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# Thomas Carlyle's Influence on George Meredith's Theory of Literature

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Alwin Thaler, Albert Rapp, William Moor, Kenneth Curry

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

December 17, 1954

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Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance

Alvin Thaler

Albert Rapp

Willis Moore

Kenneth Cameron

Accepted for the Council:

Dean of the Graduate School

# THOMAS CARLYLE'S INFLUENCE ON GEORGE MEREDITH'S THEORY OF LITERATURE

32

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A THESIS

Submitted to
The Graduate Council
of
The University of Tennessee
in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

---

by

John William Morris

December 17, 1954

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Like most writers, George Meredith passed through a period of apprenticeship and imitation, in which he tested and rejected or assimilated techniques and theories of writers whose works were familiar to him. Definite traces of Arabian, German, and English models are to be found in Meredith's early novels. The influence of The Arabian Nights on The Shaving of Shagpat is manifest, and Farina is a burlesque of the revival of medievalism characteristic of many of the early nineteenth-century English and German romances. Distinct traces of Dickens are to be seen in Evan Harrington, Rhoda Fleming, and The Adventures of Harry Richmond. It is clear, also, to the reader of his early works, that Meredith drew upon Fielding, Richardson, and Thackeray for occasional support and inspiration. But these influences are all superficial and, for the most part, fleeting—early discarded by Meredith as he gradually developed his own theory of literature. The influence of Thomas Love Peacock on Meredith appears to have been of some lasting significance and has been the subject of a special study.[1] Far more fundamental and lasting than any of these influences, however, was the influence on Meredith of Thomas Carlyle.

Though critics have noted from the beginning that Meredith was influenced by Carlyle, no attempt has been made to determine the exact

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[1]Augustus Henry Able, George Meredith and Thomas Love Peacock: A Study in Literary Influence (Philadelphia, 1933).

nature and extent of that influence and to evaluate it in terms of its role in the development of Meredith as a literary artist. Critical comment on Carlyle's influence on Meredith consists primarily of brief observations made in passing. The observations themselves are generally broad references to the fact that Meredith was influenced by Carlyle, or they point without further comment or development to a specific idea held in common by the two writers.

Perhaps the first to mention Carlyle's influence on Meredith was Justin McCarthy. Speaking of the style of The Ordeal of Richard Feverel, he says:

> It is somewhat in the style of Sterne; a good deal more in the style of one who, acknowledging himself a follower of Sterne, had a warmer heart, a purer soul, and a richer, quainter fancy than the British sentimentalist, we mean Jean Paul Richter. Mr. Meredith is often strikingly like Richter in style, with, almost as a matter of necessity, a considerable dash of the Carlylese phraseology. Here and there, indeed something unmistakeable and pure Carlyle flashes in.[2]

Mary Sturge Henderson refers to "the marked influence of Carlyle on Meredith's social and political opinion, and still more on his methods of thought,"[3] and then goes on to say:

> In regard to their style it is sometimes contended that Meredith and Carlyle drew from common stock in Jean Paul Richter. It is probable, however, that too much stress has been laid on German influences in Meredith's writings; his boyhood certainly was spent in Germany, but before he was sixteen he had returned to England. At any rate, it is clear, in regard to ideas, that the nucleus of the conception of Earth, the stress laid upon "the

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[2]"Novels with a Purpose," Westminster Review, XXVI (July, 1864), 30.

[3]George Meredith: Novelist, Poet, Reformer (London, 1907), pp. 110-111.

stern-exact," the belief in the saving power of work, are shared by Meredith with Carlyle.[4]

In his study of Thomas Love Peacock's influence on Meredith, Augustus Henry Able says: "Among the non-fictional writers of the day in England, Carlyle, of course, bulks largest as an influence on Meredith: both in philosophy and turns of style, the reverberations from that source are numerous and distinct."[5] Constantin Photiadès considers Carlyle's influence on Meredith to be fundamental and profound: "Whoever seeks to ascertain what authors have influenced Meredith, let him not linger with Fielding nor Richardson. But before all, let him think of Nevil Beauchamp's favourite author, that fantastic and eccentric Carlyle."[6] Summing up his discussion of The Ordeal of Richard Feverel, Siegfried Sassoon says:

> Through them [the critics] I now transmit the information that the style of Richard Feverel was influenced by Sterne, Carlyle, and Jean Paul Richter. . . . Jean Paul Richter is only a name to me; but I can recognize the influence of Carlyle as a potent one. From boyhood Meredith had absorbed his philosophy admiringly, and his phraseology is apparent in many passages of The Ordeal.[7]

Elsewhere Sassoon observes: "The extent of Peacock's influence on him is not easy to diagnose. One can say that it is occasionally

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[4]Henderson, Meredith, p. 111.

[5]Meredith and Peacock, p. 8.

[6]George Meredith: His Life, Genius and Teaching, trans. Arthur Price (London, 1913), p. 184.

[7]Meredith (London, 1948), pp. 24-25.

observable, less, perhaps, than that of Carlyle."[8] Meredith's latest biographer, Lionel Stevenson, refers to the "deep and early influences of Carlyle and Peacock,"[9] and speaks of Carlyle as one of Meredith's "formative influences."[10]

At least two critics have pointed out the need for a thorough study of Carlyle's influence upon Meredith. In his work on Meredith's novels, James Moffatt says:

> In the prelude to "The Egoist," and occasionally in the rhapsodical apostrophes and some of the ethical conceptions throughout the novels especially, there are not indistinct echoes of Carlyle, for whom, as readers of "Beauchamp's Career" will recollect, Meredith, like Dickens had undisguised admiration. Carlyle is one of the few contemporary writers directly mentioned by the novelist, and the affinities of thought and expression between the two writers demand rather more attention than seems to have been as yet bestowed on them.[11]

And René Galland, whose book on Meredith contains a discussion of the Carlylean ideas in The Shaving of Shagpat, which is by far the fullest treatment given any aspect of the Carlyle-Meredith relationship, also speaks of the need for a comparative study of the two writers and even lists some of their points of similarity to be included in the study:

> Les rapports de Carlyle et de Meredith exigeraient une longue étude, dont la place n'est pas ici, qui montrerait d'abord l'imagination de Carlyle convertissant tout en symbole, et en-

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[8]Meredith, p. 150.

[9]The Ordeal of George Meredith: A Biography (New York, 1953), p. 171.

[10]Ibid., p. 203.

[11]George Meredith: A Primer to the Novels (London, 1909), p. 9.

> suite les thèmes communs à Carlyle et à Meredith, par exemple l'apologie du silence (Stump-orator--et Shagpat Rasé, page 95), du Rire libérateur (Sartor Resartus--Shagpat Rasé, p. 207 et pp. 231 sqq.), le danger du philosophisme sentimental (Model Prisons et S. R., p. 294: Le sage a réprouvé l'imprudente pitié), enfin la haine de apathie: du mensonge, des fausses idoles qui circule à travers toute l'oeuvre des deux écrivains.[12]

These two assertions of the need for a study of Carlyle's influence on Meredith have apparently gone unheeded by both the students of Carlyle and of Meredith. No one has ventured on so much as an investigation of Meredith's knowledge of Carlyle's works and of the personal relations of the two men--an investigation which is the indispensable background for a study of one writer upon another. Perhaps the neglect of so promising a subject on the part of Carlylean scholars is accounted for by the fact that twentieth-century Carlylean studies have been directed primarily toward a better understanding of Carlyle's own development rather than of his influence. Studies of his influence and continuing significance should properly come later. From the Meredithian point of view, however, the neglect of such an important influence is not easily justified because its neglect has resulted in an incomplete understanding of Meredith.

Originally this study aimed at a complete examination of Carlyle's influence on Meredith's social, ethical, and literary theories. Preliminary research on the subject, however, revealed that Carlyle's influence on Meredith in all three categories, particularly in the

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[12]George Meredith: Les Cinquante Premières Années (Paris, 1923), p. 120n.

third, is of such proportion that a complete analysis of all aspects of it cannot be attempted here. The scope of this study, therefore, is limited to a consideration of Carlyle's influence on Meredith's theory of literature and its implications; and, except for incidental references, examination of Carlyle's influence on Meredith's social and ethical thought is reserved for future treatment elsewhere. Of course, the division of Carlyle's influence on Meredith into three categories or aspects is an artificial division, but it is necessary for the purposes of study and analysis even though it cannot always be strictly maintained. If the division is accepted at all, however, it will readily be admitted that the third category, the influence of Carlyle on Meredith's literary theory, is of the greatest interest and significance to the student of literature.

Study of Carlyle's influence on Meredith's social and ethical thought involves little more than collecting, organizing, and elaborating on the scattered references found throughout the body of Meredithian criticism and commentary. No clear reference to Carlyle's influence on Meredith's theory of literature has been found, however; and except for John Boynton Priestley's statement that "Meredith does with fiction what Carlyle did with history,"[13] no clear comparison of the performances of the two writers has been made. Though Priestley's statement does indicate a grasp of the parallels to be found in the approach to literature of the two men, it does not necessarily imply an influence of

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[13]George Meredith, English Men of Letters Series (New York, 1926), p. 141.

Carlyle upon Meredith.

The purpose of this study is to examine in the light of Carlyle's ideas the basic tenets of Meredith's theory of literature as enunciated directly by him and as deduced from his practice as a novelist and to determine the extent and the significance of Carlyle's influence on Meredith's conception and practice of his art. By Meredith's theory of literature, as the phrase is used in this study, is meant simply the beliefs Meredith held about the purpose and function of the man of letters in society and the principal means he employed to achieve that purpose and to fulfil that function as a writer of novels. Consequently, Meredith's poetry is considered only when it aids in the explication of an idea germane to his work as a novelist. Meredith's poetry _qua_ poetry is a study in itself.

One of the dangers implicit in a study of literary influence is that of assuming that every similarity in idea represents a direct borrowing. It is recognized throughout, therefore, that many of the ideas held in common by Carlyle and Meredith may be the result of the _Zeitgeist_ and that every similarity in idea does not necessarily represent a specific influence of Carlyle on Meredith. Another problem encountered in attempting to trace the influence of one man on another is the fact that many similarities may be the result of a common borrowing from the same source. For example, it is well known that Meredith admired the writings of Goethe and that he received some inspiration from him. It has also been often asserted that Meredith's style was influenced by Jean Paul Richter. Since Carlyle himself drew much from the literature

of Germany, it is not always possible to determine whether or not Meredith received a particular idea directly from its German source or indirectly through Carlyle, who with Coleridge was perhaps the foremost propagator of German ideas and ideals in England in the first half of the nineteenth century. Frequently, particularly with respect to the ideas and style of Richter, the latter is the greater probability. It will be shown that in several instances Meredith gives the peculiarly Carlylean slant to an idea that was originally Goethe's. These problems are dealt with wherever they arise, and only those similarities which can be shown to be the result of direct influence are treated as such. The attempt is made always to distinguish between intellectual affinity and influence.

It is not the purpose of this study merely to make a case for the thesis that Carlyle is the source of Meredith's theory of literature. More important than the fact that Carlyle influenced Meredith is the clearer understanding of Meredith's theory of literature and, consequently, of his work as a novelist that comes with a knowledge of his debt to Carlyle. What Meredith was attempting to do in the novel can be shown far more clearly than ever before when his theory of literature is examined with reference to Carlyle's influence upon it. That Meredith's whole purpose as a writer of prose fiction has not been generally understood is evident from much of the criticism of his work.

From the beginning, Meredith's critics have found it difficult to see him as a lineal descendant of earlier writers of fiction. Superficial and fleeting influences aside, they agree with Oliver Elton that

"Mr. Meredith has run a course of his own, and has owed little to any man of his own craft."[13] William Cary Brownell has gone so far as to charge Meredith with complete literary isolation:

> . . . such originality as his--originality at any price--is to be achieved only at the cost of isolation. Note also that one instinctively speaks of it as an achievement rather than a native endowment. Were it altogether the gift of mother nature, its evolution could be traced and its relationships established. As it is, it has no genealogy. No writer ever pursued particularity so far; with the result that he stands quite apart from and unsupported by the literary fellowship which is a powerful agent in commending any writer to the attention of either the studious or the desultory. He cannot be placed. He has no derivation and no tendency. His works inhere in no larger category. He gains nothing from ancestry or association. He fills no lacune, supplements no incompleteness, supplants no predecessor. He is so wholly sui generis that neglect of him involves neglect of nothing else, implies no deficiency of taste, no literary limitedness.[14]

Though Brownell's statement represents an extreme position, it illustrates the confusion and bewilderment of many critics who try to place Meredith in order to understand him. Admittedly, Meredith's work must be read in the light of its historical relations and ancestry to be understood fully. Meredith must be placed, and his derivation and tendency must be shown, before final judgment can be made on his contribution to the development of prose fiction as a conscious literary art. The difficulties of those critics who thus far have tried to place Meredith historically come as a result of their attempt to place him in a tradition which he himself rejected. By tracing the evolution of Meredith's literary theory in the light of Carlyle's influence upon it, this

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[13] Modern Studies (London, 1907), p. 231.

[14] Victorian Prose Masters (New York, 1901), pp. 233-234.

study offers an explanation for Meredith's apparent isolation from literary tradition and establishes his relationship with Carlyle, which, paradoxically, accounts for much of his originality in the novel.

The assertion that Meredith lies outside, or almost outside, the stream of development of English literature—that he owes little to his predecessors and has few links with his contemporaries—is often accompanied by the criticism that Meredith is not, properly speaking, a novelist at all. To James Ashcraft Noble, he is "not so much a novel-writer as a singularly brilliant social essayist, who has wilfully chosen to cut up his essays into fragments of fictitious description and conversation."[16] To his latest biographer, he is essentially a writer of "an extended personal essay in the guise of fiction."[17] And to Hannah Lynch, he is "a thinker first and a novelist afterwards."[18] Repeatedly, there comes the complaint that Meredith is only the artist "intermittently," that "primarily and consistently, he is a moralist—a teacher."[19]

To charge Meredith with not meeting standards that he never set out to meet is meaningless criticism. Jane Austen cannot be legitimately criticized adversely because her works do not meet Smollett's requirements for a novel. Thus the objections to Meredith posed by these

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[16]The Academy, XXVII (February 28, 1885), 147.

[17]Stevenson, Meredith, p. 66.

[18]George Meredith: A Study (London, 1891), p. 5.

[19]Henderson, Meredith, p. 2.

critics who seek to judge Meredith's works by the standards set by Fielding, Dickens, Thackeray, and other illustrious novelists who preceded him are answered when it is shown that Meredith never aimed at satisfying their standards. To say that Meredith is "not so much a novel-writer as a singularly brilliant social essayist" is to imply that Meredith attempted to write a "novel" and failed. The definition, if definition there is, of a novel as the term is used here (and elsewhere in similar statements about Meredith), is obviously the critic's own, based, of course, upon his reading in the genre. Sound criticism of Meredith's performance, however, must be based upon an accurate knowledge of his aims, and one of the values of a study of Carlyle's influence on Meredith's theory of literature is that it makes possible a more accurate understanding of Meredith's aims as a man of letters than has heretofore been achieved.

It must be added at this point that several of Meredith's critics have recognized that he was attempting something new and different in the novel, and those critics have produced the soundest appraisals of his work. Holbrook Jackson views Meredith's work as "the consummation and full expression of the tradition of the English novel, but with a difference. . . . With Meredith a change comes about. He adopts the machinery of the great novelists, and drives it by a new power."[20] And the difference, according to Jackson, is in the artistic awareness of the author and in the increased emphasis on intellectual content:

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[20]Great English Novelists (London, 1908), p. 282.

> The consummation of the English novel in Meredith is the more marked because in him it has become a fully conscious art-form. The novels of Meredith represent the adultage of the novel. They do not seek to create pleasant feeling, but intelligent consideration.[21]

Ernest A. Baker, whose lucid and penetrating discussion of Meredith's works is perhaps the best single contribution to Meredithian scholarship thus far, also takes cognizance of the fact that Meredith was consciously attempting a reform of prose fiction. Speaking of Meredith's career as a novelist in general terms, Baker says: "It will speedily be seen what profound modifications of the structure and style of fiction were inevitably involved."[22] Baker, like Jackson, sees Meredith's work as the consummation of English fiction:

> But before he reached that stage [his maturity] he had assimilated all he wanted of the art and craftsmanship of a good many more, novelists, playwrights, and others as well, and the result, the Meredithian novel all complete, was a thing entirely new, though constructed of elements that had been growing and ripening ever since the English novel emerged from the Elizabethan chaos.[23]

One of Meredith's recent critics, Walter F. Wright, also recognizes that Meredith was a conscious reformer of the novel. He says that Meredith was "from the beginning given to experiment, trying to bend the narrative form to his wish,"[24] and, further, that Meredith "was an ex-

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[21]Great English Novelists (London, 1908), p. 282.

[22]The History of the English Novel, 10 vols. (London, 1924-1939), VIII (1937), 277.

[23]Ibid., p. 303.

