highly allusive author, and his
"new Mythus" of the French Revolution contains an epic range of allusions to "antiquated Mythuses." The wide-ranging nature of his references to classical and vernacular epic, to Judaeo-Christian religion, and to Carolingian and Teutonic myths and legends suggests the importance and inclusiveness of his epic theme, the making and unmaking of "Realised Ideals." The Christian mythus, assaulted in the eighteenth century by Voltaire and the philosophes, offers a fitting analogue to the "new Church of Jean Jacques Rousseau" (I, 219) that replaced it. Classical mythology, so intimately associated with classical epic, provides a multiplicity of analogues by which a modern scene can be succinctly portrayed as a part of universal history. I shall now turn to a discussion of Carlyle's many mythic allusions, attempting to demonstrate the existence of patterns in allusions that sometimes seem, at first glance, random and haphazard; the complex question of what legitimacy such allusions might have in a modern historical epic I shall treat at the end of the present chapter.

Carlyle's mythical allusions fall into three main patterns: images of death, night, and the underworld, images of cataclysm, dismemberment, and fated destruction, and images of deities and heroes. Since Carlyle's mythic universe pictures revolution as coming from subterranean forces, The French Revolution contains many references to the underworld of classical mythology. Events of the Revolution are depicted as occurring in the darkest regions of the classical
underworld: Erebus (I, 39, 208; III, 249), Tartarus (I, 176; II, 15; III, 192), Orcus (I, 190), Cimmeria (I, 282; II, 227, 235, 241, 242, 246, 254; III, 18, 66, 67, 166, 230, 239, 241, 296), and Dis (II, 240; III, 195, 292). In the Revolution, writes Carlyle, "Rascality has slipped its muzzle; and now bays, three-throated, like the Dog of Erebus" (I, 281). The Jacobins' Club moves "through the astonished Heaven, like a Tartarean Portent, and lurid-burning Prison of Spirits in Pain" (II, 32), while Marat finds earth "a penal Tartarus . . . his horizon girdled . . . not with golden hope, but with red flames of remorse" (III, 25-6). An ineffective revolutionary assembly becomes a "fuliginous confused Kingdom of Dis," with "Tantalus-Ixion toils," "angry Fire-floods," and "Streams named of Lamentation" (II, 242). The Revolution itself becomes an "Enceladus Revolt," since the giant Enceladus pinned under Mount Etna is emblematic of the volcanic upheaval of "Innovation" against "Conservation":

For Conservation, strengthened by that mightiest quality in us, our indolence, sits for long ages, not victorious only, which she should be; but tyrannical, incommunicative. She holds her adversary as if annihilated; such adversary lying, all the while, like some buried Enceladus; who, to gain the smallest freedom, has to stir a whole Trinacria with its Etnas. (I, 39; see also III, 240)

Carlyle's frequent allusions to the "Neptuno-Plutonic Geology" (I, 80) of the classical underworld are reinforced by allusions to the analogous infernal figures and regions of the Judaeo-
Christian tradition (and hence of *Paradise Lost*): Tophet (I, 192; II, 96; III, 1, 114, 130, 243), Moloch (III, 26, 47, 51), Beelzebub (III, 26), Satan (I, 183, 236; III, 43), and "Pandemonium, or City of All the Devils" (II, 288).

The destruction wrought by the unleashing of these subterranean forces is reflected in a series of mythical images of cataclysm and disintegration. The classical myths of Pandora's Box (I, 59; II, 13), Aeolus and the Cave of the Winds (I, 74, 75; II, 107; III, 279), and Deucalion's flood (III, 130) suggest the destructive nature of unharnessed power, while those of the fall of the house of Atreus (I, 247, 280; II, 5) and the fall of Troy (III, 80) give a prophetic sense of France as a doomed house or nation. Analogous Biblical references include the story of Babel (I, 97; II, 91), Noah's flood (II, 111), God's planned destruction of Nineveh in Jonah (II, 278), "Ezekiel-visions of the fall of thrones and crowns" (III, 67), and Apocalypse (III, 70-1). Other references to the enchaunted Armida-Palace from Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* (I, 4), the Roman Saturnalia (I, 288), the last battle in the Hall of the Nibelungen (II, 96), and the Islamic Angel of Death Azrael (III, 248) give a further sense of upheaval and destruction.

The most important single example of this pattern of mythical allusion in *The French Revolution* is the myth of Orpheus and the Ménads. At the beginning of Volume I, the name of Orpheus is used with reference to two prominent but
ineffectual figures of pre-Revolutionary France: the playwright Beaumarchais, "crowned Orpheus in the Théâtre Français (I, 60), and the eloquent controller-general Calonne, of whom Carlyle writes:

Orpheus, with eloquence grown rhythmic, musical (what we call Poetry), drew iron tears from the cheek of Pluto: but by what witchery of rhyme or prose wilt thou from the pocket of Plutus draw gold? (I, 72)

But later in the volume, in the book entitled "The Insurrection of Women," the myth of Orpheus and the Menads takes on the more significant and dynamic function of representing France's struggle between order and disorder. The Menads, mad women and followers of Dionysus, are apt representatives of the "fires," "fevers," "madness," "unhealthiness," "diseasedness," and "monstrosity" of the lower world (I, 239). As murderers of Orpheus, the bringer of harmony and order, the Menads offer an analogue to the female insurrection, which is expressed in images of disorder: avalanche, deluge, and Saturnalia (I, 252, 279, 288). While the female insurrectionists are represented as Menads, Usher Maillard is cast in the rôle of Orpheus, attempting to lead the women who (as a significant reminder tells us) "hewed off the melodious head of Orpheus" to Versailles "with no music but a sheepskin drum." But Usher Maillard, like Beaumarchais and Calonne, is insufficient to his rôle: the lyre of Orpheus that would "constrain . . . these mad masses into Order" is
missing, and the insurrection of women results in a
catastrophic "downrushing of a World" in which the lowest of
the three orders overtakes the highest (I, 255-6, 270). At
the end of The French Revolution, when French society has
reverted somewhat to its former superficiality, the role of
Orpheus falls to Mademoiselle Cabarus, who attempts to
recivilize France "by witchery of the Orphic fiddle-bow" (III,
293, 295).

The casting of four different persons as Orpheus is one
example of the final pattern of Carlyle's mythical allusions,
the portrayal of historical personages as classical gods and
heroes. A central instance of this pattern is the portrayal
of the royalist party as Olympian deities and the
revolutionists as Titans and demigods. "It was the Titans
warring with Olympus," writes Carlyle of 14 July 1789, "and
they, scarcely crediting it, have conquered..." (I, 197).27
Royalist deities such as "Mars de Broglie" and "Mercury de
Brézé" sit, remote from men, on "cloudy Ida" (I, 160, 168-70),
while Lafayette performs the function of Poseidon:

Lafayette, like some divine Sea-ruler, raises
his serene head: the upper Aeolus blasts fly
back to their caves, like foolish unbidden
winds: the under sea-billows they had vexed
into froth allay themselves. But if, as we
often write; the submarine Titanic Fire-powers
came into play, the Ocean-bed from beneath
being burst? If they hurled Poseidon Lafayette
and his Constitution out of Space; and, in the
Titanic melly, sea were mixed with sky?
(II, 135)
The power of "Poseidon Lafayette" and the other deities is, as Carlyle indicates, subject to challenge by the "Titanic Fire-powers." Danton, one of the prominent leaders of those powers, is described, in the manner of a formulaic epithet, as the "brawny Titan" (III, 24), the "Titan of the Forlorn Hope" (III, 46), "Titan Danton" (III, 129), "Danton the Titan" (III, 134), and "the wild amorphous Titan" (III, 258). He "bears [the Revolution] on his giant shoulders; cloudy invisible Atlas of the whole" (II, 279; see also II, 280-1). The "Titanic" Mirabeau is portrayed as Hercules, engaged in a "Hercules-and-Typhon duel" with his political opponents:

There is one Herculean Man; in internecine duel with him, there is Monster after Monster. Emigrant Noblesse return; sword on thigh, vaunting of their Loyalty never sullied; descending from the air, like Harpy-swarms with ferocity, with obscene greed. Earthward there is the Typhon of Anarchy, Political, Religious; sprawling hundred-headed, say with Twenty-five million heads; wide as the area of France; fierce as Frenzy; strong in very Hunger. With these shall the Serpent-queller do battle continually, and expect no rest. (II, 137, 141)

But this modern Hercules, unlike his mythical counterpart, is unable to complete his labours: "there is a Nessus-Shirt on this Hercules; he must storm and burn there, without rest, till he be consumed" (II, 140).

The sheer-number of Carlyle's references to "antiquated Mythusés" prompts the question of what validity mythical allusion has in a modern "new Mythus." If we examine Carlyle's attitude towards mythic thought and pre-existent mythologies
from the perspective of Robert Langbaum's distinction between
the poet "who actually sees the world as mythical" and the
poet who "merely make[s] decorative allusions to an established
literary mythology," we can arrive at three significant
statements: first, that Carlyle attempts insistently to
demonstrate the mythic nature of the modern world; second, that
he is adamant in his rejection of decorative allusions to
outdated and merely literary mythologies; and third, that he
allows mythic allusion a predominant rôle in The French
Revolution that appears at first glance to contradict his
belief in the mythic potentialities of modern life. Through
the voice of Gottfried Sauerteig, Carlyle denigrates the
"dressing of new human feelings in old pagan garb as "hoydenish
masking." He criticizes the reliance of modern authors on the
"meaningless Deception" of epic machinery, and censures even
Homer for using mythic deities as "mere ornamental fringes."29
Carlyle's censure, it must be remembered, falls not on past
myths, but on the inappropriate modern perpetuation of them.
Carlyle dismisses ancient borrowings as irrelevant substitutes
for modern observation, and depicts slavish reliance on past
models as a lack of faith in man's ability to shape worthy
objects of belief from contemporary life. In continuing to
see heroism only in past ages, Carlyle contends, the nineteenth
century fails to realize that it is "hardly a whit less romantic
than that Ninth" in which even Roland "knew what it was to
have hose need darning."30
Past myths, when properly used by the modern author and not offered as substitutes for observation, are accorded a definite, if limited, position of respect by Carlyle. Since, as Sauerteig maintains, "all Mythologies were once... believed," past myth has significance for modern man, insofar as "we believe it to have been believed, by the Singer or his Hearers; into whose case we now laboriously struggle to transport ourselves; and so, with stinted enough result, catch some reflex of the Reality, which for them was wholly real and visible face to face." 31 Myth as embodied in literature is a "reflex," or incomplete reflection, of the reality faced by the maker of the myth, just as the cathedrals of The French Revolution constitute the "memory of a Creed," "Smoke-Vapour: unextinguished Breath as of a thing living" (I, 8). While the poet who makes decorative allusions to a literary mythology is imitating a reflection, the poet who views the world mythically is imitating past myth-makers by creating symbols from immediate experience. The symbol created by the modern mythopoetic poet is, like that of a past mythmaker, a direct rendering of reality. The difference between the two symbols is the immediacy and contemporaneity of reality in the former and the remoteness of reality in the latter.

The primary function of mythical allusion in The French Revolution is the creation of an analogy between present and past experience, especially in consideration of the "Inward Sense" that creates, "all Phenomena of the spiritual kind" (I, 6).
Because the old clothes that represent the rejected myths also represent "the unchanging need of every age for clothes," as Langbaum aptly points out, past mythology can legitimately be seen as analogous to modern mythopoeia. The basis for the analogy between past and present myth, however, lies not in the outworn literary vesture of past mythology, but in the initial belief that underlies it. While Carlyle, like many of the Victorian mythographers who follow him, traces a development of myth from primal belief to developed literary mythology, he values the perpetuated written form of myth not as its highest, but as its most degenerate form. Of the myth of the Nibelungen, for example, he writes:

by what art [can we] discover the little grain of Substance that casts such multiplied immeasurable Shadows? The primeval Mythus, were it at first philosophical truth, or were it historical incident, floats too vaguely on the breath of men: each successive Singer and Redactor furnishes it with new personages, new scenery, to please a new audience . . . . Thus though Tradition may have but one root, it grows like a Banian, into a whole overarching labyrinth of trees. Or rather might we say, it is a Hall of Mirrors, where in pale light each mirror reflects, convexly or concavely, not only some real Object, but the shadows of this in other mirrors; which again do the like for it: till in such reflection and re-reflection the whole immensity is filled with dimmer and dimmer shapes; and no firm scene lies round us, but a dislocated, distorted chaos, fading away on all hands, in the distance, into utter night.

The highly literary nature of Carlyle's own allusions serves to emphasize the important difference between past and present symbols. While both are expressions of reality, the modern
symbol is predominant because it expresses a present reality. In every juxtaposition of a mythical allusion and a modern incident, Carlyle unites a form that reflects a past reality with a present reality that is acquiring symbolic form, and points the reader to the theme that underlies both: the creation of a world by the inward sense.

The analogy between past and present symbols serves a variety of purposes in The French Revolution. Carlyle's mythical allusions fittingly reflect his own mythic universe, where custom, light, and civilization lie poised over the abyss of dark unconscious power, and where all phases of myth—its creation, its death, and its inappropriate perpetuation—are significant. They further parallel the mythopoeic efforts of the French nation as it installs, in an effort to make its own "Realised Ideals," a variety of inappropriate pagan forms: feasts, altars, pagan prayers, incense, statues of pagan deities, and Roman artworks by David. The symbols of past myths intercede between the untutored reader, conditioned to regard contemporary life as unmythical, and the new myth, while at the same time helping to create the rough splendour of a world in creation. Moreover, their inclusion in the text adds to the modern myth's scope and inclusiveness. The retention of themes, characters, and images from the mythologies of previous epics is itself an epic device; Carlyle, having envisaged a continuity between himself as artist historian and the creators of past myths, follows epic tradition in exploring
the uniqueness of his new myth through its continuity with
the old.

Most importantly, mythical allusion aids Carlyle in
performing the function of the seer, as it is described in
"On History" and elsewhere. In order to portray reality, "the
only genuine Romance," the seer or poet must bring "shadow
and compression" to "the incongruous ever-fluctuating chaos
of the Actual" (I, 10). He must shape "mere beadrolls of
exterior occurrences," or narrative, into action, by showing
the "deeper harmonies, which belong to a true Picture." He
must group isolated events in significant relationships by
demonstrating the "Passion and Mystery" that underlie them.
Consequently, The French Revolution brings to the imaging of
physical events the perspective of universal history, which
looks "with the eye of Time at large." Carlyle, the
artist historian with "an Idea of the Whole," transforms
narrative events into action by linking past, present, and
future in "the All of Things" (II, 103).

Mythical allusion contributes significantly to the
creation of action in The French Revolution. Carlyle's
description of Camille Desmoulins as "sibylline in face; his
hair streaming" (I, 175), is, though unfactual and absurd from
the perspective of straightforward narrative, of considerable
thematic and structural significance. The reference to the
Sibyls reminds us of Carlyle's prophetic function and points
us forward to the taking of the Bastille. Camille's streaming
hair allies him with the "subterranean Eumenides . . .
shaking their serpent-hair" and with the Menads of the
insurrection of women. These mythical allusions, which evoke
"the Elemental Powers," perform the dual function of
intensifying the immediate action while recalling a universal
theme, the subconscious powers that "lie always . . . in the
dullest existence of man" (I, 175-7). The writing down of the
rights of man on 4 August 1789 is designated "a new Night of
Pentecost . . . shaped according to the new Time, and new
Church of Jean Jacques Rousseau" (I, 219). While the parallel
with Christian experience reveals the magnitude of the task
that the French people have undertaken, the flame of Pentecost
becomes the fire by which "Feudalism is struck dead" (I, 231).
This spiritual flame images the literal burnings which are
taking place throughout France, the flame image which is the
universal symbol of dissolution and recreation (of which the
charter of rights is one example), and the "lake of fire" over
which naive philosophism has been dancing (I, 48). The "All
of Things," which encompasses both hopeful creation and
imminent destruction, is thus expressed in one image. The
downfall of Danton is similarly shaped by mythical allusion.
The "great Titan," writes Carlyle, avoids "black Arachne-webs,"
retreating "to native Arcis" to be with his "Everlasting
Mother": having aided in the overthrow of Olympus (Versailles),
he must now extricate himself from the prophetic image of the
spider Arachne (the French nation under the Reign of Terror)
which, having challenged divinity, kills itself.

The part played by mythical allusion in the creation of action is further evident in Carlyle's mythic epithets, in which an apparently casual parallel between modern and mythical experience comes to have an important proleptic and structural function. Carlyle calls the Versailles banquet of 1 October 1789 "a natural repast . . . now fatal as that of Thyestes," or as "that of Job's Sons," as if either the classical allusion or the biblical allusion will serve equally well. Soon, however, the banquet gains the epithet "Thyestes Repast," which introduces an important parallel between the fall of the Bourbons and the fall of the house of Atreus (I, 247-8). The epithet "Armida-Palace" applied to Versailles creates a precise analogy between Madame Dubarry and the heathen enchantress Armida, and between the "Most Christian King" Louis XV and the entrapped Christian knight Rinaldo (I, 4). The "divine Sea-Ruler" Lafayette becomes "Poseidon Lafayette," who, as the "Hero of Two Worlds," must calm "the upper Aeolus" and steer between "Sansculotte Scylla" and "Aristocrat Charybdis" (II, 130, 133, 135). These epithets all achieve compression by stating a character's nature in its briefest form and by placing the "reflex," or symbol, of a past reality in juxtaposition with a modern reality from which, through the medium of artistic history, new symbols are being formed.

Carlyle's form of mythic epithet clearly demonstrates how
thoroughly dialogic (in the strictest etymological sense of the word) Carlyle's text is. The epithet "Poseidon Lafayette" yokes together two words from radically disparate realms of experience. "Poseidon" comes from a well-established literary mythology clearly removed, as Arnold and Bagehot would argue, from the context of everyday, contemporary life. "Lafayette" comes from the realm of modern history, which cannot easily be dissociated from wives, children, measles, wanton daughters, constipation, and torn hose. Carlyle's yoking together of the two words demonstrates his thoroughgoing unwillingness to submit to a refined, univocal literary language and his conscious acknowledgement of the problematic relation of literary language to contemporary life. The very fact that he includes "Poseidon" at all shows, however, that he does not intend to dismiss literary language out of hand: when Carlyle writes that Lafayette and his "blue National Guards" surround the Tuileries "as blue Neptune (in the language of poets) does an island" (II, 2), he points up, but does not alter, the essentially literary nature of his figure.

Carlyle's practice, here as elsewhere, is paradoxical, for his unwillingness to allow the claim of past poetic mythologies to a unique voice for poetic expression is accompanied by his admittance into his history of traditional mythological themes, images, and characters. Just as "The Diamond Necklace" incorporates features of the Gothic fictions that it is partially intended to combat, The French Revolution
incorporates many of the gods and heroes that Sauerteig
denigrates for having tyrannized the European epic imagination
from the Renaissance through the eighteenth and nineteenth
centuries. Indeed, Carlyle does precisely what he elsewhere
describes Cervantes as doing in Don Quixote: sanctioning the
continued existence of the very modes of thought that his work
ostensibly opposes:

[Don Quixote is the free utterance of the
heart of man and nature. At the outset Cervantes
seems to have contemplated not much more than
a satire on chivalry—a burlesque. But, as one proceeds, the spirit soon grows on him. One may
say that in his Don Quixote he portrays his own character, representing himself with
good-natured irony, mistaking the illusions of
his own heart for realities; but he proceeds
ever more and more harmoniously. The first time
where he appears to have gone deeply into his
subject is the scene with the goatherds, where
Don Quixote breaks out into an eulogy on the
Golden Age, full of the finest poetry, although
strangely introduced in the middle of the mockery
which appears before. Throughout the delineation
of the Don's character and the incidents of the
story, there is the vesture of mockery, parody,
with a seam of poetry shining through all ...

We have the hard facts of this world's
existence, and the ideal scheme struggling with-
these in a high enthusiastic manner delineated
there; and for this there is no more wholesome
vehicle anywhere than irony, the best way in
which these ideas can live. If he had given us
only a high-flown panegyric of the Age of Gold
he would have found no ear for him, it is the
self-mockery in which he envelopes it which
reconciles us to the high bursts of enthusiasm
... It is the poetry of comedy! 42

Initial repudiation becomes the means of subsequent re-
acceptance, when Carlyle allows the illusory phantoms of past
mythologies to coexist, sometimes harmoniously, sometimes
incongruously, with the characters of modern history in the
text of his disimprisoned epic.
Notes to Chapter Three


2 Paradise Lost, IX, 28-9. All references to this poem are to the edition of Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: Odyssey, 1962).


