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President's Letter

Another successful year, an abundance of good papers, and at the end a syllabus for what looks like another good year ahead. It's been a busy year in Dumfriesshire with developments in Craigenputtoch and vigorous debate over the future of windfarm proposals; in Ecclefechan, the traffic whizzing by on the motorway stops less and less often to visit the Carlyle birthplace, and we are hoping to add to their visitor numbers with a trip to Ecclefechan (and maybe the Grey Mare's Tail) on a Saturday afternoon in early Summer.

In July 2006 a major international gathering in Villanova University, near Philadelphia, will be debating *Carlyle Resartus*, the growth in the study and – crucially – the teaching of both Carlyles, and Edinburgh will be well represented. In the *Carlyle Letters* office, work goes ahead steadily on the current volumes and 36 and 37 are taking shape. The entire Edinburgh *Letters* team will be at Villanova, and one of the round table discussions will be on scholarly editing, which the Carlyles have made a very visible and well-regarded activity in Edinburgh.

While the coming of the John Murray archive to the National Library will not immediately affect our activities, it's a major boost to the standing of the UNESCO City of Literature. The sound of building is everywhere, in the National Library, in Buccleuch Place, in the University Library which is being transformed over the next decade. We remain most grateful for the premises in which we meet; to those members who keep the society running; to the anonymous donors who have helped us financially during the last year; and we are glad to see the *Occasional Papers* appearing on time and so handsomely. 2008 will see the appearance of one of our Thomas Green special publications from Aileen Christianson.

Thanks to all who made last year a success, and who have helped plan the coming year.

Ian Campbell
Edinburgh, June 2007

The “dark expounder” and the “melodious voice” Thomas Carlyle and Elizabeth Gaskell on Chartism

Maurice Milne

What was Chartism? We do not have to look far for an answer:

Chartism means the bitter discontent grown fierce and mad, the wrong condition therefore or the wrong disposition, of the Working Classes of England. (*Chartism*, 165-6)

Carlyle, with his usual penetration, had grasped the meaning of the large, amorphous, fluctuating movement that so agitated the poorer classes and so alarmed the better-off, in the decade after 1838. Rightly, Carlyle saw that Chartism, as a widespread phenomenon, sprang from both experience and perception: an experience of great material hardship, combined with a bitter belief among many working people that the propertied classes either did not care about their misfortunes, or were actually adopting policies that made them worse.

Chartism as a *political* phenomenon, however, was both narrower, and of longer ancestry, than Chartism as a mass movement. Strictly defined ‘Chartism’ denoted the campaign for the enactment of the People’s Charter. Drawn up by William Lovett of the London Working Men’s Association, assisted by the veteran radical, Francis Place, the People’s Charter was published on 8 May 1838. It took the form of a parliamentary bill with six provisions: universal manhood suffrage, equal electoral districts, the secret ballot, annual parliaments, abolition of the property qualification for MPs, and payment of MPs. These, the famous ‘six points’, contained nothing new. They were part of a long-established radical tradition, going back to the last quarter of the eighteenth century, and embracing both advanced reformers from the propertied classes and a small number of articulate, politically-conscious, working men. The roll-call of campaigners in the early nineteenth century included William Cobbett, Francis Place, ‘Orator’ Hunt, and Samuel Bamford. Individual crusaders then gave way to organised bodies, notably the Political Unions in the great industrial towns, Birmingham, Leeds, and Manchester. This process occurred just when Carlyle was observing in ‘Signs of the Times’ (1829):

Has any man, or any society of men, a truth to speak, a piece of spiritual work to do; they can nowise proceed at once and with the mere natural organs, but must first call a public meeting, appoint committees, issue prospectuses, eat a public dinner; in a word, construct or borrow machinery, wherewith to speak it and do it.

By such means, and for other reasons too complex to enter into here, a reform of parliamentary representation was achieved, in the so-called Great Reform Act of 1832. The problem was that, 'great' though it might have been in de-fusing a potentially revolutionary situation, the Act was anything but great in its scope. It admitted some of the middle classes into the parliamentary citadel, and then firmly raised the drawbridge, leaving the disgruntled leaders of the working-class campaign on the outside. Here lay one of the direct roots of Chartism. Another derived from the way that the law was used to constrict the emerging trade union movement. Most provocative of all was the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. In place of the untidy, fragmented, Old Poor Law came a new system, modelled on the Benthamite lines. It was to be clearer, cheaper, more coherent, with its twin principles of 'less eligibility' and the 'workhouse test'. Possibly appropriate to the agrarian counties of southern England, it was much less attuned to the circumstances in the northern industrial towns. By an unfortunate coincidence, the New Poor Law began to be implemented there in 1837, just at the commencement of a severe industrial depression. Fears about the expected harshness of the new regime combined with real economic hardship, and a lingering sense of betrayal over 1832, to produce the first great mass-movement of the industrial working class.

The high points of the campaign occurred in 1839, 1842, and 1848, when the Charter was three times presented to parliament, backed by petitions containing millions of signatures, and was three times contemptuously rejected. There was much talk of violence, and some real violence, notably in the Newport Rising of November 1839. Looking back, the wonder is how little violence there was on the part of the Chartists themselves, but this is from the comfortable standpoint of posterity. For the anxious feeling of the time, we turn to the perceptions of Thomas Carlyle and Elizabeth Gaskell. The first part of this paper will focus upon what they said, and the second on how they said it. How did Carlyle the essayist and public sage express his message, compared with Gaskell the novelist? What argumentative weapons and imaginative devices lent themselves more readily to either writer?

Carlyle's essay was published as a pamphlet by Fraser, of Fraser's Magazine, on 28 December 1839. A synopsis can perhaps serve to cover the argument and content of Carlyle's essay (see Appendix) leaving consideration of lexicon and style until later. The principal strands of the argument can be narrowed down to five:

- 1) Repressing the manifestations of working-class discontents will not remove their deeper causes.
- 2) Those causes, which are mental and moral as much as material, require clear articulation, otherwise they will continue to breed bitterness and violence.
- 3) Radical MPs in the Reformed Parliament have failed in their duty.

- 4) We should look, rather, to a ‘real Aristocracy’: wise leaders who will bring active governance in the place of the vacuity of laissez-faire and the fatalism of political economy.
- 5) Two policies that government should espouse with much more vigour than hitherto are education and emigration.

It will be apparent that, sympathetic as he was in seeing what troubled the Chartists, Carlyle differed from them in several respects regarding how best to improve the situation. They put their faith in universal suffrage. Carlyle, while not opposing franchise extension on principle, thought it would prove a hollow gain. Strong governance by the wisest and best was his answer to the Condition-of-England question. The words he put into the mouths of the protesting populace were, ‘Guide me, govern me! I am mad and miserable, and cannot guide myself!’ (Chartism, 199). Chartist leaders would have begged to differ. Nor would they have been happy with Carlyle’s partial endorsement of the New Poor Law. As for his two favoured remedies of education and emigration, they already commanded a fairly wide range of support. The general critical reaction to his pamphlet was to praise the power of his diagnosis, but to be unexcited by his proposed cure. (See next paper.) An editorial in the *Glasgow Argus*, 24 February 1840, probably by the editor, William Weir, a friend of Carlyle, can serve for many similar responses:

But this capacity of perception ... is by no means accompanied by an equal sagacity as to the means of renovation... It is for him to see the evil in all the blackness and breadth of its putridity – the remedies lie... with men of more patient progress. In the meantime it is good for society to listen to the dark expounder.

Darkness is certainly where some of the supporters of the Whig government would have liked to confine Carlyle. They were stung by his condemnation of the drift and irrelevance of the Ministry in the late 1830s. Rather than engage in salutary self-scrutiny, they preferred to accuse Carlyle of turning Tory.

The ‘Tory’ label endured in some quarters. In 1954 The Institute of Marxism-Leninism of The Central Committee, Communist Party of the Soviet Union, published a volume of selected writings on Britain by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, beginning with Engels’s *Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844*, which contained numerous references to Carlyle’s *Chartism*. At the end of the volume, Thomas Carlyle is indexed thus:

English publicist, historian and idealist philosopher, Tory; criticised the English bourgeoisie from the standpoint of reactionary romanticism and extreme individualism; after 1848 – ruthless enemy of revolutionary working-class movement.

Friend or enemy, Carlyle certainly envisaged himself as the oracle of troubled proletarians. We need to reflect, therefore, on his likening of the lower classes to ‘dumb creatures in pain, unable to speak what is in them!’ (Chartism 169).

Gillian Beer anticipates a charge of condescension, indeed concedes it up to a point, but she offers the defence that, for Carlyle, to be inarticulate was not necessarily to be stupid or wrong. On the contrary, silence, dumbness, inarticulacy, could all be closer to the truth than the glib repetition of hollow formularies. (Beer, 246). Even so, something needed to be said, otherwise why go to all the lengths of publishing a pamphlet of some seventy to eighty pages? More to the point, the Chartist movement was by no means so dumb as Carlyle suggests. Consider, for example, these words, which will have a familiar ring to readers of Carlyle:

We... dwell in a land whose merchants are noted for their enterprise, whose manufacturers are very skilful and whose workmen are proverbial for their industry. The land itself is goodly, the soil rich, and the temperature wholesome. It is abundantly furnished with the materials of commerce and trade. It has numerous and convenient harbours... Yet with all the elements of national prosperity, and with every disposition and capacity to take advantage of them, we find ourselves overwhelmed with public and private suffering... The home of the artificer is desolate, and the warehouse of the pawnbroker is full. The workhouse is full, and the manufactory is deserted.

The opening paragraph of *Past and Present*, perhaps, published in 1843? No, the opening paragraphs of the first petition of the United Chartists, drawn up by R.K. Douglas for the Council of the Birmingham Political Union in 1838. (It should be noted that the BPU at this stage contained both middle-class and working-class reformers.) As the movement developed, there were Chartist newspapers, notably the Northern Star, which probably outsold *The Times*. There were Chartist hymns (‘The Charter springs from Zion’s hill’) and Chartist songs:

I feel an independent mind –
I’ve common sense, and a’ that-
Unstained by crime, and free o’ debt,
Yet I’m a slave for a’ that.