[24]Art and Substance in George Meredith: A Study in Narrative (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1953), p. 3.

perimentalist well grounded in tradition."[25]

There is still present, even in the works of these critics, the attempt to place Meredith firmly within the tradition of English fiction, to see his work as a consummation of that tradition. Meredith's novels, of necessity, are constructed of elements present in the works of his predecessors; but the theory governing the use of those elements came from a source entirely outside the tradition of English fiction. J. H. Crees, who seems to recognize this fact, gives an even more accurate description of Meredith's work:

> Yet a conclusion safely on this side of moderation would be, first that the art of novel-writing is an art which even in the hands of but a middling practitioner demands more respect than is always accorded it, and secondly, that Meredith himself, in his combination of most vigorous intellect with fervent poetry and all the normal qualities of the novelist, in his creation of what is almost a new literary form—that of the didactic prose epos, the philosophy of history applied to life and its problems—is an unparalleled and wondrous phenomenon. . . .[26]

The works of these critics, Jackson, Baker, Wright, and Crees, add much to the possibility of a better understanding of Meredith. At least the first step toward an accurate understanding of Meredith's purpose as a novelist is made when it is recognized that his work represents a conscious effort toward something new and different in prose fiction. This understanding will remain incomplete, however, until the theory upon which Meredith's efforts to reform the novel is based is explored and clarified. Heretofore, those of Meredith's critics who have

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[25]Art and Substance, p. 5.

[26]George Meredith: A Study of His Works and Personality (Oxford, 1918), pp. v-vi.

attempted to account for his originality have seized upon his idea of the Comic Spirit as offering the best key to an understanding of his literary theory. Thus undue stress has been placed upon Meredith's theory of the comic. In Meredith's hands, comedy, a particular type of comedy is an instrument of the man of letters and not a goal in itself. Study of Meredith's theory of the comic, then, is only an indirect approach to Meredith's theory of literature.

Perhaps the most direct route to an understanding of Meredith's theory of literature is through a study of the two statements concerning his art which Meredith makes in Beauchamp's Career (1876) and The Egoist (1879).[27] Both of these statements contain obscure acknowledgments of indebtedness to Carlyle, which have not heretofore been recognized as such. Since an understanding of the significance of these acknowledgments is greatly enhanced by a preliminary examination of Meredith's personal relations with Carlyle and of the broad literary theory under which the two men worked, the less direct but more rewarding approach has been adopted in this study.

Since there are records of Meredith's personal acquaintance with Carlyle, his knowledge of his writings, and his interest in his teachings, it is possible to assess the opportunities for influence of the older writer upon the younger with some degree of success. Chapter II, "Personal and Literary Relations," is an attempt to make such an assessment, chiefly through a chronological examination of these relations as

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[27]See Chapters VI and VII below.

they are reflected in biographical studies of Meredith, memoirs of his contemporaries, and Meredith's own published letters and other writings.

Chapter III, "The Noble Workman," is a comparison of Carlyle's and Meredith's conception of literature, and particularly of the nature and function of the great literary artist, as recorded in their published works, including their letters. Chapter IV, "Sentimentalism," concerns the attitude or philosophy in life and in letters which Carlyle and Meredith decreed that the great artist must combat. Chapter V, "The Apprentice," details the constructive recommendations of the two writers for the literary product of the artist.

The remaining two chapters, "The First Acknowledgment," and "Comedy," examine Meredith's two acknowledgments of indebtedness to Carlyle, with particular reference to the light that they shed upon Meredith's literary theory. As will be seen, the force and significance of these statements is considerably increased by the results of the independent investigation which Chapters II through V constitute.

Although the primary value of this thesis can be said to be its illumination of Meredith's literary theory, it is intended as a contribution to the study of the history of ideas in the Victorian Era, as well as a critical contribution to Meredithiana. It should also be remarked that its conclusion constitutes one more indication of the powerful influence which Carlyle exercised upon the thought of the nineteenth century.

## CHAPTER II

## PERSONAL AND LITERARY RELATIONS

Carlyle's influence on his age was immense; and although many aspects of his influence have yet to be studied and evaluated, it is now reasonably safe to assert that no other writer of the nineteenth century achieved the widespread acceptance as a moral force and as an intellectual leader that was his for a time. Numerous contemporary acknowledgments of his influence can be adduced in support of this statement; and since the period of Carlyle's ascendancy corresponds roughly to Meredith's formative years, it is not inappropriate to begin this chapter with a brief survey of some of these contemporary acknowledgments of Carlyle's influence.

As early as 1846, the North British Review, describing Carlyle's influence as a moral force, stated that "while other authors may be, in a looser sense, more popular, and more rapidly and eagerly read, we doubt if there is any one, whose works have gone more deeply to the springs of character and action, especially throughout the middle classes."[1]

Carlyle's uncanny ability to inspire even those who could not always accept his ideas possibly accounts for much of his influence. His works came as a tonic to Thomas Henry Huxley, who admired his forthrightness and plain speaking in a time of platitudes and shibboleths.

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[1]Quoted in Emery Neff, Carlyle (New York, 1932), p. 207.

In an article on his friend and fellow scientist John Tyndall, Huxley says:

> At that time [1851], Tyndall and I had long been zealous students of Carlyle's works. Sartor Resartus and the Miscellanies were among the few books devoured partly by myself, and partly by the mighty hordes of cockroaches in my cabin, during the cruise of the Rattlesnake; and my sense of obligation to their author was then, as it remains, extremely strong.[2]

Thus Huxley, who eventually came to represent much that was in direct opposition to Carlyle's teaching, found in Carlyle's writings a stimulating freshness even though he quarreled with many of the ideas. John Tyndall, however, came closer to being a true disciple; and in discussing the distinction between his and Tyndall's appreciation of Carlyle, Huxley hits upon what seems to have been the two general reactions to Carlyle in his day:

> Tyndall's appreciation of the seer of Chelsea was even more enthusiastic; and, in after-years, assumed a character of almost filial devotion. The grounds of our appreciation, however, were not exactly the same. My friend, I think, was disposed to regard Carlyle as a great teacher; I was rather inclined to take him as a great tonic; as a source of intellectual invigoration and moral stimulus and refreshment, rather than of theoretical or practical guidance.[3]

In his study of the great figures of the 1860's, Justin McCarthy emphasizes the prevalence of the Carlylean influence and asserts that it was impossible for anyone to be indifferent to Carlyle:

> In the early Sixties Thomas Carlyle was commonly accepted as the despotic sovereign of thought. . . . There were some of us in the Sixties who preferred to take our thinking from John Stu-

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[2]"Professor Tyndall," The Nineteenth Century, XXV (January, 1894), 3.

[3]Ibid.

> art Mill, for instance, but we did not affect to deny the power of Carlyle and we could be as rapturous as his own professed disciples in our admiration for many of his writings. . . .
>
> Carlyle therefore as the leader of an order of thought may be said to have had it all to himself even among those who could not always be loyal to his leadership. . . . there is no man just now who has anything like the influence over readers and thinkers which was exercised in the Sixties by Thomas Carlyle. That influence was the greater because, as I have said, it met with so much resistance. . . . We all discussed him, followers and rebels alike.[4]

Carlyle's moral earnestness and his deep sincerity made it impossible even for those who disagreed with many of his ideas to ignore him. His was the voice of the poet and prophet denouncing the hypocrisy and complacency of the age, and he inspired many to action. In 1869, Harriet Martineau, writing her autobiography, paid tribute to Carlyle's greatness, and gave him the credit for awakening his age to a sense of its moral and social responsibilities:

> However much or little he may yet do, he certainly ought to be recognised as one of the chief influences of his time. Bad as is our political morality, and grievous as are our social shortcomings, we are at least awakened to a sense of our sins; and I cannot but ascribe this awakening mainly to Carlyle. . . . If I am warranted in believing that the society I am bidding farewell to is a vast improvement upon that which I was born into, I am confident that the blessed change is attributable to Carlyle more than to any single influence besides.[5]

Clement Shorter attests both Carlyle's political and his literary influence, declaring without hesitation that Carlyle is the greatest figure in nineteenth-century literature:

> Carlyle is surely the greatest figure in our modern litera-

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[4]Portraits of the Sixties (London, 1903), pp. 49-50.

[5]Harriet Martineau's Autobiography, ed. Maria Weston Chapman, 2 vols. (Boston, 1877), I, 291-292.

> ture. . . . Carlyle's enormous personality, his capacity for influencing others for good and ill, have made him the greatest moral and intellectual force of his age. To him we owe the indifference to mere political shibboleths, the lull in party warfare, which is the note of our age.[6]

In reviewing volumes V and VI of Carlyle's History of Frederick the Great, the conservative Quarterly Review closed its article with a statement of the extent of Carlyle's influence on the literature of his age:

> As a writer, Mr. Carlyle's fame is established: criticism has done its worst on him: imitation and flattery have done their worst also: in this character 'nothing can touch him further,' and we certainly shall not profane the great work before us by the slight handling of an ordinary review. Enough to say, that, after forming the literary taste of England and America to an extent which no contemporary (unless, possibly, one of a very different class, Macaulay) has approached, he has become, while yet alive and at work among us, something of a classic.[7]

Thus Carlyle's influence on the thought of his times--moral, political, and literary--is everywhere acknowledged. The sheer force of his personality; his championship of right against wrong; his spiritual attitude, that is, his insistence that life is of spiritual significance; his doctrine of work, that work is a duty and a means of overcoming skepticism; his insistence on the humanity of the ordinary man; and his mode of expression, his style, are all offered in partial explanation of his tremendous influence.[8] He was truly a prophet in the an-

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[6]Victorian Literature: Sixty Years of Books and Bookmen (London, 1897), p. 127.

[7]CXVIII (July, 1865), 254.

[8]Benjamin Evans Lippincott, Victorian Critics of Democracy (Minneapolis, 1938), pp. 9-14.

cient Hebrew sense of the word, and he was recognized as one by his contemporaries.

Of most particular interest to this study, however, is Carlyle's literary influence, specifically his influence on the novel as a literary genre. This influence was twofold: The English novel began to show traces of Carlyle's influence in one direction as early as the 1840's, when it turned to the consideration of the contemporary social and economic problems of the industrial revolution. Many of the ideas which Carlyle set forth in Chartism (1840) and in Past and Present (1843) are to be found in such works as Disraeli's Sybil (1845), Mrs. Gaskell's Mary Barton (1848) and North and South (1855), Charlotte Bronte's Shirley (1849), and Kingsley's Alton Locke (1850).[9] Carlyle's influence on Dickens's Hard Times (1854) and A Tale of Two Cities (1859) is well known. Not only was Carlyle to a large extent responsible for the rising emphasis on the need for social reform and the serious study of the problems of industrialism found in the nineteenth-century novel, but he was also highly instrumental in bringing about a shift in the point of view in the novel from the portrayal of the "friction of odd idiosyncracies" to the study of the "struggle for self-realization" of the individual in society, which characterizes many of the novels of the last half of the century.[10]

It is no more than would normally be expected that Carlyle's so-

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[9]Neff, Carlyle, p. 208.

[10]The quoted phrases are taken from Baker, History of the English Novel, VIII, 23.

cial preachments were echoed in many contemporary novels, but it is somewhat ironic that Carlyle, who had denounced fiction as an idle pastime, mostly lies, should have his advice to biographers and historians as to the proper function of their art followed first and most successfully by novelists. It is true, nevertheless, that some novelists, notably George Eliot and George Meredith, recognized the value to the novel of much of Carlyle's criticism of biography and history. Carlyle advocated biographies that portray dramatically the development of the inner man. He argued that a mere collection of the external facts of a man's life is not enough; the struggle for self-realization must be depicted. In the course of explaining why he considered Lockhart's Life of Scott "a compilation well done" rather than a true "composition," a work of art, Carlyle says:

> No man lives without jostling and being jostled; in all ways he has to elbow himself through the world, giving and receiving offence. His life is a battle, in so far as it is an entity at all. The very oyster, we suppose, comes in collision with oysters: undoubtedly enough it does come in collision with Necessity and Difficulty; and helps itself through, not as a perfect ideal oyster, but as an imperfect real one. Some kind of remorse must be known to the oyster; certain hatreds, certain pusillanimities. But as for man, his conflict is continual with the spirit of contradiction, that is without and within; with the evil spirit (or call it, with the weak, most necessitous, pitiable spirit), that is in others and in himself. His walk, like all walking (say the mechanicians) is a series of falls. To paint man's life is to represent these things.[11]

And though Carlyle's main interest was the improvement of the art of biography in England, he did not exempt the novelist from the obliga-

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[11]The Works of Thomas Carlyle, ed. H. D. Traill, 30 vols. (New York, 1903-1904), XXIX, 30 -hereafter cited as Works.

tion of portraying the fundamental tragic issue of life, the "struggle of human Freewill against material Necessity." Speaking of the "whole class of Fictitious Narratives," he says: "What are all these but so many mimic Biographies?"[12] He criticizes Scott adversely for his failure to get inside his characters and depict their inner lives:

> We might say in a short word, which means a long matter, that your Shakspeare fashions his characters from the heart outwards; your Scott fashions them from the skin inwards, never getting near the heart of them. The one set become living men and women; the other amount to little more than mechanical cases, deceptively painted automatons.[13]

That the novelists began to answer Carlyle's argument that only biography is worth man's time and energy by making the novel conform in many respects to his ideal of biography is suggested by Ernest A. Baker:

> The influence on the novel of one great man who would have disdained to write such a thing himself, Thomas Carlyle, must not be overlooked or underestimated at this turning-point in the history of fiction. Carlyle was at the moment a much more imposing and stimulating figure than either Tennyson or Browning, whose chief work was yet in the future. . . . He had recently been teaching that biography is the very essence of all books worthy of the name, biography which traces the development of souls. The effect of his doctrine on such a mind as Browning's, intent on this very problem of the inmost life, is patent, and also upon George Eliot's and Meredith's.[14]

Carlyle, then, was the dominant literary personality in England during Meredith's formative years; and at the time Meredith began writing, he was exercising an important influence on the direction the later nineteenth-century novel was to take. Having received recognition as a

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[12]Works, XXVIII, 48.

[13]Works, XXIX, 75.

[14]History of the English Novel, VIII, 22.

sage as early as 1830, Carlyle continued to dominate the scene until well into the 1860's; and during this period of over thirty years, even those who could not always agree with Carlyle's ideas and those who did not accept him as a great teacher admired him and found him, as Huxley says, " a source of intellectual invigoration and moral stimulus and refreshment." During this period, Carlyle's ideas and opinions were well known. As Justin McCarthy says, "We all discussed him, followers and rebels alike."

These years were important ones in Meredith's life. Born in 1828, Meredith reached his formative years at a time when Carlyle was at the peak of his career. The circumstances of Meredith's early life and education, moreover, were ideally suited to making him susceptible to Carlyle's influence. An unhappy childhood, the death of his mother when he was five years old, the remarriage of his father (this time to his housekeeper) when Meredith was thirteen, general dissatisfaction with his environment and his station in life, his two years of education in Germany--all tended to increase his ambition to do something for himself and for mankind. Meredith was able to choose his own school because his mother's small fortune had been left in trust for his education. Choosing a Moravian school at Neuwied, he remained there for two years without a vacation, studying principally French and German literature.[15]

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[15]For a fuller account of Meredith's early years and education see Robert Esmonde Sencourt, The Life of George Meredith (New York, 1929), pp. 9-20; S. M. Ellis, George Meredith: His Life and Friends in Relation to His Work (London, 1920), pp. 36-58; and Siegfried Sassoon, Meredith (New York, 1948), pp. 1-6.

When he returned to England in 1844 at the age of sixteen, he was, according to Sencourt, "joined to Coleridge and Carlyle in that fellowship of transcendental idealism which was Germany's gift to their ages."[16]

Little is known of Meredith's life for the next two years. It is commonly conjectured, however, that he spent this time with his father in the new tailor shop at St. James Street, London, helping out with the accounts.[17] It was possibly sometime during these years that he first read Carlyle and came under his influence. If so, Carlyle's "vigorous pages," as Huxley calls them, surely came as a wholesome tonic to the sensitive youth, who was miserable in his surroundings and unsure of his future. As Sencourt rather picturesquely puts it:

> He was back again among the crowding incongruities of the comic world, and if he often laughed at them, he often felt desperate. He found relief in violent exercise and in Carlyle. There was about Carlyle just enough of the uncouth to give Meredith a savourous mixture of idealism and oddness making him able to laugh at the strain which irked him in his own life, and Carlyle kept half his brain in Germany, after his return to England: in those years of molding, Carlyle who dominated his thoughts also formed his style.[18]

Since Sencourt's statement is not documented in any way, it must be assumed that it is based on study of Meredith's works. It is cited here merely as an indication of the fact that Meredith's biographers consider the influence of Carlyle upon Meredith to be an early and formative one.

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[16]Sencourt, Meredith, pp. 19-20.

[17]Sassoon, Meredith, p. 4, and Ellis, Meredith, p. 54.

[18]Sencourt, Meredith, p. 21.