7 Greene, pp. 14-5.

8 Greene, p. 19. For another mention of the relation of Greene's theories on politics in epic to The French Revolution, see LaValley, p. 141.


10 Sartor Resartus, p. 194.


15 Jenkyns, pp. 27-8.
16 Works, XXVII, 430.
17 Sartor Resartus, p. 188.
18 Works, XVIII, 3. For another discussion of the mythic universe of "Characteristics" and its importance for The French Revolution, see LaValley, pp. 127-8.
19 Works, XVIII, 2.
20 Works, XVIII, 2-3.
21 Works, XVIII, 29-30.
22 Works, XVIII, 42. The mythic process described here by Carlyle is similar to the mythic transformation of chaos into cosmos described by Mircea Eliade. See for example Myth and Reality, trans. Willard Trask (New York: Harper, 1963), p. 141.
23 For another instance of the protective garden setting, see III, 80.
25 Paradise Lost, IX, 48-52.
27 Albert J. LaValley writes that Carlyle's "epic for moderns is also a heightened version of mock-epic, . . . in which the Titanis-war upon the Olympian gods and dethrone them forever" (p. 142). While LaValley correctly cites this pattern of analogues as being of considerable importance, he gives the misleading impression that Carlyle is entirely consistent in designating the royalists as Olympians and the revolutionaries as Titans. For instances in which Carlyle reverses his usual procedure, see I, 47 and 83 and II, 27.
28 "Browning and the Question of Myth," PMLA, 81 (1966), 575.
29 Works, XXVIII, 50-1.
30 Works, XXVIII, 327.
31 Works, XXVIII, 50.


34 Works, XXVII, 219-20.

35 Works, XXVIII, 178.


37 Works, XXVI, 41-2.

38 Works, XXVII, 88-9.


40 Works, XXVII, 90.


Chapter Four

Epic Inclusiveness: Satire, Elegy, and Farce-Tragedy

In the preceding chapter I have used the concept of epic inclusiveness several times to describe Carlyle's efforts to unite widely varying realms of human experience. That concept, which has been previously noted as an important epic feature of The French Revolution,¹ is a commonplace of epic criticism in the centuries before Carlyle. Torquato Tasso points out in his discourses on epic the paradox that the epic poet can, within the confines of a single tightly unified action, form a poem in which, as in a little world, one may read here of armies assembling, here of battles on land or sea, here of conquests of cities, skirmishes and duels, here of jousts, here descriptions of hunger and thirst, here tempests, fires, prodigies, there of celestial and infernal councils, there seditions, there discord, wanderings, adventures, enchantments, deeds of cruelty, daring, courtesy, generosity, there the fortunes of love, now happy, now sad; now joyous, now pitiful.²

John Dryden states that the epic poet must supplement his "universal genius" with "universal learning": "the knowledge of the liberal arts and sciences, and particularly moral philosophy, the mathematics, geography, and history."³ Alexander Pope, similarly impressed with the breadth of
learning required by the epic poet, describes Homer, the most revered epicist of Western civilization, as "the Father of Learning, a Soul capable of ranging over the whole Creation with an intellectual view." Homer's copious invention, writes Pope,

was like a powerful Star, which in the Violence of its Course, drew all things within its Vortex. It seem'd not enough to have taken in the whole Circle of Arts, and the whole Compass of Nature to supply his maxims and reflections; all the inward Passions and Affections of Mankind to furnish his Characters, and all the outward Forms and Images of Things for his Descriptions . . . 4

For these critics, completeness of learning and an encyclopedic totality of vision are mandatory for the author who would presume to attempt the writing of an epic that is of social and cosmic significance.

Of the many different types of inclusiveness that The French Revolution demonstrates, 5 I shall in this chapter concentrate on generic inclusiveness, the type isolated for praise by John Stuart Mill in his 1837 review of the work. As we have seen, Mill writes that Carlyle's historical epic has "a theme the most replete with every kind of human interest, epic, tragic, elegiac, even comic and farcical, which history affords." His contention, rephrased, is that Carlyle's theme, by encompassing an entire range of human experience, brings within its epic compass the literary modes that correspond to each of those experiences, and that exist elsewhere,
independently, as the genres of epic, tragedy, elegy, comedy, and farce. This view is entirely consistent with Mill's earlier views on epic as expressed in his 1833 essay "What is Poetry?" where he states that epic is "esteemed the greatest effort of poetic genius, because there is no kind whatever of poetry which may not appropriately find a place in it." This view is consistent as well with the literary aesthetic of Carlyle, with whom Mill was in close contact during the eighteen-thirties. We have seen how in the opening paragraphs of "Count Cagliostro" Carlyle describes "the grand sacred Epos, or Bible of World-History" as an inclusive form containing the heroic, the elegiac, the idyllic, the comic, the pastoral, the "farcic-tragic," the melodramatic, and the satiric. Carlyle elsewhere clearly states that the epic theme of the French Revolution contains all these areas of human interest, and hence all these literary modes. In an 1837 review of French histories of the Revolution in Mill's London and Westminster Review, Carlyle writes of the Histoire Parlementaire de la Révolution Française:

We have scenes of tragedy, of comedy, of farce, of farce-tragedy oftenest of all; there is eloquence, gravity; there is bluster, bombast and absurdity: scenes tender, scenes barbarous, spirit-stirring, and then flatly weafisome: a thing waste, incoherent, wild to look upon, but great with the greatness of reality; for the thing exhibited is no vision, but a fact.

So too in his own account of the Revolution, Carlyle describes how in French history "the most variegated of scenes paints
itself." "In startling transitions, in colours all intensified," he writes, "the sublime, the ludicrous, the horrible succeed one another; or rather, in crowding tumult, accompany one another." (III, 206-7). 8 In this chapter I shall examine several prominent literary modes as they are integrated into the inclusive structure of The French Revolution: satire, elegy, and the dramatic modes of farce, comedy, and tragedy. I shall attempt to show how, in an action framed by "no vision, but a fact," these "variegated" modes are inseparable, with the sphere of satire intersecting that of elegy, and with farce joining tragedy in the mixed form of "farce-tragedy."

In his early studies of Jean Paul Friedrich Richter, Carlyle expresses his preference for "humour" over the "faculty of irony, of caricature, which often passes by the name of humour, but consists chiefly in a certain superficial distortion or reversal of objects." 9 He nevertheless frequently uses irony, grotesque caricature, distortion, and reversal throughout his works for satiric purposes. 10 I shall begin my examination of his satiric art in The French Revolution by referring to several helpful twentieth-century commentators on satire. James Sutherland distinguishes the comic writer, who "accepts the natural and acquired folly . . . which a bountiful world provides for his enjoyment," and the satirist who, because he is "abnormally sensitive to the gap between what might be and what is," "cannot accept and refuses to tolerate" that folly. 11 Northrop Frye describes satire as "militant irony," which
brings to bear on a specific target "wit or humor founded on fantasy or a sense of the grotesque or absurd."12 Gilbert Highet writes that satire "pictures real men and women . . . with unforgettable clarity" and "uses the bold and vivid language of its own time, eschewing clichés and dead conventions."13 Ronald Paulson calls satire "the vituperatio of laus et vituperatio," and suggests "that if satire originates as rhetoric, or attack, it only matters—or survives as literature—as mimesis, exploration, and analysis."14 Matthew Hodgårt, whose account of satire is particularly illuminating for a consideration of satire in Carlyle, argues that satire is the product of a "critical and aggressive" mind responding to human folly "with a mixture of laughter and indignation." The satirist, he contends, demonstrates his profound human concern through his characteristic choice of topics: politics and "the human condition itself." But the satirist's "commitment to and involvement with the painful problems of the world," he further suggests, is tempered by "a high degree of abstraction from the world":

The satirist does not paint an objective picture of the evils he describes, since pure realism would be too oppressive. Instead he usually offers us a travesty of the situation, which at once directs our attention to actuality and permits an escape from it. All good satire contains an element of aggressive attack and a fantastic vision of the world transformed . . . .15

Hodgårt points out that satire, though restricted in its techniques, can appear in a variety of literary forms. "Some
of the best satire in literature," he states, "occurs episodically or fragmentarily in works which are not intended to be wholly satirical." Hodgart cites the novel as a form which frequently differs from satire in its overall intent, but which nevertheless admits incidental satire. Ordinarily, he writes, "satire aims at simplification, at a pretence of misunderstanding and at denunciation"; the novel, on the other hand, "aims at understanding the complexities of life." In Dickens, therefore, the "best satirical passages often occur sandwiched between sentimental and melodramatic passages, and in novels whose overall vision is other than a satirical one." 

In the case of The French Revolution, we are clearly dealing with a work that "aims at understanding the complexities of life" and "whose overall vision is other than a satirical one." Yet since human ignorance and folly play such an important part in Carlyle's complex vision of the French Revolution, satire is one of the dominant literary modes contained within The French Revolution's encyclopedic form. Carlyle uses incidental satire, with its temporary unwillingness to understand the complexity of a multi-faceted historical phenomenon, alongside the more tolerant outlooks of elegy, comedy, and tragedy. After having established in the "Realised Ideals" chapter his satiric norm of a society whose political and religious institutions exist harmoniously with transcendent, universal Nature, Carlyle satirizes the discrepancy between that norm and the society of modern France, with its diseased monarchy, ineffectual constitutionalism, and
anarchic revolution. He presents graphic, highly imaginative portraits of all ranks of French society performing what common sense must perceive as grotesque and absurd actions. He combines a profound concern for the human condition with a distancing element of travesty and fantasy. And, as we shall now see, he repeatedly uses the most common techniques of satire: mimicry and caricature, deflationary language and metaphor, and burlesque.

Mimicry, as Matthew Hodgart writes,

is an invasion of privacy, in that it destroys every man's private conviction that he is unique and inimitable: even though it may be affectionate in its malice, it is another weapon against human pride. The mimic must create a likeness, so that his audience shall recognise it; but he must go on to produce a ludicrous distortion in which the compulsive gestures and tics of the victim are exaggerated: a newly-created character is built out of them and superimposed on the original likeness. The visual element of mimicry is caricature . . . 18

As a mimic and caricaturist, Carlyle isolates a dominant feature of his satiric object and makes that feature ridiculous through insistent repetition and grotesque distortion. In satirizing the philosophes, he takes their interest in a scientific approach to language and makes it into an obsessive concern that prevents them from operating effectively in any other endeavour; he depicts both the philosophes and their philosophical heirs the constitution-makers as endlessly preoccupied with the trivial pursuit of a "Theory of Irregular Verbs" (I, 215). Elsewhere, he endlessly castigates them,
because of their philosophic zeal, as followers of a new religion, with a new evangelist (Rousseau), a new gospel, and new feasts and observances. The more firmly established Roman Catholic church is characterized by Carlyle as a contortionist. "Remark," he exhorts his reader, "what somersets and contortions a dead Catholicism is making,—skilfully galvanised" (II, 155). The indecisive Louis XVI Carlyle makes "a King Popinjay; with his Maurepas Government, gyrating as the weather-cock does, blown about by every wind" (I, 37). More acted-upon than acting, Louis is "poor King Log, tumbled hither and thither as thousand-fold change and other will than his might direct" (II, 3-4). A comparably indecisive revolutionary leader Carlyle dubs "Janus Bifrons, or Mr. Facing-both-ways, as vernacular Bunyan has it" (II, 289).

One of Carlyle's most common means of caricature is the depiction of men as animals, a technique which is, as Matthew Hodgart points out, ubiquitous in satire:

The animal world is continually drawn on by the satirist: he reminds us that homo sapiens despite his vast spiritual aspirations is only a mammal that feeds, defecates, menstruates, ruts, gives birth and catches unpleasant diseases. ... The animal image is an essential device in the visual counterpart, caricature and cartoon: it reduces man's purposeful actions, the ambitious aims of which he is proud and his lusts of which he is ashamed to the level of brute instinct: hog in sloth, fox in stealth.20

Carlyle observes in The French Revolution that "there is no animal so strange as man" (I, 16); he displays the strangeness
of man in his history by making many of his characters' animals. Indeed, the number of his references to animals gives his history the sense of an epic struggle of beasts, as in the war of the Pygmies and Cranès mentioned in the previous chapter, or of a beast fable. Dogs and birds predominate in Carlyle's zoological treatment of French society. Cardinal Richelieu has an "old dissipated mastiff-face" (I, 17), while Marat is "left at large; ... as a sort of bandog whose baying may be useful" (II, 25). ("All dogs have their day; even rabid dogs," Carlyle later observes of him [III, 8].) A member of the National Assembly "sniffs" a speaker, while "the Galleries ... bark rabid" (II, 14). Phillippe D'Orléans is a "pert scaldheaded crow" who thinks that he is allowed to "alight at pleasure, and peck" on the "mere wooden Scarecrow" of royalty (I, 92). After their first triumph over royalty, the revolutionaries are "assembled crows" who really can "pluck up their scarecrow" (II, 1). Marat flies "to Versailles and back again;--swart bird, not of the halcyon kind" (I, 249). Atheist Naigeon "crows, in his small difficult way, heralding glad dawn" (II, 24). After a military defeat, "Patriotism flies, shrieking, execrating." "Danton with Camille and Fréron [take] wing, for their life," while "Marat burrows deep in the Earth, and is silent" (II, 193). As this last example shows, other varieties of life besides dogs and birds appear in Carlyle's text. Louis XV's minister Maupois has "malign rat-eyes" (I, 4). The French nation is a family of cats:
Sansculottism grows lustily, and even frisks in not ungraceful sport: as indeed most young creatures are sportful; nay, may it not be noted further, that as the grown cat, and cat species generally, is the cruellest thing known, so the merriest is precisely the kitten, or growing cat? (II, 2)

And Marat, elsewhere a dog, a bird, and a mole, has the voice of a "bullfrog, or bittern by the solitary pools" and, "unseen of men, croaks harsh thunder" (II, 107-8).

Carlyle adds to his satiric attack on French persons and institutions with the use of deflationary language. The months of the new French calendar, instituted as a sign of the new free and equal society created by the Revolution, he translates disparagingly as "Vintageorius," "Fogarious," "Frostrarious," "Snowbus," "Rainous," "Windous," "Buddal," "Flowral," "Meadowal," "Reapidor," "Heatidor," and "Fruitidor" (III, 184). The nicknames given by Louis XV to the elderly princesses of the royal family he likewise translates as "Rag," "Snip," "Pig," and "Dud" (I, 16-7). These same princesses Carlyle describes, using the common satirical scheme of zeugma, as going "to embroidery, small-scandal, prayers, and vacancy": the first two items in this series of nouns create an impression of extreme triviality, while the final reference to "vacancy" undercuts any sense of importance rendered by "prayers" (I, 17). Carlyle dismisses Madame de Buffon as the "light wife of a great Naturalist much too old for her" (I, 92) and, in a similar fashion, calls Demoiselle Candeille "a woman fair to look upon, when well rouged" (III, 227). Cardinal
Richelieu he terms, in epithets that are heroic more in form than in intention, "conqueror of Minorca, companion of Flying-Table orgies, perforator of bedroom walls" (I, 24).

Of greater structural importance than deflationary diction is Carlyle's use of deflationary metaphors. The most appropriate metaphor of inflation and deflation in The French Revolution is the hot-air balloon or windbag. This metaphor arises from the historical fact, dutifully recorded by Carlyle, of the brothers Montgolfier launching a hot-air balloon in 1783. This launching of what Carlyle reductively terms a "paper-dome, filled with the smoke of burnt wool" is described in a deliberately inflated panegyric:

From Réveillon's Paper-warehouse there, in the Rue St. Antoine (a noted Warehouse),—the new Montgolfier air-ship launches itself. Ducks and poultry have been borne skyward; but now shall men be borne. ... Chemist Charles will himself ascend, from the Tuileries Garden; Montgolfier solemnly cutting the cord. By Heaven, this Charles does also mount, he and another! Ten times ten thousand hearts go palpitating; all tongues are mute with wonder and fear;—tilt a shout, like the voice of seas, rolls after him, on his wild way. He soars, he dwindles upwards; has become a mere gleaming circlet, ... like some new daylight Moon! Finally he descends; welcomed by the universe.

(I, 51)

Far from being an incidental object of satire, this balloon is emblematic of pre-revolutionary France:

Beautiful invention; mounting heavenward, so beautifully,—so unguidably! Emblem of much, and of our Age of Hope itself; which shall mount, specifically-light, majestically in this
same manner; and hover,—tumbling whither
Fate will. Well if it do not, Pilâtre-like,
explode; and demount all the more tragically!
--So, riding on windbags, will men scale the
Empyrean. (I, 51)

The image of men "riding on windbags" emblems the initially
satiric, and ultimately tragic discrepancy between social
aspiration and social reality. Near the end of Carlyle's
history, when the tragic potentialities of French society have
fulfilled themselves, Robespierre is described as the
"unhappiest of windbags blown nigh to bursting" (III, 267).

Another metaphor of unrealized aspiration is the Age of
Gold to be instituted by "Astraea Redux . . . (in the shape of
Philosophism)" (I, 31). The myth of the return of the
Saturnian deities alluded to by Carlyle suggests regeneration,
justice, and social harmony, the very goals of the Revolution.
But the faith that an over-optimistic Philosophism has in its
regenerative powers is sadly at odds with the social and
economic problems of France. Because of France's severe
financial crisis, the dignified, mythic Astraea Redux becomes
the prosaic, demythologized "Astraea Redux without Cash" (I, 44).
The Age of Gold becomes the Age of Paper, since paper, in the
form of "Bank-paper" ("wherewith you can still buy when there
is no gold left") and "Book-paper" ("splendid with Theories,
Philosophies, Sensibilities"), is a more fitting symbol of the
age of the philosophes (I, 29).

The use of inflated metaphors by Carlyle is closely
related to his use of burlesque. High burlesque, usually
associated with mock-heroic verse, adopts a deliberately incongruous, elevated literary manner for subjects that are incapable of warranting its elevation. Carlyle uses many of the exalted conventions of epic for historical characters who are not sufficient in will or stature to be traditional epic heroes. During the flight to Varennes, for example, Carlyle portrays a dawn in which the universe appears to welcome the arrival of a great leader. But the reality of Louis XVI and his fleeing family is at variance with the welcome given:

Stars fade out, and Galaxies; Street-lamps of the City of God. The Universe, O my brothers, is flinging wide its portals for the Levee of the GREAT HIGH KING. Thou, poor King Louis, farest nevertheless, as mortals do, towards Orient lands of Hope; and the Tuileries with its Levees, and France and the Earth itself, is but a larger kind of dog-hutch, occasionally going rabid. (II, 164)

The metaphor of galaxies and a heavenly city, when coupled with the contrasting metaphor of the hutch of rabid dogs, reduces to absurdity the aspirations of French monarchy. Later in the same episode, Carlyle depicts the coach in which the royal family is travelling as the Sun-Chariot of Phaeton and Apollo. "Dawn on our bewilderment, thou new Berline," he exclaims, "dawn on us, thou Sun-Chariot of a new Berline, with the destinies of France" (II, 170). But this chariot is in reality, as the narrative reveals, a needless luxury and encumbrance that prevents an undetected escape from France. Indeed, many of the metaphoric identifications of French
persons and events with epic gods and happenings serve the purposes of burlesque, rather than of epic analogy and elevation. Beaumarchais fighting a lawsuit is "like a lean French Hercules" who "ventured down, driven by destiny into the Nether Kingdoms; and victoriously tamed hell-dogs there" (I, 43), while Finance Minister Necker, "Atlas-like, sustains the burden of the Finances" (I, 47). The Parlement of Paris Carlyle apostrophizes as an artificially constructed ruler of heaven: "Thou too (O heavens!) mayest become a Political Power; and with the shakings of thy horse-hair wig shake principalities and dynasties, like a very Jove with his ambrosial curls" (I, 62). And various orators become Olympian deities of awesome stature:

Sweet also is the meed of patriotic éloquence, when your D’Esprèmènil, your Fréteau, or Sabatier, issuing from his Demosthenic Olympus, the thunder being hushed for the day, is welcomed, in the outer courts, with a shout from four thousand throats; is borne home shoulder-high 'with benedictions,' and strikes the stars with his sublime head. (I, 83)

The reductive effect of all these satiric techniques is complemented by the predominantly laudatory effect of Carlyle’s passages of elegy, which looks at human limitations from a radically different perspective than that of satire. The predominance of the elegiac mode in Carlyle’s history arises from its concern with the "phasis" of personal and universal history when persons and symbols "fall into decay; sorrowfully dwindle; and crumble down, or rush down, noisily or noiselessly
disappearing" (I, 10). Since The French Revolution begins with
the death of a king and treats the downfall of kingship, it
fittingly eulogizes both "Sovereigns" and "Sovereignties" at
its outset:

Sovereigns die and Sovereignties: how all
dies, and is for a Time only . . . . The
Merovingian Kings, slowly wending on their
bullock-carts through the streets of Paris,
with their long hair flowing, have all wended
slowly on,—into Eternity. Charlemagne sleeps
at Salzburg, with truncheon grounded; only
Fable expecting that he will awaken. Charles
the Hammer, Pepin Bow-legged, where is
their eye of menace, their voice of command?
Rollo and his shaggy Northmen cover not the
Seine with ships; but have sailed off on a
longer voyage. The hair of Towhead . . . now
needs no combing; Iron-cutter . . . cannot cut
a cobweb; shrill Fredegonda, shrill Brunhilda
have had out their hot life-scold, and lie
silent, their hot life-frenzy cooled. Neither
from that black Tower de Nesle descends now
darkling the doomed gallant, in his sack, to
the Seine waters; plunging into Night: for
Dame de Nesle now cares not for this world's
gallantry, heeds not this world's scandal;
Dame de Nesle is herself gone into Night. They
are all gone; sunk,—down, down, with the tumult
they made; and the rolling and the trampling
of ever new generations passes over them; and
they hear it not any more for ever. (I, 7-8)

This passage, which adopts many of the traditional images and
motifs of elegy (deafness, darkness, cold, immersion, the
lament for dead heroes, ubi sunt, Death the Leveller, and the
Fall of Princes), establishes the elegiac mode which reappears
many times throughout the text when a character dies or
otherwise leaves the stage of universal history.