(From ‘I hae a cot, a wee kail-yard’, to the tune, ‘A man’s a man, for a’ that’, published in the Glasgow-based Chartist Circular, 8 Feb. 1840.) Autobiographies of working-class radicals, like Samuel Bamford, the Lancashire weaver, and Thomas Cooper, the Chartist poet from Leicestershire, are further testimony to the articulacy of the downtrodden. Yet Cooper dedicated his epic, *The Purgatory of Suicides*, written in prison in 1844, to Carlyle. And there is perhaps a nod to Carlyle in this editorial from the Northern Star, on 25 Jan. 1840:

The only ruling power is intense and grasping selfishness; the only acknowledged deity is the idol Mammon, seated on a throne of blood.

The Chartists could speak for themselves, but when it came to addressing the Condition-of-England question, no-one could match Carlyle, who framed the question and set the parameters of the debate.

Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton. A Tale of Manchester Life*, published in October 1848, is widely regarded as one of the outstanding 'Condition-of-England novels' of the 1840s. Labelling it in this way suggests a conscious reference to Carlyle. Mrs Gaskell herself reinforced the link by including a quotation from Carlyle on her title page. It comes from a wonderfully ironic passage in his short essay, 'Biography', which appeared in *Fraser's Magazine* for April 1832. Carlyle characterised 'the whole class of 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', as all being 'but so many mimic Biographies.' This led him into a mordantly jesting speculation about whether any of us can ever know when we have met the stupidest person in existence. There might still be someone even stupider out there. 'Of no given book', he continues, 'not even of a Fashionable Novel, can you predict with certainty that its vacuity is absolute; that there are not other vacuities which shall partially replenish themselves therefrom, and esteem it a *plenum*.' Then come the two sentences quoted by Gaskell:

'How knowest thou,' may the distressed Novel-wright exclaim, 'that I, here where I sit, am the Foolishest of existing mortals; that this my long-ear of a fictitious Biography shall not find one and the other, into whose still longer ears it may be the means, under Providence, of instilling somewhat?' We answer, 'None knows, none can certainly know: therefore, write on, worthy Brother, even as thou canst, even as it is given thee.'

Gaskell's modest disclaimer, on a title page which did not even carry her name, might suggest an unsureness of purpose. Her Preface, however, written at the behest of her publisher, indicated her true seriousness:

I had always felt a deep sympathy with the care-worn men, who looked as if doomed to struggle through their lives in strange alternations between work and want...

... The more I reflected on this unhappy state of things between those so bound to each other by common interests, as the employers and the employed must ever be, the more anxious I became to give some utterance to the agony which, from time to time, convulses this dumb people; the agony of suffering without the sympathy of the happy, or of erroneously believing that such is the case.

There are some obvious parallels with Carlylean themes here: the insecurity of employment, the mutual suspicions between masters and men, above all the need to give utterance to 'dumb' resentment. There are also differences to be seen, in Gaskell's striving for balance, inserting a note about commonality of interests, or suggesting that it would be erroneous for the poor to believe that the rich did not care about them. In all these respects the Preface foreshadows those chapters in the novel where Gaskell most directly addresses the reader. She does so either as narrator or in the voice of her chief male character, John Barton. In the latter case passages of his fiery eloquence are sometimes dampened by authorial interventions, as if Mrs Gaskell had become alarmed by the ferocity of her own creation.

The sentence in the Preface that has been the most picked-over ever since is where Gaskell confesses, 'I know nothing of Political Economy, or the theories of trade.' Modern scholars have not been fooled by this, variously describing Gaskell's admission as, 'far from innocent', 'not entirely ingenuous', and 'almost certainly a ploy.' (Campbell, 8-9; Dentith, 192-3; Daly, xv). They agree that what Gaskell was really doing was to distance herself from political economy as a wholly sufficient means of comprehending the current situation. It was not that Gaskell disputed the operation of laws such as supply and demand, wages fund theory, or the outcomes of overproduction. Rather, she believed that this conceptual framework was incapable of embracing the intense human suffering and feeling of alienation engendered by the operation of the market. The purpose of *Mary Barton* was to show the suffering, and to plead for better communication between masters and men about the former's need to be competitive, and latter's need for steady employment. Such matters were well within the range of Gaskell's competence. The Manchester middle-class circles within which she moved, especially the Unitarians, gave her an acquaintance with economic ideas, upon which she built by her reading. Even more to the point, she was the daughter of William Stevenson, Keeper of Records at the Treasury, who had contributed a series of articles to Blackwood's Magazine, from May 1824, entitled, 'The Political Economist.' He adopted a middle position between outright rejection, and total acceptance, of political economy as a guide to practical problems. His daughter took the same view in her fiction. I suggest that what she was really saying in her disclaimer, as an anonymous writer, quickly guessed by discerning critics to be a woman, was, 'I am not Harriet Martineau.'

In the novel, Mary Barton's father, John, a Manchester factory worker, becomes a Chartist and an active trade unionist. Uneducated but intelligent, compassionate but questioning, he is driven by a succession of misfortunes, his own and those he witnesses in others, to extremes of class antagonism. Mrs Gaskell envisaged his life as a 'tragic poem.' The Carlylean inspiration is obvious here, and is closer to our present purpose than many other parts of the novel, which elicited favourable reviews at the time and have attracted readers ever since. One thinks of the opening scene in

Green Heys Fields, the impromptu tea party, 'Old Alice's History', the horrors of the Davenport's cellar-dwelling, the fire at Carson's mill, and Mary's dramatic dash to Liverpool in order to avert a calamitous outcome to a murder trial. To put all these episodes in one category, and John Barton's story in another, would seriously distort the humane purpose that suffuses the entire novel. Consistent with Carlyle's belief that every person's life is, in its way, a kind of poem, we could extend this to a whole range of characters in this 'tale of Manchester life.' We could, but we must not, for the space will not allow it. Instead, a *précis* as pinched and gaunt as a Manchester cellar-dweller must suffice to cover the John Barton side, before we move on to compare *how* Carlyle and Gaskell expressed what they had to say.

Chosen as one of the Manchester delegates to the national Chartist Convention in London, in the spring of 1839, Barton experiences parliament's deafness to the Chartist case. He returns to a scene of industrial difficulties, which cost him his job and then plunge him into outright industrial conflict. As a member of the strike committee, Barton misses the crucial meeting with the employers because he goes to the infirmary to visit a strike-breaker (a 'knob-stick') who has been blinded by having vitriol thrown in his face. Barton condemns this kind of violent intimidation but has no such compunction as regards the masters, especially once he has learnt how the son of Carson, the factory owner, had drawn mocking caricatures of the union delegates. His resolve is put to the test when he draws the lot to murder Carson junior. The deed done, Barton goes absent from Manchester and the narrative, but returns at the end, wracked by hunger and guilt. He dies in the arms of Carson senior, whose initial cry for vengeance at all costs becomes, reluctantly, transmuted into Christian forgiveness.

We now turn to the second part of this paper, an examination of the rhetorical devices by which Carlyle and Gaskell sought to persuade their readers. To embark here on a general analysis of Carlyle's style would be both superfluous and presumptuous. Yet to say nothing about it would leave comparative references to Mrs Gaskell hanging limply in the air. A few observations on Carlyle must suffice, combined with a brief case-study of one chapter of *Chartism*.

What makes Carlyle so distinctive as an essayist, and indeed in many of his longer works too, is his ability to assume different voices. He is the controversialist as ventriloquist. He can thunder like an Old Testament prophet, deride like Swift or Voltaire, lower his voice to the subtler irony of Fielding, raise it in adulation of the strong man, project it in commiseration with the dispossessed. The Bible is a rich source of both phraseology and illustration. So too is classical myth. As if this linguistic treasury were not rich enough, Carlyle coins words of his own, and then quotes himself on a later page, leaving the casual or browsing reader perplexed. No wonder that Monckton Milnes (appropriating the thought from Harriet Martineau),

said of *Past and Present*, as he might well have said of *Chartism*, that it would be very dangerous if it were ever ‘turned into the vernacular.’ Let us take the fourth chapter of *Chartism* as a case study: the ‘Finest Peasantry in the World.’

The reference, of course, is to the Irish: already present in large numbers in northern industrial towns, with the tide swelling to a flood after the potato blight in 1845. At this stage (1839) the potatoes were generally unblighted, but Carlyle had found a statistical report which claimed that one third of the population lacked a sufficiency of potatoes for thirty weeks in the year. Carlyle dubs the hapless being at the bottom of the food-chain the ‘Sanspotato.’ The reference recalls the sansculottes in the French Revolution. As a synonym for the Irish in general, Carlyle uses ‘Milesian’, from Milesius, legendary Spanish conqueror of Ireland. The ‘Saxon British’ who see their living standards cut by immigrants, are pictured as barely holding-down their ‘Berserkir rage.’ The image, from Nordic mythology, is apt, for the tongue-tied Saxons become (to those conversant with the myth) transmuted into Vikings, biting on their shields to infuse their anger through every fibre of their being. Biblical imagery soon follows: the ‘strong have eaten sour grapes, and the teeth of the weak are set on edge.’ Then, in the next paragraph, we are into classical mythology, as a way of expressing the deficiencies of statistical science, with its ‘Danaiades reticulations.’ (The reference is to the daughters of Danaus, who murdered their husbands on their wedding-night and were doomed eternally to fill sieves – ‘reticulations’ – with water.) The demon of Mechanism is likened to Proteus, industrial pollution to ‘a murky-simmering Tophet,’ and the whole hellish outcome to ‘Dante’s *Inferno*.’ And all this in eight pages!

What can Mrs Gaskell offer compared with this? What, indeed, can fiction do? We have already seen Carlyle’s contemptuous reference to ‘the lowest of froth prose in the Fashionable Novel.’ A word of caution is needed. If Carlyle had his doubts about fiction, it was not because it occupied an imaginative sphere. What could be more imaginative than his own style? The offence, if it was there, was lack of serious purpose, in the writer and the reader. And if the purpose was right, could it ensue in right doing? That was the question. Gaskell was standing on sure ground. *Mary Barton* was not an effusion of the Minerva Press.

The best way to distinguish between Carlyle’s and Gaskell’s handling of their material is to focus on the word ‘dumb’. Both use it of the downtrodden, but there is, I believe, a significant difference. For Carlyle, ‘dumb’ means ‘without a voice’. Hence, in *Chartism*, if he wishes to convey what the misgoverned multitudes are seeking, he resorts to what Gillian Beer calls, ‘a biblical language which is non-mimetic.’ (Beer, 247. Her direct reference is to *Past and Present*, but the same applies to *Chartism*). It is still worth recalling, however, the language of the first Chartist petition, quoted earlier, which is clearly suffused in the phraseology and cadences of

the Authorised Version: the book above all most likely to be found in the homes of the humble. As a minister's wife, actively working for the District Provident Society and for the Sunday schools, Elizabeth Gaskell knew this at the first hand. For her, the poorer classes are 'dumb' in the sense of being unheard: just as John Barton and his fellow Chartist delegates were unheard when they went to Westminster. Through her fictional dialogues, and personal narratives, Gaskell could give the voices of the poor a hearing.