In 1846 Meredith became an articled clerk with Richard Stephen Charnock, a solicitor. This association proved of great value to the young Meredith. Charnock is said to have had a share in helping Meredith get started on a literary career. Through Charnock, Meredith met Edward Peacock, son of Thomas Love Peacock, and his sister, a Mrs. Nicolls, who became Meredith's wife in 1849. Another friend of Charnock's with whom Meredith became acquainted was Richard Hengist Horne, admirer of Carlyle and author of Orion and A New Spirit of the Age.[19] Meredith's friendship with Horne is significant for a study of Carlyle's influence on Meredith because Horne represents a strong personal and literary link between Carlyle and Meredith during this important period of Meredith's life. Though he does not connect the three writers directly, Douglas Bush sees in Horne's Orion a link between the thought of Carlyle and Meredith:

> . . . Orion embodies something of Carlyle's gospel of work and leadership, and it anticipates Meredith's evolutionary and humanitarian ideals. It anticipates also Meredith's mythological and philosophic "reading of life." Horne insisted that Orion was not merely a "spiritual epic," as Mrs. Browning called it, but a corporeal epic too; whereas Christian asceticism, in spite of modern physiology and psychology, had never allowed the legitimate claims of the body, he had given senses as well as intellect full scope, and set up as an ideal the harmony of the two. This is pure Meredith.[20]

The fullest treatment of the early influence of Carlyle and Horne on Meredith is given by Galland, who assigns to them the importance of

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[19]Ellis, Meredith, pp. 54-62.

[20]Mythology and the Romantic Tradition: Harvard Studies in English, XVIII (Harvard, 1937), 282.

having stimulated in Meredith the desire to become a great writer:

> . . . Meredith qui devra beaucoup à Carlyle, ne devra-t-il pas moins à Horne, à sa fréquentation, à son influence, pour passer des rêves de l'adolescence et d'un romantisme souffrant à des ambitions précises.[21]
> George Meredith a résolu d'être poète, ce qui, dans sa pensée, veut dire serviteur de l'humanite, heraut du progrès, stimulateur d'énergies. Horne et Carlyle l'ont aidé a prendre conscience de son génie; la leçon d'indépendance et de courage qui sort des Héros lui a été au coeur, et il a senti, comme autant de secousses électriques les exhortations du prophète.[22]

According to Galland, the inspiration of Carlyle's personal experience as recorded in Sartor Resartus helped Meredith to banish doubts and fears from his own mind and to comprehend the evils of society. He began to study Goethe, as Carlyle had urged all men to do, and in Goethe, as Carlyle interpreted him, found his ideal.[23] And it is to this early influence of Carlyle that Galland attributes the absence of any Satanic influence or Byronism in Meredith's first prose work, The Shaving of Shagpat (1855).[24] In addition to this negative influence, Galland sees in Shagpat many positive evidences of the Carlylean influence:

> Carlyle l'avait aidé a formuler ses ambitions, à préciser les vertus viriles que doit acquerir le Héros: l'endurance, le courage, la sincérité, "l'effort incessant pour discerner les vraies règles de l'univers, en connexion avec lui-même et son but, et pour les suivre." Apres "les Héros," il avait lu Sartor Resartus et la fantaisie de Carlyle habillant à l'allemande son héros de la pensée, c'est-à-dire se déguisant en Herr

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[21]Galland, Meredith, p. 46.

[22]Ibid., pp. 49-50.

[23]Ibid., pp. 50-51.

[24]Ibid., p. 104.

> Teufelsdroeckh, car il y a beaucoup de lui-même en Teufelsdroeckh, avait trouvé en Meredith un disciple preparé.[25]

Reading Carlyle not only did much to help Meredith find himself, Galland says, but it also suggested to him a means of expressing his freedom from fear and doubt, his determination to be come "Master of the Event." Shibli Bagarag is Meredith's Teufelsdröckh. Galland points to the analogy. After discussing several specific Carlylean ideas in Shagpat and pointing to verbal echoes of Carlyle in the work, Galland says:

> Il y a plus de Carlyle que de Vathek ou de Thalaba dans Shagpat. La conception fondamentale--du héros libéralement fustigé par le sort—est toute Carlyléene et l'humour qui déguise en sac-à chiffons (Bag-à-rag) et qui prend pour type de la Bêtise une tête embroussaillée (Shaggy pate) ou l'est pas moins. On pense malgré soi aux sacs de notes en désordre qui contenaient la philosophie de Teufelsdroeckh. Ce que ce dernier est à Carlyle, Shibli Bagarag l'est à Meredith. Cette oeuvre de jeunesse est le Pourana (comme disait Renan de son Avenir de la Science) où il a versé pêle-mêle toutes ses ideas, (qui sont pour une bonne part celles de Carlyle) en laissant à la fantaisie le soin de les produire. Et de même que Sartor Resartus est autobiographique, Shagpat, l'est aussi dans une certaine mesure. Shibli Bagarag, c'est Meredith lui-même avec sa pauvreté, son ambition, ses rêves, sa vanité, son courage forgé par le sort. "Dans ma jeunesse, dira-t-il plus tard, je regardai l'avenir sous une grêle de coups" (I looked out from under a hail of blows). Son imitation de Carlyle est moins une parodie qu'un délicat hommage, une forme subtile de flatterie pour "le foyer ardent auquel il a allumé ce qui brûle de plus clair en son âme."[26]

Galland appears to base his opinions on careful study of Shagpat and of a sonnet of Meredith's, to be examined later in this chapter. In any event, his comparison of Shagpat to Sartor seems to be a valid one. His suggestion that the similarities between the two works are the

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[25]Meredith, p. 108.

[26]Ibid., p. 111.

result of a conscious imitation of Carlyle by Meredith is of particular interest. Since he confines his remarks to Shagpat, it does not seem likely that he intends in this statement to indicate an influence of Carlyle upon Meredith's total literary theory, though he evidently conceives the influence upon Meredith of Carlyle's attitude toward life to be formative and lasting. This conclusion, it should be noted, is probably based largely upon study of Meredith's works and upon certain tributes to Carlyle by Meredith to be examined later in this chapter. As far as can be ascertained, Meredith never made any direct statements which indicate the time that he first read Carlyle's works; nor did he ever openly admit that he was indebted to Carlyle for his philosophical outlook.

Since Meredith's letters and other writings reveal a fairly thorough and detailed knowledge of Carlyle's works, it is a valid assumption that he read and re-read them, but nothing can be found to connect Meredith directly with Carlyle until their first meeting in 1859 or 1860, soon after the publication of The Ordeal of Richard Feverel. The circumstances surrounding this first meeting between Carlyle and Meredith are extremely significant for the study of Carlyle's influence on Meredith. Meredith's friend York Powell writes:

> The story is that Mrs. Carlyle begged Carlyle to read Richard Feverel. He did so, and said, 'Ma dear, that young man's nae fule. Ask him here.' When he came, as Meredith himself told me, he talked long with him on deep things, and begged him to come often. He said 'Man, ye suld write heestory! Ye have a heestorian in ye!' Meredith answered that novel-writing was his way of writing history, but Carlyle would not quite accept that, though he did not argue against it, but rather doubted over it,

as if there were more in it than he had thought at first.[27]

Meredith seems to have been fond of recollecting and recounting the story of his first visit with Carlyle. Here is another version as Meredith told it to Edward Clodd, whom he did not meet until 1884,[28] twenty-five years after the meeting with Carlyle and four years after Carlyle's death:

> In my walks I often came across Carlyle, and longed to speak to him. One day my publishers received a letter from Mr. Carlyle asking about me. Then I called on them; Carlyle told me that his wife disliked Feverel at first, and had flung it on the floor, but that on her reading some of it to him he said, 'The man's no fool'; so they persevered to the end. He said that I had the making of an historian in me; but I answered that so much fiction must always enter into history that I must stick to novel writing.[29]

Sassoon reports still a third version of the occasion as Meredith described it to a visiting journalist nearly fifty years later. Carlyle had urged Meredith to stick to facts:

> I said to him, with all deference, I thought there were greater things in the world than facts. He turned on me and said, 'But facts are truth, and truth is facts.' I said, 'No pardon me; if I may say so, truth I take to be the broad heaven above the petty doings of mankind which we call Facts.' He gave me a smile of pity for my youth, as I suppose, and then said, 'Ah well, if ye like to talk in that poetic way, ye may; but ye'll find it in your best interest, young man, to stick to Fahcts.'[30]

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[27]Oliver Elton, Frederick York Powell: A Life and a Selection from His Letters and Occasional Writings, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1906), I, 227-228.

[28]Edward Clodd, Memories (New York, 1916), p. 138.

[29]Ibid., p. 148.

[30]Meredith, p. 25.

The three versions of Meredith's first visit with Carlyle cited here tell essentially the same story. Carlyle tried to persuade Meredith to turn to the writing of history; but Meredith, though surely aware of the praise involved in Carlyle's proposal, insisted on the worth of the kind of fiction he hoped to write. And Carlyle probably admired the sincerity and integrity of the younger man. What is truly remarkable, however, is that Meredith continued to tell the story of his first meeting with Carlyle until his death. It must have been one of his most treasured memories. Carlyle's approbation of Richard Feverel, expressed in such a manner, surely went far toward counteracting the effect of the general disapproval of the professional critics and toward increasing Meredith's regard for Carlyle.

It is significant, too, that Carlyle, in spite of his general antipathy to fiction, was interested enough in the author of Richard Feverel to write the publishers to inquire about him and that when Meredith visited him he paid him his highest compliment in telling him that he should write history. As will be shown in Chapter III, for Carlyle, the historian must possess the attributes of a poet and a prophet; true history is not written by Dryasdusts. And the fact that Carlyle, after he had read Richard Feverel, urged Meredith to write history suggests that he believed he had found a disciple, or at least someone who could easily be made one.

Perhaps Carlyle was conscious of an intellectual affinity with Meredith after he met him; perhaps the novel itself convinced him of Meredith's merits. At any rate, it is not out of place here to mention

briefly those things about the novel that possibly account for Carlyle's interest in its author. Richard Feverel is an apprenticeship novel in the tradition of Goethe's Wilhelm Meister,[31] which Carlyle had translated early in his career. It is the Carlylean interpretation of the apprentice theme, moreover, that Meredith adopts, as will be shown in Chapter V of this study. Carlyle himself had used elements of the apprentice pattern in his Sartor Resartus, and his theory of biography shows traces of its influence. Richard Feverel, like the ideal Carlylean biography, portrays the development of a man's soul, his struggle for self-realization as he goes through life. The autobiographical element in Richard Feverel is also very prominent; indeed, the transition from writing Richard Feverel to writing Carlylean biography or history would not have been a difficult one to make. Richard Feverel is not written primarily for entertainment; it is concocted of far sterner stuff than the typical "fashionable novel," which Carlyle thoroughly despised. The spirit of the teacher, the moralist, and the poet breathes from nearly every page. Meredith's attack on a system of education in opposition to nature, which is one of the dominant themes of the novel, must have pleased Carlyle, who had no respect for system-builders and systems in general. In fact, Carlyle's criticism of the system of Mirabeau's education devised by Mirabeau's father is strikingly similar to Meredith's

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[31]For a brief discussion of the apprentice pattern found in some of Meredith's novels see Susanne Howe, Wilhelm Meister and His English Kinsmen: Apprentices to Life (New York, 1930), pp. 266-268.

criticism of Sir Austin's system in Richard Feverel.[32] It is relatively easy to find specific passages in Richard Feverel that conceivably would have met with Carlyle's approval. For example, after Richard has run away in London, but before it is known or even suspected at Raynham that he intends to marry Lucy, Meredith, delighting in the irony of the situation, digresses:

> The System, wedded to Time, slept, and knew not how he had been outraged--anticipated by seven pregnant seasons. For Time had heard the hero swear to that legalizing instrument, and had also registered an oath. Ah me! venerable Hebrew Time! he is unforgiving. Half the confusion and fever of the world comes of this vendetta he declares against the hapless innocents who have once done him a wrong. They cannot escape him. They will never outlive it. The father of jokes, he is himself no joke; which it seems the business of men to discover.[33]

The inevitability of the fruits of all actions in Time mentioned here by Meredith is a Carlylean maxim. The moralizing tone and style of this and of many other similar passages in Richard Feverel is not unlike Carlyle's own. Meredith, like Carlyle, could not often resist the opportunity to point a moral. It is quite possible to imagine such a passage as this evoking from Carlyle the comment: "Ma dear, that young man's nae fule. Ask him here."

Unfortunately, very few details of the personal relationship between Carlyle and Meredith following their first meeting have come to light. It is impossible to determine the exact nature of their relationship; therefore, whether they became close friends or whether the

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[32] Works, XXVIII, 434-452, et passim.

[33] The Works of George Meredith. Memorial Edition, 29 vols. (New York, 1909-1912), II, 274-275--hereafter cited as Works.

relationship remained casual is a matter for debate. J. A. Hammerton says that Meredith's friendship with Carlyle was "of the most casual nature."[34] Stevenson, on the other hand, referring to Meredith's "old friend Carlyle," implies that the friendship was a fairly close one.[35] However casual or intimate the relationship may have been, indications are that the two men encountered each other frequently during the 1860's and even into the 1870's. Opportunities for casual meetings were certainly not lacking during this period. In 1860 Meredith assumed his post as literary adviser to the publishing firm of Chapman and Hall, which was at that time Carlyle's publisher.[36] Meredith's work as reader required that he spend one full day each week at the office in Piccadilly,[37] where he can Carlyle could easily have met often. Then in 1862, Meredith took a room with the Rossetti brothers and Swinburne at 16 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea. Meredith spent at least one night a week there until late 1863 or early 1864.[38] This house was near Carlyle's and while there, Meredith had further opportunities to see Carlyle.[39]

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[34]George Meredith: His Life and Art in Anecdote and Criticism (Edinburgh, 1911), p. 108.

[35]Meredith, p. 152.

[36]Ellis, Meredith, p. 201. Chapman and Hall had been Carlyle's publishers since 1843.

[37]Ibid., p. 149.

[38]Ibid., pp. 149-153.

[39]The house, in fact, seems to have been too close to Carlyle's: "Meredith, in after years, used to say that so hilarious were the post-prandial meetings of Rossetti's guests in the garden that Mrs. Carlyle had to send round to beg them to make less noise, as Carlyle was dis-

That he did continue to call on the Carlyles after the first visit can be inferred from a statement made by Sir William Hardman, a close friend of Meredith's, on the occasion of Jane Welsh Carlyle's death, which occurred on April 21, 1866. Hardman writes:

> The death of Mrs. Carlyle, wife of the celebrated author, during his absence in Scotland, where he had gone to be installed Lord Rector, has been a great shock to various friends of ours, especially George Meredith, who had been to see her only the day before she died.[40]

Meredith probably first called on the Carlyles in late 1859 or early 1860, and the fact that he visited Mrs. Carlyle in 1866 suggests that he was a periodic, if not a frequent visitor at No. 5 Cheyne Row. He surely did not wait seven years to follow Carlyle's advice to "come often."

Further evidence that the relationship between Meredith and Carlyle was somewhat more than casual and that they did see each other from time to time over a long period of years is found in the story of Arthur J. Ashton's meeting with Meredith. In reporting Meredith's conversation, Ashton says:

> He said in effect, "Carlyle was always trying to get me to write history. Novels were no good. 'Ye must write heestory.' So one day I said, 'Carlyle, do you know what historians remind me of?' 'No.' 'They are like a row of men working in a potato field, with their eyes and noses down in the furrow, and their other end turned towards Heaven.' I thought he would be very angry; but he only listened, and sighed, and then said, 'Well, perhaps that's varra true.' He never asked me to write history

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turbed at his lucubrations." Ellis, Meredith, pp. 149-150.

[40]The Hardman Papers: A Further Selection (1865-1868) from the Letters and Memoirs of Sir William Hardman, ed. S. M. Ellis (London, 1930), p. 127.

again." We walked up and down Penrith station while he told me this story, very carefully, to get the right dramatic effect.[41]

There is no reason to doubt the authenticity of Ashton's account of Meredith's conversation. David Alec Wilson accepts it and opines that the conversation between Carlyle and Meredith reported by Ashton occurred some time in the 1870's.[42] If Wilson is correct in dating the incident, then Carlyle and Meredith must have met periodically over a stretch of some eleven years or more. Frequently during that period, they must have discussed literature--Carlyle urging Meredith to forsake fiction and to turn to the writing of history. Still, it is impossible from the scanty evidence available to determine just what degree of personal friendship may have existed between Carlyle and Meredith.

It is noteworthy, however, that Meredith chose to tell this story to a young man whom he had never seen before. Having struck up a conversation with Ashton in a carriage, Meredith proceeded to deliver what Ashton terms a "very fine monologue,"[43] which continued after they had reached the station; and prominent in that monologue was the story of Meredith's encounters with Carlyle. Evidently Meredith's discussions with Carlyle on the subject of literature were much in his mind.