The form of prose elegy used by Carlyle in The French
Revolution is brief, impassioned, formal in structure, and elevated in style and diction. In attempting to comprehend the loss of an individual or group by reference to a universal pattern of meaning, this form reflects the traditional elegy's concern with "eulogy and dyslogy, and summing-up of character." 

It contains elements of dispraise and satire (as Milton's "Lycidas," for example, does), but subordinates these to the overall tenor of praise. Carlyle's elegiac passages point up an individual's or group's closeness to or remoteness from the ideal of true manhood. Louis XV stands remote from truth, because of his reliance on obsolete institutions:

Doomed mortal;—for is it not a doom to be Solecism incarnate: ... His Life-solecism
was seen and felt of a whole scandalised world; him endless Oblivion cannot engulf, and
swallow to endless depths,—not yet for a generation or two. (I, 22)

The Royalist Marquis de Bouillé, on the other hand, represents a rare instance of bravery and truth in an age of cant:

With little of speech, Bouillé rides; with thoughts that do not brook speech. Northward, towards uncertainty, and the Cimmerian Night: towards West-Indian Isles ...; towards England, towards premature Stoical death; not towards France any more. Honour to the Brave; who, be it in this quarrel or in that, in a substance and articulate-speaking piece of human Valour, not a fanfaronading hollow Spectrum and squeaking and gibbering Shadow! (II, 184-5)

Carlyle's elegiac passages relate the nature of a particular individual or group to the general condition of France and to
the universal condition of mankind. In describing Louis XVI's second procession to Paris, after the abortive flight to Varennes, for example, Carlyle uses his elegy for those who have died or left France since the first procession to elegize the French nation and man himself:

Théroigne will not escort here; neither does Mirabeau now 'sit in one of the accompanying carriages.' Mirabeau lies dead, in the Pantheon of Great Men. Théroigne lies living, in dark Austrian Prison; having gone to Liège, professionally, and been seized there. Bemurred now by the hoarse-flowing Danube: the light of her Patriot Supper-parties gone quite out; so lies Théroigne: she shall speak with the Kaiser face to face, and return. And France lies—how! Fleeting Time shears down the great and the little; and in two years alters many things. (II, 186)

This passage, with its traditional elegiac images and motifs (the extinction of light, the sympathetic grieving of nature in "the hoarse-flowing Danube," ubi sunt, Time the Reaper, and Death the Leveler), moves from a consideration of the individuals Théroigne and Mirabeau to the general condition of revolutionary France and to the universal condition of man in a world bound by time. Finally, Carlyle's elegiac passages link the present state of an individual or group to the past and the future, thereby creating an image of "the All of Things." Of Madame Dubarry, for example, Carlyle writes:

She is gone: and her place knows her no more. Vanish, false Sorceress; into Space! Needless to hover at neighbouring Rue1, for thy day is done. Shut are the royal palace-gates for evermore; hardly in coming years shalt thou, under cloud of night, descend once, in black
domino, like a black night-bird, and disturb
the fair Antoinette's music-party in the Park;
all Birds of Paradise flying from thee, and
musical windpipes growing mute. Thou unclean,
yet unmalignant, not unpitiable thing! What a
course was thine: from that first trucklebed
(in Joan of Arc's country) where thy mother
bore thee, with tears, to an unnamed father:
forward, through lowest subterranean depths,
and over highest sunlit heights, of Harlotdom
and Rascaldom—to the guillotine-axe, which
shears away thy vainly whimpering head! Rest
there uncursed; only buried and abolished: what
else befitted thee? (I, 22-3)

Carlyle unites the "retrospective" aspects of Dubarry's birth
and court intrigues with the "prospective" aspect of the
"guillotine-axe" and her "vainly whimpering head."²⁰

All of these techniques come into play in Carlyle's
elegies for the principal actors in the Revolution: Mirabeau,
Marat, Danton, and Robespierre. The longest and most important
of these elegies, in the "Death of Mirabeau" chapter of Volume
II, treats Mirabeau as "a gigantic Heathen and Titan;
stumbling blindly, undismayed, down to his rest." It contains
the traditional elegiac pattern of universal mourning for the
loss of a revered individual:

Even so, ye silent Patriot multitudes, all ye
men of France; this man is rapt away from you.
He has fallen suddenly, without bending till
he broke; as a tower falls, smitten by sudden
lightning. His word ye shall hear no more,
his guidance follow no more.—The multitudes
depart, heart-struck; spread the sad tidings.
... The gloom is universal; never in this
City was such sorrow for one death; never since
that old night when Louis XII. departed ...
King Mirabeau is now the lost King; and one may
say with little exaggeration, all the People
mourns for him. (II, 142-3)
It eulogizes Mirabeau as an individual who allies himself with the power of nature rather than with formulas formerly derived but now detached from nature:

A man who 'had swallowed all formulas'; who, in these strange times and circumstances, felt called to live Titanically, and also to die so. As he, for his part, had swallowed all formulas, what formula is there, never so comprehensive, that will express truly the plus and the minus of him, give us the accurate net-result of him? There is hitherto none such. Moralities not a few must shriek condemnatory over this Mirabeau; the Morality by which he could be judged has not yet got uttered in the speech of men. We will say this of him again: That he is a Reality and no Simulacrum; a living Son of Nature, our general Mother; not a hollow Artifice, and mechanism of Conventionalities, son of nothing, brother to nothing. (II, 145)

Finally, it depicts his individual nature in its general significance for the history of the French nation. The pyre on which Mirabeau's life "blazes out . . . and becomes ashes" is the "World-Pyre, which we name French Revolution" (II, 145), while the loss of that life is the loss of France itself:

The chosen Last of the Mirabeaus is gone; the chosen man of France is gone. It was he who shook old France from its basis; and, as if with his single hand, has held it toppling there, still unfallen. What things depended on that one man! He is as a ship suddenly shivered on sunk rocks; much sways on the waste waters, far from help. (II, 148)

In a similar manner, Carlyle portrays the death of Danton as the loss of one of France's few fully truthful men:

So passes, like a gigantic mass of valour
ostentation, fury, affection and wild
revolutionary force and manhood, this Danton,
to his unknown home. He was of Arcis-sur-Aube;
born of 'good farmer-people' there. He had
many sins; but one worst sin he had - not, that
of Cant. No hollow Formalist, deceptive and
self-deceptive, ghastly to the natural sense,
was this; but a very Man: with all his dross
he was a Man; fiery-real, from the great fire-
bosom of Nature herself. He saved France from
Brunswick; he walked straight his own wild
road, whither it led him. He may live for
some generations in the memory of men.

(III, 259-60)

The dignity and gravity of expression, the stately parallel
structures, and the final assertion of immortality through human
memory all serve to elevate this farewell to a departing hero.

Carlyle's elegies for Marat and Robespierre, tinged as
they are with disapprobation, serve less readily than his
elegies for Mirabeau and Danton to identify their subjects with
ideal humanity. Marat is portrayed at his death not as a
Titan stumbling undismayed to his rest but as a "lone Stylitea"
who "has got hurled down suddenly from his Pillar" (III, 169).
His loss is received not by genuine mourning, as is Mirabeau's,
but by a series of artificial and ineffectual attempts at
deification: the comparison by orators of Marat to Christ, the
state funeral and burial in the Pantheon, the painting of his
death-scene by David, "and, such other Apotheosis . . . as the
human genius . . . can devise" (III, 169-70). Carlyle adopts
the tone of true elegy only when he ceases to consider Marat
in his somewhat regrettable public rôle and considers him
instead for his private worth:
One sole circumstance we have read with clear sympathy, in the old Moniteur Newspaper: how Marat's Brother comes from Neuchâtel to ask of the Convention, 'that the deceased Jean-Paul Marat's musket be given him.' For Marat too had a brother and natural affections; and was wrapped once in swaddling-clothes, and slept safe in a cradle like the rest of us. Ye children of men!—A sister of his, they say, lives still to this day in Paris. (III, 170)

Having earlier in his elegiac farewell to Marat questioned the comparison of Marat with Christ by republican orators, Carlyle allows the unmistakably Christian allusion to a child "wrapped once in swaddling-clothes" to stand for Marat's common humanity. In the case of Robespierre, too, Carlyle turns to private friends rather than public allies for testimonials to his subject's worth:

O unhappiest Advocate of Arras, wert thou worse than other Advocates? Stricter man, according to his Formula, to his Credo and his Cant, of probities, benevolences, pleasures-of-virtue, and suchlike, lived not in that age. A man fitted, in some luckier settled age, to have become one of those incorruptible barren Pattern-Figures and have had marble-tablets and funeral-sermons. His poor landlord, the Cabinet-maker in the Rue Saint-Honoré, loved him; his Brother died for him. May God be merciful to him and to us! (III, 285-6)

Because of Carlyle's emphasis on the common humanity of all participants in the Revolution, the minor as well as the major characters are elegized. The royalist Princess de Lamballe, killed during the infamous September of 1792, is elegized with a grave and indignant lament:
That fair hind head is cleft with the axe; the
neck is severed. That fair body is cut in
fragments; with indignities, and obscene
horrors of mustachio grands-levres.
She was beautiful, she was good, she had known
no happiness. Young hearts, generation after
generation, will think with themselves: O
worthy of worship, thou king-descended, god-
descended, and poor sister-woman! Why was
not I there; and some Sword Balmung or Thor's
Hammer in my hand? (III, 29-30)

Of the Duke de la Rochefoucault, Carlyle states succinctly
that he "dies lamented of Europe; his blood spattering the
cheeks of his old Mother, ninety-three years old" (III, 44)
Jeanne Philipon, who demonstrates extreme courage and composure
at her execution, is elegized as a rare example of truth and
loyalty in an age of untruth:

Noble white Vision, with its high queenly face,
it's soft proud eyes; long black hair flowing
down to the girdle; and as brave a heart as
ever beat in woman's bosom! Like a white
Grecian Statue, serenely complete, she shines
in that black wreck of things;--long memorable.
Honour to great Nature who, in Paris City, in
the era of noble-Sentiment and Pompadourism, can
make a Jeanne Philipon, and nourish her to clear
perennial Womanhood, though but 'on Logics,
Encyclopédies, and the Gospel according to Jean-
Jacques'. (III, 211)

As these examples show, Carlyle's concern with universal
humanity makes the political allegiance of the person elegized,
whether royalist or revolutionary, secondary in importance to
the person's dedication to, or apostasy from, nature.

Groups, as well as individuals, are subjected to the test
of nature, and are elegized with varying degrees of
approbation or disapprobation. The revolutionary Gardes Françaises are accorded a genuine, if limited, respect by Carlyle:

those Sansculottic violent Gardes Françaises, or Centre Grenadiers, shall have their mittimus: they do ere long, in the Journals, not without a hoarse pathos, publish their Farewell; 'wishing all Aristocrats the graves in Paris which to us are denied.' They depart, these first Soldiers of the Revolution; they hover very dimly in the distance for about another year; till they can be remodelled, new-named, and sent to fight the Austrians; and then History beholds them no more. A most notable Corps of men; which has its place in World-History;—though to us, so is History written, they remain mere rubrics of men; nameless; a shaggy Grenadier Mass, crossed with buff-belts. And yet might we not ask: What Argonauts, what Leonidas' Spartans had done such a work? Think of their destiny: since that May morning, some three years ago, when they, unparticipating, trundled off D'Espréménil to the Calypso Isles; since that July evening, some two years ago, when they, participating and sacreing with knit brows, 'poured a volley into Besenval's Prince de Lambesc! History waves them her mute adieu. (II, 196)

But the Swiss Guards, who place duty before self-interest by remaining loyal to Louis XVI, receive much more than a "mute adieu" from Carlyle; in a passage that contains all of the elegy's characteristic imagistic transitions from light to darkness, from motion to stillness, and from sound to silence, Carlyle asserts the continuing memorability of the Swiss Guards' dedication:

What ineffaceable red streak, flickering so sad in the memory, is that, of this poor column of red Swiss... dispersing, into blackness and death! Honour to you, brave men; honourable
pity, through long times! Not martyrs were ye; and yet almost more. He was no King of yours, this Louis; and he forsook you like a King of shreds and patches: ye were but sold to him for some poor sixpence a-day; yet would ye work for your wages, keep your plighted word, The work now was to die; and ye did it. Not bastards; true-born were these men: sons of the men of Sempach, of Murten, who knelt, but not to thee, O Burgundy!—Let the traveller, as he passes through Lucerne, turn aside to look a little at their monumental Lion; not for Thorwaldsen's sake alone. Hewn out of living rock, the figure rests there, by the still Lake-waters, in lull by of distant-tinkling rance-des-vaches, the granite Mountains dumbly keeping watch all round; and, though inanimate, speaks. (II, 302).

In assessing the fall of the Girondins, Carlyle balances eulogy and dyslog. He observes antithetically that the Girondins are "not condemnable, but most unfortunate," and that they "wanted a Republic of the Virtues" but "could only get a Republic of the Strengths" (III, 163). 'Yet while he remains cognizant of the disparity between the Girondins' aspirations and their performance, he does depict their downfall as a part of the downfall common to all humanity:

The chorus is wearing weak; the chorus is worn out;—farewell for evermore, yet Girondins. Te-Deum Fauchet has become silent; Valazé's dead head is lopped: the sickle of the Guillotine has reaped the Girondins all away. 'The eloquent, the young, the beautiful and brave!' exclaims Riouffe. O Death, what feast is toward in thy ghastly Halls! (III, 199)

The sickle of Time the Reaper, which becomes in a deliberately forced metaphor the blade of the Guillotine, serves, together with the personified Death, as a reminder of the fate common to
all mankind. Carlyle tempers his final judgement on the Girondins with a recognition of their intrinsic humanity and worth:

Such was the end of Girondism. They arose to regenerate France, these men; and have accomplished this. Alas, whatever quarrel we had with them, has not their cruel fate abolished it? Pity only survives. So many excellent souls of heroes sent down to Hades; they themselves given as a prey of dogs and all manner of birds! But, here too, the will of the Supreme Power was accomplished. As Vergnaud said: "the Revolution, like Saturn, is devouring its own children." (III, 201)

In Carlyle's farewell to the Girondins, as in several of the other examples of elegy cited above, there is the disparity between aim and achievement that characteristically leads to satire, a form antithetical to elegy. Whereas elegy emphasizes eulogy and laus, satire emphasizes dyslogy and vituperatio; and whereas elegy works towards a consolation that identifies the elegized subject with the truthful and effectual power of the universe, satire works towards the ridicule of the satirized subject's separation from reason and truth. Within the encyclopedic framework of the French Revolution, Carlyle presents elegiac passages in which satire takes on a function of far greater predominance than its subordinate role in traditional elegy. In a chapter of Volume I unsentimentally titled "Loménie's Death-Throes," Carlyle describes how Loménie de Brienne falls, protected only by "huge featherbeds of Promotion," and eulogizes him in a heavily ironic manner: "Flimsier mortal was seldom fated to do as
weighty a mischief." He replaces the elegy's traditional request that its subject be remembered with a plea that Loménie be forgotten: "Let us pity the hapless Loménie; and forgive him; and, as soon as possible, forget him" (I, 109-10).

In portraying the downfall of Prince Philippe D'Orléans, satirically dubbed "Prince of the Power of Air," Carlyle uses his favourite image of the windbag in conjunction with a satiric rhythm of inflation and deflation, stating that Philippe "starts aloft, or is flung aloft, even into a clearness and a kind of memorability,—to sink then for evermore" (II, 114-5). On another occasion, Carlyle greets the departure of the Marquis de Brézé with a mixture of pathos and satire:

Hapless De Brézé; doomed to survive long ages, in men's memory; in this faint way, with tremulant white rod! He was true to Etiquette, which was his Faith here below; a martyr to respect of persons. Short woollen cloaks could not kiss Majesty's hand as long velvet ones did. Nay lately, when the poor little Dauphin lay dead, and some ceremonious Visitation came, was he not punctual to announce it even to the Dauphin's dead body: "Monseigneur, a Deputation of the States-General! Sunt lachrymae rerum" (I, 165).

The satiric effect of this passage's deflationary language ("true to Etiquette," "a martyr to respect of persons") is tempered by the pathos of its anecdote and its final quotation of Lucretius' terse observation on the tears of things.

Carlyle's mingling of the lyric and epideictic mode of elegy with the didactic and dyslogistic mode of satire has a dramatic analogy in his mixed form of "farce-tragedy" and the
"comico-tragical" (II, 134). The insistence of Carlyle's preoccupation with the conjunction of the farcical and the tragic in life and art is evidenced by the frequent use of "farce-tragedy" and related generic designations throughout his works. In "Jean Paul Friedrich Richter Again" he writes of "the rugged grim farce-tragedy often manifested in Hogarth's pictures." In "Count Cagliostro" he includes the "farcic-tragic" among the literary modes encompassed by the epos of universal history. In his review of the Histoire Parlementaire he cites "farce-tragedy" as the form appearing "oftenest of all" within that work. The preponderance of farce-tragedy that Carlyle notes in the Histoire Parlementaire appears also in his own account of the Revolution, where the laughable and the lamentable are placed in closest proximity to each other. "Poor royal mind, poor Paris," declares Carlyle, "that have to go mumming; enveloped in speciosities ; and to enact mutually your sorrowful farce-tragedy" (II, 197; see also II, 191). The procession of the captured royal family to Paris after the abortive flight to Varennes is, he states, comico-tragic; with bound Couriers, and a Doom hanging over it; most fantastic, yet most miserably real. Miserablest fible luditrium of a Pickleherring Tragedy! It sweeps along there, in most ungorgeous pall, through many streets, in the dusty summer evening; gets itself at length wriggled out of sight; vanishing in the Tuileries Palace,—towards its doom, of slow torture, peine forte et dure.

[II, 187]

An understanding of Carlyle's form of farce-tragedy and comico-
tragedy is crucial to a proper evaluation of the artistry of

The French Revolution. But a discussion of that form must be
preceded by a brief definition of its constituent elements:

farce, comedy, and tragedy.