Mary Barton is richly textured with the speech of Manchester working people. Their words are in dialect, not for 'quaintness' or comic effect, but for greater authenticity. At the publisher's suggestion, Mrs Gaskell's husband, the Rev. William Gaskell, provided occasional footnotes. These can be of two kinds: straight glossaries, so that, for instance, we are told that 'gloppened' means 'amazed or frightened'; and brief etymologies, so that 'again it' is explained to mean 'against it' and traced back to Wycliffe. The latter entries can sometimes seem overly didactic, but their purpose was to show the ancestral roots of popular speech, back through the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer to Chaucer and Anglo-Saxon. The working-class characters are thus dignified in their diction, just as they are humanized and individualized in their discourse. As Gillian Beer somewhat acidly remarks 'Mrs Gaskell has one great resource that Carlyle never has. She listens to other people talking.' (Beer, 250). We have the homely reminiscences of Old Alice, with her rural roots; the more pedagogical interventions of Job Legh, naturalist and autodidact; and the folk songs of his grand-daughter Margaret. Only one character can be quoted here, and it must be John Barton. The novel opens with a family walk in Green Heys Fields on an early evening in May. This seeming idyll suddenly becomes something more troubling, when John Barton is prodded by his friend George Wilson's observation that he, Barton, 'could never abide the gentlefolk.'

'And what good have they ever done me that I should like them?' asked Barton, the latent fire lighting up his eye : and bursting forth he continued, 'If I am sick do they come and nurse me? If my child lies dying... does the rich man bring the wine or broth that might save his life? If I am out of work for weeks in the bad time, and winter comes, with black frost, and keen east wind, and there is no coal for the grate, and no clothes for the bed, and the thin bones are seen through the ragged clothes, does the rich man share his plenty with me, as he ought to do, if his religion wasn't a humbug? ...No, I tell you, it's the poor, and the poor only, as does such things for the poor. Don't think to come over me with th'old tale that the rich know nothing of the trials of the poor; I say, if they don't know, they ought to know. We're their slaves as long as we can work; we pile up their fortunes with the sweat of our brows, and yet we are to live as separate as if we were in two worlds; ay, as separate

as Dives and Lazarus, with a great gulf betwixt us: but I know who was best off then,' and he wound up his speech with a low chuckle that had no mirth in it. (*Mary Barton*, 10-11).

By her reference to Dives and Lazarus, as Terence Wright maintains, Gaskell 'lifts the "problem" out of the realm of Political Economy and makes it a moral outrage of timeless and religious dimensions.' (Wright, 22). Barton's remark about ragged clothes takes us quickly through to Chapter 16, 'Meeting between Masters and Workmen.' Gaskell describes the trades' union delegates:

Had they been larger-boned men, you would have called them gaunt; as it was, they were little of stature, and their fustian clothes hung loosely upon their shrunken limbs. In choosing their delegates, too, the operatives had more regard to their brains, and power of speech, than to their wardrobes; they might have read the opinions of that worthy Professor Teufelsdreck (sic), in 'Sartor Resartus', to judge from the dilapidated coats and trousers, which yet clothed men of parts and power.

As Angus Easson rightly remarks, it was the mocking misjudgement of Henry Carson about these ill-clad delegates that would cost him his life. (Easson, 4-5)

Lack of communication, lack of respect: not *listening* : that is a running theme of *Mary Barton*. After John Barton gives his account of his visit to London as a Chartist delegate, he adds, 'I'll not speak of it no more.' (*Mary Barton*, 102). Jane Spencer perceptively observes that, 'Silence is the great danger in the novel, always the prelude to violence, and throughout the novel Gaskell is warning her middle-class readership that if they will not listen to the workers there will be a dangerous silence.' (Spencer, 5). This brings us back to Thomas Carlyle and *Chartism*: 'For, as is well said, all battle is misunderstanding; did the parties know one another, the battle must cease.' (*Chartism*, 169).

What then, did Carlyle make of *Mary Barton*? I end with his oft-quoted letter to Mrs Gaskell, via her publisher, on 8 November 1848. They had never met, and Carlyle addresses her as a stranger, although it was possible that mutual acquaintances in London might have given him a clue as the identity of the anonymous author.

Dear *Madam* (for I catch the treble of that fine melodious voice very well), - We have read your book here, my Wife first and then I; both of us with real pleasure. A beautiful, cheerfully pious, social, clear and observant character is everywhere recognisable in the writer...: the result is a Book deserving to take its place far above the ordinary garbage of Novels... I gratefully accept it as a real contribution (almost the first real one) towards developing a huge subject,

which has lain *dumb* too long...

May you live long to write good Books – and to do silently good actions, which I believe is very much more indispensable! (CL 23:154-5).

Doing good by silence? It is time I took Carlyle's advice.

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Appendix

Summary of Carlyle's CHARTISM

CHAP. I CONDITION-OF-ENGLAND QUESTION

Condition and disposition of the Working-Classes: 'the living-essence of Chartism has not been put down.' Symptoms: torch-meetings, riots, 'Glasgow Thuggery.' Reformed parliament is neglecting the problem. Radical MPs are failing to speak for 'that great dumb toiling class which cannot speak.'

CHAP. II STATISTICS Inadequate in present state. Won't answer the big questions. 'What constitutes the well-being of a man?'

CHAP. III NEW POOR-LAW

Offered as a sole recipe for the woes of England, which it cannot be; but it is an improvement on the Old Poor Law. 'He that will not work according to his faculty, let him perish according to his necessity: there is no law juster than that.' Supervision by the central government provides the opportunity for a truer vision. 'Let us welcome the New Poor-Law as the harsh beginning of much, the harsh ending of much!'

CHAP. IV FINEST PEASANTRY IN THE WORLD Irish immigrants take work at the lowest rates, dragging down or driving out 'the Saxon native.' The English are thus paying the price for their 'long centuries of injustice to our neighbour Island.'

CHAP. V RIGHTS AND MIGHTS

'It is not what a man outwardly has or wants that constitutes the happiness or misery of him... The real smart is the soul's pain and stigma, the hurt inflicted on the moral self.' What really constitutes the strong man? 'The wise man... who has insight into what is what... who is fit to administer, to direct... he is the strong man.'

CHAP. VI LAISSEZ-FAIRE

Thus far and no further. Now is the time for guidance and governance. 'Democracy is, by the nature of it, a self-cancelling business; and gives in the long-run a net result of zero.' Hence 'we must find a real Aristocracy.' The old feudal aristocracy did once serve a purpose. 'For, in one word, *Cash Payment* had not then grown to be the universal sole nexus of man to man.'

CHAP. VII NOT LAISSEZ-FAIRE

It 'ought partly to endeavour to cease', or there will be social convulsion.

CHAP. VIII NEW ERAS Sauerteig's potted history of England. Manchester.

CHAP. IX PARLIAMENTARY RADICALISM Has, since 1832, failed in its

true role. 'The expectant millions have sat at a feast of the Barmecide.'

CHAP.X IMPOSSIBLE

'Paralytic Radicalism' takes hopeless refuge in 'time and general laws.' Two great things can be done: 'universal Education' and 'general Emigration.'

Chartism's Reception: Carlyle's Politics

Maurice Milne

Only last week I finished an astonishing piece of work, a long review article, thick pamphlet or little volume, entitled "Chartism". Lockhart has it, for it was partly promised to him, at least the refusal of it was; and that, I conjecture, will be all he enjoy of it. Such an Article, equally astonishing to Girondin Radicals, Donothing Aristocrat Conservatives, and Unbelieving Dilettante Whigs, can hope for no harbour in any Review. Lockhart refusing it, I mean to print it at my own expence... (CL11:218)

Thus Carlyle heralded his impending publication, writing to John Sterling on 25 November 1839. He was right in predicting that it would create a stir across the political spectrum, but unduly pessimistic about the likely trouble and expense in reaching the reading public. True, Lockhart did return the article, reluctantly, but John Stuart Mill would gladly have published it in the *London and Westminster Review*. Carlyle preferred, however, not to entrust to an ailing journal the product of his many years of anxious reflection about popular distress and discontents. Fraser, of *Fraser's Magazine*, was happy to sustain the printing and publishing costs, in return for half the profits. He brought out *Chartism* as a free-standing booklet, on 28 December, priced at five shillings. The first edition of 1,000 copies quickly sold out. A second edition appeared in April 1840.

Carlyle's *Chartism* did indeed attract plenty of notice at the time, and some of its key phrases entered the language: the 'Condition of England', the 'cash-nexus', the Irish 'sanspotato.' The opening passage, in particular, ('Chartism means the bitter discontent grown fierce and mad...'), was to go on to be quoted in countless historical studies of nineteenth-century England. All of this makes it rather surprising that *Chartism* has not attracted more attention in Carlylean studies, where literary, philosophical and biographical concerns seem to be uppermost. John Lamb has remarked on the 'overall critical neglect' that *Chartism* has received (145). If we turn to the relevant volume in the *Critical Heritage* series, we can see that he has a point. Jules Paul Seigel includes only one review of *Chartism*, under that heading, from *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*. He does, however, include in the preceding section William Sewell's review in the *Quarterly*, which bears significantly upon *Chartism*. Kirsty Ferguson offered a useful supplement in the very first *Carlyle Newsletter* (March 1979), quoting from the views of the *Glasgow Argus* and three American periodicals: the *Cincinnati Western Messenger*, the *Boston Quarterly Review* and the *Boston Christian Examiner*. As ever, the editorial notes to the great Duke-Edinburgh

Collected Letters project are a valuable resource. They print brief extracts from contemporary newspapers, to amplify remarks in Carlyle's correspondence. This disparate coverage, however, does not seem commensurate with the weight of what Carlyle had to say and the strength of the reactions he aroused.

The present exercise is intended to be a reasonably thoroughgoing attempt to fill the gap. The approach is not that of the *Critical Heritage*, however. Rather than assemble a set of filleted reviews with brief introductions, I have tried to identify various themes from *Chartism*, both of style and of substance, and to range around the critiques in developing an analysis. Even so, it might be helpful to begin by identifying some of the principal reviews, leaving the rest to be mentioned when appropriate.