Meredith's knowledge of Carlyle's writings and his opinions of them are of far greater importance to this study than his personal rela-

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[41] As I Went on My Way (London, 1924), p. 82.

[42] David Alec Wilson and David Wilson MacArthur, Carlyle in Old Age (1865-1881) (New York, 1934), p. 354.

[43] As I Went on My Way, p. 81.

tions with Carlyle; and, fortunately, Meredith himself has left a record of these. It is clear from the many references to Carlyle in Meredith's letters and in his other works that he read Carlyle and knew his works well; moreover, Meredith's criticism of Carlyle, which is singularly perceptive and just for one so close to him in time (and space, too, for that matter), could result only from careful study of Carlyle's writings. It will be seen, furthermore, that Meredith's enthusiasm for Carlyle did not lead him to a blind acceptance of all of Carlyle's ideas. Though he maintained the value of Carlyle's spiritual point of view, he could not always agree with Carlyle's conclusions, particularly in politics. He recognized, too, the humor which pervades Carlyle's writings. In 1865, Meredith writes to his friend Frederick Maxse, an avid reader of Carlyle, cautioning him not to take Carlyle too literally:

> In reading Carlyle, bear in mind that he is a humourist. The insolence offensive to you, is part of his humour. He means what he says, but only as far as a humourist can mean what he says. See the difference between him and Emerson, who is on the contrary a philosopher. The humourist, notwithstanding, has much truth to back him. Swim on his pages, take his poetry and fine grisly laughter, his manliness, together with some splendid teaching. It is a good set-off to the doctrines of what is called the 'Empirical school.' I don't agree with Carlyle a bit, but I do enjoy him.[44]

Such a comment as this one assuredly came from a man who was well-acquainted with Carlyle's work. Meredith probably did not mean it when he wrote that he did not agree with Carlyle "a bit." It is safe to assume that Meredith here had reference to specific political ideas of

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[44]Letters of George Meredith, ed. [William Maxse Meredith], 2 vols. (New York, 1912), I, 173-174—hereafter cited as Letters.

Carlyle, for he did, in fact, agree with much that Carlyle believed. The duality of Meredith's attitude toward Carlyle is well illustrated in the poem "Lines to a Friend Visiting America," occasioned by John Morley's visit to America in 1867. In this poem, Meredith, much in the Carlylean manner, denounces Mammonism as the besetting evil in England, describing the English middle class as

> A false majority, by stealth,
> Have got her fast, and sway the rod:
> A headless tyrant built of wealth,
> The hypocrite, the belly-God.[45]

At the same time, however, he attacks the conclusion of Carlyle's splenetic "Shooting Niagara: And After?"—in which Carlyle, driven to the wall by the passage of the Second Reform Bill, turned to the remnants of the English hereditary nobility as providing the last hope for producing the necessary "heroes" to lead the country out of anarchy. In a passage containing much high praise of Carlyle, Meredith ridicules his reliance on the aristocracy:

> A poet, half a prophet, rose
> In recent days, and called for power.
> I love him; but his mountain prose--
> His Alp and valley and wild flower—
>
> Proclaimed our weakness, not its source.
> What medicine for disease had he?
> Whom summoned for a show of force?
> Our titular aristocracy![46]

Meredith then goes on to say that once he, too, had hoped for leadership from the aristocracy, but that it has now conceded to and

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[45] Works, XXV, 8.

[46] Works, XXV, 9.

been absorbed by the Mammon-worshiping commercial class:

> But these, of all the liveried crew
> Obeisant in Mammon's walk,
> Most deferent ply the facial screw,
> The spinal bend, submissive talk.
>
> Small fear that they will run to books
> (At least the better form of seed)!
> I, too, have hoped from their good looks,
> And fables of their Northman breed;--
>
> Have hoped that they the land would head
> In acts magnanimous; but, lo,
> When fainting heroes beg for bread
> They frown: where they are driven they go.[47]

Further evidence that Meredith has Carlyle's "Shooting Niagara: And After?" specifically in mind is found in his reference to America as

> The strange experimental land
> Where men continually dare take
> Niagara leaps. . . .[48]

Though Meredith valued Carlyle highly as a sage and seer, as a spiritual teacher, he recognized his limitations as a guide to the practical conduct of everyday life. In a letter to Maxse dated December 27, 1869, he makes this distinction himself:

> Mill is essentially a critic: it is his heart, not his mind, which sends him feeling ahead. But he really does not touch the soul and springs of the Universe as Carlyle does. Only when the latter attempts practical dealings he is irritable as a woman, impetuous as a tyrant. He seeks the short road to his ends; and the short road is, we know, a bloody one. He is not wise; Mill is; but Carlyle has most light when he burns calmly.[49]

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[47] Works, XXV, 9-10.

[48] Works, XXV, 4.

[49] Letters, I, 198-199.

In another letter to Maxse a few days later (January 2, 1870), Meredith expresses even more clearly his attitude toward Carlyle as a practical guide in political affairs:

> I hold that he is the nearest to being an inspired writer of any man in our times; he does proclaim inviolable law: he speaks from the deep springs of life. All this. But when he descends to our common pavement, when he would apply his eminent spiritual wisdom to the course of legislation, he is no more sagacious nor useful nor temperate than a flash of lightning in a grocer's shop. 'I purify the atmosphere,' says this agent. 'You knock me down, spoil my goods and frighten my family,' says the grocer.--Philosophy, while rendering his dues to a man like Carlyle and acknowledging itself inferior in activity, despises his hideous blustering impatience in the presence of progressive facts.
>
> Read the 'French Revolution' and you listen to a seer: the recent pamphlets, and he is a drunken country squire of superordinary ability.
>
> Carlyle preaches work for all, to all. Good. But his method of applying his sermon to his 'nigger' is intolerable.--Spiritual light he has to illuminate a nation. Of practical little or none, and he beats his own brains out with emphasis.[50]

In these two letters to Maxse, though Meredith vehemently denies that Carlyle has any value as a guide in practical affairs, he states strongly his admiration and respect for him as a moral leader, a seer. That he loved and admired the essential Carlyle and felt that he was a great teacher is manifest. It is only Carlyle's attempt to "apply his eminent spiritual wisdom to the course of legislation" to which Meredith objects. It should be noted, too, that Meredith speaks not only of Carlyle the political thinker and Carlyle the spiritual leader, but of Carlyle the writer also. He says that he is "the nearest to being an inspired writer of any man in our times"; that in his works, he "beats his own brains out with emphasis." Here, again, Meredith speaks with

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[50] Letters, I, 200.

the authority of one who has read Carlyle and re-read him. The allusion to Carlyle's doctrine of work could have come from almost any cultivated person of the nineteenth century, whether he had read the productions of the sage or not, but these careful judgments do not proceed from a casual acquaintance with Carlyle's writings. They proceed, instead, from a thorough knowledge of them.

During the whole decade of the 1870's, Meredith was unusually conscious of Carlyle and of Carlyle's ideas. Writing to Frederick Greenwood in 1873, he praises, with slight reservation, Sir James Fitz-James Stephen's articles criticizing Mill's utilitarian viewpoint in "On Liberty." Assuming the impartial attitude of the critical observer of the controversies of others, Meredith points out that Stephen is indebted to Carlyle for his ideas:

> Fitz James Stephen's articles are fine outhitting and have judicial good sense. They are the prose of Carlyle's doctrines, valuable, profitable, but to me, though I take their smashing force, just not conclusive enough to make me anxious to hear the rejoinder. It is of great importance that what he says should be said. His side of the case has hitherto been woefully dumb--unable to supply an athlete. So bold and able a writer will set a balance.[51]

In Beauchamp's Career, first published serially in The Fortnightly Review in 1874-1875, Meredith pays tribute to Carlyle's style with an impressionistic description of it that is almost as applicable to his own style. This description of Carlyle's style is indicative of Meredith's knowledge of and appreciation for Carlyle's works in general:

> [Beauchamp's] favourite author was one writing of Heroes, in . .

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[51] Letters, I, 239.

> . a style resembling either early architecture or utter dilapidation, so loose and rough it seemed; a wind-in-the-orchard style, that tumbled down here and there an appreciable fruit with uncouth bluster; sentences without commencements running to abrupt endings and smoke, like waves against a sea-wall, learned dictionary words giving a hand to street-slang, and accents falling on them haphazard, like slant rays from driving clouds; all the pages in a breeze, the whole book producing a kind of electrical agitation in the mind and the joints.[52]

This description of Carlyle's style, emphasizing as it does its power to affect the reader, could have been written only by a sympathetic admirer of Carlyle's, by one who felt the force of Carlyle's language. The statement that Carlyle's Heroes produces a "kind of electrical agitation in the mind and the joints" is assuredly the expression of a personal experience.

In addition to the reference to Heroes cited above, there are two allusions to Carlyle's Cromwell in Beauchamp's Career. The first allusion is an oblique one, to be sure, but unmistakable nevertheless:

> [Beauchamp] confessed to his dear friend Rosamund Culling that he thought the parsons happy in having time to read history. And oh, to feel for certain which side was the wrong side in our Civil War, so that one should not hesitate in choosing![53]

The second reference to Cromwell is direct:

> Nevil proposed to [Rosamund] that her next present should be the entire list of his beloved Incomprehensible's published works, and she promised, and was not sorry to keep her promise dangling at the skirts of memory, to drop away in time. For that fire-and-smoke writer dedicated volumes to the praise of a regicide.[54]

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[52] Works, XI, 22.

[53] Works, XI, 21.

[54] Works, XI, 23.

The sonnet which Meredith wrote on Carlyle's eightieth birthday suggests that Meredith reverenced Carlyle to a fuller extent than he would admit in his letters to his friends. It is as extravagant in its unqualified praise of Carlyle as any of the eulogies cited at the beginning of this chapter. It also demonstrates a firm grasp of the essential meaning and value of Carlyle's teachings. It is perhaps significant, too, that this sonnet was not written for publication, but was composed in the Garrick Club in the early hours of the morning and given to a friend:

To Carlyle

This eightieth year of thine sits crowned in light
To lift our England from her fleshly mire:
Two generations view thee as a fire
Whence they have drawn what burns in them most bright:
For thou hast bared the roots of life with sight
Piercing; in language stronger than the lyre:
And thou hast shown the way must man aspire,
Is through the old sweat and anguish Adamite,
As at the first. Unsweet might seem his fate
Sole with a spade between the stars of earth!--
Giving much labour for his little mirth,
And soldier-service till he fail to strike:
But such thine was, and thine to contemplate
Shall quicken young ambition for the like.[55]

Carlyle's depth of vision as a seer, his mode of expression, his doctrine of work for all, and the example he set in his own life as a man of letters are all alluded to and extolled in this sonnet. A tribute such as this one indicates an attitude toward Carlyle which would be most appropriate in a professed disciple. The concluding line holds special significance in view of Galland's idea that Carlyle's concept of

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[55]Letters, I, 259-260.

the hero helped Meredith to formulate his ambitions. It is difficult to avoid concluding that when Meredith calls attention to the power of Carlyle's example to "quicken young ambition," he is making a personal allusion.

In 1876, Meredith wrote to John Morley praising his essay "Robespierre," and suggested that he write a history of the French Revolution. Though Meredith said that Carlyle bore the re-reading, he added that there was a need for a more sober, ordered treatment of the subject—one, say, in Morley's style. It was a high compliment to Morley, and Meredith meant it as such. Since the break in their friendship a few years earlier, which had resulted from Meredith's criticism of Morley's work, Meredith had been careful not to give offense:

> I have read your 'Robespierre.' It sent me to Carlyle. He bears the re-reading. Still that kind of thing will not do. It is our only History of the French Revolution, and is in as much disorder as the Paris of Danton. Evidently this is your work to be done.[56]

In the following year, Meredith paid a glowing tribute to Carlyle in his Essay on Comedy, first given as a lecture at the London Institution on February 1, 1877, and published in the April number of The New Quarterly Magazine of that same year.[57] In a style reminiscent of Carlyle's own, Meredith uses Carlyle as the basis of his description of the great humorist; and even though he takes this occasion to point out a weakness in Carlyle's theory of the hero, or rather in Carlyle's appli-

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[56]Letters, I, 265.

[57]Subsequently published in book form in 1897, and later printed in volume XXIII of the Memorial Edition of Meredith's works.

cation of it, this criticism is far outweighed by the high praise given:

> Taking a living great, though not creative humourist to guide our description: the skull of Yorick is in his hand in our seasons of festival; he sees visions of primitive man capering preposterously under the gorgeous robes of ceremonial. Our souls must be on fire when we wear solemnity, if we would not press upon his shrewdest nerve. Finite and infinite flash from one to the other with him, lending him a two-edged thought that peeps out of his peacefullest lines by fits, like the lantern of the fire-watcher at windows, going the rounds at night. The comportment and performances of men in society are to him, by the vivid comparison with their mortality, more grotesque than respectable. But ask yourself, Is he always to be relied on for justness? He will fly straight as the emissary eagle back to Jove at the true Hero. He will also make as determined a swift descent upon the man of his wilful choice, whom we cannot distinguish as a true one. This vast power of his, built up of the feelings and the intellect in union, is often wanting in proportion and in direction. Humourists touching upon History or Society are given to be capricious.[58]

Another indication of Meredith's regard for Carlyle as a writer is seen in the fact that Chapman and Hall, the firm for which Meredith was literary adviser, purchased the copyright to all of Carlyle's works upon his death in 1881. The year before Carlyle's death, Chapman and Hall had been floated and limited, and Frederic Chapman had been made manager of the firm. In his history of the company, Arthur Waugh says:

> . . . the real business of the firm depended, of course, upon Frederic Chapman and George Meredith, his adviser. One of the first things that Frederic Chapman did with the new capital at his disposal was to purchase the entire copyright in Carlyle's works, when that author, by this time an established "seller," died in 1881, the year after the formation of the company.[59]

That the firm purchased the copyright to Carlyle's works upon the advice

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[58] Works, XXIII, 44.

[59] A Hundred Years of Publishing: Being the Story of Chapman & Hall, Ltd. (London, 1930), pp. 182-183.

of Meredith is hardly open to doubt. B. W. Matz, in his article on Meredith as a reader for the firm, says: "Mr. Meredith's word was the final one for us in almost every circumstance."[60]

Then, in 1882, after the publication of Carlyle's Reminiscences, and at a time when Carlyle's popularity had suffered a sharp decline, Meredith, seemingly eager to correct a false impression of Carlyle in a young man he had recently corresponded with, staunchly defends him in a letter to André Raffalovich. In this letter Meredith says that he knew the Carlyles well, and is resolutely unwavering in his vindication of Carlyle. Significantly, Meredith mentions Carlyle's approbation of Richard Feverel and quotes his comment on the "writer thereof." Though the passage in question is rather long, it is worthy of quotation in full:

> Your article on Th. Carlyle's 'Reminiscences' was prompted I think rather by enthusiasm for the lady who stands close and in contrast with him than by an accurate knowledge of his works, nature and teaching. Our people over here have been equally unjust, with less excuse. You speak of vanity, as a charge against him. He has little, though he certainly does not err on the side of modesty:—he knew his powers. The harsh judgment he passed on the greater number of his contemporaries came from a very accurate perception of them, as they were perused by the intense light of the man's personal sincereness. He was one who stood constantly in the presence of those 'Eternal verities' of which he speaks. For the shallow men of mere literary aptitude he had perforce contempt. The spirit of the prophet was in him. —Between him and his wife the case is quite simple. She was a woman of peculiar conversational sprightliness, and such a woman longs for society. To him, bearing that fire of sincereness, as I have said, society was unendurable. All coming near him, except those who could bear the trial, were scorched, and he was as much hurt as they by the action rousing the flames in him.

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[60]"George Meredith as a Publisher's Reader," The Fortnightly Review, LXXXVI (August, 1909), 284.

> Moreover, like all truthful souls, he was an artist in his work. The efforts after verification of matters of fact, and to present things distinctly in language, were incessant; they cost him his health, swallowed up his leisure. Such a man could hardly be an agreeable husband for a woman of the liveliest vivacity. But that is not a reason for your passing condemnation on him. Study well his writings. I knew them both. She did me the honour to read my books, and make him listen to extracts, and he was good enough to repeat that 'the writer thereof was no fool'—high praise from him. They snapped at one another, and yet the basis of affection was mutually firm. She admired, he respected, and each knew the other to be honest. Only she needed for her mate one who was more a citizen of the world, and a woman of the placid disposition of Milton's Eve, framed by her master to be an honest labourer's cook and housekeeper, with a nervous system resembling a dumpling, would have been enough for him—He was the greatest of the Britons of his time—and after the British fashion of not coming near perfection; Titanic, not Olympian: a heaver of rocks, not a shaper. But if he did no perfect work, he had lightning's power to strike out marvellous pictures and reach to the inmost of men with a phrase.[61]

Several of Meredith's statements here deserve further comment. Meredith's sympathetic defense of Carlyle's harsh judgment of many of his contemporaries, his recognition of Carlyle's contempt for "shallow men of mere literary aptitude," his knowledge of the domestic life of the Carlyles and of Carlyle's methods of working--all tend to confirm the impression that Meredith's personal relationship with the Carlyles, though not necessarily intimate, had been more than casual. The soundness and balance of Meredith's judgments of Carlyle are truly amazing, especially when it is remembered that it took about fifty years of criticism and scholarship after the publication of the Reminiscences to clear the air and to arrive at essentially the same position. Such a letter as this one could have been composed only by one possessing an

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[61] Letters, II, 332-333.

intimate knowledge of Carlyle the man and the writer. Meredith never gave higher praise to any man than that contained in the concluding sentences of this eulogy of Carlyle.