Farce in The French Revolution involves the depiction of
futile, self-destructive, and potentially tragic actions which
are made risible by the temporary distancing of any tragic
sentiment on the part of the reader. A single instance that
will serve to illustrate the nature of farce is Carlyle's
amusing depiction of Representative Drouet escaping imprisonment
on a kite:

Representative Drouet as an Old-dragoon, could
fight by a kind of second nature: but he was
unlucky. Him, in a night-foray at Maubege, the
Austrians took alive, in October last. They
stript him almost naked, he says; making a show
of him, as King-taker of Varennes. They flung
him into carts; sent him far into the interior
of Cimmeria, to 'a Fortress called Spitzberg'
on the Danube River; and left him there, at an
elevation of perhaps a hundred and fifty feet,
to his own bitter reflections. Reflections,
and also devices! For the indomitable Old-
dragoon constructs wing machinery, of Paperkite;
saws window-bars; determines to fly down.

Authentic History, accordingly, looking far
into Cimmeria, discerns dimly a phenomenon. In
the dead night-watches, the Spitzberg Sentry
is near fainting with terror:—Is it a huge
vague Fortent descending through the night-air?
It is a huge National Representative Old-dragoon,
descending by Paperkite; too rapidly, alas! For
Drouet had taken with him 'a small provision-
store, twenty pounds weight or thereby', which
proved accelerative: so he fell, fracturing
his leg; and lay there, moaning, till 'day dawned,
till you could discern clearly that he was not
a Portent but a Representative. (III, 239-40)
The subject of this passage suffers military defeat and capture, public humiliation, incarceration, a fall, and painful injury. But however potentially tragic the subject's predicament, the language and tone of this passage determine that its sentiment is farcical.

To define comedy in The French Revolution is more complex than to define farce. As used in the designation "comico-tragical," comedy means the laughable and ridiculous, and is therefore almost synonymous with farce. As the modal opposite of tragedy, however, comedy has the further meaning of a pattern of rising fortune and social integration, such as is characteristically found in comic drama. In this sense, comedy represents the rise to freedom and power of a new revolutionary society, which overcomes the recalcitrance of an obstructive royalty. This new society is represented by the traditional comic images of the Age of Gold, dawn, and millennium. When Louis XV is buried, we read that "a New Era is come; the future all the brighter that the past was base" (I, 26):

Man awakens from his long somnambulism; chases the Phantasms that beleaguered and bewitched him. Behold the new morning glittering down the eastern steep; fly, false Phantasms, from its shafts of light; let the Absurd fly utterly, forsaking this lower Earth forever. (I, 30-1)

"Behind us is the Guillotine," writes Carlyle near the end of his history: "before us is Victory, Apotheosis, and Millenium without end" (II, 237). Despite the regenerative imagery of the Revolution, the discrepancy between its constructive
aspirations and largely destructive reality makes the mode of comedy susceptible to farce, satire, and ultimate tragedy.

Because of Carlyle's insistent concern with the downfall of persons and institutions, The French Revolution repeatedly manifests the mode and language of tragedy: "the nodus of a drama, not untragical" (I, 186), "a poetic Tragedy" (II, 147), "a catastasis or heightening" (II, 265), "tragic, almost ghastly" (III, 194), "an uncertain catastrophe" (III, 280), "this natural Greek drama, with its natural unities" (III, 283). Tragedy in The French Revolution means quite simply a fall in fortune from eminence and power to destruction and impotence; it is applied to royalist and revolutionary alike. The first paragraph of Volume II depicts the imminent downfall of Louis XVI, imprisoned in the Tuileries, as the conclusion of a tragic drama:

The victim having once got his stroke-of-grace, the catastrophe can be considered as almost come. There is small interest now in watching his long low means: notable only are his sharper agonies; what convulsive struggles he may make to cast the torture off from him; and then finally the last departure of life itself, and how he lies extinct and ended, either wrapped like Caesar in decorous mantle-folds, or unseemly sunk together, like one that had not the force even to die. (II, 1)

Consequently, Louis' actual execution in Volume III is received with the tragic emotion of pity:

Miserablest mortals, doomed for picking pockets, have a whole five-act Tragedy in them, in that dumb pain, as they go to the gallows, unregarded;
they consume the cup of trembling down to the
lees. For Kings and for Beggars, for the justly
doomed and the unjustly, it is a hard thing to
die. Pity them all: thy utmost pity, with all
aids and appliances and throne-and-scaffold
contrasts, how far short is it of the thing
pityed! (III, 107)

The tragedy of the royal family, with its "throne-and-scaffold
contrasts," is imaged, in a manner contrary to the dawn and
regeneration of comedy, by autumn and disintegration. During
their incarceration in the Tuileries, the members of the royal
family spend "Months bleak, ungenial, of rapid vicissitude, yet
with a mild pale splendour, here and there: as of an April that
were leading to leafiest Summer; as of an October that led only
to everlasting Frost" (II, 5). When the comic aspirations of
the Revolution begin to fail, it too becomes associated with
autumnal imagery: "In the last nights of September," demands
Carlyle, "when the autumnal equinox is past, and grey September
fades into brown October, why are the Champs Elysées illuminated;
why is Paris dancing, and flinging fireworks?" (II, 195). As
revolutionary joy approaches imminent cataclysm, images of
comic regeneration give way to images of tragic disintegration.
At the time of the Feast of Pikes, one of the great festivals
of the new revolutionary society, Carlyle suggests the breakdown
of the idyllic brotherhood of equal men and the initiation of a
tragic pattern of extinction:

O, as that evening Sun fell over the Champ-de-
Mars, and tinted with fire the thick umbrageous
bosage that shelters it on this hand and on
that, and struck direct on those Domes and two-
and-forty Windows of the Ecole Militaire, and made them all of burnished gold,—saw he on his wide zodiac road other such sight? A living garden spotted and dotted with such flowerage; all colours of the prism; the beautifulest blent friendly with the usefulest; all growing and working brotherlike there under one warm feeling, were it but for days; once and no second time! But Night is sinking; these Nights, too, into Eternity. (II, 59)

In Carlyle's vision of the Revolution, all of France must suffer the tragic movement of a "New Golden Era going down in leaden dross, and sulphurous black of the Everlasting Darkness" (III, 112).

The mixed form of farce-tragedy or comico-tragedy appears in The French Revolution when, because the work is founded on actual "fact" rather than on an artificially created "vision," its various literary modes cannot be separated from each other. In this form, the ridiculous, grotesque, and often degrading modes of farce, comedy, and satire become inextricably mingled with the ennobling modes of tragedy and elegy. A single compelling example of this mixed form is the book "Regicide" of Volume III. As its title suggests, this book treats the execution of Louis XVI, the "King himself," and the extinction of "Kinghood in his person," a thoroughly tragic action, deserving the "utmost pity, with all aids and appliances and throne-and-scaffold contrasts" (III, 107). Yet "Regicide" is as much as any other book of The French Revolution characterized by the techniques of farce, comedy, and satire. The National Convention debating the King's sentence is so overwhelmed by
high-pitched, frenetic oratory that it becomes in Carlyle's
caricature a full-scale operatic chorus:

The Convention, really much at a loss, discusses
and deliberates. All day from morning to night,
day after day, the Tribune drones with oratory
on this matter; one must stretch the old Formula
to cover the new Thing. The Patriots of the
Mountain, whetted ever keener, clamour for
despatch above all ... . Nevertheless the
Convention deliberates; the Tribune drones,—
drowned indeed in tenor, and even in treble, from
time to time; the whole Hall shrilling up round
it into pretty frequent wrath and provocation.
(III, 95)

Oration, spoken Pamphlet follows spoken Pamphlet,
with what eloquence it can: President's List
swells ever higher with name's claiming to speak;
from day to day, all days and all hours, the
constant Tribune drones;—shrill Galleries
supplying, very variably, the tenor and treble.
It were a dull tone otherwise. (III, 96)

The spectators who witness the debate from the galleries, rather
than manifesting "a funereal, sorrowful or even grave character,"
act like spectators at an opera:

Gallant Deputies pass and repass thitherward,
treating them with ices, refreshments and
small-talk; the high-dized heads beck
responsive; some have their card and pin,
pricking down the Ayes and Noes, as at a game
of Rouge-et-Noir. Farther aloft reigns Mère
Duchesse with her unrouged Amazons; she cannot
be prevented making long Hahas, when the vote
is not La Mort . . . Members have fallen asleep;
Ushers come and awaken them to vote: other
Members calculate whether they shall not have
time to run and dine. (III, 103)

Individual members of the Convention who engage themselves in
the horrific act of regicide by their votes for death are treated
as ridiculous and inconsequential persons. Carlyle dismisses
Deputy Thuriot with 'mock praise, stating that he "can stretch a
Formula as heartily as most men," and deflates the "cruel Jean-
Bon" by requesting that the reader "write him not, as the
Dictionaries too often do, Jambon, which signifies mere Ham"
(III, 96). He describes Jacob Dupont, who goes to inappropriate
lengths to inform the Convention that he is an atheist, as
having a "restless loud-rattling slightly-furnished head" (III,
97). Wounded citizens who come to testify against Louis are
grotesquely humorous rather than tragically pathetic:

Crippled Patriots hop on crutches round the
Salle de Manège, demanding justice. The Wounded
of the Tenth of August, the Widows and Orphans
of the Killed petition in a body; and hop and
defile, eloquently mute, through the Hall: one
wounded Patriot, unable to hop, is borne on his
bed thither, and passes shoulder-high, in the
horizontal posture. (III, 98)

The execution of Louis carries with it no suggestion of pathetic
fallacy, or universal mourning of nature for a tragic loss;
rather, "Pastry-cooks, coffee-sellers, milkmen sing out their
trivial quotidian cries: the world wags on, as if this were a
common day" (III, 111).

These manifestations of comic situations and techniques in
epic are not peculiar to The French Revolution: Joseph Addison,
for example, cites as instances of comedy Homer's treatment of
the Olympian gods, Virgil's depiction of Monoetes "thrown
overboard, and drying himself upon a rock," and Milton's
presentation of the fallen spirits taunting the angels in a
passage that is "nothing else but a string of puns." What is, however, peculiar to Carlyle's history is its unwillingness to draw clear boundaries between the comic and the tragic. When Milton states at the beginning of Book IX of Paradise Lost that he must alter his style from the idyllic mode of "God or Angel Guest / With Man" to the "Tragic" mode of "breach / Disloyal on the part of Man, revolt, / And disobedience," he signals his own ability to separate the diverse types of human behaviour and literary form that are included within the encyclopedic compass of his work. But when Carlyle comes to write of a parallel revolt and disobedience in "Regicide," he cannot extricate his tragic theme from the "spectral, pandemonial" aspect of the National Convention (III, 103), which like Milton's Pandemonium demands dark, infernal comedy. As Albert J. Lavalleastutely notes, the "epic of fact will of necessity be rough-edged like fact itself," and will therefore not allow a detached, elevated perspective from which the epicist can clearly distinguish the divergent human realities and literary modes that arise from his historical theme. Consequently, as we shall see in the following chapter, Carlyle's attention to particular facts and to the multi-faceted quality of historical experience challenges, and indeed threatens, his aspirations to a clearly demarcated, architectonic form.
Notes to Chapter Four

1 See my survey of criticism of The French Revolution at the end of Chapter One above.


3 "A Discourse concerning the Original and Progress of Satire," Essays, II, 36, 43.

4 The Poems of Alexander Pope, VII, 5, 80.

5 The French Revolution is inclusive in its geographical, historical, literary and mythological references, its citation of various languages, and its multiplicity of characters and character types.


7 Works, XXIX, 9-10.

8 Compare Burke's observations on the French Revolution:

   The most wonderful things are brought about in many instances by means the most absurd and ridiculous, in the most ridiculous modes; and, apparently, by the most contemptible instruments. Everything seems out of nature in this strange chaos of levity and ferocity, and of all sorts of crimes jumbled together with all sorts of follies. In viewing this monstrous tragico-comic scene, the most opposite passions necessarily succeed, and sometimes mix with each other in the mind; alternate contempt and indignation; alternate laughter and tears; alternate scorn and horror: (Reflections on the Revolution in France [London: Dent, 1967], p. 8.)

9 Works, XXVIII, 18.

10 For a recent and important treatment of the grotesque in literature see Geoffrey Galt Harpham, On the Grotesque (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1982).

12 Anatomy of Criticism, pp. 223-4.


17 Hodgart, pp. 121-2.

18 Hodgart, pp. 118-9.

19 Works, XXVIII, 478.

20 For the terms "prospective" and "retrospective," see I, 20 and III, 81. These terms will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five below.

21 Works, XXVII, 151.

22 Addison, pp. 73-4.

23 Paradise Lost, IX, 1-8.

24 LaValley, p. 147.
Chapter Five

Epic Structure, Emblem, and Phantasmagory

Nowhere more than in its structure does The French Revolution manifest its paradoxical relation to the epic genre as defined by earlier critical theorists. The French and English neo-classicists describe epic structure in Aristotelian fashion as the presentation of a single, clearly defined action, with a definite beginning, middle, and end. They find in epic structure the clear articulation that in their view typifies epic language, epic characterization, and the epic ethos. The German critics of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century, likewise involved in reinterpreting the genre theory of Aristotle, see in epic structure the composed presentation of a total world view, made possible by the epicist's temporal separation from his subject. Influenced by both the neo-classicists and the German critics, Carlyle gives his history a carefully demarcated architectonic structure containing three volumes and twenty books, subdivided into chapters. To describe only the architectonic scaffolding of The French Revolution would be, however, to ignore the conflicting formal demands that shape its structure, for Carlyle's attempt to delineate a continuous epic structure is opposed by his exploration of multifaceted, disparate facts, which leads...
to mixed literary modes, to discontinuous form, and to apparent structural confusion. In this chapter I shall begin by discussing the architectonic structure of The French Revolution, with its presentation of a unified and complete action. I shall then examine Carlyle's use of the prose emblem, a form that is like the epic in its concern for pattern and totality, but that is unlike the epic in its brevity and discontinuity. Finally, I shall treat phantasmagory, the variegated and troubled form which stands most opposed to the clearly articulated structure of epic.

An underlying principle of Carlyle's architectonic structure is the threefold schema of beginning, middle, and end derived from Aristotle and constantly reiterated in neo-Aristotelian criticism of epic structure. Le Bossu, an important proponent of this schema, writes that an epic contains "the Causes and Designs of an Action" (the beginning), "the Effects of these Causes, and the Difficulties that are met with in the execution of these designs" (the middle), and "the Unravelling and Resolution of these Difficulties" (the end). In addition, he provides tripartite descriptions of the structure of the major classical epics. The Iliad, he states, begins with the onset of Achilles' rage, continues with the effects of his passion, and ends with his placation, while the Odyssey begins with the departure of Odysseus from Troy, continues with his misfortunes at sea, and ends with his reinstatement to his rightful place as ruler of Ithaca. The
action of the Aeneid, he contends, arises from the taking of Troy through the strategem of the wooden horse, continues with Aeneas' wanderings and battles, and concludes with the establishment of peace in Italy.¹ Joseph Addison, attempting to reconcile Paradise Lost with previous epic criticism and practice, adopts a comparable tripartite interpretation: the action of that poem is, he argues, "contrived in Hell, executed upon Earth, and punished by Heaven."²

Carlyle's division of The French Revolution into three volumes is roughly consistent with this threefold schema of cause, effect, and resolution. Volume I, "The Bastille," treats the impotence of established modes of government to restrain the anarchic forces of revolution. It begins with the death of Louis XV (an event emblematic of the death of kingship, the initiating cause of the action of The French Revolution), continues with a demonstration of the insufficiency of philosophes and royal ministers to govern, and ends with the consequent triumph of the Sansculottes in capturing the Bastille and removing the royal family to Paris. Volume II, "The Constitution," presents the impotence of monarchy (especially in the book entitled "Varennes") and depicts the inability of new forms of government to harness the power of the Revolution. It begins with the hopeful but fatally insufficient Feast of Pâques, continues with the death of Mirabeau, the single man most capable of creating a new order, and ends, as its final chapter ominously tells us, with
a "Constitution Burst in Pieces." Volume III, "The Guillotine," presents the final destruction of royalty (in "Regicide") and the collapse of the Revolution, anticipated by the inefficacy of constitutionalism in the previous volume. The predominance of tragedy and disintegration in Volume III creates a structural parallel between that volume and Volume I by suggesting an analogy between the downfall of revolution in the former and the downfall of royalty in the latter. Since royalists and revolutionaries share a common tragic destiny, the resolution of Carlyle's history is not, as John Dryden for example argues the conclusion of an epic should be, a "prosperous" one for either party: the prosperity for modern Europe that the Revolution foreshadows is, like the prospect of human happiness in Paradise Lost, the poem that Dryden censures for treating "the losing of our happiness" rather than a more prosperous theme, a deferred prosperity, which will come from a new attention to the supremacy of reality over the formulas that attempt to circumscribe it.

The structural effect of Carlyle's volume divisions is enhanced by his book and chapter titles. Considered singly, these titles achieve Carlyle's desired artistic compression by stating succinctly the reality of the historical phenomenon under consideration and by indicating the predominant literary mode of the given part of the history: elegy in "Death of Mirabeau," tragedy in "Regicide," satire in "The Paper Age" and "Windbags," and mock heroic in "Broglie the War-God."
Considered as members of groups, verbally similar titles from disparate parts of the history manifest the pattern of historical events. The pairing of "Astraea Redux" and "Astraea Redux without Cash" demonstrates the deficiency in, and consequent failure of, the rhetoric of the philosophes. The grouping of "Loménie's Edicts," "Loménie's Thunderbolts," "Loménie's Plots," and "Loménie's Death-Throes" demonstrates progressive deterioration through time, as does the grouping of "Make the Constitution," "Constitution will not March," and "Constitution Burst in Pieces." The pairing of "Terror" with "Terror the Order of the Day" and of "Lion not Dead" with "Lion Sprawling, its Last" manifests a tragic movement towards death and disintegration. The ability of Carlyle's titles to exhibit patterns is shown by the manner in which they reinforce the structural parallels of his history. The title "Death of Louis XV," which establishes the initial tragic movement of Volume I, anticipates the parallel title "Regicide" of Volume III. The tragic pattern of the "Death of Louis XV" parallels as well the disintegration reflected in the final volume's titles "September," "The Girondins," "Terror," "Terror the Order of the Day," "Thermidor," and "Vendémiaire."

The architectonic framework of The French Revolution is further reinforced by Carlyle's use of prospection and retrospection. Traditionally, the epic has been distinguished by its freedom from the constraints of chronological ordering. The epicist has been allowed to reorder events, to move forward
or backward in time, and to adopt or abandon chronological progression at will. The neo-classical critics, by acknowledging that (in Bosque's words) the epicist does not care "whether the Beginning of the Action be the Beginning of the Poem," suggest the appropriateness of a disjunction between events as ordered by the narrative and events as ordered in time. The German critics, moreover, discuss exhaustively the disparity between epic time and actual time. Schiller speaks of the epic as a work in which the spectator is not driven on and compelled forward by a temporal action, as in drama, but is carried forward at a calm, unhurried pace by its author. Schiller and Goethe together point out the predominance of the prospective (Vorgreifende) and the retrospective (Zurückgreifende) in epic:

In The French Revolution, Carlyle not only includes the terms "prospective" and "retrospective" but, as H.M. Leicester points out, uses the techniques of prospection and retrospection to create a work which views history from a synoptic perspective and thereby transforms narrative into action. In "The Procession" chapter of Volume I, which Leicester cites as a prominent example of Carlyle's synoptic technique, Carlyle makes a procession of the States-General the occasion for a proleptic presentation of the fate of the persons involved and manifests the "Futurity" latent in the "silent marching mass" (I, 134). Similarly, when Louis is being led from Versailles to Paris at the end of Volume I, Carlyle announces proleptically that "Louis has Two other Paris Processions to
make: one ludicrous-ignominious like this; the other not ludicrous nor ignominious, but serious, nay sublime" (I, 289). Carlyle's epic technique of looking backward and forward reinforces the structural parallels of his work by relating each individual event to a central epic vision.