Six substantial critiques form the backbone of what follows:

* The *British and Foreign Review*; or *European Quarterly Journal* provided two reviews, one in September 1840, the other in September 1841. The former was by Bonamy Price, the latter by George Stovin Venables. (The editor was John M. Kemble, a distinguished Anglo-Saxon scholar.) Price was an economist, then serving as a master at Rugby School, under Thomas Arnold. He was later elected to the Drummond Professorship of Political Economy at Oxford. Venables was a barrister and a regular contributor to the higher journalism. Carlyle was acquainted with him as an active member of the committee for establishing the London Library. Venables was a friend of Tennyson, and a member of the Ashburton circle. His review of *Chartism* can be commended as the most intellectually rewarding of all the pieces listed here.

* *The Quarterly Review* was edited by J.G. Lockhart, where the original essay might just possibly have appeared. The review, by the Rev. William Sewell, was published in September 1840. Sewell was fellow of Exeter College, Oxford, an authority on Plato, and an ardent High Churchman, although deploring the drift to Rome. During an early stage of his negotiations with Lockhart, Carlyle observed: 'There are writers in your Review with whom I have deep sympathy; a Revd Mr Sewell in particular...' He added that he cordially agreed with Sewell's analysis, but not with his conclusions (20 May, 1839. *CL*11: 104). Sewell was to reciprocate in his review.

* *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* reviewed *Chartism* in February 1840. Jules Paul Seigel, in his *Critical Heritage* edition, describes *Tait's* as 'a magazine less expensive than some' – selling for a shilling – and adopting a similar Radical standpoint to the *Westminster Review*.

* *The Athenaeum*, a weekly *Journal of Literature, Science and the Fine Arts*, led with its review of *Chartism* on 11 January 1840. Like the *Globe* newspaper, it was owned by Col. Robert Torrens, who felt increasing impatience with the loss of reforming momentum by Melbourne's Whig government.

* *The Spectator*, founded in 1828 and inclining towards philosophical radicalism, discussed *Chartism*, on 4 and 11 Jan 1840, first in its 'Topics of the day', where it quoted extended passages, and then, a week later, defended Carlyle against some of his critics.

Carlyle's general diagnosis – his sense that the outward manifestations of Chartism were symptoms of a deeper malaise – was broadly welcomed. At the very least he had provided the political classes with a stimulus to thought. This basic level of approval can be found across a wide range of periodicals, from daily newspapers to quarterly reviews, including the *Globe*, the *Athenaeum*, *Tait's* and the *Quarterly*. Bonamy Price, in the *British and Foreign*, endorsed Carlyle's approach more warmly than most:

The inquiry into the sources of mischief is twofold. They are either physical, or moral and religious. Mr. Carlyle's book enumerates some of the first class only; but he treats them in such a way as to leave a very strong impression on his reader, that the latter class contains the most powerful, and the really true agents of evil. There is perhaps no book which places so vividly before the eye the internal character of the malady. (5)

Likewise the *Spectator* commended Carlyle's diagnosis,

which institutes such a searching, unsparing investigation into the question of popular rights, unmasking with such ease some of the most flourishing lies of the time, practical and logical, and contains so many deep-sighted observations on the general course of politics. (4 Jan. 1840)

The *Morning Chronicle*, however, was less impressed. It was stung by Carlyle's strictures on the shortcomings of the Whig government, and so was more ready to point out his own weaknesses of argument. Yes, it rather grudgingly conceded, his 'eloquent admonitions' should receive due attention, 'where such admonitions are most needed': that would be the chief value of 'this curious work', a work of which the defects were 'not less remarkable than its tone of pretension'. In particular, what became the pamphlet's famous and much-quoted opening, was dismissed by the *Chronicle* as 'much too sweeping.' Where Carlyle depicted Chartism as the outcome of 'the wrong condition... or the wrong disposition, of the Working Classes of

England,' the Chronicle saw it as 'a political fanaticism by which the great majority of the working classes is untouched.' It pointed out that skilled workmen, organised in their trade unions, avoided active involvement with Chartism. Nor were the people crying out 'Guide me, govern me' as Carlyle claimed. In the Chronicle's sardonic judgement,

The true philosophy of Chartism is not in the mine of German mysticism, although many things both rich and rare may lurk in its abysses. (3 Jan. 1840)

Heeding the *Chronicle's* advice to keep out of 'the mine of German mysticism', we turn instead to the mind of a trainee German textile manufacturer: the young Friedrich Engels, sent by his father from the Rhineland to Lancashire to learn Manchester business methods. Instead, the wayward son busied himself with pioneering and polemical social investigation. His influential tract, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, was published, in German, in 1845. It contains numerous references to Carlyle's *Chartism*, some agreeing, others not. On the present contested topic of whether or not Carlyle correctly perceived what was wrong with the troubled working classes, Engels provided a partial endorsement:

Carlyle is perfectly right as to the facts and wrong only in censuring the wild rage of the workers against the higher classes. This rage, this passion, is rather the proof that the workers feel the inhumanity of their position, that they refuse to be degraded to the level of brutes... (145)

Carlyle actually said very much the same, and not in a censorious way, although certainly in a tone of lamentation:

It is the feeling of injustice that is insupportable to all men... No man can bear it, or ought to bear it... It is not the outward pain of injustice... The real smart is the soul's pain and stigma, the hurt inflicted on the moral self. (Chartism, 188)

That is the message which came most powerfully across to his readers, some of whom were moved to write literary works of their own, engaging with the sundered class relations of the 1840s. Two notable examples were Benjamin Disraeli's *Sybil* (1845), with its famous identification of the 'two nations', and Charles Kingsley's *Alton Locke. Tailor and Poet* (1849). This tailor was 're-tailored' as a Chartist, under the influence of his more militant friend, Crossthwaite. After attending his first Chartist meeting, Alton Locke wonders where the speakers acquired such eloquence. Crossthwaite replies:

From the God who knows nothing about ranks. They're the unknown great – the unaccredited heroes, as Master Thomas Carlyle would say – whom the

flunkeys aloft have not acknowledged yet – though they'll be forced to, some day, with a vengeance.

While Crossthwaite thus interprets Carlyle in a militant way, Alton Locke comes to learn that Chartism is not the answer, and preaches a different, although still Carlyean message:

'If we had but the Charter' – was the excuse for a thousand lazinesses, procrastinations. 'If we had but the Charter' – I should be good, and free, and happy. Fool that I was! It was within, rather than without that I needed reform...

For my part, I seem to have learnt that the only thing to regenerate the world is not more of any system, good or bad, but simply more of the Spirit of God. About the supposed omnipotence of the Charter, I have found out my mistake. I believe no more in 'Morison's-Pill-remedies', as Thomas Carlyle calls them. (Ch.10)

The last reference is, of course, to *Past and Present* (1843). In both works Carlyle preferred to focus on a diagnosis of the deeper ills of society, rather than to come up with specific reform proposals. Yet his readers patently wanted to know – and Carlyle felt obliged to say – what was to *done* about 'the Condition of England'. In a moment we will turn to specific chapters in *Chartism* to see how they were received. First, however, keeping to generalities, I want to switch the focus from content to style.

Then as now, Carlyle's unique style aroused widely differing reactions. Bonamy Price, in the *British and Foreign*, was the most admiring, observing that,

...the power of painting, the vividness with which each separate element is worked up into the general picture, the brilliancy of colouring, and the force with which the whole view is made to strike the imagination, are exactly such as we have been accustomed to admire in Mr. Carlyle's writings. (2)

Price's colleague at the *British and Foreign*, however, G.S. Venables, gave a more nuanced, and critically acute, verdict. Opening with some general remarks on Carlyle's mind and style, not tied exclusively to *Chartism*, Venables made a perceptive contrast between Carlyle's subversive language and authoritarian politics. Carlyle adopts phraseology displaying 'undisguised contempt' for the forms and traditions of the British Constitution, for instance dubbing parliament the 'National Palaver.' But when it comes to direct attempts at revolution or constitutional change, 'Mr Carlyle might almost be a Tory.' (305-6). Also, the 'mannerism' of Carlyle's style, applying one contrived mode of expression to a variety of subjects where different modes

would be suited, carries the twin dangers of predictability and formulaic utterance:

...No more forcible objection can be applied to the case of so earnest a preacher of sincerity, than that the effect of eccentric language is to substitute shams for reality. (332)

William Weir of the *Glasgow Argus* was alive to the charge of ‘mannerism’, but dealt with it more sympathetically:

We are not presuming to find fault with this philosophic writer for his peculiar style and mannerism. They are obviously necessary to him as exponents of his ideas... The involution is in the mind, and there must be a warp in the utterance. (Qtd. Ferguson, 4)

William Sewell, in the *Quarterly*, who was familiar with a wide range of Carlyle’s writings, claimed to see unwelcome tendencies. Carlyle, he thought, wrote well in his life of Schiller and his essay on Boswell, but in *Sartor Resartus* and *Chartism* ‘he runs wild in distortions and extravagancies’ (453). The *Athenaeum* was even more censorious, asserting that,

...nothing surely but affectation can induce such a writer as Mr. Carlyle to go out of his way in search of crudities and quaintnesses, which obscure his thoughts, and grate upon the ear, rendering it scarcely possible to read his essay aloud, so as to be intelligible. (27)

The critique that most backfired upon its author occurred in *Tait’s Magazine*, where an extended metaphor about Carlyle shed more obfuscation than light:

It seems his philanthropic purpose to suspend a few filaments of truth over the fermenting chaotic mass, around which its weltering elements may take form, order, and lucidity; but although the presence of these slender filaments cannot altogether miss the intended effect, they are not always immediately perceptible to ordinary optics. (115)

Across the Atlantic, American periodicals put it more simply:

It requires... patience and industry to break through his crust... (*Western Messenger*, Cincinnati)

He wants clearness and precision, and that too when writing on topics where clearness and precision are all but indispensable... (*Boston Quarterly Review*)

A merry-andrew dancing on a coffin does not offer a more shocking incongruity... Self and the wondering gaze he shall draw from an astonished public, appear to be ever the chief matters in hand with him... As for the Chartists themselves, they might as well essay Chinese. (*Christian Examiner*, Boston) (All qtd. Ferguson, 5-9).