In the spring of 1893, Meredith posed for George Frederic Watts, the painter. While posing, he talked to the artist and his wife about some of his eminent contemporaries. His opinion of Carlyle bespeaks tremendous respect for the man and for his work. Part of the conversation is reported in Watts's biography:

> To Signor [Frederic Watts] he remarked, "I believe that this age will be ranked as the most heroically striving of any time," and he attributed much of this earnestness to the work of Carlyle. Of this he said: "It will last, but how it is impossible to say; whether as classical work or as absorbed by his generation and transmitted, none can say as yet. He has taught all earnest people to-day that they have to take life seriously and do some work for the world—that there is a yea and a nay, and they must make choice of one or other."[62]

This statement reaffirms most clearly the tribute which Meredith paid to Carlyle in the sonnet already quoted. Together, they indicate a thorough acquaintance with Carlyle's teachings. It is important, too, to note that in this statement Meredith again emphasizes the importance of Carlyle as a spiritual guide.

In The National Review for August, 1896, Meredith reviewed Alice Meynell's two books of essays, The Rhythm of Life and The Colour of Life. Meredith closes his review with these borrowed compliments:

> I can fancy Matthew Arnold lighting on such essays as 'The Point of Honour,' 'A Point in Biography,' 'Symmetry and Incident,' and others that I have named, saying with refreshment, 'She can

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[62]M. S. Watts, George Frederic Watts: The Annals of an Artist's Life, 3 vols. (New York, 1912), II, 231.

> write!' It does not seem to me too bold to imagine Carlyle listening, without the weariful gesture, to his wife's reading of the same, hearing them to the end, and giving his comment: 'That woman thinks!'[63]

Meredith's reverence for Carlyle never waned throughout his life. As late as 1902, he recalls with pleasure Carlyle's essays on Goethe. Writing to Lady Ulrica Duncombe, he says:

> No, I have never written of Goethe. In my younger days Carlyle had the field. He commended the study of Goethe to me constantly, and wrote better of him than I should have done. Do you know his Goethe articles? You, womanlike, swallow your herb whole. He inclined to do the same, for he also was wilful in his adorings. I do worship the splendid statue clothed in wisdom; only I claim the right to smile now and then. It is not wholesome even for great men to be adored while they breathe.[64]

Thus Meredith, in his seventy-fourth year, is still concerned about Carlyle's heroes. It seems almost as though he regrets that Carlyle possessed a wilfulness which made it impossible, at times, to accept his choice of a hero or his application of his "spiritual wisdom" to the common course of "practical dealings." Meredith has fairly accurately expressed his own attitude toward Carlyle in the last two sentences of the passage quoted above.

In 1903, Meredith said to his friend Edward Clodd:

> "Morley has sent me his Gladstone: the life of the intellectual gladiator is more to his taste than the life of a soldier-statesman like Cromwell, because Morley has no stomach for fighting. Hence the difference between him and Carlyle, whose heart was in the story of a battle."[65]

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[63] Works, XXIII, 139.

[64] Letters, II, 525.

[65] Memories, p. 158.

This comparison of Morley and Carlyle is particularly interesting in the light of Meredith's earlier remarks to Morley upon The French Revolution. In this comment it seems clear that Meredith's sympathy is with the writer whose "heart was in the story of a battle."

These references to Carlyle from Meredith's conversations, from his letters, and from some of his literary works and the sonnet on Carlyle's eightieth birthday show that Meredith knew Carlyle and his works and that though he reserved the right to disagree with Carlyle's choice of a hero now and then and with some of Carlyle's judgments in the practical, everyday world of politics, he considered him to be the greatest spiritual force of his times. Repeatedly he voices his highest praise for Carlyle the humorist and the literary artist. He esteems Carlyle the moral philosopher, the poet and prophet. Frequently he uses Carlyle as a touchstone for judging the work of others. The conclusion that Meredith read Carlyle's works sympathetically and thoroughly is inescapable. He speaks of The French Revolution, the Cromwell, Heroes, and the political and social essays, alludes to the "clothes philosophy" of Sartor Resartus, praises the essays on Goethe, and reveals a close knowledge of Carlyle's ideas in general, particularly his theory of the hero and his doctrine of work.

It has been the purpose of this chapter to show that the possibility for Carlyle to exert a significant influence on Meredith did exist and to provide a background for a study of that influence. Carlyle was the most influential writer in England during Meredith's formative years. His moral, political, and literary influence on thinkers

and readers of the time was tremendous. Further, Meredith read Carlyle under circumstances singularly propitious to the early acceptance of his leadership. His two years of study in Germany must have prepared him, as it were, for Carlyle's influence. His early reading of Carlyle probably helped him to shape his ambitions to become a man of letters, as Galland deduces. When he met Carlyle in 1859 or 1860, the two men discussed literature, Carlyle insisting that Meredith should write history. It is not unreasonable to deduce from the evidence available that the two writers met frequently on quite friendly terms during the 1860's and the 1870's and that literature was often the topic of discussion. And finally, it has been shown from Meredith's references to Carlyle and to his works that he knew Carlyle's works well and that he held him in high esteem as a seer and as a man of letters. The way was certainly open for Carlyle to exercise a fundamental influence on Meredith's thought and on his literary art. The remainder of this study will attempt to set forth and evaluate Carlyle's influence on Meredith's theory of literature.

## CHAPTER III

## THE NOBLE WORKMAN

Although Meredith gives the impression that he and Carlyle frequently discussed literature, he records only two specific recommendations that Carlyle made to him. He says that Carlyle continually urged him to write history ("Carlyle was always trying to get me to write history") and to study Goethe ("He commended the study of Goethe to me constantly"). Superficially considered, Carlyle's two recommendations to Meredith appear to be mutually contradictory. He advises Meredith to write history; yet the writer he offers as a model is no historian, but a creative artist of the highest order. It is only on the surface, however, that any contradiction exists. Involved in the reconciliation of these two recommendations to Meredith is Carlyle's theory of the function of the man of letters in society. It is that broad theory from which all of Carlyle's literary principles derive, and study of it not only resolves any contradiction which his advice to Meredith may seem to contain, but offers a basis for a comparison of his literary principles with those of Meredith.

For the purpose, therefore, of comparing their theories of literature, the fact that according to commonly-accepted definitions Carlyle is primarily an essayist, a biographer, and a historian, and that Meredith is primarily a poet and a novelist will be ignored as far as possible in this chapter. The emphasis, at least, will be placed on their similarities rather than on their differences. The two writers

will be viewed as men of letters in the broadest sense, and from this larger viewpoint, their theories of literature will be scrutinized for points of agreement. Their chief point of difference and its implications will be discussed in a later chapter.

All his life Carlyle was first and foremost a man of letters. He was at one time or another translator, reviewer, novelist (unsuccessful), critic, essayist, biographer, and historian. However much he lauded the doctrine of silence and praised men of action, he remained an active writer throughout his life. He held the profession of letters in very high esteem; in fact, he treats the modern man of letters as a direct descendant of the ancient prophet-priest, performing the same function in society. In "The Hero as Man of Letters," he says:

> The Hero is he who lives in the inmost sphere of things, in the True, Divine, and Eternal, which exists always, unseen to most, under the Temporary, Trivial: his being is in that, he declares that abroad, by act or speech as it may be, in declaring himself abroad. . . . The Man of Letters, like every Hero, is there to proclaim this in such sort as he can. Intrinsically, it is the same function which the old generations named a man Prophet, Priest, Divinity for doing. . . .[1]

The man of letters must concern himself with two things that are of cardinal importance to man: he must help man to a better understanding of his fellow men and to some knowledge of the mystery of life. In "Count Cagliostro," Carlyle says:

> What is all History, and all Poesy, but a deciphering somewhat thereof, out of that mystic heaven-written Sanscrit; and rendering it into the speech of men? Know thyself, value thyself, is a moralist's commandment (which I only half approve of); but know others, value others, is the best of Nature herself. Or

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[1]Works, V, 155-156.

> again, Work while it is called Today: is not that also the irreversible law of being for mortal man? And now, what is all working, what is all knowing, but a faint showing-forth of that same Mystery of Life, which ever remains infinite,--heaven-written mystic Sanscrit?[2]

Literature, then, for Carlyle, is primarily didactic. Long before Meredith wrote his first novel, Carlyle had preached this ideal to his own generation, urging writers to cease shirking what he regarded as their social responsibility. In the increasing publication of literature designed for amusement only, he saw a corruption of that high office which the hero as man of letters was supposed to fill. His well-known diatribes against "fashionable novels" first took shape as a protest against this corruption. If they are understood as stemming from his view of literature as a vehicle for a priest-hero, charged with the high function of interpreting man to man and God to man, these attacks assume their proper proportions in Carlyle's broad theory of literature.[3] As a matter of fact, Carlyle usually ties his attacks on "fiction" to a plea or prophecy that writers will take up the burden of their social responsibility, as he does in this typical diatribe from "Count Cagliostro":

> Day after day, looking at the high destinies which yet await Literature, which Literature will ere long address herself with

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[2]Works, XXVIII, 251.

[3]For a careful study of the development of Carlyle's attitude toward fiction, see Hill Shine, Carlyle's Fusion of Poetry, History, and Religion by 1834 (Chapel Hill, 1938). Cf. Carlisle Moore, "Thomas Carlyle and Fiction: 1822-1834," Nineteenth Century Studies, ed. Herbert Davis et al. (Ithaca, 1940), and Carlisle Moore, "Carlyle's 'Diamond Necklace' and Poetic History," PMLA, LVIII (June, 1943), 537-557.

more decisiveness than ever to fulfil, it grows clearer to us that the proper task of Literature lies in the domain of BELIEF; within which 'Poetic Fiction,' as it is charitably named, will have to take quite a new figure, if allowed a settlement there. Whereby were it not reasonable to prophesy that this exceeding great multitude of Novel-writers, and suchlike, must, in a new generation, gradually do one of two things: either retire into nurseries, and work for children, minors, and semifatuous persons of both sexes; or else, what were far better, sweep their Novel-fabric into the dust-cart, and betake them with such faculty as they have to understand and record what is true,—of which, surely, there is, and will forever be, a whole Infinitude unknown to us, of infinite importance to us.[4]

As late as 1858, Carlyle can be found making such statements as these about the young Frederick:

> We note with pleasure a lively taste for facts in the little Boy; which continued to be the taste of the Man, in an eminent degree. Fictions he also knows; an eager, extensive reader of what is called Poetry, Literature, and himself a performer in that province by and by: but it is observable how much of Realism there is always in his Literature, how close, here as elsewhere, he always hangs on the practical truth of things; how Fiction itself is either an expository, illustrative garment of Fact, or else is of no value to him. Romantic readers of his Literature are much disappointed in consequence, and pronounce it bad Literature;--and sure enough, in several senses, it is not to be called good! Bad Literature, they say; shallow, barren, most unsatisfactory to a reader of romantic appetites. Which is a correct verdict, as to the romantic appetites and it. But to the man himself, this quality of mind is of great moment and advantage; and forms truly the basis of all he was good for in life. Once for all, he has no pleasure in dreams, in parti-coloured clouds and nothingness. All his curiosities gravitate toward what exists, what has being and reality around him.[5]

The emphasis in this passage is clearly upon the function, not the form of literature. The fiction which ministers to "romantic appetites"--that is composed of "dreams," "parti-coloured clouds," and

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[4]Works, XXVIII, 178.

[5]Works, XII, 431.

"nothingness"--is thoroughly condemned here; but that fiction which is "an expository, illustrative garment of Fact"—which sticks to "the practical truth of things"—is specifically, if somewhat grudgingly, exempted from condemnation. Carlyle's approbation is, admittedly, reserved for "facts," as opposed to "Fictions."

In the light of Carlyle's conception of the function of the hero of letters in society, his attack upon literature designed to minister to "romantic appetites" is merely an attack upon all forms of literature which do not serve that spiritual function. The man of letters must deal essentially with reality, with facts, in order to serve as the interpreter of life.

Meredith's conception of literature and the role of the literary artist in society corresponds closely to Carlyle's. Although Meredith speaks, for the most part, of the duty of the novelist particularly, it is possible to see in his literary theory the same broad principles which serve as the cornerstone for Carlyle's conclusions. In a letter to G. P. Baker written in 1887, he speaks of his literary aims as distinctly didactic:

> Close knowledge of our fellows, discernment of the laws of existence, these lead to great civilization. I have supposed that the novel, exposing and illustrating the natural history of man, may help us to such sustaining roadside gifts.[6]

Meredith here assigns to the novelist the aim of the Carlylean man of letters; in doing so, he establishes himself as a writer whose aim is to instruct, not merely to amuse. This position is one from

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[6]Letters, II, 398.

which he did not deviate throughout his career. Like Carlyle, he expresses contempt for the fashionable novel, which both writers saw as the antithesis of the literature which instructs and elevates mankind. As early as Richard Feverel, he speaks scornfully of the novel-reading public as an "audience impatient for blood and glory";[7] in Evan Harrington, he says pointedly that his hero does not engage in the "heroics we are more accustomed to";[8] and in Sandra Belloni, he uses as a literary device a figure known only as the "Philosopher," whose task it is to contrast the popular novel with the kind of fiction which he, Meredith, is writing. The author's relation to the Philosopher is that of Carlyle to Teufelsdröckh, or more specifically, to Herr Sauerteig. Of his "partner," the author says:

> It would be very commendable and serviceable if a novel were what he thinks it: but all attestation favours the critical dictum, that a novel is to give us copious sugar and no cane. I, myself, as a reader, consider concomitant cane an adulteration of the qualities of sugar. My Philosopher's error is to deem the sugar, born of the cane, inseparable from it. The which is naturally resented, and away flies my book back at the heads of the librarians, hitting me behind them a far more grievous blow.
>
> Such is the construction of my story, however, that to entirely deny the Philosopher the privilege he stipulated for when with his assistance I conceived it, would render our performance unintelligible to that acute and honourable minority which consents to be thwacked with aphorisms and sentences and a fantastic delivery of the verities. While my Play goes on, I must permit him to come forward occasionally. We are indeed in a sort of partnership, and it is useless for me to tell him that he is not popular and destroys my chance.[9]

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[7]Works, II, 226.

[8]Works, VI, 309.

[9]Works, IV, 230.

The Philosopher, of course, represents Meredith himself. The public, with the exception of a small minority, prefers the fashionable novel to the instructive fiction which Meredith writes. Particularly noteworthy is Meredith's description of his own work. He pays tribute to his followers, who consent "to be thwacked with aphorisms and sentences and a fantastic delivery of the verities." It is almost unnecessary to point out the fact that this description can very easily be applied to Carlyle's writings. For Meredith to give such a view of his own work is close to a direct admission on his part of the similarities between his literary product and that of the Sage of Chelsea, whose thunderous pronouncements upon the "Eternal Verities" Meredith knew well.[10]

Though this connection may appear somewhat tenuous, it is reinforced by another passage in Sandra, in which Meredith has the Philosopher express again the Carlylean aim for the man of letters. In excuse for a diversion upon the difference between his characters and the "puppets" of the fashionable novel, he says this:

> In our fat England the gardener Time is playing all sorts of freaks in the hues and traceries of the flower of life, and shall we not note them? If we are to understand our species and mark the progress of civilization, we must.[11]

Enough has been said to show that Meredith agrees with Carlyle that the profession of letters is a didactic one, concerning man in his relationship with his fellows and to the laws of life; and that the

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[10]See p. 45.

[11]Works, IV, 186.

fashionable novel, which aims at amusement only, is the unworthy arch-rival of the product of the hero of letters. It is interesting, too, to note that Meredith describes his own writings in terms that are entirely applicable to Carlyle's writings, and that, indeed, could easily have been suggested by Carlyle's work.

Some of the passages quoted indicate, too, that Meredith, like Carlyle, professed to be a reformer of literature; and though Meredith, unlike Carlyle, confines his efforts to the reform of fiction, the reforms which he advocates are designed to make the novel instructive to man as well as pleasing to him. The changes he proposes are those which will make it a suitable vehicle for the writer who is to interpret man to himself. These changes will be discussed more fully in a later chapter.

Although rlyle's attack on the fashionable novel does not necessarily constitute an attack on fiction as such, as is shown by the passage from Frederick quoted above, he was extremely reluctant to admit that fiction was a suitable vehicle for his hero of letters. Early in his career he decided that the ideal man of letters could best perform his social function by turning to the writing of history.[12] In a passage already quoted, he advises the novelists to "sweep their Novel-fabric into the dust-cart, and betake them with such faculty as they have to understand and record what is true. . . ."[13]

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[12]Carlisle Moore, "Carlyle's 'Diamond Necklace' and Poetic History," PMLA, LVIII (June, 1943), 538.