As Carlyle's use of prospection and retrospection demonstrates, the structure of The French Revolution is not based on the requirements of consecutive narrative presentation. Indeed, the limitations of narrative, which we have seen identified by Carlyle himself as a critical problem for the historian, must be considered in any study of Carlyle's artistry. John Holloway, stressing the dynamic aspect of Carlyle's style, argues that the reader of Carlyle "is hurried, as if by an all-pervading and irresistible violence, from one problem to another." George Levine maintains, by way of contrast, that "Carlyle's method is essentially static." The apparent contradiction in the views of these two valuable contributors to the literary appreciation of Carlyle expresses a paradox central to Carlyle's work in general and to The French Revolution in particular: that Carlyle's writings achieve their maximum effect when they eschew, or indeed positively resist, chronological or narrative ordering. As Levine himself states, the "extraordinary quality of Carlyle's style is that it manages to create so much excitement in the handling of essentially static conceptions." A resistance to narrative can be traced through the course of Carlyle's
literary career before The French Revolution. As G. B. Tennyson notes in his account of Carlyle's early development, the experience of writing novelistic fiction in Wotton Reinfred demonstrated to Carlyle the inappropriateness of his attempting to write a Kunstkwerk in a continuous novelistic style, the comic and anti-narrative vein of Sterne and Richter (which was to produce Sartor Resartus) being more congenial to his abilities. The bipartite and tripartite structures that Tennyson identifies as characteristic of Carlyle's work from his early journalistic articles through Sartor are non-narrative in their inspiration. And Sartor itself is, like The Prelude and other nineteenth-century autobiographical works, "radically achronological." Of the major genres that Carlyle, according to G. B. Tennyson, incorporates into the fabric of Sartor (Fragment, Märchen, and Kunstkwerk), the only one suited to a long continuous narrative, the last-mentioned, is not used continuously. As Levine helpfully intimates, Carlyle uses even his narrative materials in a non-narrative manner: Levine's description of the tripartite structure of Sartor as the text, exemplum, and application of a sermon, like Tennyson's description of it as the vesture, body, and spirit of a vision, is conceptual rather than narrative. The French Revolution, despite its broadly chronological arrangement, is similarly concerned with overcoming the illusions of temporal succession: it shows how the past tense "is a most lying thing" (III, 81) and demonstrates of successive events how the "one lay in the
other, the one was the other minus Time" (II, 105).

A verbal form that Carlyle uses insistently to manifest relations among temporally disjoined events is the prose emblem; because this form has been ignored by previous critics (despite Carlyle's insistence on its importance), I shall examine its cultural origins and its development by Carlyle in considerable detail. The word-emblem of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is, as Peter-M. Daly argues in his recent and comprehensive Literature in the Light of the Emblem, a verbal development of the visual emblem found in Renaissance emblem books. Three important characteristics of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century word-emblem have striking similarities to the form of the word-emblem developed by Carlyle. First, the word-emblem is like its forerunner, the visual emblém, a static form in which the constituent elements are arranged conceptually rather than narratively. Secondly, the word-emblem is an insistently visual form, in which language is used to embody both the pictura and the scriptura of the visual emblem. Thirdly, the word-emblem is a form which attempts to establish a correspondence between the visible world and the unseen. Emblematic thought is, as Daly argues, a kind of "controlled associativ thinking" which derives from the harmonious world view that the Renaissance inherited from the Middle Ages:

The typological exegesis of the Middle Ages presumed an ordered and meaningful universe, created by God to reveal himself and his plan
for the salvation of man. Both the medieval, allegorist and the renaissance, emblemist held that everything that exists points to meanings beyond the things themselves, or as Albrecht Schöne puts it: 'that which exists at the same time carries significance.'

The mind of the Renaissance emblemist, Daly contends, "still has a medieval temper," since "its basic tendency is to think in analogies and allegories." 13

The first characteristic of the word-emblem, its static form and conceptual arrangement, is compatible with Carlyle's habitual preference for non-narrative forms. In the essay, or Charakteristik, Carlyle uses the static form of the emblem to embody the inherent significance of the individual under consideration: Goethe, Novalis, Voltaire, Diderot, Richter, or Johnson. In The French Revolution, he uses the emblem for the static representation of characters caught up in the dynamic movement of historical change. The artistic attraction of the emblem for Carlyle in this work is its capacity to render in brief compass a movement of epic scope. We can picture this capacity by comparing Andrea Alciati's emblem "Ex Bello, Pax" 14 with the action of the Aeneid. This emblem depicts a hive of bees inhabiting the abandoned helmet of a soldier, its intended meaning, which derives from the equation of the helmet with war and of the hive with peace, is that war precedes peace and social harmony. Through the juxtaposition of two simple visual motifs, this emblem embodies in petto a movement comparable to the entire narrative movement of the Aeneid, in
which the Italian wars of Aeneas precede the founding of the new Troy and the establishment of the Roman Empire. The emblems of The French Revolution, in similar fashion, embody narrative movements in static form. Early in Volume I, for example, when the dying Louis XV will not allow death to be mentioned in his presence, Carlyle states: "It is the resource of the Ostrich, who, hard-hunted sticks his foolish head in the ground, and would fain forget that his foolish unseeing body is not unseen" (I, 19). This word-emblem, which in traditional emblematic fashion uses a fact of nature to represent an inner state of being, presents in one static picture the tragic downfall of the Bourbons, thereby embodying the serial or successive events of the "Bastille" volume in solid and simultaneous form.

The second feature of the word-emblem, its insistently visual nature, is of paramount importance in Carlyle's emblems. For Carlyle, the artist's function is to embody "the everlasting Reason of man in forms visible to his Sense"; Carlyle's highest praise of Goethe, for example, is reserved for "his singularly emblematic intellect;"

- his perpetual never-failing tendency to transform into shape, into life, the opinion, the feeling that may dwell in him; which, in its widest sense, we reckon to be essentially the grand problem of the Poet. . . . Everything has form, everything has visual existence; the poet's imagination fords the forms of things unseen, his pen turns them to shape.

The "visual existence" of things, which it is the "grand problem
of the Poet" to render, is for Carlyle the basis of wonder and worship. In "Goethe's Works," Carlyle states through the voice of Teufelsdröckh that "man is by necessity an idol-worshipper (no offense in him so long as idol means accurately vision, clear symbol)." 16 In On Heroes, he writes that all "creeds, liturgies, religious forms" are "eidola" or "things seen." 17

And The French Revolution is replete with references to vision and the visible world: "Eidolon" or "Thing Seen" (I, 6), "Emblem" (I, 51), "vesture" (I, 52), "Picture" (I, 60), "the Eye above" (I, 134), "the eye of prophecy" (I, 143), "vision (spectral yet real)" (I, 189), "emblematic" (I, 206, 243), "point of vision" (I, 214), "the living emblem" (II, 4), "visual-objects" (II, 40), "dim-visible" (II, 66), "veil," "revelation," "reflex" (II, 103), "faint ineffectual Emblem" (II, 185), "the mere natural eye" (II, 193), "the eye of History" (III, 152, 187), "significant glimpse of things" (III, 207), "idol-worshipper," "sight-worshipper," "sensuous-imaginative" (III, 227), and "hieroglyphically" (III; 312).

Carlyle's insistence on the visual is intimately linked to his belief in the correspondence of the seen and the unseen and hence to the third characteristic of the word-emblem. In Carlyle's central historical myth, the perception of universal correspondences is a feature of human thought prior to the modern loss of faith. For early pagan man, states Carlyle, "all things . . . were an emblem of the Godlike": "the Godlike stood embodied under many a symbol in men's interests and
business; the Finite shadowed forth the Infinite; Eternity looked through Time. After the loss of faith, when modern man wanders homeless, "looking up to a Heaven which is dead for him, round to an Earth which is deaf," the interdependence of the seen and the unseen is broken or unrecognized. In the period of reforged faith, which Carlyle sees heralded in contemporary German literature, correspondences are reestablished and "new emblems" are made. Thus Novalis, who like Goethe "speaks in emblems," is praised by Carlyle for his ability to comprehend nature "not analytically and as a divisible Aggregate, but as a self-subsistent universally connected Whole."

He loves external Nature with a singular depth; nay, we might say, he reverences her, and holds unspeakable communings with her: for Nature is no longer dead, hostile Matter, but the veil and mysterious Garment of the Unseen; as it were, the Voice with which the Deity proclaims himself to man.

While the three stated characteristics of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century word-emblem are clearly compatible with Carlyle's artistic practices, the consideration of Carlyle's prose in the light of that form poses important critical problems. The first of these involves the appropriateness of discussing a nineteenth-century author in terms of a form whose vogue was much earlier. Daly, exploring the grounds of such a discussion in "Goethe and the Emblematic Tradition" (a study which possesses, in light of Carlyle's
praise for Goethe's "emblematic intellect," obvious relevance to the study of Carlyle), warns against unwary application of the term "emblem" to modern literature. Daly's first objection to seeing Goethe's work as continuous with the emblematic tradition concerns the question of sources and influence. Daly contends, that the "case for Goethe's association with the emblematic tradition remains unproved," because of the "broken or missing links in the chain" of transmission. A similar objection can well be made in the case of Carlyle: little proof exists for Carlyle's knowledge of emblem books; indeed, Carlyle's own phrase "new emblems" suggests a discontinuity between the emblematic activity of the nineteenth century and that of the Renaissance. Daly's second objection concerns the nature of Goethe's literary preoccupations. "Emblems as such were evidently not important to Goethe at any stage in his career," Daly writes: "[with a single exception] neither the word 'Emblem,' nor its Baroque synonym 'Sinnbild,' finds mention in any letter, conversation, diary or work, as far as I have been able to establish." Here the cases of Goethe and Carlyle diverge, for Carlyle's writings manifest a personal preoccupation with the emblem: the word "emblem" and its associated forms appear insistently in Carlyle's essays and in his longer artistic works. Furthermore, as The French Revolution attests, Carlyle understands the emblem not only in its broad sense of a visual, significant object, but also in its specific generic sense of
an artistic combination of \textit{pictura} and \textit{scriptura}. In the "Procession of the Black Breeches" chapter of Volume II, Carlyle writes:

\begin{quote}
this Procession has a character of its own. Tricolor ribands streaming aloft from Pike-heads, ironshod batons; and emblems not a few; among which see specially these two, of the tragic and the utragic sort: a Bull's Heart transfixed with iron, bearing this epigraph, 'Coeur d'Aristocrate, Aristocrat's heart'; and, more striking still, properly the standard of the host, a pair of old Black Breeches (silk, they say), extended on cross-staff, high overhead, with these memorable words: 'Tremblez, tyrans; voilà les Sansculottes, Tremble, tyrants; here are the Sans-indispensables!' (II, 260)
\end{quote}

Carlyle here clearly perceives in the emblem an interdependence of the visual object and its written counterpart, or "epigraph." By isolating the black breeches as an object for the reader's consideration, Carlyle shows his sensitivity to the emblematic significance of historical fact. By incorporating those breeches in his chapter title, Carlyle further shows how the emblem-making activity present in the historical events he depicts parallels his own emblematic artistry; just as the writer of epic narrative embeds in his work the heroic narratives of his characters, Carlyle as emblemmatist places within his history the emblems of the French revolutionaries. Elsewhere, Carlyle writes how "Couthon, borne in a chair, taps on the wall, with emblematic mallet, saying, 'La Loi te frappe'" (II, 217). And yet again, without this time using the term "emblem," he writes of the siege of
Thionville: "The Thionvillers, carrying their insolence to the epigrammatic pitch, have put a Wooden Horse on their walls, with a bundle of Hay hung from him, and this Inscription: 'When I finish my hay, you will take Thionville'" (III, 57).

Treating Carlyle in light of the Renaissance-Baroque emblematic tradition raises the additional critical question of whether Carlyle's emblematic forms should not more correctly be discussed in terms of the symbol, Carlyle's discussions of which are well known. Daly distinguishes emblem and symbol by differentiating the "univalent" meaning of the former from the "rich plurisignation" of the latter; he argues that the symbol, unlike the emblem, possesses plurisignation "because it is a focus of feeling and attitude, as well as conceptual meaning."

"Where the word-emblem does convey a plurality of meanings," he states, "these do not interweave, as in the modern poetic symbol, but rather form a list of distinct and separate meanings, deriving from different qualities of the pictured object."24 Daly's distinction between emblem and symbol is of much use in discussing Carlyle. The picture of the ostrich cited above is clearly emblematic: by using one fact of the ostrich's existence, its peculiar feature of burying its head in the sand, Carlyle conveys one aspect of human experience, the refusal by Louis XV to accept the fact of his impending death; secondary associations (Carlyle's tendency to portray various individuals as animals, for instance) are designated as such by the emphasis on a central isolated meaning. Much of
Carlyle's fire imagery is, as we have seen in Chapter Three, emotional and richly symbolic rather than simply conceptual and exclusive. Nevertheless, while the emblem-symbol distinction is useful to a point, these two forms must not be seen as discontinuous. The emblem and the symbol have an important common basis for Carlyle, since both are visible manifestations of unseen realities, and Carlyle often uses the two terms interchangeably. Carlyle's symbols are highly conceptual, while his emblems make a strong, though secondary, appeal to the emotions. Thus the Phoenix, as central to The French Revolution as it is to Sartor, fulfills an emblematic function in picturing death as a potential form of rebirth at the same time as it refers symbolically to the repeated fire images mentioned above. And even in an overt emblem the emotional and associative effect produced by the texture of Carlyle's prose cannot be ignored any more than the texture of the pictura in a visual emblem can be said to be irrelevant to that emblem's apprehension.

Having examined the validity of using the term "emblem" in relation to Carlyle's work, we can now attempt a description of the Carlylean word-emblem. A single sentence from a notebook entry of 1826 will serve as an apt example:

The philosophy of Voltaire and his tribe exhilarates and fills us with glorying for a season; the comfort of the Indian who warmed himself at the flames of his--bed. The Carlylean word-emblem is typically contained within a
single sentence; unlike the more protracted prose character, it attempts to express the significance of a personage or event in a restricted compass by presenting a single compelling image. It uses few and simple visual motifs; usually it considers one historical character or group of characters in the light of a single fact from natural or, as in the example given, ethnic history. The arrangement of the emblem, spatial and conceptual rather than temporal and narrative, produces the controlled and directed reading of a two-dimensional picture. In the example given, the dash is used as a means of delay and suspension; what it delays, however, is not a narrative event, but a final part of the picture, which completes the horrific significance of the image presented. The texture of the pictură in the Carlylean word-emblem, accentuated by parenthesis and fragmentation, is grotesque and rough-hewn. The deliberate roughness preferred by Carlyle in his visual imagery is illustrated in a (somewhat emblematic) passage of the "Voltaire" essay, in which Carlyle contrasts his own stylistic preferences with the smooth elegance of Voltaire:

We might say, there is not the deep natural symmetry of a forest oak [in Voltaire's work], but the simple artificial symmetry of a parlour chandelier. Compare, for example, the plan of the Henriadé to that of our so barbarous Hamlet. The plan of the former is a geometrical diagram by Fermat; that of the latter a cartoon by Raphael. The Henriadé... is a polished, square-built Tuileries; Hamlet is a mysterious star-paved Valhalla and dwelling of the gods.27

The subject-matter of the Carlylean word-emblem is similarly
grotesque. Typically, a figure from modern history is depicted in a limited, futile, or self-destructive activity: the distance between his perception of his own activity (in this instance the light and warmth generated by the enlightened philosophy of Voltaire) and the reality of his activity (the self-destructive nature of that philosophy) suggests the grotesque alienation of sympathy characteristic of satire.

Carlyle uses the emblem to embody in one simple picture a figure representative of an entire phase of modern history. Thus Voltaire, "the paragon and epitome of a whole spiritual period," appears prominently in Carlyle's emblems: the series of emblems in which Carlyle attempts to evaluate the historical significance of Voltaire's philosophy and character offers an instructive instance of Carlyle's experiment with the emblem form in his essays. In "Goethe," as in the notebook entry cited above, Voltaire is pictured as a misguided incendiary:

With bold, with skilful hand, Voltaire set his torch to the jungle [of established religion]: it blazed aloft to heaven; and the flame exhilarated and comforted the incendiaries; but, unhappily, such comfort could not long continue. Ere long this flame, with its cheerful light and heat, was gone: the jungle, it is true, had been consumed; but, with its entanglements, its shelter and its spots of verdure also; and the black, chill, ashy swamp, left in its stead, seemed for a time a greater evil than the other.

Here the image of self-destruction is retained from the earlier emblem, while the scope of the emblem is extended to encompass
a slight temporal movement and a consequent imagistic contrast
of the "flame, with its cheerful light and heat," and "the black,
chill, ashy swamp." Other emblems of Voltaire emphasize not
self-destruction, but futility:

the plummet of French or Scotch logic,
excellent, nay, indispensable as it is for
surveying all coasts and harbours, will
absolutely not sound the deep-seas of human
Inquiry; and . . . many of Voltaire and Hume,
well-gifted and highly meritorious men, were
far wrong in reckoning that when their six-
hundred fathoms were out, they had reached the
bottom, which, as in the Atlantic, may lie
unknown miles lower.30

This [the inspiration of the Scriptures] is the
single wall, against which, through long years,
and with innumerable battering-rams and catapults
and pop-guns, he unweariedly batters.31

[Voltaire] meets [life's] difficulties not with
earnest force, but with gay agility; and is
found always at the top, less by power in
swimming, than by lightness in floating.32

Religion cannot pass away. The burning of a
little straw may hide the stars of the sky; but
the stars are there, and will reappear.33

He has not drunk the moon: but only the
reflection of the moon, in his own poor water-
pail . . . 34

Carlyle's ultimate depiction of the futility of Voltaire's
philosophizing is his image of Voltaire as the chief fool in a
Ship-of-Fools: "to him it is nowise heart-rending," writes
Carlyle, "that this Planet of ours should be sent sailing
through Space, like a miserable aimless Ship-of-Fools, and he
himself be a fool among the rest, and only a very little wiser
than they."35
The artistic impulse to depict the universal significance of historical characters that appears so prominently in Carlyle's essays reappears in The French Revolution. The first volume, "The Bastille," concerned with the failure of the French monarchy to govern and with its consequent downfall, presents royalty's lack of direction and lack of vision in the emblem of Louis XV as ostrich cited above, in the portrayal of Louis XV as a "drift-log" on "the wind-tossed moon-stirred Atlantic" (I, 21), and in the horrific depiction of French royalty as dancers on an abyss: "Light mortals, how ye walk your light life-minuet, over bottomless abysses, divided from you by a film!" (I, 25). The fatal abdication of control by the government of Louis XVI is shown by the portraits of his ministers, Maurepas and Brienne. Carlyle states that Louis XVI "has become a King Popinjay: with his Maurepas Government, gyrating as the weather-cock does, blown about by every wind" (I, 37), and depicts Loménie de Brienne as a pilot futilely endeavouring to save a sinking ship: "a sinking pilot will fling out all things, his very biscuit-bags, lead, log, compass and quadrant, before flinging out himself" (I, 107); the former emblem suggests comic aimlessness, the latter a more menacing act of self-destruction. Later, when a retiring Brienne is given many honours, Carlyle portrays the ridiculousness of his departure: "Buckled-round with such bolsters and huge feather-beds of Promotion, let him now fall as soft as he can!" (I, 109). What Carlyle depicts as ridiculous on the personal level proves
catastrophic in the realm of politics: Brienne, states Carlyle, was "Fired . . . with ambition: blown, like a kindled rag, the sport of winds, not this way, not that way, but of all ways, straight towards such a powder-mine,—which he kindled!" (I, 110).

The first half of this emblem presents the ludicrous aspect of the individual's aimless wanderings; the second half, revealing its full significance (like the emblem of Voltaire as the Indian who burnt his own bed) only at the end, presents the tragic and strangely purposeful course of the kindled rag towards the powder-mine.

While the first volume of The French Revolution fittingly presents the downfall of the French monarchy, it also emblems the incapacity of the various alternatives to monarchy. The "Age of Hope" predicted by the philosophes and constitutionalists is, Carlyle suggests, "Cloud-vapour with rainbows painted on it, beautiful to see, to sail towards,—which hovers over Niagara Falls" (I, 36). Here again, the historical subject's perception of its own significance is radically contrasted with its significance as perceived by the historian, and the scheme of the dash is used to emphasize that a final and indispensable portion of the picture is yet to be revealed. The futility found in this emblem recurs later in Carlyle's emblem of Abbe Sieyes, "the Sieyes who shall be System-builder, Constitution-builder General; and build Constitutions (as many as wanted) skyhigh,—which shall all unfortunately fall before he get the scaffolding away" (I, 144). Yet again, the dash demarcates the
distance that separates self-perception from historical perception. In another emblem, the French nobility, displaced from allegiance to the king and now allied with the constitutionists, are portrayed as having "drifted far down from their native latitude, like Arctic icebergs got into the Equatorial sea, and fast thawing there!" (I, 146). At the end of Volume I, the increasingly powerful and prominent Sansculottes are also emblazoned. After the insurrection of women, the final major movement of the volume, "Boundless Chaos of Insurrection presses slumbering round the Palace, like Ocean round adiving-bell, and may penetrate at any crevice" (I, 277). In the volume's closing paragraphs, "the royal Life-boat" floats "helmsless, on black deluges of Rascality" (I, 288).