Carlyle's perception of a deeper malaise beneath Chartism, then, drew widespread approval, although his mode of expressing it evoked a more mixed response. When it came to indicating what was to be done, the scales of criticism tipped towards disappointment and disagreement, with some sympathetic exceptions. Following Carlyle, we will start with the general message, before coming down to specifics. In any case, his preferred role was that of a prophet, rather than a prescriber of policies. G.S. Venables of the *British and Foreign* at least recognised this, and judged the Chartism pamphlet accordingly:

It will not, by itself, teach us how to get rid of Chartism, but it may infuse into many men a spirit which may eventually work out the means of improvement...(313)

Sewell, in the *Quarterly*, was less charitable:

He fails precisely in the same point as in his other speculations: he states the danger, but prescribes no remedy, or a remedy so poor and superficial that we wonder a man of such talent should have thought it worthwhile to propound it. (461)

Sewell was being unfair. Carlyle offered remedies both general and specific, and they were worthy of being taken seriously, even if not commanding agreement. Thus his advocacy of a greater engagement by the propertied and employing classes on behalf of their employees and those seeking work, rather than resorting to franchise extension, did make sense in terms of the deep social inequalities of the period. The counter-argument to this paternalistic view was well put by the *Athenaeum*:

Exclusive aristocracies will always govern for exclusive interests... Vicarious government has been tried for six thousand years, and found wanting... (We must find a way which will) eventually give labour its full legitimate influence on the legislature, without passing through preparatory anarchy. (29)

The *Examiner*, which supported the Whig government, argued that Carlyle's lamentations simply diverted attention from concrete policies:

Beware how you talk to a certain sort of men of the Corn Laws, Ballot, improvement of the Suffrage, Reform of the Law, Emigration and such topics, they will look at you with supreme pity for your imperfect views, shake their heads, and the lank locks pendant from them, and with a smile of mingled compassion and contempt, tell you that there is but one question of questions, THE CONDITION OF ENGLAND QUESTION. (9 Feb. 1840, qtd CL:12, 44-45 ed. note)

The *Examiner's* sneer can swiftly be refuted by turning to the final section of Carlyle's pamphlet and his two main policy proposals: education and emigration. Rather harder to refute is the widespread complaint that these remedies were commonplace and anticlimatic. *The Morning Chronicle* made the point concisely:

In his two remedial propositions, of education and emigration, he is behind rather than before the progress of public discussion, and the endeavours of public exertion. (3 Jan. 1840)

The *Athenaeum* adopted a more derisive tone, contrasting the 'pomp and circumstance' of *Chartism's* opening with the conventional nostrums in the conclusion:

...the very crambe repetita of pamphlets, journals and parliamentary speeches... On arriving at the end of such a volume it is impossible not to exclaim - "In the name of the prophet - figs." (27)

The *Edinburgh Review* thought Carlyle's recommendations were made 'very much in the tone of a man forced to *say something*,' and it dismissed the adoption of an emigration *policy* as 'the merest of all delusions.'

As for education,

...doubtless in its ultimate effects, a lightener of many of the evils which afflict humanity; but even were it attainable, which our wretched jealousies place out of the question, still of very indirect and distant influence upon this particular disorder... (417)

The *Edinburgh's* remark about 'wretched jealousies' provides a peg upon which to hang a modest defence of Carlyle's policy proposals. Taking education first, he was well aware of contemporary debates and of the central place of the 'religious difficulty' in those debates. His contribution was to try to shift the focus away from the vexed question of *how* religion was to be taught - and, as he observed, who might have a sufficiently sound sense of religion to be able to teach it. Instead, let us at least make a start with the basics.

But now, in the mean time, could not, by some fit official person, some fit announcement be made, in words well-weighed, in plan well-schemed, adequately representing the facts of the thing, that after thirteen centuries of waiting, he the official person, and England with him, was minded now to have the mystery of the Alphabetic Letters imparted to all human souls in this realm? Teaching of religion was a thing he could not undertake to settle this day; it would be work for a day after this; the work of this day was teaching of the alphabet to all people. (*Chartism*, 232)

That it took another thirty years for a 'fit official person' to transact this (inclusive of a basic religious provision) in W.E. Forster's 1870 Education Act, suggests that Carlyle's intervention merited endorsement rather than scorn.

Carlyle's other main policy-proposal, for government to encourage and organise emigration, also merited more respectful attention than it received in contemporary reviews. Subsequent scholarship has begun to redress the balance. C.C. Eldridge, the leading authority on ideas about the empire in nineteenth-century Britain, subtitles his book on *The Imperial Experience*, 'From Carlyle to Forster.' Also John Lamb has written about Carlyle's "'genealogic mythus" of imperial conquest' (137). To explain this renewed interest, take for example the penultimate page of *Chartism*, where Carlyle counterposes against Malthusians and neo-Malthusians,

...a world where Canadian Forests stand unfelled, boundless Plains and Prairies unbroken with the plough; on the west and on the east green desert spaces never yet made white with corn; and to the overcrowded little western nook of Europe, our Terrestrial Planet, nine-tenths of it yet vacant or tenanted by nomads, is still crying, Come and till me, come and reap me! (*Chartism*, 237)

Social commentators before Carlyle had already urged emigration as a means of alleviating distress, but there is an imperial vision here which transcends the usual discourse. Contemporary debates revolved around whether the colonies were worth the trouble of defending and administering them. Would not our comparative economic advantage, as the first industrial nation, be sufficient to ensure a large share of the colonial trade without sustaining the costs of ownership? Carlyle's ringing peroration foreshadowed the rhetoric of high Victorian imperialism. His basic proposition did at least receive cautious support from G.S. Venables in the *British and Foreign*. Yes, colonial emigration would ultimately lead to new markets and granaries overseas, redounding to the benefit of the home country, but this would take time. The multitude demanded relief now, and policies with speedier

effect (325). William Sewell in the *Quarterly* took a distinctly more jaundiced view, exclaiming that

America is groaning beneath the discharge of the drains which we have opened on her coast – that Australia! – but we must not touch on such a subject...(496)

G.S. Venables was not hopeful of ‘any great and sudden organic improvement’, but neither did he think that Britain’s national institutions were ‘effete or impotent.’ He trusted that, over time, improvement would come from ‘the instruments which are at present in operation.’ The best way out of the current distress would be ‘found, if at all, in the despised and calumniated resources of political economy’ (322-5). Carlyle’s contempt for the ‘dismal science’ is well known, but we need to distinguish between his hatred of a doctrinaire fixation with *laissez-faire* theory and his agreement with specific *laissez-faire* measures, such as the repeal of the Corn Laws. He devoted chapters six and seven of *Chartism* to berating the shortcomings of *laissez-faire*. One quotation will suffice:

That *Laissez-faire* has as good as done its part in a great many provinces; that in the province of the Working-Classes, *Laissez-faire* having passed its New Poor Law, has reached the suicidal point, and now, as *felo-de-se*, lies dying there, in torchlight meetings and such-like; that, in brief, a government of the underclasses by the upper on a principle of *Let-alone* is no longer possible in England in these days. This is the one inference inclusive of all. (*Chartism*, 197)

Thomas Arnold, writing to James Marshall on 23 January 1840, expressed his agreement, in more restrained language:

I agree with Carlyle, in thinking that they (the Liberals) greatly over-estimate Bentham and also that they over-rate the Political Economists generally; not that I doubt the ability of those writers, or the truth of their conclusions, as far as regards their own science, - but I think that the summum bonum of their science, and of human life, are not identical. (Stanley, 372-3)

Harriet Martineau, predictably, was less impressed. Writing to Fanny Wedgwood on 17 January 1840, she observed:

‘Chartism’ gave me more pleasure and less pain than I expected in the reading: but the more I think it over the worse it looks. There is a fine sympathy with many at bottom; but it is stuck all thro’ with prejudices and bits of injustice, as thick as tipsy cake with almonds; and the excessive conceits, connected with want of knowledge, will do him harm. (Qtd. *CL12*: 24-25, ed.n.)

The *Athenaeum* found parts of Carlyle's chapters on *laissez-faire* acceptable, notably his strictures on the selfishness of the aristocracy, but as for *laissez-faire* itself, the problem was that it had not gone far enough! Britain still had the Corn Laws, protective duties, colonial protection, and the rest (29). Carlyle detested the Corn Laws, but did not think them worth a special chapter in *Chartism*. When Thomas Ballantyne, an anti-Corn Law campaigner, apparently queried this, Carlyle replied on 24 January 1840, giving two main reasons. First, the campaign seemed more of a middle class one, the capitalists versus the landed interest; and second, it already had its own powerful voice, while the great cause preoccupying Carlyle 'continues dumb, able to express itself only in groans and convulsions, and does need a spokesman' (CL12: 23). It was the seeming indifference of Whig politicians and reviewers to the sufferings of the poor that made Carlyle reserve his special venom for them rather than for the Tory *Quarterly*. Writing again to Thomas Ballantyne, on 8 October 1840, he observed:

My reviewer in the *Edinburgh* seemed to me of a much more detestable school than these poor Quarterlies. He writes down this doctrine, That "hunger" is perennial, irremediable among the lower classes of men, here, everywhere and at all times... It struck me I had never seen in writing so entirely damnable a statement; though it is what all manner of Whigs and Benthamite Radicals, and other Atheistic men (as our Pusey friends would call them) do constantly act upon without writing it. (CL12: 282)

John Stuart Mill thought that Carlyle was over-reacting to Merivale's article (ibid. n.2), which leads us into the final question to be considered in this paper: What were Carlyle's *political* affiliations perceived to be, by his reviewers and himself, at this stage of his life? Perhaps it is a pointless exercise, to try and pin a political label upon Carlyle. Certainly the *Spectator*, defending him against the charge of playing the Tories' game by attacking the Whigs, maintained that it was Carlyle's independence of party allegiances that gave such force to his pamphlet. The *Globe* made the same point, having first looked into Chartism after seeing other commentators' remarks on Carlyle's assault on Whigs and Radicals:

We have found, however, on turning to the pamphlet itself, considerable impartiality in Mr Carlyle's sarcasms on *all* parties. We suspect our contemporaries are not so familiar with the *esprit desapprobateur*, as Montesquieu might have called it, which pervades Mr Carlyle's writings, towards most existing men and things – including of course, ministries, whether Tory or Liberal. (13 Jan. 1840)

Arguably it was because the Whigs were in government that they incurred some of Carlyle's harshest strictures. Even so, there were other reasons for wondering whether Carlyle had aligned himself with the Tories. Fraser, his publisher, was on the Tory side, although the political writers in his magazine were too maverick to follow any party line. The *Athenaeum*, responding to Carlyle's complaint that other social reforms had not followed the New Poor Law, pointed out that its full implementation had been blocked 'very mainly by the party to which Mr Carlyle himself is believed to belong.' (11 Jan.1840). Likewise the *Morning Chronicle* depicted Toryism as impeding working-class relief: 'If the philosopher wants to serve his country, let him analyse this monster's power, and do battle with it.' (3 Jan. 1840). *Tait's Magazine*, after first offering 'philosophical radical' as the best label, then explored hybrid variants of Toryism as an indicator of Carlyle's position. Was he perhaps a 'Tory-Radical', or promulgating a new kind of 'Utopian Toryism'? *Tait's* then offered a third variant: 'It is a kind of heroic Toryism, or intellectual and philosophic Feudalism established in the social body, and derived directly from the gods...' (Qtd. Seigel,165) The bantering tone of this discussion detracts from attaching too much weight to it, but, written three years before *Past and Present*, it perhaps attains a prescient quality.