[13]See p. 54.

Notwithstanding the high place to which Carlyle assigned the writing of history, he was not satisfied with history as it was conventionally written. His reverence for the word facts, indicated in his advice to Meredith to "stick to Fahcts,"[14] is tempered by his clearly-expressed belief that it is not so much in the gathering of facts that the historian has failed as in the interpreting of them. Repeatedly, he insisted that a mere collection of facts, arranged in chronological or other order, does not constitute history--or biography, the basic form of history. Carlyle's criticism that Lockhart's Life of Scott is a "compilation well done" but not a "composition" has already been cited.[15] In Sartor Resartus, he says:

> 'What are your historical Facts; still more your biographical? Wilt thou know a Man, above all Mankind, by stringing-together beadrolls of what thou namest Facts? The Man is the spirit he worked in, not what he did, but what he became. Facts are engraved Hiergrams, for which the fewest have the key.[16]

Dryasdust, the conventional historian, certainly does not have the key. In discussing the lamentable state of confusion in the records and in the histories of the "Age of Cromwell," Carlyle says:

> There, all vanquished, overwhelmed under such waste lumber-mountains, the wreck and dead ashes of some six unbelieving generations, does the Age of Cromwell and his Puritans lie hidden from us. That is what we, for our share, have been able to accomplish towards keeping our Heroic Ones in memory. By way of sacred poets they have found voluminous Dryasdust, and his

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[14]See p. 29.

[15]See p. 21.

[16]Works, I, 161.

Collections and Philosophical Histories.[17]

Carlyle's use of the term "sacred poet" here holds the key to an understanding of his conception of the true historian. The poetic history which he devised as a substitute for the compilations of Dryasdust must be written by a great creative writer, whose handling of his materials will be artistic rather than scientific; for in spite of his emphasis on facts, Carlyle is not a scientific realist. The type of realism which he recommends is an imaginative realism, a poetic and dramatic interpretation of facts. For this task, he insists, the imagination and the insight of the poet are necessary equipment of the man of letters. In "Diderot," he says:

> Poetry, it will more and more come to be understood, is nothing but higher Knowledge; and the only genuine Romance (for grown Persons) Reality. The Thinker is the Poet, the Seer: Let him who <u>sees</u> write down according to his gift of sight; if deep and with inspired vision, then creatively, poetically; if common, and with only uninspired, everyday vision, let him be at least faithful in this and write <u>Memoirs</u>.[18]

In "Boswell's <u>Life of Johnson</u>," Carlyle is even more specific about the relation between poetry and history. He has Sauerteig say that "'History, after all, is the true Poetry; that Reality, if rightly interpreted is grander than Fiction; nay, that even in the right interpretation of Reality and History does genuine Poetry consist.'"[19]

This fusion of poetry and history requires not only the insight

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[17] <u>Works</u>, VI, 3.

[18] <u>Works</u>, XXVIII, 178.

[19] <u>Works</u>, XXVIII, 79.

and imagination of the poet, but also his command of harmonious thought and utterance. As a matter of fact, for Carlyle insight and harmony go hand in hand: one cannot exist without the other. In "The Hero as Poet," he says:

> If your delineation be authentically musical, musical not in word only, but in heart and substance, in all the thoughts and utterances of it, in the whole conception of it, then it will be poetical; if not, not.--Musical: how much lies in that! A musical thought is one spoken by a mind that has penetrated into the inmost heart of the thing; detected the inmost mystery of it; the inward harmony of coherence which is its soul whereby it exists and has a right to be here in this world.[20]

Throughout Carlyle's work, the word musical is used almost as a synonym for true or right. The seer with inspired vision sees poetically, musically. And just as poetry is identified with reality, so is harmony with poetry. What the seer produces will be a poem, whether it has the form of poetry or not. The fusion of the poet-historian is complete when the "man of rhythmic nature" eventually turns to the "interpretation of Fact."[21]

By a further extension of his conception of the product of the great man of letters, Carlyle insists that true poetry is inevitably song, and that "whatever is not sung is properly no Poem, but a piece of Prose cramped into jingling lines. . . ."[22]

Thus poetry, according to Carlyle, exists when a successful artistic interpretation of reality has been achieved, when the Seer has

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[20] Works, V, 83.

[21] Works, XII, 19.

[22] Works, V, 90.

penetrated to the "inward harmony" of reality and has recorded his vision "creatively, poetically." The "music" must come as a result of the poet's depth of vision; it is not a superimposed ornamentation. "See deep enough," Carlyle says, "and you see musically; the heart of Nature being everywhere music, if you can only reach it."[23]

Having rejected Dryasdust and accepted the poet-historian as the ideal man of letters, Carlyle turned to such figures as Shakespeare, Cervantes, and, above all, Goethe, to find the artist he was seeking. In them he found the qualities of the true historian, and he lamented bitterly their failure to take up the burden of interpreting fact, or reality, to man.[24] He says that "the highest Shakspeare producible is the fittest Historian producible,"[25] and that "it is frightful to see the Gelehrte Dumnkopf (what we here may translate Dryasdust) doing the function of History, and the Shakspeare and the Goethe neglecting it."[26]

Carlyle's call for an imaginative interpretation of reality by a great creative artist is echoed by Meredith, most clearly in a letter to the Reverend Augustus Jessopp written in 1864:

> Between realism and idealism there is no natural conflict. This completes that. Realism is the basis of good composition: it implies study, observation, artistic power, and (in those who can do more) humility. Little writers should be realistic. They would then at least do solid work. They afflict the world because they attempt that it is given to none but noble workmen

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[23] Works, V, 84.

[24] Works, XII, 18.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid.

> to achieve. A great genius must necessarily employ ideal means, for a vast conception cannot be placed bodily before the eye, and remains to be suggested. Idealism is an atmosphere whose effects of grandeur are wrought out through a series of illusions, that are illusions to the sense within us only when divorced from the ground-work of the real. Need there be exclusion, the one of the other? The artist is incomplete who does this. Men to whom I bow my head (Shakespeare, Goethe, and in their way, Molière, Cervantes) are Realists au fond. But they have the broad arms of Idealism at command. They give us Earth; but it is earth with an atmosphere. One may find as much amusement in a Kaleidoscope as in a merely idealistic writer: and just as sound prose is of more worth than pretentious poetry, I hold the man who gives a plain wall of fact higher in esteem than one who is constantly shuffling the clouds and dealing with airy, delicate sentimentalities, headless and tailless imaginings, despising our good, plain strength.
>
> Does not all science (the mammoth balloon, to wit) tell us that when we forsake earth, we reach up to a frosty, inimical Inane? For my part I love and cling to earth, as the one piece of God's handiwork which we possess. I admit that we can refashion; but of earth must be the material.[27]

Carlyle's enthusiastic approval can be legitimately postulated for the ideas here contained, since they are, in fact, the essence of his own teachings on literature. "Little writers" are to be "realistic," give us "a plain wall of fact," Meredith says. Carlyle consigns some to the nursery,[28] and bids others to "write Memoirs" so as to be of some use to those artists who can interpret events.[29] Meredith's "noble" workman and Carlyle's "seer" are to stay upon the "ground-work of the real"--or, as Carlyle puts it, "what is true."[30] Shakespeare and Goethe are to both examples of this artist. Meredith condemns heartily the "merely idealistic writer," who is "constantly shuffling the clouds

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[27]Letters, I, 156-157.

[28]See p. 54.

[29]See p. 60.

[30]See p. 54.

and dealing with airy, delicate sentimentalities, headless and tailless imaginings." Carlyle attacks those who minister to "romantic appetites," dealing in "dreams, in parti-coloured clouds and nothingness."[31] Meredith holds "sound prose" to be of more worth than "pretentious poetry." Carlyle insists that all except the great artists should stick to prose.[32] In short, Meredith's attitude, as expressed in this letter to Jessopp, is precisely that of Carlyle. And his final summing-up that "earth" (reality) is the "one piece of God's handiwork which we possess" is too Carlylean to need specific quotation from Carlyle's work here.

It may be instructive to inquire further into Meredith's use of the term <u>idealism</u>. In the <u>Essay on Comedy</u>, he pays tribute to those great artists who have "idealized upon life: the foundation of their types is real and in the quick, but they painted with spiritual strength, which is the solid in Art."[33] Here is the same emphasis upon the spiritual which is found in Carlyle's attitude toward literature. It is clear that what Meredith means by the idealization of the real is very close to what Carlyle meant when he called for an imaginative interpretation of reality.

Meredith also shares with Carlyle the conception that harmony is a test of the truth and virtue of deeds and ideas. In a conversation with his young friend Alice Butcher, he himself pointed to the fact that

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[31]See p. 54.

[32]See p. 60.

[33]<u>Works</u>, XXIII, 27.

the "musical test" mentioned in the poem "The Empty Purse" is intended to apply to more than poetry, or writing, for that matter. Mrs. Butcher describes the conversation this way:

> Speaking one day of the Japanese saying with reference to any conduct or words that are not worthy: 'It is not poetry,' he said eagerly. 'Yes, that's just what I say in the 'Empty Purse,"' and he quoted the lines:—
>
> Is it accepted of Song?
> Does it sound to the mind through the ear,
> Right sober, pure sane? has it disciplined feet?
> Thou wilt find it a test severe;
> Unerring whatever the theme.[34]

One scholar, Crees, quotes these lines and says that the "test of poetry" given in them was "perhaps suggested by a fine passage in Carlyle."[35] He does not cite the passage, but it seems probable that he has in mind a selection from "The Hero as Poet," in which Carlyle discusses song and from which his statement that "whatever is not sung is Properly no Poem. . . ." has already been quoted. Though Crees cites only the narrow interpretation of the refrain (as a test for poetry), it is likely that Meredith is indebted to Carlyle for the broader application as well, which is stated directly in a later stanza of "The Empty Purse":

> And no singer is needed to serve
> The musical God, my friend.
> Needs only his law on a sensible nerve:
> A law that to Measure invites,

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[34]Lady Butcher, Memories of George Meredith (London, 1919), p. 112. The punctuation used in the stanza quoted here has been changed to conform with that used in the Memorial Edition of Meredith's works.

[35]Crees, Meredith, p. 72.

Forbidding the passions contend.[36]

Meredith, like Carlyle, uses music to denote harmony stemming from the essence of an action or a thought; it is not to be confused with a superficial ornamentation. The "test" is for all things, including great literature. As it is applied to literature, it means that it is not the "singer" in the restricted sense, the maker of verse, who is needed to produce this music; it is the seer or noble workman, who perceives the inward harmony of reality, or, in other words, who views life poetically.

That Meredith applied his dictum that great writing should be poetical, musical, to his novels is evident even to the casual reader. It is not surprising that he referred to himself as "the poet and philosopher forming the Novelist."[37] From the beginning, he ignored the conventional boundaries between poetry and prose. Though it is cast in a conventional and more obviously poetic form, Modern Love is not intrinsically more poetic than Richard Feverel.[38]

Although the idea that the harmony of an action or a thought is a test of their worth is not original with Carlyle, it seems likely that Meredith obtained it from him. Carlyle himself attributes one form of it to Coleridge,[39] but Baker believes that its presence in the romantic

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[36]Works, XXVI, 50.

[37]Letters, II, 523-524.

[38]Baker stresses this aspect of Meredith's style in History of the English Novel, XIII, 13, 274-275.

[39]Works, V, 90-91.

revival in prose is probably due to Carlyle's work.[40] At any rate, Meredith was familiar with Carlyle's writings, and that familiarity, added to the presence of verbal echoes, makes it seem most likely that Meredith drew upon Carlyle for his conception of the "musical test."

The similarity between Meredith's and Carlyle's conception of the nature of the noble workman and the materials to be employed by him is clear. The two agree that the great artist must have the abilities of the poet at command, that Shakespeare and Goethe exemplify the artist, and that his artistic work should be based on reality.

Because Carlyle insisted so vehemently that the proper task of the Carlylean man of letters is to write poetic history, it is possible to forget that he could and did often praise poetry in the more limited sense. Because it treated the real, even to the point of concerning the poet's own day, he found the poetry of Goethe to be a fit vehicle for the noble workman. In his "State of German Literature," Carlyle says:

> The poetry of Goethe, for instance, we reckon to be Poetry, sometimes in the very highest sense of that word. . . . With Goethe, the mythologies of bygone days pass only for what they are: we have no witchcraft or magic in the common acceptation; and spirits no longer bring with them airs from heaven or blasts from hell; for Pandemonium and the steadfast Empyrean have faded away, since the opinions which they symbolized no longer are. Neither does he bring his heroes from remote Oriental climates, or periods of Chivalry, or any section either of Atlantis or the Age of Gold; feeling that the reflex of these things is cold and faint, and only hangs like a cloud-picture in the distance, beautiful but delusive, and which even the simplest know to be a delusion. The end of Poetry is higher; she must dwell in Reality, and become manifest to men in the forms

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[40]Baker, History of the English Novel, VIII, 12-24.

among which they live and move.[41]

The poet, then, must take his subject matter from a reality still alive for his own generation. Here is one of Carlyle's chief critical tenets. In his essay on Burns's life and writings, Carlyle says:

> The ordinary poet, like the ordinary man, is forever seeking in external circumstances the help which can be found only in himself. In what is familiar and near at hand he discerns no form or comeliness: home is not poetical but prosaic; it is in some past, distant, conventional heroic world, that poetry resides; were he there and not here, were he thus and not so, it would be well with him. Hence our innumerable host of rose-coloured Novels and iron-mailed Epics, with their locality not on the Earth, but somewhere nearer to the moon.[42]

The poet should not be driven to the past, to mythological realms, or to the "moon" for subject matter; for material is at hand all about him:

> The poet, we imagine, can never have far to seek for a subject: the elements of his art are in him, and around him on every hand; for him the Ideal world is not remote from the Actual, but under it and within it: nay, he is a poet, precisely because he can discern it there.[43]

Carlyle pays special tribute to Burns's sincerity and to his use of his own experiences and observations as the basis for his poetry:

> The excellence of Burns is, indeed, among the rarest, whether in poetry or prose; but, at the same time, it is plain and easily recognized: his Sincerity, his indisputable air of Truth. Here are no fabulous woes or joys: no hollow fantastic sentimentalities; no wiredrawn refinings, either in thought or feeling. . . . He does not write from hearsay, but from sight and experience; it is the scenes that he has lived and laboured amidst, that he

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[41] Works, XXVI, 65-66.

[42] Works, XXVI, 271.

[43] Works, XXVI, 272.

describes. . . .[44]

The "most strictly poetical" of Burns's poems, Carlyle says, is The Jolly Beggars. Of this work, he says: "The subject truly is among the lowest in Nature; but it only the more shows our Poet's gift in raising it into the domain of Art."[45] And he has something very similar to say about the peasants of Schiller's William Tell: Their "genuine humanity" pleases him, and he generalizes thus:

> Truth is superior to Fiction: we feel at home among these brave good people; their fortune interests us more than that of all the brawling, vapid sentimental heroes in creation. Yet to make them interest us was the very highest problem of art; it was to copy lowly Nature, to give us a copy of it embellished and refined by the agency of genius, yet preserving the likeness in every lineament. The highest quality of art is to conceal itself: these peasants of Schiller's are what every one imagines he could imitate successfully; yet in the hands of any but a true and strong-minded poet they dwindle into repulsive coarseness or mawkish insipidity.[46]

From these statements of Carlyle's it is clear that the poetry of the noble workman is subject to essentially the same basic law binding the product of the poet-historian: It must be based on reality, preferably of the poet's own observation. While the poet-historian must treat the past in order to interpret it to man, the poet proper is limited to his own day, to symbols that have value for the men of his times.

These views of Carlyle's upon poetry proper, culled chiefly from his criticism, are of particular interest to the student of Meredith

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[44] Works, XXVI, 267.

[45] Works, XXVI, 284.

[46] Works, XV, 175.

because their presence in Carlyle's work may help to explain why Meredith held them, for hold them he did, at least at one point in his career. It should not be forgotten that The Shaving of Shagpat (1856) and Farina: A Legend of Cologne (1857) are both burlesques of forms popular with readers of "romantic appetites"--the one of the oriental tale and the other of the medieval story. Professor Moffatt sees Farina as a "practical illustration of this scorn for the revival of medievalism."[47] On the matter of treating the past in the novel, Meredith had this to say to Edward Clodd:

> You may have histories, but you cannot have novels on periods so long ago. A novel can only reflect successfully the moods of men and women around us, and after all, in depicting the present we are dealing with the past, because the one is enfolded in the other. I cannot stomach the modern historical novel any more than I can novels which are three-fourths dialect.[48]

Although these remarks do not concern poetry proper, they help to indicate that Meredith was serious in a statement which he makes in the preface to The Tale of Chloe, published in 1879, and which is germane to treatment of his views on poetry proper. The short novel begins with a humorous preface about a country ballad which concerns the marriage of a milkmaid to a duke. Meredith uses this preface to throw an air of verisimilitude over the tale. The ballad is Meredith's own. The preface is ironical in some respects--so much so that, considered alone, it cannot be described as a serious statement of Meredith's views. In conjunction with his other statements about the necessity for the writer's sticking

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[47]Moffatt, Meredith, pp. 85-86.