The implicit threat contained in these nautical emblems of Sansculottism is made explicit in the twin emblems of an impotent Medusa and an unmenacing scarecrow which open the "Constitution" volume:

Royalty was beforehand so decrepit, moribund, there is little life in it to heal an injury. How much of its strength, which was of the imagination merely, has fled; Rascality having looked plainly in the King's face, and not died! When the assembled crows can pluck up their scarecrow, and say to it, Here shalt thou stand and not there; and can treat with it, and make it, from an infinite, a quite finite Constitutional scarecrow,—what is to be looked for? (II, 1-2)

These emblems express in brief compass the standing of three principal historical parties at the beginning of Volume II.
Royalty is dying; hence, its emblems in this volume contain motifs of incapacity. The doomed Louis sits, "as he had ever done, like clay on potter's wheel" perhaps the most of all pitable and pardonable clay-figures that now circle under the Moon" (II, 182-3). The "ancient Kingship" of France goes "reeling and spinning, one knows not whitherward, on the flood of things" (II, 257). The Princess de Lamballe, "bosom-friend of her Majesty," is engulfed by a "black World-tornado" which "will whirl her, poor fragile Bird of Paradise, against grim rocks" (II, 227). Sansculottism, unrestrained by fear and increasingly ungoverned, moves towards the anarchy of the Terror. Meanwhile, in the principal movement of Volume II, the constitutionalists endeavour in vain to create a new order, or "finite Constitutional scarecrow."

Their efforts are depicted throughout by characteristic Carlylean emblems of impotence and futility. As in the emblem of Voltaire, "found always at the top, less by power in swimming, than by lightness in floating," Carlyle writes that "the Revolution-element works itself rarer; so that only lighter and lighter bodies will float in it; till at last the mere blown-bladder is your only swimmer" (II, 19). The philosophic Age of Hope comes to consist of "beautiful far-stretching landscapes" painted by man "on his strait prison-walls" (II, 34). France becomes a bride which "has led Royalty, or wooed and teased poor Royalty to lead her, to the hymeneal Fatherland's Altar, in such over-sweet manner; and has, most thoughtlessly, to
celebrate the nuptials with due shine and demonstration,—burnt her bed" (II, 69). In this emblem, which repeats the motif of self-conflagration and the form of the emblem of "Voltaire and his tribe," the dash suspends the completion of the *Pictura* and demarcates the satiric disparity between perceived joy and actual horror. The horror conveyed by this emblem is repeated in the emblem of shipwreck found in the impressive concluding sentences of the "Death of Mirabeau" chapter:

The chosen Last of the Mirabeaus is gone; the chosen man of France is gone. It was he who shook old France from its basis; and, as if with his single hand, has held it toppling there, still unfallen. What things depended on that one man! He is a ship suddenly shivered on sunk rocks: much swims on the waste waters, far from help. (II, 148)

The emblems of Volume III, "The Guillotine," continue to depict the futility and self-destructiveness of the new government. The legislative assembly is portrayed as "a floating piece of wreck" to which "certain things, persons, and interests may still cleave" (III, 4). The Committee of Public Salvation is depicted as a whirlwind; its leaders, the "Cleud-Compellers" Robespierre, Couthon, and Saint-Just, "ride this Whirlwind; they, raised by force of circumstances, insensibly, very strangely, thither to that dread height;—and guide it, and seem to guide it" (III, 231). The inefficacy of the National Convention is emblemed by a variety of motifs. Speeches made in the Convention are termed "the whimpering of
an infant which cannot speak what ails it, but is in distress clearly, in the inwards of it; and so must squall and whimper continually, till its Mother take it, and it get—to sleep!"

(III, 72). The Convention is "unfortunately the crankiest of machines: it shall be pointing eastward with stiff violence this moment; and then do but touch some spring dexterously, the whole machine, clattering and jerking seven-hundred-fold, will whirl with huge crash, and, next moment, is pointing westward!" (III, 75). The Convention is also a ship without a pilot:

In this poor National Convention, broken, bewildered by long terror, perturbations and guillotinement; there is no Pilot, there is not now even a Danton, who could undertake to steer you anywhere, in such press of weather. The utmost a bewildered Convention can do, is to veer, and trim, and try to keep itself steady; and rush, undrowned, before the wind. Needless to struggle; to fling helm a-lee, and make 'bout ship! A bewildered Convention sails not in the teeth of the wind; but is rapidly blown round again. (III, 291)

The theme of self-destruction and the motif of peril, at sea reappear in the most powerful summative emblem of Volume III, the depiction of France as a fireship. "The Fireship," explains Carlyle,

is old France, the old French Form of Life; her crew a Generation of men. Wild are their cries and their rages there, like spirits tormented in that flame. . . . Their Fireship and they, frightening the world, have sailed away; its flames and its thunders quite away, into the Deep of Time. (III, 120)
At the end of The French Revolution, established institutions stand "like a brown-leaved Vallombrosa: which waits but one whirl-blast of the November wind, and in an hour stands bare" (III, 224); in this one pictura, derived from a Miltonic simile, Carlyle emblems the closing tragic movement of his work, in which "the Notabilities of France disappear, one after one, like lights in a Theatre, which you are snuffing out" (III, 266).

Carlyle's emblems contribute, to some extent, to an impression of radical discontinuity in his text. The emblem's stasis interrupts any sense of straightforward narrative progression, while its continual intrusion of abstruse and bizarre visual motifs breaks any illusion of a consistent mimetic representation of a world: as Henry James notes, Carlyle constantly exhorts his reader to "look at realities and not at imitations, ... but all the while he gives us the sense that it is not at things themselves, but straight into this abyssmal manner of his own that he is looking." 36

Nevertheless, the emblem contributes as well to Carlyle's insistent sense of the continuity of his subject. The emblem's fusion of the successive occurrences of history in a solid, simultaneous form unites a particular personage or event with the pattern of beginning, middle, and end embodied architectonically in Carlyle's tripartite volume division. The recurrence of emblematic motifs (sea, wind, and fire) and themes (aimlessness, mistaken perception, and self-annihilation)
suggests the presence of a continuous bardic voice. Furthermore, the application to the doomed revolutionaries of motifs originally applied to doomed royalists reinforces the important structural parallels of Carlyle's history. The motif of man as ostrich applied to Louis XV in Volume I is transferred to the revolutionaries in Volume II: "They can, when the Truth is all-too horrible, stick their heads ostrich-like into what sheltering Fallacy is nearest; and wait there, à posteriori" (II, 189). The gyrating of the royalist minister Maurepas is transferred to the revolutionary Brissot, a "man of the windmill species, that grinds always, turning towards all winds; not in the steadiest manner" (II, 206). The "light life-minuet" of the Bourbons in Volume I is recalled by the revolutionaries' "carmagnole complète" in Volume III (III, 230). And the downfall of the French monarchy, which renders Louis XVI at the beginning of Volume II a Medusa who will not turn men to stone and a scarecrow pecked at by crows, is mirrored by the downfall of Sansculottism, rendered similarly impotent: "The dormant lion has become a dead one; and now, as we see, any hoof may smite him" (III, 130).

However brief and static its structure, the emblem is, because of its concern with totality and pattern and because of its characteristic linking of causes with their effects, compatible with the framework of a larger literary form: in Spenser's Faerie Queene, for example, the emblem or impresa is used as a smaller form within the structure of a sustained
allegory. But because The French Revolution more often approaches phantasmagory, the "vague fluctuating fitful adumbration of many" things, than it does allegory, the "type of one thing," the relationship of the emblem to the larger form of Carlyle's history is an extremely problematic one. The emblem is a form which tends to enclose and delimit the possible meanings of human experience; in its striving for univalence, it establishes a hierarchical supremacy of one selected meaning deriving from a certain juxtaposition of images over the possible alternative meanings deriving from the same images. Furthermore, the emblem presupposes authorial control of, and detachment from, the phenomena it depicts. Carlyle's history, concerned with portraying the "Real-Phantasmagory" of existence, frequently eschews such control and detachment, rather than establishing facile one-to-one equations between things and their meanings, it depicts historical phenomena as fluctuating adumbrations of many significations. Consequently, the emblem with its tendency towards a clearly demarcated sense of cause and effect and of beginning, middle, and end coexists in The French Revolution with the less closed and less certain form of phantasmagory. In both external and internal references to his text, Carlyle provides suggestions of the phantasmagoric nature of his history. In a letter of 1836, he writes of his intention "to splash down" his account of the Revolution's conclusion "in large masses of colours; that it may look like a smoke-and-
flame conflagration . . . ,--which it is."40 In the text itself, Carlyle refers to phantasmagory several times: the massacres of September 1792, for example, he calls a "dim Phantasmagory of the Pit" (III, 27). 41

In the distance between the closed and clearly demarcated form of the emblem and the open, often confused form of phantasmagory we see the tension between the self-contained, artificially created epic form sought by the neoclassicists (and to a lesser extent by the modern Germans) and Carlyle's self-contradictory mimetic historical epic. Epic and emblem are analogous, in a political sense, to the hierarchical systems embodied in the destroyed social institutions of France: the former is monarchical in its content and rigidly hierarchical in its form, while the latter, based on a traditional world of correspondences, depends upon the subordination of possible meanings and orders to a single central meaning. Phantasmagory is, by way of contrast, insistently revolutionary and anarchic. Phantasmagory is created by the juxtaposition and agglomeration of competing aspects of experience, rather than by the subordination of parts to a clearly defined whole; its mode is incompleteness, fragmentation, and suggestion, not architectonic pattern and definite demarcation. Consequently, its texture is one of bold contrasts rather than of harmonious arrangement, and its style is formed by grammatical fragmentation and interruption rather than by clear and graceful syntactical subordination.
The voice of the phantasmagorist is, unlike the calm and homologized voice of the epicist, confused, fragmented, probing, and uncertain. In phantasmagory, the author's "point of vision" (I, 214) is shifting and incomplete: the phantasmagorist, unlike the epicist, is subservient to time and space. The cosmology of the phantasmagoric world presents a confused mingling of the human and superhuman realms, not the distinct separation of worlds characteristic of epic. Finally, the characters of phantasmagory are vague phantasms rather than strong independent epic characters representative of clearly defined ethical principles.

Phantasmagory's dissolution of discrete characters is made apparent in The French Revolution by the absence of a single, readily identifiable hero. For the neoclassical theorists, the hero and his activities form the basis of any epic structure; the problematic nature of the hero in a modern epic is noted, however, at least as early as the criticism of Dryden and Addison. Dryden, demonstrating how modern poems that are epic in scope nevertheless fail to be epic in their choice of hero, censures Spenser for selecting a different "hero for every one of his adventures," and states that Paradise Lost would have been a better poem "if the Devil had not been [Milton's] hero, instead of Adam."42 His designation of Satan as the hero of Paradise Lost, far from being the expression of a nascent Romantic Satanism, is based on the perception that Satan fulfills the same structural function in Paradise Lost.
that Achilles, Odysseus, and Aeneas do in their epics. Addison makes the implication of Dryden's statement explicit when he presents Satan as a figure comparable to Odysseus: Satan, he remarks, "makes a much longer voyage than Ulysses, puts in practice many more wiles and stratagems, and hides himself under a greater variety of shapes and appearances." Addison questions Dryden's conclusions about the hero of Paradise Lost, however, by suggesting that heroism, a trait admired particularly by pagan societies, is alien to Milton and his Christian age. Addison's suggestion that the very idea of heroism is obsolete radically undermines the centrality given to the hero in the epic criticism of the French neoclassicists, Dryden, and Pope. The uncertain status of the hero in modern epic is reflected in the early critical reviews of The French Revolution, surveyed above in Chapter One. J. A. Heraud, for example, states "that, the plan of this work being considered as permissible, some one character should have been chosen as the hero for each division, and all the rest, even with some violence, made to fall into diminished importance." The structural plan that Heraud devises as being proper for Carlyle's history is analogous to the Spenserian model of diverse heroes that Dryden derogates for its undue fragmentation; yet even this diminished heroism is, as Heraud suspects, absent from The French Revolution, for no character in the Revolution can be made, without an unacceptable "violence" to the phantasmagoric nature of
Revolutionary history, to dominate any large part of the work. Indeed, Carlyle's important elegy for sovereigns and sovereignties early in the history (I, 7) suggests, as Addison's criticism of Dryden does, that traditional heroism is impossible in modern literature; in the search for a new form of heroism Carlyle becomes, as Heraud himself notes, the "only hero" of his work. 46

The presence of phantasmagory in The French Revolution is further evidenced by its insistent transgression of established literary decorum, its preference for the natural, the unformed, and the incongruous over the artificial, the graceful, and the elevated. The indecorousness of Carlyle's history is summed up for the work's early critics by the adjective "grotesque." William Makepeace Thackeray contends that The French Revolution, with its "odd words and twisted sentences," "grotesque conceits and images," and "prose run mad," manifests stylistic features "which would never be allowed entrance into a polite modern epic." 47 The historian William H. Prescott unkindly but appropriately describes the work as a "harlequin compound, . . . in which the author flounders on, amid a sort of 'crude consistence,' half prose, half poetry, like Milton's Devil, working his way through Chaos." 48 William Sewell censures its "grotesque" and "abrupt" transitions from high to low, from the solemn to the ludicrous. 49 The views of these early critics, all in varying degrees derogatory, are all anticipated by Carlyle himself. Carlyle admits that in his history "the
sublime, the ludicrous, the horrible succeed one another; or rather, in crowding tumult, accompany one another" (III, 206-7); he is quite aware that his text is constructed by agglomeration rather than by subordination and clear demarcation. Committed to the writing of a modern historical epic, he cannot guarantee the graceful harmony among the diverse parts of his work that Le Bossu and Pope presuppose to be necessary in an epic structure: the emblematic and phantasmagoric parts of his history are not in any simple sense consistent either with each other or with the mixed and variegated form of the whole.
Notes to Chapter Five

1 The information from Le Bossu is taken from pages 79 and 86-7 of his treatise on epic poetry, as reproduced in Curran. The form and orthography of the quotations are from the extract of Le Bossu's treatise appended to eighteenth-century editions of Pope's Homer. See The Poems of Alexander Pope, IX, 14.

2 Addison, p. 64.

3 Essays, II, 29.

4 The Poems of Alexander Pope, IX, 15.


6 Holloway, p. 27.

7 Levine, p. 65.

8 Levine, p. 49.

9 Tennyson, pp. 51, 99, 127.

10 Abrams, Natural Supernaturalism, p. 74.

11 Levine, p. 68.


13 Literature in the Light of the Emblem, pp. 32, 83.


15 Works, XXVI, 244, 255.

16 Works, XXVII, 391.

17 Works, V, 121.

18 Works, V, 9-10; XXVIII, 29-30.

19 Works, XXVI, 65.


Literature in the Light of the Emblem, pp. 72, 87-9.

Sartor, pp. 236-7; The French Revolution, I, 213.

Two Note Books, p. 85.

Works, XXVI, 449.

Works, XXVI, 401-2.

Works, XXVI, 216.

Works, XXVII, 54.

Works, XXVI, 457.

Works, XXVI, 426.

Works, XXVI, 468.

Works, XXVI, 468.

Works, XXVI, 426-7.

"The Correspondence of Carlyle and Emerson," Century, 26 (1883), 272. James writes of Carlyle: "Both the moral and the physical world were full of pictures for him, and it would seem to be by his great pictorial energy that he will live" (pp. 271-2).


Works, XXVI, 196.

Works, XXVIII, 328.

Letters, IX, 21-2.

See also I, 18, 189; II, 200.

Essays, II, 165. For Carlyle's awareness of the debate over the hero of Paradise Lost, see Works, XXVIII, 255.
43 Addison, p. 68.
44 Addison, p. 85.
46 Heraud, p. 85.
47 Seigel, pp. 71-3.
48 North American Review, 49 (1839), 342.
49 Quarterly Review, 66 (1840), 452.
Chapter Six

Carlyle, Whitman, and the Disimprisonment of Epic

Because of its dialogic inclusion of diverse materials, its mixed form, and its allusiveness, The French Revolution suggests a wide variety of sources and analogues for its artistry. These include Carlyle's historical sources, such as the Histoire Parlementaire, the memoirs of the Baron de Besenval, and the diaries of Arthur Young, as well as a multiplicity of more overtly literary forms: the Bible, classical epic (Homer and Virgil), vernacular epic (Camoëns, Dante, Tasso, Ariosto, Milton), Teutonic epic (the Nibelungenlied), modern epic (Voltaire's Henriade, Goethe's Hermann und Dorothea, Wilkie's Epigoniad, Glover's Leonidas), epic novel (Tom Jones, Tristram Shandy, Don Quixote, Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre), historical novel (Scott), verse allegory (Spenser), prose allegory (Bunyan), verse satire (Butler), prose satire (Swift), biography (Boswell), autobiography (Rousseau and Goethe), and history (Gibbon and Hume). A thorough treatment of the literary context of The French Revolution demands, therefore, a book-length study of Carlyle's reading and uses of literary tradition.

Even a more limited examination of the relation of Carlyle's history to other nineteenth-century experiments in epic form demands detailed and complex attention, since these other experiments manifest strongly divergent approaches to the features that
Carlyle identifies as crucial for any believable modern epic:
a credible argument, a mythic form congruent with modern vision,
and a justifiable use of literary convention. William Blake, in
his *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, combines Biblical and Miltonic themes
and characters with an intricately developed personal mythology.

William Wordsworth, in his *Prelude*, rejects literary mythologies,
as Carlyle does, in favour of the supernatural power inherent in
natural forms; of his experience of a tree, for example, he
writes:

> Often have I stood  
> Foot-bound uplooking at this lovely tree
> Beneath a frosty moon. The hemisphere
> Of magic fiction, verse of mine perchance
> May never tread; but scarcely Spenser's self
> Could have more tranquil visions in his youth,
> Or could more bright appearances create.
> Of human forms with superhuman powers,
> Than I Beheld loitering on calm clear nights
> Alone, beneath this fairy work of earth. 2

In his *Excursion*, too, Wordsworth forsakes the realm of Miltonic
"magic fiction" for "human forms with superhuman powers."

All strength—all terror, single or in bands,
That ever was put forth in personal form—
Jehovah—with his thunder, and the choir
Of shouting Angels, and the empyreal thrones—
I pass them unalarmed. Not Chaos, not
The darkest pit of lowest Erebus,
Nor aught of blinder vacancy, scooped out
By help of dreams—can breed such fear and awe
As fall upon us often when we look
Into our Minds, into the Mind of Man—
My haunt, and the main region of my song.

... Paradise, and groves
Elysian, Fortunate Fields—like those of old
Sought in the Atlantic Main—why should they be
A history only, of departed things,
Or a mere fiction of what never was?
For the discerning intellect of Man,
When wedded to this goodly universe
In love and holy passion, shall find these
A simple produce of the common day. 3

John Keats attempts a reanimation of Greek mythological figures
and Miltonic themes in his epic fragments Hyperion and The Fall of
Hyperion. Byron uses legendary matter for Don Juan, but in a
clearly iconoclastic manner, so that, his self-styled epic becomes,
as William Hazlitt characterizes it, "a poem written about it-
self." 4 Tennyson, while attempting a long work of "parabolic"
significance to modern society, 5 adopts the medieval legends of
Arthur and his knights as the basis of the Idylls of the King.
William Morris, in The Earthly Paradise, The Life and Death of
Jason, and Sigurd the Volsung, uses a variety of classical and
medieval myths and legends. Browning, influenced partly by
Carlyle's historical concerns, bases his The Ring and the Book on
Italian history, eschewing supernatural poetic machinery for a
study of human perception and the shaping power of art.