Carlyle was aware of the speculation, and seemed to give some credence to it in his letter to Ralph Waldo Emerson on 17 January 1840:

...the people accuse me not of being an incendiary and speculative sansculotte threatening to become practical, but of being a Tory. – thank Heaven. (CL 12: 15)

The 'thank Heaven' has to be taken ironically when we counterpose two letters from Carlyle to his mother, on 23 January and 11 February 1840:

Considerable reviewing of *Chartism* still goes on; but very *daft* reviewing. They approve generally... but regret that I am – a Tory! Stranger Tory, in my opinion, has not been fallen in with in these latter generations. (CL 12: 21)

The people are beginning to discover (wise men as they are!) that I am not a "Tory," ah no; but one of the deepest tho' perhaps the quietest of all the radicals now extant in the world; a thing productive of small comfort to several persons! (CL 12: 40)

Taking Carlyle at his word, then, can we call him a 'radical'? John Stuart Mill, as we have seen, would have been happy to publish the *Chartism essay* in the *Westminster Review*, the chief organ of the philosophic radicals. Indeed Carlyle recalled in his

Reminiscences once having felt inclined to accept the editorship, had it been offered to him – which it was not (vol.2, 186). Friedrich Engels brought another perspective. After a bleak assessment of the English bourgeoisie, Engels added a footnote indicating some ‘honourable exceptions,’ namely some pro-Chartist radicals such as Fielden of Todmorden, the ‘Young England’ group, and lastly Carlyle:

Wholly isolated is the half-German Englishman, Thomas Carlyle, who, originally a Tory, goes beyond all those hitherto mentioned. He has sounded the social disorder more deeply than any other English bourgeois, and demands the organization of labour. (289,n.)

Tait's Magazine, however, rightly observed that, in some respects, Carlyle was ***...scarce a half Radical. He seems to repudiate self-government; and he proposes none other, save what is conveyed in those dark hints about the human demigods, who, in the coming golden age, are to direct all earthly affairs, and who might educate, plant colonies, and direct the energies of the masses. Popular election, representative government, he appears to consider comparatively worthless, as remedies for the social and moral ills that afflict the country...(Qtd. Seigel,166)***

Building on the perceptions of Engels and *Tait's*, the soundest verdict would be that Carlyle was an administrative radical, but not a *political* one. If political radicalism was not *about* the extension of the suffrage, with the attendant safeguard of the secret ballot, it is hard to see what it was about. Having heard so much about Chartism in this paper – the movement and the pamphlet – it seems fitting to leave the final words to two Chartists. George Julian Harney – sometimes known as ‘the English Marat’ – was assistant editor, and later editor, of the *Northern Star*, the largest-selling Chartist newspaper. He characterised Carlyle as, ‘that sword-worshipper, one half great man and one half a humbug.’ (Schoyen, 126). Harney went on to found his own periodical, after the rejection of the third Chartist petition in 1848. The *Democratic Review* contained, appropriately, a pair of articles on ‘Democracy,’ in April and May 1850. They were written by a female Chartist – a Scotswoman, indeed – Helen MacFarlane. Her first article paid particular attention to the ideas of Carlyle, ideas, of course, which had by then moved to the more authoritarian and anti-democratic standpoint of the *Latter-Day Pamphlets*. Even so, her main point would still have been applicable ten years earlier. Yes, Carlyle was right to urge government ‘by the best and noblest,’ but men could not be *coerced* into following such leaders: they had to be persuaded. Governors, to be successful, must be in tune with the spirit of their age, and democracy is ‘the Idea of the 19th century’ (425).

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Dr John Aitken Carlyle: Travelling Physician

Malcolm Ingram

Introduction

Dr John Carlyle is a prominent figure in most volumes of the Collected Letters. Much of what we know about him comes from this source and is unflattering, for he often irritated Thomas and Jane: by doing well financially while not subscribing wholeheartedly to the Carlylean work ethic; by being dilatory, indecisive and mean; and even by having squeaky shoes. In her later years Jane called him ‘an insufferable bore,’ and Sterling once described him, to her delight, as ‘an accursed vegetable...not a man at all, but a Walking Cabbage.’ But Froude, who knew him well, thought that John would have been distinguished in his own right had he not been overshadowed by his brother; and in John’s entry in the Dictionary of National Biography Francis Espinasse described him as of ‘good, affectionate, manly character and fine talents.’ Although some of his letters are quoted in the Collected Letters, most, with his journal, lie unpublished in the National Library of Scotland (1). They furnish new information about him, especially about the decade he spent on the Continent, mostly in Italy. Perhaps we have been viewing Dr Carlyle through the eyes and pens of Thomas and Jane for too long. This long period yields a different view of him as man and doctor, and casts light on the role of the Travelling Physician, little documented, despite much historical research on the Grand Tour (Black, 1992, 2003).

Finding employment

His medical education was at Edinburgh, funded by Thomas. He then studied in Munich and Vienna for a year. By 1831, when he was thirty, he was well qualified, but lack of capital made it difficult for him to acquire a practice, and he had notions of becoming a writer, even of tackling a History of Medicine, much to the disgust of Thomas, struggling to make a living by his pen. John was in London, seriously short of money, and his brother had already spent some £240 on his education. He had few patients, mostly friends, but attended Hazlitt on his deathbed, and was commissioned by Jeffrey to help him out financially (JAC-TC,14.3.31). He had no regular medical work, made little effort to find it, and told his brother that he had no desire to acquire a practice. He published a few medical articles in Fraser’s Magazine and the Foreign Review, and sent the modest fees to Thomas, only to quickly borrow them back. Thomas visited London in August. He reported on John to their brother Alex on the 18th: ‘His worst fault, indeed almost only one, is procrastination....he needs to be stirred up...as long as I am here he can look for little rest.’(TC-AC,18. 8. 31). Thomas lobbied his friends and contacts, and asked Lord Jeffrey to interview him and assist the process of stirring John up. Jeffrey obliged, then offered to help John

in any way he could, even financially, and suggested that if he could no find work in a practice he could perhaps become a travelling physician. Soon after he told John that the Countess of Clare, an Irish lady of ‘rank and wealth,’ was seeking one to accompany her to Italy for a year.

The Lady Clare Years

Lady Clare interviewed John twice. He had references from the charismatic preacher Irving, with whom he had been lodging, commending his ‘religious character.’ Another doctor was being considered, but Jack was appointed. He wrote to his father (JAC/JCSr.19.9.31), telling him that ‘she seems a very straightforward, clever, informed lady.’ She was religious , and he thought that she would treat him well and even kindly. ‘We are to have two carriages with four, and one with two horses, and the whole party will consist of seven or eight persons in all....I am...to have the inside of the small carriage to myself while the Countess and another lady with her servants and couriers have the large one. We are to have breakfast and dinner together during the journey.’ They would cross from Dover to Calais, spend three weeks in Paris, then travel to the south of France and on to Italy and Rome. ‘It is likely that most of the time will be at my own disposition. I suppose my professional duty will be attended by little anxiety or labour.’ His prediction proved correct and was the source of much discontent in the next seven years. His starting salary was £300 per annum, plus his keep and expenses. To the Carlyle family at that time this was wealth beyond any dreams of avarice. Thomas hoped that the contact with a lady of quality might help his brother to enter London medical circles in the future. John began to study Italian.

Thomas, wrote to his mother:

‘... all give her a good character’...‘The Countess is young (perhaps 33), courteous, and has behaved in this transaction with great liberality. Jack also is much more prudent and manly in his ways than he was; so that I think there is a fair prospect of his even doing the poor lady some good...’

‘Something mysterious there is in the condition of this high personage, She was married some years ago and shortly after that event she parted from her husband (they say by her own determination), the nearest friends know not for what reason; and now she lives in a sort of widowhood (her husband is Governor of Bombay, and said to be a “very good sort of man”), so that being farther in ill-health she is probably unhappy enough, and has need of good counsel every way.’(TC to MC, 26.8.31)

Lady Clare (1793-1879) was Elizabeth Julia Georgiana, third daughter of Peter Burrell, first Baron Gwydir (2). Her husband, the second Earl (1792-1851), was John Fitzgibbon, Governor of Bombay from 1830 to 1834, and later a Privy Councillor and Lord Lieutenant of Limerick. . They married in 1826 and separated three years later. The reasons were probably sexual, and can be surmised from recent

Byron research. (3)

Although engaged for only one year initially, John spent over seven years with Lady Clare in Italy, and returned with the Duke of Buccleuch and his family for a further year. He had only two short summer breaks at home, escorting his employer back and forward to London on each of them.

The journal he kept for three months in Naples in the summer of 1832 combines a travel diary, describing his outings with the party to the conventional sights of Naples, with a commonplace book, long passages of religious and philosophical speculation (Campbell, 1977), and disappointingly little about his fellow travellers. John found the summer heat oppressive and suffered from frequent headaches. There are only two mentions of medical work: 'Have just left a consultation with Dr Roskilly and Prof Petroni about Mr Mill's servant. I differed from them both in thinking the disease cataract.' Three weeks later the Queen's Physician was consulted and agreed that cataract was the correct diagnosis.

On the fifth of August there was a violent eruption of Vesuvius, one of many in the eighteen-thirties (Palmieri, 1880). This did not stop the party from making their second excursion to the volcano: 'Lady Clare was carried all the way from Portici in a chair, Miss Morris on the trustiest of donkeys, Doria and I on good safe horses. Our equipage consisted in all of about 24 persons, ourselves not included.' They reached the summit, and all found it a memorable experience.