[48]Memories, p. 156.

to his own day, it can be seen, however, to represent Meredith's viewpoint. Meredith says:

> Apart from its historical value, the ballad is an example to poets of our day, who fly to mythological Greece, or a fanciful and morbid medievalism, or--save the mark!--abstract ideas, for themes of song, of what may be done to make our English life poetically interesting, if they would but pluck the treasures presented them by the wayside; and Nature being now as then the passport to popularity, they have themselves to thank for their little hold on the heart of the people![49]

These comments from Meredith seem to indicate that he too rejected, in theory at least, the idea that a poet should draw upon the open stock of the past for his subjects.

In a letter to the Reverend Augustus Jessopp, written in November of 1861, only two years after the publication of Richard Feverel, and supposedly the meeting with Carlyle, Meredith speaks with Carlyle's own accents of some poems which he is preparing for publication:

> But one result of my hard education since the publication of my boy's book in '51 (those poems were written before I was twenty) has been that I rarely write save from the suggestion of something actually observed. I mean that I rarely write verse. Thus my Jugglers, Beggars, etc., I have met on the road, and have idealized but slightly. I desire to strike the poetic spark out of absolute human clay. And in doing so, I have the fancy that I do solid work--better than a carol in mid air. Note the 'Old Chartist,' and the 'Patriot Engineer,' that will also appear in 'Once a Week.' They may not please you, but I think you will admit that they have a truth condensed in them. They are flints perhaps, not flowers. . . . Of course, I do not think of binding down the Muse to the study of facts. That is but a part of her work.[50]

It is truly remarkable how much of Meredith's writing on his art

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[49] Works, XXI, 194.

[50] Letters, I, 45.

sounds like a response to Carlyle, or, at least, how much of it seems to involve a consciousness on the part of Meredith of Carlyle's statements on the subject. "Of course," he says, "I do not think of binding down the Muse to the study of facts." One is immediately reminded of Carlyle's almost-reverent attitude toward facts, particularly as opposed to fictions, and of his advice to Meredith to "stick to Fahcts." It is as though Meredith suddenly realized that he was echoing Carlyle's ideas and hastened to qualify his endorsement.

Whether or not Carlyle would have approved the poems to which Meredith refers in his letter to Jessopp is a moot point, but he would certainly have applauded the sentiments Meredith expresses in his letter to Jessopp. What he praised in Burns, Goethe, and Schiller was their attempt to "strike the poetic spark out of absolute human clay."

It is entirely possible that Carlyle contributed something to Meredith's ideas about poetry. Certainly, the two agree that it, like prose, should treat the real and reject the pretentious and the false. What is chiefly interesting in the similarity to be found between Meredith's statements concerning poetry and Carlyle's criticisms of poetry is that the best expression of it, the letter to Jessopp, was written at a time when it is reasonable to expect Carlyle's influence upon the younger writer to have been at its height.

It is evident from this examination of the ideas which Carlyle and Meredith express about literature and its professors that they share certain basic convictions on the subject: Both writers regard the profession of letters as a high calling. The purpose of literature, as

they view it, is not to amuse, but to instruct. Its proper domain is truth, particularly moral and philosophical truth. The noble workman, charged with the spiritual task of interpreting man to man and the laws of existence to man, must treat his material, reality, poetically. He must have the imagination, the insight, and the command of harmonious thought and utterance of the poet. Shakespeare and Goethe exemplify this seer or poet-philosopher. Carlyle speaks of this great creative artist as primarily a historian; Meredith, a novelist. Both agree that he may also write poetry proper. If he does so, he must interpret the reality--the facts, as Carlyle would put it--of his own day.

This correspondence between Carlyle's and Meredith's conception of the noble workman and his product is of such a nature as to suggest strongly that Meredith is indebted to Carlyle for the core of his broad literary theory. This conclusion is strengthened, moreover, when this correspondence is viewed in the light of Meredith's interest in and knowledge of Carlyle and his writings. It was not unnatural for the man who considered Carlyle to be an "eminent" guide in matters of the spirit to accept a view of literature which is so closely connected with Carlyle's spiritual teachings.

## CHAPTER IV

## SENTIMENTALISM

The burden of much that Carlyle wrote is reducible to this admonition: Clear your minds of cant, of the sham-true, of all the shackles that bind you to the service of falsehood, and do some true work in the world. Carlyle's hero is the man gifted with the ability to see through the curtain of illusion and to gaze upon reality. Whatever his particular field of action, whether it be political, military, religious, or literary, the hero is one who shatters the curtain of illusion and proclaims abroad the facts of reality in deeds or in words. And since one of the greatest producers and nourishers of illusion in Carlyle's day was sentimentalism, a self-conscious preoccupation with the feelings, the true Carlylean hero as man of letters would of necessity wage a relentless war against sentimentalism in life and in literature. Carlyle himself led the way in the battle against sentimentalism. His works contain an acute analysis of its subtler aspects and manifestations. He even coined two words relating to the evils of sentimentalism and sentimentalists--rosepink and dandiacal, both describing the sentimentalist and his attitude toward life and reality.[1] Carlyle frequently uses both of these adjectives to express his contempt for sentimentalism.

Carlyle considered sentimentalism an evil because it is false and unsubstantial and because, being false and unsubstantial, it can produce

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[1]Oxford English Dictionary.

nothing real or true in the world. The sentimentalist refuses to grapple with the unpleasant facts of existence; he prefers to live in a world of unrealities, wilfully blind to anything which threatens his "rosepink" view of the universe. In The French Revolution, Carlyle assigns to their sentimentalism much of the inability of the Philosophes to accomplish anything:

> For as to this Sentimentalism, so useful for weeping with over romances and on pathetic occasions, it otherwise verily will avail nothing; nay less. The healthy heart that said to itself, 'How healthy am I!' was already fallen into the fatalest sort of disease. Is not Sentimentalism twin-sister to Cant, if not one and the same with it? Is not Cant the materia prima of the Devil; from which all falsehoods, imbecilities, abominations body themselves; from which no true thing can come?[2]

In this one passage Carlyle touches on three aspects of sentimentalism: its failure to accomplish anything, its self-consciousness, and its relation to cant and falsehood. Of course, these aspects of sentimentalism are not truly separable; they are genuine aspects, closely interrelated. Sentimentalism can inspire no true work because it is based on falsehood. Elsewhere in The French Revolution, Carlyle says:

> For verily not Federation-rosepink is the colour of this Earth and her work: not by outbursts of noble-sentiment, but with far other ammunition, shall a man front the world.[3]

The self-consciousness of sentimentalism also acts as a barrier to accomplishment. In "Characteristics," his famous essay on the significance and value of spontaneity, Carlyle says:

> . . . when the generous Affections have become wellnigh paralyt-

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[2]Works, II, 54-55.

[3]Works , III, 68.

> ic, we have the reign of Sentimentality. The greatness, the profitableness, at any rate the extremely ornamental nature of high feeling, and the luxury of doing good; charity, love, self-forgetfulness, devotedness and all manner of godlike magnanimity,—are everywhere insisted on, and pressingly inculcated in speech and writing, in prose and verse; Socinian Preachers proclaim 'Benevolence' to all the four winds, and have TRUTH engraved on their watch-seals: unhappily with little or no effect. Were the limbs in right walking order, why so much demonstrating of motion? The barrenest of all mortals is the Sentimentalist. Granting even that he were sincere, and did not wilfully deceive us, or without first deceiving himself, what good is in him? Does he not lie there as a perpetual lesson of despair, and type of bedrid valetudinarian impotence? His is emphatically a Virtue that has become, through every fibre, conscious of itself; it is all sick, and feels as if it were made of glass, and durst not touch or be touched; in the shape of work, it can do nothing; at the utmost, by incessant nursing and caudling, keep itself alive.[4]

Thus the very self-consciousness of sentimentalism destroys its usefulness in the world. The sentimentalist indulges in endless self-analysis. He speculates, theorizes, talks, preaches, waxes eloquent, and ends by doing nothing. He is incapable of action, and, therefore, according to Carlyle's definition, of sincerity. Elsewhere Carlyle stresses the inability of the sentimentalist to be sincere. He says of Preceptress Sillery-Genlis:

> Pretentious, frothy; a puritan yet creedless, darkening counsel by words without wisdom! For, it is in that thin element of the Sentimentalist and Distinguished-Female that Sillery-Genlis works; she would gladly be sincere, yet can grow no sincerer than sincere-cant. . . .[5]

Carlyle sees in the so-called "Age of Hope," which followed the death of Louis XV, an example of the fatal type of self-delusion and

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[4]Works, XXVIII, 9-10.

[5]Works, III, 24.

insincerity indulged in by sentimentalists. He says:

> Or is this same Age of Hope itself but a simulacrum: as Hope too often is? Cloud-vapour with rainbows painted on it, beautiful to see, to sail towards,--which hovers over Niagara Falls? In that case, victorious Analysis will have enough to do.
> Alas, yes! a whole world to remake. . . . For all is wrong, and gone out of joint; the inward spiritual, and the outward economical; head or heart, there is no soundness in it. . . .
> In fact, if we pierce through that rosepink vapour of Sentimentalism, Philanthropy, and Feasts of Morals, there lies behind it one of the sorriest spectacles.[6]

The failure to come to grips with facts, with reality, characteristic of the self-deluding sentimentalist, who confounds his own self-spun, "rosepink" picture with actuality, results in French Revolutions. Truth eventually reasserts itself, often not too gently—hence the great danger of sentimentalism.

The sentimentalist apes spirituality. He mistakes his super-refined sensualism for spirituality. Thus he is not in touch with reality, which is spirit; he is rather bound up within himself. Carlyle realized that sentimentalism is at best sham-spirituality rooted in the senses. Speaking of the corruption in France before the Revolution, he says:

> Behold the mouldering mass of Sensuality and Falsehood; round which plays foolishly, itself a corrupt phosphorescence, some glimmer of sentimentalism. . . .[7]

Perhaps the subtlest aspect of sentimentalism is its relation to egoism. The sentimentalist, a self-conscious possessor of acute sensi-

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[6]Works, II, 36.

[7]Works, II, 58.

bilities, takes pride in his fine feelings. He revels in the consciousness of superiority which is his as the possessor of these feelings. He believes that he has risen above the senses, not realizing that his spirituality is merely transferred sensuality. His egoism stems from his consciousness of his own ego as the possessor of fine feelings. It is a peculiar type of spiritual pride; it is pride in a sham-spirituality. This relationship between sentimentalism and egoism did not escape Carlyle. In Sartor Resartus, he devotes a chapter, entitled "The Dandiacal Body," to the sentimentalists, in which he allows Teufelsdröckh to treat the "dandiacal" group as though it were a religious sect, whose sacred books are "fashionable novels." Teufelsdröckh says:

> 'To my own surmise, it appears as if this Dandiacal Sect were but a new modification, adapted to the new time, of that primeval Superstition, Self-worship.[8]

It is this particular aspect of sentimentalism, its relation to egoism, that Meredith exposes to the relentless scrutiny of the Comic Spirit.

On the question of sentimentalism in literature and the expression of the sentimental philosophy in literature, Carlyle has much to say. The presence of sentimentalism in much of the literature of his time very possibly contributed to his distaste for fiction and helped to strengthen his conviction that writers should stick to facts. Carlyle sees the relationship between sensuality and sentimentalism in Rousseau, and blames him for the prevalence of sentimentalism in French litera-

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[8] Works, I, 220.

ture. In Heroes, he says:

> Of Rousseau's literary talents, greatly celebrated still among his countrymen, I do not say much. His Books, like himself, are what I call unhealthy; not the good sort of Books. There is a sensuality in Rousseau. Combined with such an intellectual gift as his, it makes pictures of a certain gorgeous attractiveness: but they are not genuinely poetical. Not white sunlight: something operatic; a kind of rosepink, artificial bedizenment. It is frequent, or rather it is universal, among the French since his time. Madame de Staël has something of it, St. Pierre; and down onwards to the present astonishing convulsionary 'Literature of Desperation,' it is everywhere abundant. That same rosepink is not the right hue. Look at a Shakspeare, at a Goethe, even at a Walter Scott! He who has once seen into this, has seen the difference of the True from the Sham-True, and will discriminate them ever afterwards.[9]

Writers who look directly at life without attempting to disguise it in any way receive Carlyle's praise. He continually cites Shakespeare and Goethe as his ideals among writers. The mention of Scott here is not surprising in the light of Carlyle's earlier remarks on his healthfulness as a writer. In his essay on Scott, Carlyle had singled out his healthfulness—by which he meant his wholesomeness, his genuineness, his freedom from cant—as a point on which he could praise Scott sincerely; and this healthfulness was all the more prized by Carlyle for its sharp contrast with the dominant tendency of Scott's times:

> So bounteous was Nature to us; in the sickliest of recorded ages, when British Literature lay all puking and sprawling in Werterism, Byronism, and other Sentimentalism tearful or spasmodic (fruit of internal wind). Nature was kind enough to send us two healthy men [Scott and Cobbett]. . . .[10]

Scott, however, is not entirely free of the disease in spite of

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[9] Works, V, 187.

[10] Works, XXIX, 39-40.

his general good health. Later on in the same essay, Carlyle remarks:

> . . . getting out of the ordinary range, and attempting the heroic, which is but seldom the case, he falls almost at once into the rose-pink sentimental,--descries the Minerva Press from afar, and hastily quits that course. . . .[11]

Sentimentalism in literature is responsible for the modern craze for view-hunting, as Carlyle calls it, the self-conscious description of picturesque scenes in nature. In "Characteristics," Carlyle treats view-hunting as one of the symptoms of the sickness of the literature and the life of his day:

> Consider, for one example, this peculiarity of Modern Literature, the sin that has been named View-hunting. In our elder writers, there are no paintings of scenery for its own sake; no euphuistic gallantries with Nature, but a constant heartlove for her, a constant dwelling in communion with her. View-hunting, with so much else that is of kin to it, first came decisively into action through the Sorrows of Werter; which wonderful Performance, indeed, may in many senses be regarded as the progenitor of all that has since become popular in Literature; whereof, in so far as concerns spirit and tendency, it still offers the most instructive image; for nowhere, except in its own country, above all in the mind of its illustrious Author, has it yet fallen wholly obsolete. Scarcely ever, till that late epoch, did any worshipper of Nature become entirely aware that he was worshipping, much to his own credit; and think of saying to himself: Come, let us make a description! Intolerable enough: when every puny whipster plucks out his pencil, and insists on painting you a scene; so that the instant you discern such a thing as 'wavy outline,' 'mirror of the lake,' 'stern headland,' or the like, in any Book, you tremulously hasten on; and scarcely the Author of Waverly himself can tempt you not to skip.[12]

Carlyle has no patience with the literature of the sentimentalists who attempt to portray the 'moral sublime.' Surveying the French

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[11]Works, XXIX, 75.

[12]Works, XXVIII, 24. In Sartor Resartus, Carlyle says essentially the same thing about view-hunting: Works, I, 124.

literature of the eighteenth century in his essay on Diderot, he says:

> But to return to Paris and its Philosophe Church-militant. Here is a Marmontel, an active subaltern thereof, who fights in a small way, through the Mercure; and, in rose-pink romance-pictures, strives to celebrate the 'moral sublime.'[13]

Elsewhere he speaks disdainfully of La Fontaine, "the sentimental novelist, over whose rose-coloured moral-sublime what fair eye has not wept."[14]

Sentimentalism is speculative and productive of nothing solid or lasting; it is at best a mere waste of time. For this reason alone, it is perfectly understandable why Carlyle condemns it wherever it is found. In his review of Varnhagen von Ense's memoirs, he says:

> 'One thing above all others,' says Goethe once; 'I have never thought about Thinking.' What a thrift of thinking-faculty there; thrift almost of itself equal to a fortune, in these days: 'habe nie ans Denken dacht!' But how much wastefuler still is it to feel about Feeling![15]

Many more examples of Carlyle's opposition to sentimentalism in life and in literature could be cited here. These examples suffice, however, to illustrate Carlyle's understanding of and his attitude toward it. In sum: Carlyle attacked sentimentalism because of its morbid self-consciousness, its relation to cant and sham, its insincerity, and its failure to produce work. He perceived its relationship to sensualism and egoism, and condemned its presence in literature. He coined two words to describe it--rosepink, or rose-pink, and dandiacal--and used

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[13] Works, XXVIII, 211.

[14] Works, XXIX, 93.

[15] Works, XXIX, 108-109.

them frequently.