A similar variety of approaches to argument, to mythology,
and to "point of vision" appears even in the more restricted
sphere of the nineteenth-century historical epic; in Blake's "The
French Revolution," Shelley's The Revolt of Islam, and Hardy's
The Dynasts. In Blake's almost contemporary account of the
Revolution we see, as in Carlyle's later treatment, a movement
towards the mythification of history; this mythopoeic movement is
reflected, as Harold Bloom notes, in Blake's "radical simplifi-
cation and condensation of events into one crucial day," "his
vision of pre-Revolutionary history as a tyrannous slumber of
thousand years," and "his mingling of historical and fictive personages." Shelley's account of the Revolution, given a remote poetic setting and written from the perspective of a time "When the last hope of trampled France had failed / Like a brief dream of unremaining glory," employs several poetic devices incompatible with Carlyle's literary aesthetic. The entire poem is set within the framework of a vision, while Laon's version of the revolution is presented in a retrospective narrative, related from a position of safety and tranquillity. Historical change in the poem is frequently rendered by the form of Spenserian allegory, where alterations in personal vision produce immediate and cataclysmic political transformations. Hardy's "Epic-Drama" of the Napoleonic wars, unlike The French Revolution, makes the classical epic's characteristic demarcation of earthly and spiritual realms: even in its dramatis personae it makes a division between "Persons" and "Phantom Intelligences" that contravenes Sauerteig's standards for credible poetic machinery. Hardy's over-world, with its choruses of spirits, has the appearance of the residual, artificial, unbelieved machinery denigrated by Carlyle in "Biography" and in his dramatic criticism.

In this chapter I shall not examine in detail any of the sources and analogues mentioned above; rather, I shall concentrate on a single important analogue, Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass, which I shall use to review Carlyle's concept of the disimprisoned epic and to point up the formal complexity of Carlyle's history of the French Revolution. In his 1858 "Proem" to Frederick the Great, Carlyle presents his conception of a disimprisoned epic, which
recalls the features that characterize his earlier work from Sartor Resartus onwards—the symbolic presentation of nature, the cosmology of Natural Supernaturalism, and the thematic concern with the "new Mythus" of modern Europe—as well as the accommodation between historical themes and fictional forms which shapes "The Diamond Necklace" and The French Revolution. This conception, a practical embodiment of Gottfried Sauerteig's much earlier thesis that history is the true poetry and that reality is grander than fiction, encompasses both the presentation in a highly-wrought, continuous form of "the Romance of Life" underlying and uniting all historical events and the liberation of the central romantic vision of epic from the fictional encrustations placed upon it by recalcitrant literary convention. In Sauerteig's critique of epic tradition in "Biography," epic machinery is regarded as a "meaningless Deception" perpetuated by literary inertia, while epic deities are termed "Superannuated lumber." Because the compelling epics of past ages are "Histories, and understood to be narratives of facts," a believable modern epic must, for Sauerteig, be grounded factually in modern history. Working from the hypothesis that "the true Heroic Poems of these times [are] to be written with the ink of Science," Carlyle chooses for his first epic experiment the modern theme of the French Revolution.

Carlyle is not alone in the mid-nineteenth century in selecting a modern historical theme as the basis of an experiment in epic form. In the first (1855) edition of Leaves of Grass, Walt Whitman makes a claim for his book strikingly similar to Carlyle's claim for The French Revolution. "The United States
themselves," he announces confidently, "are essentially the
greatest poem." Whitman's commitment to a modern theme for
his "epic of Democracy" is evident in his intention "to articulate
and faithfully express in literary or poetic form, and uncompro-
misingly, [his] own physical, emotional, moral, intellectual,
and aesthetic personality, in the midst of, and tallying, the
momentous spirit and facts of its immediate days, and of current
America--and to exploit that Personality, identified with place
and date, in a far more candid and comprehensive sense than any
hitherto poem or book." Both The French Revolution and Leaves
& Of Grass dedicate themselves to an accurate representation of
modern facts within the framework of a disimprisoned epic vision.
Both works simultaneously use and resist epic conventions with
such insistence that their critics, while unable to use the term
"epic" without considerable qualification, can never afford to
ignore the context of epic tradition. Both Carlyle's depiction of
European revolution and Whitman's effort to express in verse the
reality of the American Revolution are shaped by an awareness of
radical change in society, in individuals, and in literary form.
Because of this awareness, both works are highly self-reflexive:
The French Revolution, like Sartor Resartus, foregrounds the
virtuosity of its own creation, while Leaves of Grass encompasses
both the great poem of America and the manifesto describing the
nature and importance of that poem. That the striking similarities
of these two major works have gone unregarded is especially
surprising in light of the important relationship of Whitman and
Carlyle, whom Whitman came to consider "more significant than any
modern man—as in himself a full answer to the cry of the modern spirit for expression."\(^\text{13}\)

For reasons of geography, chronology, and personal disposition, the Carlyle—Whitman relationship does not involve, as the Carlyle—Emerson relationship does, personal friendship and a rich mutual interchange of ideas. Indeed, Carlyle's knowledge of Whitman seems quite limited. In 1856 Emerson somewhat apologetically sent Carlyle a copy of the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*, recommending it as "a nondescript monster" with "terrible eyes & buffalo strength."\(^\text{14}\) In 1872 Whitman, "taking permission to personally offer . . . from America true respects & love," sent Carlyle a brief note with two copies of his works.\(^\text{15}\) Carlyle's responses to *Leaves of Grass*, all reported at second hand, centre on Whitman's stylistic irregularities and his irrepressible Americanism. An 1868 article in the *New York Tribune* quotes Carlyle as comparing Whitman "to a buffalo, useful in fertilizing the soil, but mistaken in supposing that his contributions of that sort are matters which the world desires to contemplate closely."\(^\text{16}\) William Allingham, in a diary entry of 1872, states that Carlyle "was accustomed to say of W. W., 'It is as though the town-bull had learnt to hold a pen.'"\(^\text{17}\) Finally, in a statement that afforded Whitman great amusement, Carlyle paraphrases Whitman as saying "I'm a big man because I live in such a big country."\(^\text{18}\)

"I was outside to Carlyle," Whitman explained in 1888: "he could not divine what I was up to: I think I was no more to Carlyle than any other disturber of the peace—no more than the cock that crowed in the next door back yard and bothered the life out of him."\(^\text{19}\)
But if Whitman is "outside to Carlyle," Carlyle is nevertheless insistently present in the thought of Whitman. That Whitman is aware of Carlyle well before the publication of the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* is demonstrated by his five newspaper reviews of Carlyle's major works in 1846. Whitman's reviews, while not offering convincing proof of his intimate knowledge of Carlyle at this time--his notice of *The French Revolution* is particularly frustrating in this respect--do demonstrate an awareness of Carlyle's stature as a literary innovator. Whitman describes *The Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell* as a "dashy, rollicky, most readable book that sets at defiance all the old rules of English composition," and while he censures the "rapt, weird, (grotesque?) style" of *Heroes and Hero Worship*, he comes in his review of *Past and Present* to acknowledge that Carlyle's "weird, wild way," "his phrases, welded together," and "his startling suggestions" "make an original kind of composition, that gets, after a little usage, to be strangely agreeable!" Already in these early reviews appear hints of Whitman's mature evaluation of Carlyle's style as "the expression of the man--natural, strong, right for him," and of Carlyle himself as a major critic of modern society, "a Democrat in that enlarged sense in which we would fain see more men Democrats; ... quick to champion the downtrodden, and earnest in his wrath at tyranny."

These reviews, Whitman's annotations of Carlyle's essays, and *Leaves of Grass* itself inevitably suggest the question of Carlyle's early influence on Whitman. A proper evaluation of the evidence must steer between the Scylla of minimizing and the Charybdis of
overstating the extent of that influence. Justin Kaplan, discussing their relationship in his recent *Walt Whitman, A Life*, falls prey to the former danger. Kaplan's statement that Whitman ultimately "rejected Carlyle, the most obstreperous Victorian critic of democracy," inaccurately portrays the temporal development of their relationship and directly contradicts the more solidly argued thesis of Gregory Paine, that in "meditative old age Whitman came to approve of Carlyle's criticism of democracy."23 Furthermore, Kaplan's argument that in "the long run neither Emerson nor Carlyle was the 'master' of Whitman" is based on an unwhitmanian view of Whitman as an entirely autonomous poet, for which Whitman's own words can be used as a fitting corrective:

> It will be difficult for the future... to account for the deep hold this author has taken on the present age, and the way he has color'd its method and thought. I am certainly at a loss to account for it all as affecting myself. But there could be no view, or even partial picture, of the middle and latter part of our Nineteenth century, that did not markedly include Thomas Carlyle. In his case... there has been an impalpable something more effective than the palpable. 24

The opposite error of overstating Carlyle's influence on Whitman appears in two articles from the nineteen-forties by Fred Manning Smith, which still stand as the most detailed examinations of the influence question.25 Smith holds the reasonable position "that much in Whitman that has been considered Emersonian may really derive from Carlyle; that as Carlyle may account for certain resemblances between Emerson and Whitman, so likewise he may account for certain differences; and that an important source of the inspiration back of the writing of *Leaves of Grass* may be..."
found in Heroes and Sartor. To support his position, however, Smith relies on parallel passages that, though interesting for the analogies they offer, are not examined in sufficiently stringent a manner to stand as indications of influence. The question of Carlyle's influence on the early Whitman, then, remains in limbo, pending the work of scholars sufficiently conversant with Emerson to distinguish between the Carlylean and Emersonian in Whitman, aware of the common sources (and especially the Germanic sources) available to both authors, and capable of isolating "palpable" signs of influence from the "impalpable" presence of Carlyle in the nineteenth century.

What I intend to treat here is not the unduly neglected influence question, but the equally neglected comparative study of these two authors, with specific reference to The French Revolution and Leaves of Grass. Such a study has a more solid basis in literary history than many to which Carlyle and Whitman have been subjected, inasmuch as an extensive comparison of the two authors is carried out by Whitman himself. In his two obituary pieces on Carlyle, "Death of Thomas Carlyle" and "Carlyle from American Points of View," and elsewhere, Whitman establishes, sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly, a comparison of Carlyle's European "new Mythus" and his own myth of America. Carlyle is first, for Whitman, a representative European of the nineteenth century: "no man else," states Whitman, "will bequeath to the future more significant hints of our stormy era, its fierce paradoxes, its din, and its struggling parturition periods, than
Carlyle." 27 Carlyle's "final value," beyond his "great" literary merit, is as a social critic, "launching into the self-complacent atmosphere of our days a rasping, questioning, dislocating agitation and shock," a "leviathan [splanishing] in the seas of modern literature and politics." (In spite of the fact that Carlyle "was no chartist or radical," Whitman writes, he "should be lauded for raising "by far the most indignant comment or protest anent the fruits of feudalism to-day in Great Britain.") 28 While Whitman maintains that Carlyle's work is to be respected by Americans, he insists that Carlyle's "short-comings ... from an American point of view" be recognized. In Whitman's portrait, Carlyle is a severely divided individual torn between the demand of "his great heart" for reform and the conservative tendencies of "his scornful brain."  "Carlyle's grim fate," says Whitman, "was cast to live and dwell in, and largely embody, the parturition agony and qualms of the old order... giving birth to the new." Uncompromising and "curiously antique," infallibly European, Carlyle rejected "the only solace and solvent to be had," the great modern experiment of America. 29 Between Carlyle and America, Whitman states, there existed "an inexplicable rapport (all the more piquant for its contradictoriness)." Hence, the divided consciousness of Carlyle might well have been healed by direct experience of America: "conceive of him," demands Whitman, "coming to America, recuperated by the cheering realities and activity of our people and country... inhaling and exhaling our limitless air and eligibilities--devoting his mind to the theories and developments of this Republic amid its practical facts as exemplified
in Kansas, Missouri, Illinois, Tennessee, or Louisiana.\textsuperscript{30}

Setting aside for the moment the crucial differences between himself and Carlyle which Whitman identifies, we can see that the feature which most strongly links them (and the source of Whitman's abiding interest in Carlyle) is their status as representatives of their respective forms of contemporary society. The most fundamental common artistic problem for Carlyle and Whitman is an awareness of the need for a radical change in literary practice to correspond to revolutionary historical and political change, the need for new modes of expression to manifest the transcendental reality of modern historical experience. And the most important common pattern in their works is an accommodation of the romantic forms of poetic fiction to the factual demands of reality, which for both authors is potentially grander than fiction. According to Carlyle, the literature of the eighteenth century "had sunk from its former vocation: it no longer held the mirror up to Nature; no longer reflected . . . the actual passions, the hopes, sorrows, joys of living men, but dwelt in a remote conventional world, in Castles of Otranto, in Epigoniads and Leonidases, among clear, metallic heroes, and white, high, stainless beauties, in whom the drapery and elocution were nowise the least important qualities."\textsuperscript{31} The "ordinary Poet" of the nineteenth century, Carlyle maintains, similarly locates poetry in "some past, distant, conventional heroic world." In consequence, "rose-coloured Novels and iron-mailed Epics" continue to abound, "with their locality not on the Earth, but somewhere nearer to the Moon."\textsuperscript{32} The true poet of the nineteenth century must, in Carlyle's estimation,
reconcile the romantic principle of poetry with contemporary facts. The poet who for Carlyle most recognizes the poetic possibilities of modern life is Goethe, who rejects any "looking back into an antique Fairyland" for the kind of poetry that "must dwell in Reality, and become manifest to men in the forms among which they live and move." 33 "In reading Goethe's poetry," writes Carlyle,

it perpetually strikes us that we are reading the poetry of our own day and generation. . . . He does not deal in antiquated mythologies, or ring changes on traditionary poetic forms; there are no supernal, no infernal influences . . . but there is the barren prose of the nineteenth century, the vulgar life which we are all leading; and it starts into strange beauty in his hands; and we pause in delighted wonder to behold the flower of Poesy blooming in that parched and rugged soil. 34

The attractiveness of such views on the function of the modern poet for Whitman is more than a matter of conjecture: Carlyle's statement in the essay on Goethe quoted immediately above that "the existence or non-existence of a new Poet for the World in our own time . . . is really a question of more importance to us than many that are agitated with far greater noise" 35 is identified by Whitman as being "singularly applicable to W. W.," and Whitman praises Goethe, as Carlyle does, for "writing LIFE." 36 For Whitman, as for Carlyle, "the true use for the imaginative faculty of modern times is to give ultimate vivification to facts, to science, and to common lives, endowing them with the glows and glories and final illustriousness which belong to every real thing, and to real things only." Poetry, he states, "so largely . . . wedded to
children's tales, and to mere amorousness; upholstery and superficial rhyme, will have to accept, and, while not denying the past, nor the themes of the past, will be revivified by this tremendous innovation, the kosmic spirit, which must henceforth... be the background and underlying impetus... of all first-class songs. 37

Whitman's opposition of the "demonstrable" to the "mythical" and of "the opening of the western continent by discovery" to "the small theatre of the antique" in his 1855 Preface to Leaves of Grass resembles Carlyle's opposition of the "joys of living men" to the "remote conventional world" of inherited fictions, and his adoption of the United States as the topic of Leaves of Grass parallels Carlyle's choice of the French Revolution as the topic for the grand poem of his era. 38 "Our history is so full of spinal, modern, germinal subjects," declares Whitman. "What the ancient siege of Illium [sic], and the puissance of Hector's and Agamemnon's warriors proved to Hellenic art and literature... may prove the war of attempted secession of 1861-'65 to the future aesthetics, drama, romance, poems of the United States." 39

As Whitman's reference to the future romances of the United States suggests, the word "romance" is pivotal in the critical rhetoric of both Carlyle and Whitman, who attack the romance writer's "conventional privilege" (in Hawthorne's words) to stand "between fiction and reality." 40 For Carlyle, whose discussions of the word are more detailed and explicit than Whitman's, "romance" has a dual signification. In reference to popular fiction, which he calumniates in The French Revolution as "Novel-garbage" (III, 206), it has a strong pejorative sense, inasmuch as it denotes something
fabricated in opposition to reality. Used in the sense of his phrase "the Romance of Life," however, it represents a redemptive principle, consistent with reality, which can be disimprisoned by the modern fact-centred poet. In a passage closely resembling Whitman's complaint about poetry "wedded to children's tales," Carlyle writes that novelists must "do one of two things: either retire into nurseries, and work for children, minors, and semifatuous persons of both sexes; or else ... sweep their Novel-fabric into the dust-cart, and betake them with such faculty as they have to understand and record what is true." "Poetry," he concludes, "is nothing but higher Knowledge; and the only genuine Romance (for grown persons) Reality." 41 Whitman shares Carlyle's pejorative sense of romance when he asserts "the superiority of genuineness over all fiction and romance" and insists that "the people of these States must never be demean'd to romances." 42 Yet he also suggests a type of romance based on the ultimate vivification of facts when he states that science, by "clearing a field for verse, for all the arts, and even, for romance," can replace outmoded poetic themes ("the butcheries and wars of the past" and Milton's "fight between Deity on one side and somebody else on the other") with imaginative treatments of "different and hitherto unknown classes of men." 43 Carlyle and Whitman's conception of a romance consistent with factual reality is reflected in their choice of literary forms. In the mid-eighteen-thirties, Carlyle experiments with an historically-based "Romance," or "True Fiction," in "The Diamond Necklace." 44 In the mid-eighteen-forties, Whitman writes in a prose form that he calls the "Fact-
Romance." These experiments in shorter forms anticipate The French Revolution and Leaves of Grass, attempts to demonstrate the romantic or transcendental significance of modern history on an epic scale.

The epic nature of these two works, as well as their modifications of epic tradition, has been examined separately in modern criticism. Albert LaValley states that Carlyle "certainly intended to write an epic for the modern age, one that would be both ultimate and full in its recognition of man's deepest drives but would also be problematic, like the process of history itself," while James E. Miller describes Leaves of Grass as "America's epic," whose hero, "unlike the hero of past epics, discovers his heroic qualities not in superman characteristics but in the selfhood common to every man." Where the artistry of these works can be most profitably compared, I think, is in their revolutionary theme as it affects their uses of the epic past. Both Carlyle and Whitman treat the downfall of hierarchical and monarchical institutions and the consequent attempts to construct a new social order. Both resist traditional epic forms, inasmuch as those forms are inextricably linked with a royalist, non-egalitarian world-view. But they do so in such a way that their new myths are shaped by an insistent awareness of the "antiquated Mythuses," or in Whitman's term "the old signifiers," of Homer, Virgil, Dante, Ariosto, Tasso and Milton.

"The great paradox of the 'epic,'" argues Brian Wilkie, "lies in the fact that the partial repudiation of earlier epic tradition is itself traditional." That is to say that the problem of
poetic tradition which the nineteenth-century artist faces in dealing with previous exemplars of epic greatness is shared with previous epicists, at least as far back as Virgil. Carlyle, aware of the problem of imitation, lists the Aeneid as the first of modern, imitative epics, "artificial, heterogeneous things: more of gumflowers than of roses," while Whitman calls it "a second-hand article," "too plain an attempt to get up a case . . . for Roman origin and for the divine participation in old Italian affairs just as much as in those of besieged Troy and in mythical Greece."49 From the outset of the Aeneid, Virgil accepts the epic geography and narrative framework of Homeric epic, while radically altering their meaning: he makes Troy, the locus of physical and spiritual exile in Homer, the lost home, or narrative equivalent of Ithaca; he makes Homer's protagonist Odysseus the antagonist of Aeneas, and transfers from Odysseus to Aeneas the role of beleaguered Mediterranean wanderer. By dismembering his narrative from the matter of Greece and Troy and locating his central struggle in Italy, Virgil initiates the westward dislocation that marks much of subsequent epic tradition. Whether unsuccessfully, as Carlyle and Whitman think, or not, Virgil opposes the eastward-looking metropolitan pull of Greek epic (what Whitman depreciates in the 1855 Preface as "trot[ting] back generation after generation to the eastern records") with an epic celebration of the western frontier not entirely dissimilar in intent to that which Whitman, as "chanter of Adamic songs" in "the new garden the West," attempts in Leaves of Grass.50 The paradoxical effect of Virgil's concern with his new epic theme is an insistent turning-back upon past epic themes.
and events; his sense of coming after a great epic predecessor, emblemed by the encounter of Aeneas with the already blinded Polyphemus in Book III, became a hallmark of subsequent epics. Dante, in turn, absorbs Virgil as Virgil absorbs Homer, making Aeneas' rôle of traveller through the underworld his own, and giving the guide's rôle, held in the Aeneid by the Cumaean Sibyl, to Virgil himself; Dante invites his predecessor into the Divine Comedy, while showing the limitations of his vision. Milton, declaring his theme to be "Not less but more Heroic than the wrath / Of stern Achilles... or rage / Of Turnus for Lavinia disespous'd," absorbs within his poem the themes and textures of the epics that he is determined to supersede. Epic tradition demands, then, that the establishment of a new epic vision embrace within itself a concerted criticism of the visions of previous epics. Carlyle and Whitman exemplify this retrospective tendency in epic by inviting the spectres of past epics into their own works and allowing them to struggle with the figures of their modern vision.