Despite the heat and the noise, John was impressed by Naples. He saw no indecency, – 'no shocking degradation and misery and wickedness as in London.' He finished his diary in mid-August, as they prepared to return to Rome:

'I am the creature of habit to an extreme degree... I feel rather sorry and disheartened on looking over this part of my journal to find it so imperfect, so badly written, and it costs me some effort to keep from destroying it altogether. Yet it is not quite worthless and therefore it shall remain. I will even console myself with the hope of being able to do better in future. And now farewell to the record of three months past! Alas that they have not been spent more profitably.'

He remained with Lady Clare for seven years in all, his salary steadily increasing. The party spent most of the year in Rome, sometimes moving for the summer months to Naples, or Roman suburbs. One summer they had an extensive tour in the south of France. In the later years Lady Clare had two young nieces for company and John grew friendly with one of them, a Miss Elliot, often horse-riding and walking with her in the moonlight.

He returned to Britain with Lady Clare in 1833, and had two months leave. When they returned to Rome in the Autumn she rented a house, in which John had a suite of rooms with a separate entrance. The establishment was led by a Roman courier.

'The entourage consists of five English manservants, a chambermaid, two maids for Lady Clare and the other ladies, and a cook with two or three assistants. They almost kept me out of countenance for some time at first, but

now I have got more accustomed to them and they annoy me much less...I think it odd that anyone requires so many. I observe that my patient endures them as part of the state belonging to her rank, and as a thing she has been accustomed to all her life. She would think herself happier and better without them, as they can only at last minister to a transient and most unsatisfactory vanity, which does not naturally belong to her.' (JAC/ MC, 17 11 33).

Despite this he could boast of her wealth: 'Lady Clare's carriage surpasses all others at Rome for its unpretending elegance and propriety. It reduces the Cardinals to despair.'

He described a typical day in 1833 (JAC/MC,17.11.33): 'We breakfast about eleven, a luncheon of bread, butter, meat and wine put on the table for those who choose to have it at three'. Dinner was at six-thirty, tea at nine. He rose at eight and worked until breakfast; walked in the afternoon, alone or with some of the party. He did not remain with the ladies at teatime. He often read to the Countess. As in the past he had little to do: '...my medical duties amount almost to nothing. My patient is as well as when she left England ...scarcely ever had to consult me.' He had attended one or two other people in Rome, but there were many resident English physicians, and there was little work for him.

In the summer of 1835 John was expected home for another leave. He and the Countess had reached Geneva, but she changed her mind, probably because Lord Clare had returned from Bombay to London. Instead she spent the winter in Munich, where John found hospital work to occupy him. The party came back to England for a holiday in 1836, and for good in 1838. In these last years John briefly severed his connection with Lady Clare. She allowed him to practice in Rome, and he set up his brass plate outside his lodgings in the Piazza di Spagna for the winter of 1836-37. He made over £60 in the first few months, but found he had few patients apart from those sent by friends, and returned to Lady Clare in May, 1837. A month later he met William Wordsworth and the journalist Crabbe Robinson, and showed them the antiquities of Tivoli.

Outbreaks of cholera in these last years reduced the number of visitors to Italy, and made his chances of building up a practice slim. During the epidemic in Rome John persuaded Lady Clare to remain when most visitors were fleeing the city. He gave his services gratis to the poor, and was horrified by the general panic and selfishness that prevailed. The presence of cholera was officially denied and the deaths blamed on 'poisoning.' In his letters he accused the Pope and his staff of exceptional cowardice, but praised the poor priests, the Jesuits, and the Capuchins. Many of the physicians 'behaved very ill.'

He and Lady Clare agreed to part when they reached London in September, 1838. Thomas was on holiday in Scotland, and it was Jane who welcomed John back to Cheyne Row. He went on to Scotland with a letter from Jane to Thomas:

'..I send you our Doctor very grey, very thin, but healthy, and locomotive

as ever. I wish I could send him with one certainty in his pocket, in which case he would be a help more meet for youRome may be the best place for him.....I should not like to have any hand in deciding him one way or the other – this only is clear to me; better to be a peripatetic Doctor than no doctor at all – and it is to be thoroughly doubted if he will ever screw himself up to practising his profession with the necessary energy and endurance in London.’(JWC/TC 9.38).

Within a month Lady Clare was missing him and sent for him. He was in Scotland and turned her down. The Countess summoned other doctors who diagnosed ‘Nervous Fever with Delirium.’ When John returned to London a fortnight later she refused to see him, but he discussed her case with the other doctors and feared for her sanity and recovery. But within a fortnight she had improved, met him, and they parted friends. It seems likely that her symptoms had been related to his departure and refusal to return.

By this time John had learned that the Duke of Buccleuch was in search of a physician. He went at once to Sir James Clark, the Queen’s physician, obtained a reference from him, took it to Dr Hume, the Duke of Wellington’s physician, and from him obtained a letter to Dr Arnott, a Dumfriesshire man, who had connections with Buccleuch, and had been Napoleon’s physician. John now had some useful contacts, thanks to his long service with the nobility, and knew how to use them. He obtained the post in the face of much competition. He was to be the family’s physician for their tour to Italy, principally to attend to the health of the children. The payment offered for the tour was £500, with all expenses paid.

The Buccleuch Grand Tour

Walter, the Fifth Duke of Buccleuch, was an even grander employer than the Countess of Clare. His palace was at Dalkeith, and he owned other large properties, including Drumlanrig Castle in Dumfriesshire, where his patronage might prove useful to the Carlyle family. He had held the title since he was thirteen, and when only sixteen entertained George IV for two weeks at Dalkeith. In 1838 he was thirty-two, married to the former Lady Charlotte Anne Thyme, and had four young children. The oldest son was William, Lord Dalkeith, aged seven; the others Henry, aged six, Walter, four, and a newborn fourth son, Charles. The children were said to be delicate but not ill.

John had dinner with the Buccleuch family in London, and on the 30th of November, 1838, joined them at Dover to proceed to Naples. The party was detained at Dover by bad weather, and he wrote to his sister Jean:

‘I have seen a good deal of the Duke and Duchess and think very highly of them. Their four little boys are the best-trained, and at the same time when let loose from constraint the rickettiest creatures, with the exception of your little Jamy, that I have seen. ...Neither the Duke or the Duchess have any

touch of the aristocratic haughtiness or stiffness of which one hears so much. They seem at home in their station, and bear themselves simply and naturally in it. I already get on with them as well as with Lady C after seven years intercourse.’(JAC to JCA, 30.11.38)

When he dined with them, he met the elderly Earl of Home, the uncle of the Duke and one of the party for the tour. John thought him ‘a good-natured specimen of Scotch nobility’ and ‘a very affable, agreeable old man.’ He had already consulted John about his indigestion. Both the Duchess and Lord Dalkeith, the future heir, were unwell, and John was glad to report that ‘in addition to my scribbling I have other work.’

Their departure must have been a brave sight. They travelled in five large carriages, each with four horses, with John in the children’s party, which occupied three of the carriages. The crossing to Calais was quick but unpleasant; most of the party were sick. John went ahead with the children to Boulogne, accompanied by the young tutor, and the governess. She was a middle-aged Swiss, and John was able to practise his French with her. The children were very biddable. Young Lord Dalkeith was fond of stories and John often took him on his knee to tell them while they travelled.

After seven years abroad John was a competent courier as well as an experienced physician. He guided the Buccleuchs around Paris, and interpreted for them there and in Italy and Austria. He was a shopping assistant to the Duke and Duchess in Naples, and his knowledge of Italian cities and tourist attractions must have been useful to them. The party made heavy demands on his medical services. His salary was generous, but now he had to earn it.

He wrote home more in this year, having more to tell the family, and because his and the Buccleuchs’ letters went in the ambassador’s bag wherever they went. John had decided that the Duke and Duchess were ‘both very different from Lady Clare, but I question whether my connection with them will ever be so intimate as it was with her’(JAC-TC,18.12.38). He had become friendly with Lord Home: ‘Lord Home amuses us all very much. He is an original of his kind – speaks in general broad Scotch, tells many stories of hunting and of warfare and often breaks through all etiquettes, tho’ thoroughly well bred.’ He saw much of the tutor, some 15 years his junior, but found him ‘commonplace and indolent.’ He had treated him for a very bad sore throat; and his patients also included Lord Home, whose indigestion continued to trouble him; the Duke and Duchess, both of whom had had colds; a nurse with pleurisy; and a nephew of the Duke’s.

The Duke engaged a vessel to take them from Marseilles to Naples, where they arrived in late December, 1838. John moved into private lodgings, five minutes walk from the house the Buccleuchs had taken. He thought other visitors to Naples not so ‘nice’ as formerly, and found life with his group very unlike the formality of Lady Clare’s. He went hare-hunting with them, and often dined alone with Lord Home, when they enjoyed whisky, brandy punch and a cigar together

A month later (JAC/ TC, 21 2 39), the Duke's yacht, the Flower of Yarrow, arrived from home, and the Duke and Duchess planned an excursion to Malta or Sicily. The yacht brought many books, including a copy of French Revolution, which John re-read. He had been kept up for two nights with a patient when he wrote, but usually he rose at seven, breakfasted at eight, then read until ten or eleven, when he visited the Duke and Duchess. He dined at a trattoria, read again, walked, then 'closed himself in' for the night. On Sundays he dined with the Duke and Duchess, and after dinner the Duke read a sermon and prayers with all the household assembled. His main patients, the children, were giving him no trouble, but the Duke had sprained his great toe. John had been 'sitting in with three doctors, and making a little money' and so had no need to touch his annual salary. He met J S Mill, travelling with Harriet Taylor, and sailed with him to Sorrento, Amalfi and Paestum.

By March (JAC to TC, 20 3 39) John still had a busy family surgery. He was treating Lord Dalkeith for a cold and threatened croup. The Duke had 'violent bilious and gastric fever'; which had 'shaken and weakened him very much.' Another patient kept him up several nights, then died of fever. The Duke's nephew, treated successfully, sent John a cheque for £20, but the scrupulous John returned it, refusing to accept money for treating a relative of the Duke while in his pay. The Duke continued 'steady and faithful,' but the Duchess was 'a little changeable and more difficult to comprehend.'

May brought very bad news (JAC- MC, 18 5 39). The Duke's youngest child died of 'irregular measles' on the 7th, and his three brothers were in bed with the same disease, one of them dangerously ill. All the family were unwell except the Duke. 'My hands were full enough,' wrote John. After the death, 'the Duke and Duchess behaved like reasonable wise people in their severe affliction and testified their gratitude to me and to the other physicians in attendance at the time of their greatest trial in a way we cannot forget.'