In a brief but remarkable passage of the first volume of The French Revolution, Carlyle depicts the strange early morning visitation of a young revolutionary to the besieged royalist general the Baron de Besenval:

At five o'clock this morning, as [Besenval] lay dreaming, oblivious in the Ecole Militaire, a 'figure' stood suddenly at his bedside; 'with face rather handsome; eyes inflamed, speech rapid, and curt, air audacious': such a figure drew Priam's curtains! The message and monition of the figure was, that resistance would be hopeless; that if blood flowed, woe to him who shed it. Thus spoke the figure...
vanished. 'Withal there was a kind of eloquence that struck one.' Besenval admits that he should have arrested him, but did not. Who this figure with inflamed eyes, with speech rapid and curt, might be? Besenval knows, but mentions not. Camille Desmoulins? Pythagorean Marquis Valadi, inflamed with 'violent motions all night at the Palais-Royal'? Fame names him 'Young M. Meillar'; then shuts her lips about him for ever. (I, 187)

Carlyle's presentation of the visitor as a mysterious "figure with inflamed eyes" gives the scene a mythic (or naturally supernatural) texture that is only latent or imprisoned in his principal source for the passage, the Mémoires of Besenval:

Le 14, à cinq heures du matin, un homme entra chez moi. Cet homme (dont j'ai su le nom) avait les yeux enflammés, la parole rapide, et courtois le maintien audacieux, et d'ailleurs la figure assez belle, et je ne sais quoi d'éloquente qui me frappa. "Monsieur le baron, me dit-il, il faut que vous soyez averti, pour prévenir une résistance inutile. Au-jour-d'hui les barrières de Paris seront brûlées; j'en suis sûr, et n'y peux rien, ni vous non plus. N'essayez pas de l'empêcher. Vous sacrifieriez des hommes sans éteindre un flambeau."

Je ne me rappelle pas ce que je lui répondis, mais il pâlit de rage, et sortit précipitamment. J'aurais dû le faire arrêter: je n'en fis rien. 52

That Besenval's visitor should be given an otherworldly appearance in Carlyle's narrative is fitting, inasmuch as the phrase "such a figure drew Priam's curtains" links the passage with the long-standing epic convention (to which an entire book, Thomas Grene's The Descent from Heaven, has been devoted) of "the descent of an emissary god or angel from heaven bearing a message to earth." 53

At the same time as Carlyle's passage refers by means of a footnote (in the manner of a scientific history) to Besenval's memoirs, it refers in epic fashion, by this mythic analogue, to the final book
of the Iliad where the messenger Iris conveys the will of Zeus to
Priam:

Before the king Jove's messenger appears,
And thus in whispers greets his trembling ears:
'Fear not, O father: no ill news I bear;
From Jove I come, Jove makes thee still his care:
For Hector's sake these walls he bids thee leave,
And bear what stern Achilles may receive.
Fierce as he is, Achilles' self shall spare
Thy age, nor touch one venerable hair...

She spoke, and vanish'd. 54

Carlyle's Besenval episode, with its indecorous mingling of the
historical and the mythical, superimposes the allusion to Priam,
a mythic "reflex" of history, 55 or symbol detached from the reality
it originally signified, on the encounter of Besenval and Meiller,
an historical reality which is, through Carlyle's artistry, moving
towards mythic stature. Carlyle's juxtaposition of new and
antiquated mythus forces the reader to an apprehension of the
imprisoned epic of modern history which his work is in the process
of liberating, while it readmits to the text the epic machinery
that the informing aesthetic of Sauerbeig ostensibly forbids.

Perhaps the closest analogue in Whitman to the Besenval
episode is the "Song of the Exposition," in which Whitman implores
the muse of his poem to abandon the stock themes of European epic
for the vibrant realities of America. "Come Muse migrate from
Greece and Ionia," he says: "Cross out please those immensely
overpaid accounts, / That matter of Troy and Achilles' wrath, and
Aeneas', Odysseus' wanderings, / Placard 'Removed' and 'To Let' on
the rocks of your snowy Parnassus" (ll. 15-8). In a magnificent
elegiac passage, which resembles Carlyle's elegy for sovereigns
and *sovereignties* both in form and in function, Whitman tells of
the obsolescence of traditional epic:

> Ended for aye the epics of Asia's, Europe's
> helmeted warriors, ended the primitive
> call of the muses,
> Clio's call forever closed, Clio, Melpomene,
> Thalia dead,
> Ended the stately rhythmus of Co and Oriana,
> ended the quest of the holy Graal,
> Jerusalem a handful of ashes blown by the wind,
> extinct,
> The Crusaders' streams of shadowy midnight troops
> sped with the sunrise,
> Amadis, Tancred, utterly gone, Charlemagne,
> Roland, Oliver gone,
> Palmein, ogre, departed, vanish'd the turrets
> that Usk from its waters reflected,
> Arthur vanish'd with all his knights, Merlin and
> Lancelot and Galahad, all gone, dissolv'd
> utterly like an exhalation;
> Pass'd! pass'd! for us, forever pass'd, that
> once so mighty world, now void, inanimate,
> phantom world,
> Embroider'd, dazzling, foreign world, with all
> its gorgeous legends, myths,
> Its kings and castles proud, its priests and
> warlike lords and courtly dames,
> Pass'd to its charnel vault, coffin'd with
> crown and armour on,
> Blazon'd with Shakspere's purple page,
> And dirged by Tennyson's sweet sad-rhyme.

(ll. 40-53)

Whitman's evocation of mythic splendour, his indulgence in what he
elsewhere designates as the "perfumed, arras-and-gold Nature" of
Tennyson's Arthuriana,\(^\text{56}\) gives to the "void, inanimate, phantom
world" he elegizes a very real presence in his text, strangely
coupled with his subsequent prosaic depiction of his own muse at
the Exposition, "By thud of machinery and shrill steam-whistle
undismay'd, / Bluff'd not a bit by drain-pipe, gasometers, artificial
fertilizers, / Smiling and pleas'd with palpable intent to stay, /
install'd amid the kitchen ware" (ll. 56-9). Whitman, like Carlyle, brings his insistent awareness of the division between past and present to the surface of his text, and reflects their discontinuity in the bold contrasts of his work. His gasometers and kitchen-ware, as unromantic as Roland's tough beef and constipation, when daringly juxtaposed with the enticing beauty of his elegy for epic, challenge the reader to accept the text's incongruity by reference to a belief that the Age of Romance has not ceased and that modern man is part of "the same old human race" which produced the great epics of the past: "Faces and hearts the same, feelings the same, yearnings the same, / The same old love, beauty and use the same" (ll. 66-8).

The result of this technique by which Carlyle and Whitman give the spectres of myth equal existence in the foreground of the text with figures of contemporary reality is a work in which the revolutionary tensions underlying the text are embodied in its vapid, surface texture. The revolutionary form of the work becomes (in Carlyle's terms) not the clothing of its revolutionary vision, but its "skin," "the product and close kinsfellow of all that lies under it; exact type of the nature of the beast: not to be plucked off without flaying and death." Thus Carlyle describes The French Revolution as "a wild savage Book, itself a kind of French Revolution," and Whitman, in words which are almost equally applicable to Carlyle, states of Leaves of Grass:

as I have lived in fresh lands... and in a revolutionary age... I have felt to identify the points of that age, these lands, in my recitatives, altogether in my own way. Thus my form has strictly grown from my purports and facts, and is the analogy of them. 58
With their indecorous juxtapositions, variegated texture, abrupt transitions of tone, and insistent repudiation of stylistic elegance, the works of Carlyle and Whitman demand to be treated according to an aesthetic quite other than that offered by the "superannuated unities of Aristotle, or the French school". The concept of Gothic or romantic form, which is an insistent concern of nineteenth-century critical thought (inspiring, for example, William Blake's distinction between Greek "Mathematic Form" and Gothic "Living Form," the modern Germans' discussions of the differences between Greek and modern art, and John Ruskin's study of "The Nature of Gothic"), is an indispensable context for understanding the similar aesthetic principles of The French Revolution and Leaves of Grass. Carlyle makes his own Gothic aesthetic explicit in "Voltaire" when (in a passage quoted above in a different context) he differentiates Voltaire's style from his own:

We might say, there is not the deep natural symmetry of a forest oak, but the simple artificial symmetry of a parlour chandelier. Compare, for example, the plan of the Henriade to that of our so barbarous Hamlet. The plan of the former is a geometrical diagram by Fermat; that of the latter a cartoon by Raphael. The Henriade ... is a polished, square-built Tuileries; Hamlet is a mysterious star-paved Valhalla and dwelling of the gods. 

Carlyle's contrast between the natural and the architectonic is analogous to a similar opposition in the critical prose of Whitman:
Poetic style, when address'd to the soul, is less

definite form, outline, sculpture, and becomes vista,

music, half-tints, and even less than half-tints.

True, it may be architecture; but again it may be

the forest wild-wood . . . at twilight, the waving

oaks and cedars in the wind, and the impalpable odor.

Whitman's sense of the Gothic elements in Carlyle's work is

reflected in his early comments on Carlyle's "rapt, weird,

(grotesque?) style," "strange wild way," and "original kind of

composition," and in his later statement that Carlyle is "neither

Latin nor Greek, but altogether Gothic." Whitman acknowledges

that "Carlyle certainly introduced the German style, writers,

sentimentalism, transcendentalism . . . from 1826 to 1840--through

the great reviews and magazines--and through his own works and

eexample." The clearest expression of Whitman's own Gothic

aesthetic appears in "Spirit that Form'd this Scene, Written in

Platte Cañon, Colorado," a late poem written as a response to

critics hostile to his style:

Spirit that form'd this scene,
These tumbled rock-piles grim and red,
These reckless heaven-ambitious peaks,
These gorges, turbulent-clear streams, this

naked freshness,
These formless wild arrays, for reasons of

their own,
I know thee, savage spirit--for we have communed

together,
Mine too such wondrous arrays, for reasons of their

own;
Was't charged against my chants they had for-

gotten art?
To fuse within themselves its rules precise and
delicatessse?
The lyrist's measur'd beat, the wrought-out

temple's grace--column and polish'd arch

forgot?
But thou that revellest here--spirit that

formed this scene,

They have remember'd thee.
Here, as in Carlyle, we have the opposition of the natural "formless wild arrays" to the architectonic "column and polish'd arch." Here too we see expressed the dependence of literary form on individual vision, which makes *Leaves of Grass*, like *The French Revolution*, a wild savage book, itself a kind of American Revolution in verse.

To this point in my discussion I have treated the two works in question as remarkably similar works, while remembering as Whitman did in his literary relationship with Carlyle that every example of "rapport" between the two authors carries its own element of "contradictoriness." I must now turn to the most striking difference between the two works, which involves Whitman's differentiation (mentioned above) between himself as American and Carlyle as European. The source of the difference can be traced to Whitman's distinction between the "Subjective or lyric," which comes "out of the person himself," and the "objective or epic," which treats "other persons, things, events, places, characters." "*Leaves of Grass* must be called not objective, but altogether subjective," Whitman writes: "'I Know' runs through them [sic] as a perpetual refrain." "As the *Iliad* is profoundly objective," he explains, "*Leaves of Grass* are profoundly subjective."66 The characteristic form of European feudalism, Whitman finds, is objective epic, while the characteristic form of American democracy is subjective lyric. Whitman's identification of his own work as subjective offers support for arguments which place *Leaves of Grass* in the tradition of the "personal epic," "lyric-epic," or even "anti-epic."67 Whitman's book is structured:
by the autobiographical impulse central to much nineteenth-century literature: Whitman reviews Goethe's autobiography in 1846 and annotates Rousseau's *Confessions* in the fall of 1856; his intention to express his personality "in a far more candid and comprehensive sense than any hitherto poem or book" is strongly reminiscent of Rousseau's "entreprise qui n'eut jamais d'exemple," his effort to show "un homme dans toute la vérité de la nature." 68 *Leaves of Grass* manifests the personal epic's movement towards an authorial hero, first in the sense that Whitman emerges, as does Dante in the *Divine Comedy* or Wordsworth in the *Prelude*, as the protagonist of his own poem, and secondly in the sense that the act of poetic creation becomes a principal instance of heroism in the work. Traditional, or in Whitman's term objective, epic maintains a distinction between active and narrative functions. "There are two Odysseuses in the *Odyssey*," for example, as Tzvetan Todorov argues: "one has the adventures, the other tells them." 69 In a modern epic such as *Don Juan*, the disappearance of the external hero, announced by Byron in the opening line of Canto One, necessitates a self-reflexive focussing on the author and his work, which becomes, in Hazlitt's phrase; "a poem written about itself." Thus, in the "I celebrate myself" which opens the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* (or in the more awkwardly self-reflexive "One's-Self I sing" which begins the Deathbed Edition) Whitman announces his double heroism as celebrating "I" and celebrated self.

The opening sentence of *The French Revolution*, by way of contrast, reveals with its commitment to the third person and suppression of the "I" the objective European detachment against which Whitman
is reacting. The relative absence from Carlyle's three volumes of the "I know" which makes a "perpetual refrain" in Whitman suggests that the context of the personal epic is inappropriate to Carlyle. Yet while the dominant mode of The French Revolution is by Whitman's definition objective, there is a strong subjective undercurrent in the work, as Whitman's most intriguing critical comment on Carlyle implies. "Rugged, mountainous, volcanic," says Whitman, "he was himself more a French revolution than any of his volumes." Whitman's statement suggests that Carlyle is more important a subject for The French Revolution than the Revolution itself, and that Carlyle's history is to some extent a personal epic, like Leaves of Grass an epic of the modern soul, but showing the heroic (though self-contradictory and futile) effort of a European trying to create unity and pattern from the contradictions of his surroundings rather than a free, integrated spirit breathing the "limitless air and eligibilities" of America.

Whitman's observation approximates statements that Carlyle himself makes about the work. "It is a wild savage Book, itself a kind of French Revolution," Carlyle writes to John Sterling: "What I do know of it is that it has come hot out of my own soul; born in blackness whirlwind and sorrow; that no man, for a long while, has stood speaking so completely alone under the Eternal Azure, in the character of man only; or is likely for a long while so to stand." And in a letter to Emerson Carlyle similarly emphasizes the heroic struggle of writing which is not explicitly treated in the work itself. "It is a Book contradicting all rules of Formalism, that have not a Reality within them," writes Carlyle: "One does verily
stand on the Earth, a Star-dome encompassing one; seemingly accoutred and enlisted and sent to battle, with rations good, indifferent or bad,—what can one do but in the name of Odin, Tuiskope, Hertha, Horsa, and all Saxon and Hebrew Gods, fight it out?" Whitman's criticism of Carlyle, then, accords with Carlyle's own words in suggesting a personal, heroic struggle, that remains on the surface of the work not through the author's repeated insistence on the "I," which remains submerged, but through the heroic virtuosity of his style. As J. A. Herald states in his 1837 review of The French Revolution, "this Book is itself, in a certain sense, a Revolution—and the Author its only Hero." Whitman's criticism of The French Revolution, like Nietzsche's treatment of Carlyle in The Twilight of the Idols a pitting of the latent or "impalpable" text against the "palpable" text, identifies the subjective epic of the modern European soul which underlies the objective epic of external revolution and which, might, from Whitman's standpoint, have been disimprisoned by exposure to the "practical facts" of America.

Carlyle's and Whitman's experiments in epic form are evidence of a shared feeling that, in Friedrich Schlegel's words, "the classical poetical genres have now become ridiculous in their rigid purity." Carlyle's prose history with footnotes and Whitman's discontinuous subjective poems show nothing of the "superannuated unities" or "rules precise" of neoclassical epic. Yet the nineteenth-century sense of generic disintegration in which Carlyle and Whitman share does not imply, as Tzvetan Todorov maintains, a refusal "to recognize the very existence of such a
notion" as genre, for Carlyle and Whitman, like other nineteenth-century authors, mix, modify, and challenge established genres, rather than ignore them. In turning to the epic, Carlyle and Whitman select a genre which, being progressive and self-conscious, is already somewhat suited to a theme of radical change and modern self-awareness. What Thomas Greene writes of the problems of Renaissance epicists comes close to describing the situation of Carlyle and Whitman with regard to epic:

in its quest for epic the Renaissance was engaged in the quest for self-definition. It was forced to modify Homer and Virgil, 'to modify them in ways characteristically modern, and thus to discover in the modern age what was new and individual. . . . [Renaissance epics] are most of them imperfectly coherent, uncertainly unified, divided by powerful forces not altogether controlled and understood. 76

Yet whereas Renaissance epic is forced, as Greene notes, to make "a series of adjustments between a Christian society and antique forms," 77 the nineteenth-century treatments of revolution by Carlyle and Whitman mediate between a post-Christian, post-monarchical society and epic conventions structured by the assumptions of a hierarchical world-view. Consequently, for those authors the epic is a genre to be disimprisoned; the "Epic Poem of the Revolution" by Carlyle and the "epic of Democracy" by Whitman reflect only in a severely displaced and often incongruous form the previous centuries' veneration of epic as "the greatest work which the soul of man is capable to perform." 78
Notes to Chapter Six

1 For a listing of Carlyle's historical sources, see Isaac Watson Dyer, A Bibliography of Thomas Carlyle's Writings and Ana (Portland, Maine: Southworth Press, 1929), pp. 582-4.


3 Prospectus to The Excursion, ll. 31-55.


5 Hallam Tennyson, Alfred Lord Tennyson, a Memoir (London: Macmillan, 1897), II, 127.


8 Works, XXVIII, 325.

9 Works, XXVIII, 49-51.

10 Two Note Books, p. 188.


12 Prose, II, 458, 714.

13 Horace Traubel, With Walt Whitman in Camden, II (New York: Appleton, 1908), 300.


19 Traubel, II, 328.


21 Traubel, II, 106.

22 Rodgers and Black, II, 291.


24 Kaplan, p. 174; Prose, I, 261n.


27 Prose, I, 249.

28 Prose, I, 250-1.

29 Prose, I, 249, 254, 256-7.

30 Prose, I, 254-5.

31 Works, XXVI, 213.

32 Works, XXVI, 271.

33 Works, XXVI, 65-6.

34 Works, XXIII, 28-9.

35 Works, XXIII, 33.

36 Emory Holloway, "Notes from a Whitman Student's Scrapbook," American Scholar, 2 (1933), 277-8.
Prose, II, 472, 716.
Prose, II, 436; Works, XXVI, 213, 271.
Prose, II, 483-4.
See Hawthorne's prefaces to The Blithedale Romance (in which this quotation appears) and The House of the Seven Gables.
Works, XXVIII, 178.
Prose, II, 483.
Works, XXVII, 330; Letters, VII, 245.
Wilkie, p. 10.
Prose, II, 436; "Ages and Ages Returning at Intervals," 11. 4-5.
Paradise Lost, IX, 414-7.
Greene, p. 7.
Iliad, trans. Pope, XXIV, 207-221.
Works, XXVIII, 50.

Emerson writes to Carlyle about The French Revolution in 1837: "I insist, of course, that it might be more simple, less Gothically efflorescent. You will say no rules for the illumination of windows can apply to the aurora borealis" (The Correspondence of Emerson and Carlyle, p. 167). Much later, after Carlyle's death, George Meredith notes that Carlyle is "Titanic, not Olympian: a Weaver of rocks, not a "shaper" (Letters, ed. William Maxse Meredith, Vol. XXIX of The Works of George Meredith, Memorial Edition [London, 1912; rpt. New York: Russell, 1968], 333).


Rodgers and Black, II, 294; Notes and Fragments, p. 80.

76 Greene, p. 4.
77 Greene, p. 5.
78 Dryden, Essays, II, 154.
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