The party had planned to move north to Florence by the end of the month and leave Italy at the end of June, but Henry was still desperately unwell. Staying in Naples was endangering his chances of recovery and he would be better moving north, but John feared that the sea voyage might kill him. But he advised it, and was justified and relieved when his young charge quickly improved.

All in better health, and glad to be 'out of the Roman heat and heading for the German mountains', they travelled by Trent, Innsbruck and Salzburg to the spa town of Ischl. They did not linger there, but cut short the tour, reaching London before the end of July. They had a 'prosperous journey from Ischl,' visiting Munich, Heidelberg and Bonn, and a favourable passage to London from Rotterdam. On arrival in the Thames 'the Duke's pleasure boat, all equipped, was waiting for his arrival', and they reached Montagu House within half an hour (JAC- MC, 27 7 39). Something was seriously amiss with one of the children, for the very next day a consultation took place involving John and London's three 'first surgeons': Sir Benjamin Brodie,

Lister and Stone. All agreed that John's treatment plan should be continued, which, he proudly reported to the family, gave the Duke and Duchess 'a high idea of my skill.'

The doctor was pleased by this tour of duty. He had been much happier in Italy than in the past, but remained loyal to his first employer: 'I esteem Lady C much higher than either but my sphere with her was narrower and I had much too little work.' He thought of rejoining Lady Clare but decided against it, and in October a parting gift arrived at Chelsea from her, a portable writing desk of Russian leather.

Within a short time he was off to Brighton with a new patient, William Coningham, describe by Thomas as 'a young, very tall, very lean, dyspeptical, gentlehearted, rich and melancholy man...at present in a pitiable state with his stomach disorders, and the dispiritment they may have brought on.'. John's past experience with Thomas may have helped him here. The New Year brought a more tempting offer, and for the next two years John took charge of another psychiatric patient, a wealthy young Irishman, William Ogilby or Ogilvie, troubled by extreme shyness and anxiety. His family were threatening to have him declared unfit to manage his affairs, and had designs on his fortune. John prevented this, his treatment comprising companionship, extensive tours of Scotland and England with intervals in London, and keeping Ogilby's relatives at bay, which entailed much correspondence. He was paid £500 for the first year, and over £1000 annually for the second and third, again with all his expenses and accommodation. Psychotherapy has been called bought friendship, and if this is true John was now a travelling psychotherapist.

But from 1843, after a career lasting only some eleven years, he virtually abandoned medicine, turning down an offer to be physician to Lady Holland. He translated Dante's *Inferno*, and married a rich widow, who died in childbirth a year later, as did the child. He acted as ward to her children, helped his nephews and nieces, retired to Dumfries, edited a history of Scottish verse, endowed a scholarship at his old medical school, and shortly predeceased his brother. He and Thomas lie together in Ecclefechan churchyard.

Scholar and Doctor

Far from being indolent, Dr Carlyle was a perpetual student. His brother had noticed this earlier when John made demands to study further in Munich and then Vienna. Thomas, who financed these postgraduate studies, believed he would be better starting medical employment. After seven years of medical idleness with Lady Clare, John was harder worked by the sickly Buccleuch family, and made a telling slip of the pen when he wrote home complaining that he had been unable to get on with any work – by which he meant his studies.

He read daily and broadly in all these years: the three months of the journal alone show him reading in Latin, English, French, German and Italian, and transcribing many passages. In this short time he was reading *Pilgrim's Progress*, a life of Cicero,

Goethe's Italian journey, a history of Naples, Rousseau's Confessions, Byron, the Annals of Tacitus, the New Testament in Greek and Italian, and had reached the book of Job in the Old Testament. He took Italian lessons during these years, and studied Dante with Roman scholars, which led to his translation of the Inferno years later. He corresponded with French and German friends, as well as with his family and friends like J S Mill at home. But he never resumed a journal, and wrote no more, except for his translation.

He was a competent and well-educated doctor. A lengthy case history (NLS acc.9086 Vol. 2,18.f.96) survives, vividly written, of a Russian boy of 14, suffering from severe and complex epileptic fits, treated by John in Rome in the spring of 1837. It reveals an acute observer, who can carry out an efficient clinical examination, but whose treatment is limited to calomel, castor oil and alarmingly heroic bleeding, all standard procedure for the time (Pfeiffer, 1985). He gives a long and detailed account of the unusual and complicated symptoms, mysterious to him, but describing what would become known a century later as temporal lobe epilepsy

Another medical thread runs through his life: an interest in psychiatry, from the experience of his mother's mental illness when he was fourteen (Ingram, 2004), to choosing mental illness as the subject of his university thesis, and even to his choice of patients later. In Rome in 1837 he was able to persuade a very deluded patient, armed with dagger and pistol and threatening to attack the clergy, to leave the city. His last two patients, with whom he spent over three years, had psychiatric conditions. John had no real vocation for medicine, as his brother discovered with the ministry, but he was a conscientious and patient physician and counsellor.

There is little information about travelling physicians in either this period or the 18th century. They were uncommon, as only the very rich aspired to them, and many British doctors had settled in Rome and Italy (Black, 2003). The salaries Dr Carlyle was paid in these years increased from £300 to over £1000 per annum. Compared with other doctors of the period (Loudon, 1986), these were generous, especially for a young and inexperienced man. At all levels of practice, fees were sharply higher for the aristocracy, and his were very high, when all travelling expenses and accommodation were added (Peterson, 1978). He saved virtually all his income and, over these twelve years, amassed what Froude called a 'modest competency.' Even more surprising, at a time when most doctors had a lowly position in society, is the status he had, regularly mixing and dining with his employers, and often with his own coach and separate, spacious accommodation.

The Man

He was indecisive, and knew it. He was a restless man, always dashing here and there when in London with the Carlyles, and an indefatigable traveller for the rest of his days, never purchasing a home of his own. His lack of vocation was encouraged by Jeffrey unwittingly providing him with a seven year sinecure. John was unable

to resist the lure of easy money. But it was always 1984 for John: Big Brother was always watching him. From school and university on, he was known as the brother of Thomas, and compared to him at every turn. It was a life-long burden which he bore with grace and without complaint. Jane, at her unkindest, said: ‘...*he eats the dinners which C declines* – for that seems to be the principle on which he is invited out – “since we cannot get Carlyle we may always have his *brother*.”’ (JWC to Jeannie Welsh, 12.11.43)

Thomas and Jane were ambivalent about John; it was an odd triangular relationship. Both of them were very attached to him at various times. Thomas was always a loyal brother, although often irritated, and closer to John than to any other of his siblings. It is no accident that they lie together and share a tombstone in Ecclefechan churchyard. Jane was fond of him in the Craigenputtock days, but grew steadily more exasperated by him over the years, and never forgave his robust attitude to her complaints, which he told her, more than once, could be remedied by work. His faults were many, but his virtues have been undervalued. He was cheerful, clubbable and sociable, qualities sadly missing at times in Cheyne Row, where they felt he ‘knew not the meaning of Silence.’ Thomas confided to his Journal in 1833:

‘He has a boundless affectionateness; this is his great quality. Manifesting itself too at times in strange ways, as in humorous frolicking (even with pigs and horses, if there is no other living thing to frolick with), ...and as a genuine inexhaustible fund of bonhomie.....How different from me; how much happier and better!.’

He was a good doctor, valued by his patients and patrons, but his vocation was weak, and he yearned to be what he had little talent for: a writer like his brother. His prose translation of the *Inferno* was well regarded, and remained in print until the 1930s, but he failed to complete the rest of the *Divine Comedy*. He was not an original like Thomas, but he was a decent, conventional man, who, unlike his brother, retained the faith he had been raised in. All in all, he was much more than a Walking Cabbage. John consulted a phrenologist at the end of these years, and was told that he was capable of anything, but not capable of turning his ability to account. There was some truth in that, but, if the inevitable comparisons with his older brother are put aside, it was no mean achievement for an Ecclefechan farm boy to become the Duke of Buccleuch’s travelling physician

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NOTES

The Letters are contained in NLS Acc 9086 (NT Deposit). Volume 2 contains the letters of his years abroad, his medical notes of 1837(F96), and his Journal. The Journal covers a period from 20 May, 1832-15 August, 1832, and covers 61 pages, with pp 43-44 missing). Volume 3 has letters to and from JAC from 1822-1850; Vol.4 to 6 contain later letters than this period, except for Vol. 6 which contains letters from Lady Clare, 1838-9 and from European friends to JAC during the 1830's. Detailed contents of all of these are available on the NLS website: www.nls.uk. All dated letters from JAC in the text are from these manuscripts. All others are from the Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane.

2 The pious Lady Clare was a Catholic - surprisingly, as her husband was not, and her father in law, the first Lord Clare, was Black Jack Fitzgibbon, Lord Chancellor of Ireland, and a much-reviled opponent of Catholic emancipation. John and Thomas never mention her Catholicism. In later life she endowed a church in Ryde, where she died after retreating to a convent in her latter days (Kavanaugh).

3 In Byron's first poems, published when he was nineteen, there is a long poem 'To the Earl of Clare,' beginning:

Friend of my youth! when young we roved,
Like striplings mutually beloved,
With friendship's purest glow,
The bliss which wing'd those rosy hours
Was such as pleasure seldom showers
On mortals here below.....

Byron met Clare at Harrow when he was fifteen and the Earl eleven or twelve. The most recent Byron biography (MacCarthy, 2002) shows, using the Murray archive, that he was bisexual. His homosexual relationships, from Harrow on, have been concealed or minimised in the past. They corresponded, but Clare destroyed the letters. When Byron met Clare by chance 18 years later in Italy he shed tears, and he wrote to him during his last illness at Missolonghi in 1824.

SYLLABUS 2007-8



CARLYLE SOCIETY: PROGRAMME FOR 2007-8

Oct 6 2007	Bill Bell:	Carlyle and the Literature Machine
27 Oct	Aileen Finding Fault:	Jane Welsh, Carlyle, Biography and Biographers
Oct 28	Aileen Christianson	Nigh on Forty Years Living with the Carlyles
7 Dec	Malcolm Ingram:	The Carlyles, Dr. Gully and the Water-Cure + AGM + Party
9 Feb 2008	Maurice Milne:	
23 Feb	Sheila McIntosh:	TC and the Caribbean
8 Mar	David Sorensen:	Who killed Carlyle the historian?

We hope to organise a trip to Ecclefechan in the Spring.

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