In order to perform his proper function in society, that of a teacher and a moralist, the Carlylean hero as man of letters must interpret reality to mankind, and to get at reality, he must expose cant, sham, pretense, illusion, false thinking, false feeling—everything which stands between man and the truth. Since Carlyle found very little fiction that succeeded in avoiding completely one of the very things the man of letters must expose, he concluded that the writer could best interpret reality by sticking to facts, by writing history or biography. Meredith, on the other hand, who is one with Carlyle in the fight against sentimentalism, maintained that the man of letters could perform his task even more successfully through the medium of a new kind of fiction than he could through history or biography, and to this end he developed his concept of the Comic Spirit, which he employed as a weapon against the shams and pretenses of sentimentalism. Since the reasons for Meredith's adherence to the cause of fiction and the relation of the comic to his overall theory of literature are discussed fully in a later chapter, emphasis here is placed on the proposition that Meredith in opposing sentimentalism in literature and in life and in shaping his theory of literature with an eye toward that opposition is under the direct influence of Carlyle and is indebted to his teachings. Though Able shows that there is some similarity between Peacock's use of comedy as a weapon against sentimentalism and Meredith's use of the Comic Spirit,[16]

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[16] Meredith and Peacock, pp. 46ff.

it seems likely that Carlyle's influence is the antecedent one.

That Meredith learned much of what he knew of sentimentalism from his reading of Carlyle becomes plausible when his analysis of it is compared with Carlyle's. Meredith frequently uses in the same connotations the two words which Carlyle coined to describe sentimentalism--rosepink and dandiacal; and though the analysis of sentimentalism occupies proportionately more space in the work of Meredith than in that of Carlyle, Meredith's treatment of it consists, for the most part, of variations upon the same themes which Carlyle introduces. No attempt is made here, however, to explore fully Meredith's treatment of sentimentalism. The purpose of the present discussion of it is merely to illustrate Meredith's debt to Carlyle.

In the dialogues which he wrote for The Graphic, Meredith speaks of the power of sentimentalism to delude, to cause men to take names for things:

> . . . if we are to speculate upon what the year before us is to bring forth, I think it more expedient to give up all rose-coloured delusions, and especially our habit of sucking phrases like sweetmeats--liberty is one of them, for example. We read the newspapers daily, and yet we surround ourselves with a description of scenic extravaganza conjured up to displace uncomfortable facts.[17]

Meredith's criticism here of the sentimental habit of "sucking phrases" such as "liberty" as a substitute for facing uncomfortable facts is essentially the same criticism Carlyle makes of the French of the reign of Louis XVI. The sentimentalist often prefers illusion to

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[17]Up to Midnight: A Series of Dialogues Contributed to The Graphic (Boston, 1913), p. 57.

reality, deliberately blinding himself to the inevitable consequences of his deeds. Sir Austin Feverel writes in his aphoristic enchiridion, The Pilgrim's Scrip: "Sentimentalists are they who seek to enjoy without incurring the Immense Debtorship for a thing done."[18] Later in Richard Feverel, when Lady Blandish begs Sir Austin to relent in his refusal to accept Richard's wife, Sir Austin replies:

> 'That I should save him, or any one, from consequences, is asking more than the order of things will allow to you, Emmeline, and is not in the disposition of this world. I cannot. Consequences are the natural offspring of acts. My child, you are talking sentiment, which is the distraction of our modern age in everything--a phantasmal vapour distorting the image of the life we live.'[19]

Meredith's irony is, of course, at work here. Sir Austin's error of confounding sentiment with sentimentalism gives rise to the tragic "consequences" of the novel. Applied to sentimentalism, Meredith's definition seems much like Carlyle's. The description of sentimentalism as a vapor distorting and obscuring reality is an image which Carlyle uses frequently. He calls it a "cloud-vapour with rainbows painted on it" and a "rosepink vapour." These comparisons effectively express the attitude that sentimentalism is unsubstantial and deluding. Furthermore, as Carlyle points out, its lack of solidity renders it powerless to produce any work. Meredith, too, scores this aspect of sentimentalism. In Celt and Saxon, he says: "'. . . nothing solid comes of a

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[18] Works, II, 213.

[19] Works, II, 339.

sentiment. Power is built on work.'"[20] Sentimentalism may result in action, but it is likely to be quixotic. Meredith, speaking through his mouthpiece, "the Philosopher," who insists on interrupting to comment on the action in Sandra Belloni, observes:

> 'The sentimentalist goes on accumulating images and hiving sensations, till such time as (if the stuff be in him) they assume a form of vitality, and hurry him headlong. This is not passion, though it amazes men, and does the madder thing.[21]

Meredith, like Carlyle, frequently points out the connection between sentimentalism and sensualism. In Diana of the Crossways, he writes: "But [Diana] would have us away with sentimentalism. Sentimental people, in her phrase, 'fiddle harmonics on the strings of sensualism,' to the delight of a world gaping for marvels of musical execution rather than for music."[22] A few pages later Meredith refers to sentimentalism as the "fine flower, or pinnacle flame-spire, of sensualism."[23]

Evidently Meredith felt that the image of the "harmonics" was particularly felicitous in conveying the precise relationship of sentimentalism to sensualism, for he repeats it several times throughout the book. And then, toward the end, he allows Diana's friend Emma to arrive at a full understanding of its meaning: "That saying of Tony's ripened will full significance to Emma now. Not sensualism, but sham spiritual-

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[20] Works, XX, 164.

[21] Works, IV, 185.

[22] Works, XVI, 12.

[23] Works, XVI, 16.

ism, was the meaning; and however fine the notes, they come skilfully evoked of the under-brute in us."[24] It is obvious that Meredith wanted to be sure that his readers understood the full significance of his metaphor. Sentimentalism is sham spiritualism because it is not truly of the spirit; it is rooted in the senses, in the material. Thus when it masquerades as spiritualism, it is pretense or sham. It is sham, too, when it affects to disdain the wholesome physical aspects of life; it is then, in Meredith's phrase, "the sham decent."[25]

Two of Meredith's novels, Sandra Belloni and The Egoist, contain sustained and detailed studies of sentimentalists. In the former, the Pole family is dissected; and in the latter, that arch sentimental egoist, Sir Willoughby Patterne. In these books, Meredith makes clear the association of sentimentalism with egoism, which is implicit in his dissection of the sentimentalist. The consciousness of the ego as the possessor of the feelings which characterizes the sentimentalist is the link between the two. In introducing the Poles, Meredith says: "It may be seen that they were sentimentalists. That is to say, they supposed that they enjoyed exclusive possession of the Nice Feelings, and exclusively comprehended the Fine Shades."[26]

The relation between sentimentalism and egoism as Meredith viewed it is seen clearly in his analysis of the personality of Wilfrid Pole.

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[24] Works, XVI, 442-443.

[25] Works, XVI, 16.

[26] Works, III, 5-6.

Emilia, the heroine, had insisted on carrying out her promise to sing at a meeting of a workingmen's club in spite of the not-too-well-disguised disapproval of the Pole sisters, and at this concert a rival club had staged a raid on the club for which Emilia was singing. In the brawl that had followed the arrival of the Hillford men at Ipley, Wilfrid had been bruised badly on the cheek while heroically attempting to save the harp which he had given to Emilia anonymously. After the fight a tender scene had taken place between Wilfrid and Emilia. When Wilfrid awakened the next morning, he looked at his face in the mirror, and Meredith, analyzing his sentiments, says:

> Wilfrid was young, and under the dominion of his senses; which can be, if the sentimentalists will believe me, as tyrannous and misleading when super-refined as when ultra-bestial. He made a good stout effort to resist the pipe-smoke. Emilia's voice, her growing beauty, her simplicity, her peculiar charms of feature, were all conjured up to combat the dismal images suggested by that fatal, dragging-down smell. It was vain. Horrible pipe-smoke pervaded the memory of her. It seemed to his offended dainty fancy that he could never dissociate her from smoking-booths and abominably bad tobacco; and, let us add (for this was part of the secret), that it never could dwell on her without the companionship of a hideous disfigured countenance, claiming to be Wilfrid Pole.[27]

The sentimental egoist is incapable of loving a woman for herself. He loves her for her conception of him, and it must be flawless. Meredith touches on this aspect of sentimental egoism even more delicately and far more cleverly in The Egoist. After returning from a three-year tour of the globe, Sir Willoughby Patterne met Laetitia Dale as he rode around his estate. He had courted Laetitia briefly before

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[27]Works, III, 113.

departing. Of this first meeting after a separation of three years, Meredith says:

> He sprang to the ground and seized her hand. 'Laetitia Dale!' he said. He panted. 'Your name is sweet English Music! And you are well?' The anxious question permitted him to read deeply in her eyes. He found the man he sought there, squeezed him passionately, and let her go, saying, 'I could not have prayed for a lovelier home-scene to welcome me than you and these children flower-gathering. I don't believe in chance. It was decreed that we should meet. Do not you think so?'[28]

Meredith, like Carlyle, sees the connection between sentimental egoism and "that primeval Superstitution, Self-worship." He says:

> The Egoist is our fountain-head, primaeval man: the primitive is born again, the elemental reconstituted. Born again, into new conditions, the primitive may be highly polished of men, and forfeit nothing save the roughness of his original nature.[29]

Meredith, too, attacks sentimentalism in literature. In a passage reminiscent of Carlyle's attacks on view-hunting, he ridicules the sentimental worship of the "picturesque":

> Unfortunately, Mr. Helion used the term "picturesque" and thereby set the satiric powers of Mr. M'Nimbus in motion. He drummed on it for the better part of an hour. The picturesque! That was our modern craze! We rushed abroad in perpetual fever to catch sight of the picturesque, too often the painted curtain across a tragedy! It filled us with wind, and made us think ourselves possessed by the sublime Unutterable, because we could express just nothing at all concerning it, and he was the inspired man of the party who managed to convey his sensations in the greater number of gasps and exclamations, like a howling dervish! Eh, the picturesque. It was a purely latter-day phantasy; a delusion invented to flatter the idle-minded; a make-believe of something immense in them, which they were at pains to communicate by a set of newly coined phrases belonging to no

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[28] Works, XIII, 29-30.

[29] Works, XIV, 182.

known mortal tongue.[30]

There is more here, however, than just a simple attack on the adoration of the "picturesque." Meredith points out that it is a means of self-delusion, that the so-called "picturesque" is often a "painted curtain across a tragedy," that worship of it is the pastime of the idle-minded, who refuse to face uncomfortable facts and do something constructive about them. And when Meredith says that "it filled us with wind," he lays stress on the vaporous or unsubstantial quality of sentimentalism. Naturally, its expression in literature, or elsewhere, would be, in Carlyle's phrase, the "fruit of internal wind." In a passage in Diana of the Crossways, Meredith uses the term wind-filling to describe the romantically unreal in literature. Perhaps this passage not only contains one of Carlyle's favorite metaphors but also includes an allusion to Carlyle's partiality for facts. Discussing one of his sources of information on Diana, Meredith says:

> [Dorset Wilmers'] unadorned harsh substantive statements, excluding adjectives, give his Memoirs the appearance of a body of facts, attractive to the historic Muse, which has learnt to esteem those brawny giants marching club on shoulder, independent of henchmen, in preference to your panoplied knights with their puffy squires, once her favourites, and wind-filling to her columns, ultimately found indigestible.[31]

In his letters Meredith criticizes Tennyson adversely for his sentimentalism, and, significantly, he uses to describe it the two words

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[30] Up to Midnight, pp. 72-73.

[31] Works, XVI, 6.

coined by Carlyle.[32] Writing to Maxse in 1869, he says:

> But answer me--isn't there a scent of damned hypocrisy in all this lisping and vowelled purity of the Idylls? Well! just as you like. It's fashionable; it pleases the rose-pink ladies, it sells.[33]

Then he writes to John Morley a few months later:

> I should have written to ask leave to review Tennyson's Arthurian Cycles; but I could not summon heart even to get the opening for speaking my mind on it.--I can hardly say I think he deserves well of us; he is a real singer, and he sings this mild fluency to this great length. Malory's Morte Arthur is preferable. Fancy one affecting the great poet and giving himself up (in our days!--he must have lost the key of them) to such dandiacal fluting.[34]

When Carlyle pointed out the relationship of sentimentalism to cant, he went on to say that cant is the "materia prima of the Devil." Meredith, also, accuses the sentimentalists of being instruments of evil in their confusion of the true and the false. In a letter to Maxse, written in 1883, he says:

> You know my feeling about sentimentalists. If I did not take them for subjects of study, they would enrage me past any tolerance; and as it is, I find the prompting to fling too heavy a word at them hard to restrain. The Tempter of mankind has never such a grin as when he sees them mix the true and the false.[35]

And then as late as 1887, in a letter to Maxse in which he attacks in strong language a naturalistic novel, "sheer Realism," as he calls it, Meredith concludes with the assertion that sentimentalism is

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[32]For other examples of Meredith's use of these adjectives, see his Works, XVI, 15-16; XIX, 460; XX, 12, 27; XXVII, 22.

[33]Letters, I, 198.

[34]Letters, I, 201.

[35]Letters, II, 345.

even worse:

> Yet has that Realism been a corrective of the more corruptingly vapourous with its tickling hints at sensuality. It may serve ultimately in form of coprolite to fatten poor soil for better produce.[36]

Meredith's aim as a man of letters was to help man attain the philosophic mind. For the novel to serve this end, all vestiges of sentimentalism must be eliminated from it. Men of philosophic mind will desire the fiction that has embraced philosophy. In Diana of the Crossways, Meredith, speaking directly to the reader, says:

> And how may you know that you have reached to Philosophy? You touch her skirts when you share her hatred of the sham decent, her derision of sentimentalism.[37]

Meredith's treatment of sentimentalism thus closely parallels Carlyle's treatment of it. They both see it as a form of self-delusion indulged in by the idle-minded, often for the purpose of avoiding uncomfortable facts. Both view it as productive of cant and falsehood and as unproductive of labor. In spite of the sentimentalist's pretense of spirituality, Carlyle and Meredith both attribute to him a refined sensualism, at best a sham spirituality. In his self-consciousness, both writers see elements of the primitive egoist. And both condemn the presence of sentimentalism in literature. In addition to dissecting sentimentalism after the manner of Carlyle and coming to the same conclusions about it that Carlyle had reached before him, Meredith frequently echoes Carlyle in actual words, and in images or comparisons

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[36] Letters, II, 401.

[37] Works, XVI, 16.

expressing his attitude toward it. Both, for example, picture sentimentalism as a vapor and both compare it to wind: Carlyle calling the exhibition of it in literature the "fruit of internal wind" and Meredith calling the consumption of it "wind-filling." Carlyle was the first writer to employ the words rosepink and dandiacal to describe sentimentalists and the sentimental outlook on life. Meredith adopts both of these adjectives and makes repeated use of them. The foregoing conclusions justify the dual supposition that Meredith's attitude toward sentimentalism was influenced by Carlyle and that he, like Carlyle, conceived it to be his task as the man of letters to fight sentimentalism in life and in literature.

To the extent, then, that Meredith directed his literary practice toward the abolition of sentimentalism from life and literature, he can be said to be under the influence of Carlyle. For Carlyle not only pointed out the target, but he also inculcated the desire to shoot, and even supplied much of the ammunition. He taught that the writer to be of true service to mankind must interpret reality, that the hero as man of letters must first see the thing as it is and then record it according to his ability. To render this "soldier-service," Meredith had to show himself the implacable enemy of all forms of sham, which duty he performed by attacking one of the greatest sources of sham, sentimentalism, and by devising a theory of the novel which had as one of its main objectives the elimination of the "rosepink" from literature.

## CHAPTER V

## THE APPRENTICE

Perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of Carlyle's theory of literature is its concentration upon the biographic interest. In this respect, Carlyle the historian cannot be distinguished from Carlyle the critic. In both instances, he is Carlyle the biographer, working toward the same goal--a biographic insight. In "Biography," he says, "'Man is perenially interesting to man; nay, if we look strictly to it, there is nothing else interesting.'"[1] And in the same essay: "Of History, for example, the most honoured, if not honourable species of composition, is not the whole purport Biographic?"[2] In the Cromwell, he makes a distinction between the traditional historian and the biographer-historian in the course of his complaints about the state of the historical records of the seventeenth century:

> 'To Dryasdust, who wishes merely to compile torpedo Histories of the philosophical or other sorts, and gain immortal laurels for himself by writing about it and about it, all this is sport; but to us who struggle piously, passionately, to behold, if but in glimpses, the faces of our vanished Fathers, it is death!'[3]

The biographer-historian, then, seeks through his study of historical records to find and portray the men whose biographies make up the history of man. A similar task occupies the critic who attempts to

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[1] Works, XXVIII, 44.

[2] Works, XXVIII, 46.

[3] Works, VI, 3.

interpret the work of the artist. His prime function, as Carlyle conceived it, is to determine: "What manner of man is this?"[4] For Carlyle, works of art, literary and otherwise, tended to degenerate into so much biographical evidence. In "Biography," he says:

> Art indeed is Art; yet Man also is Man. Had the Transfiguration been painted without human hand; had it grown merely on the canvas, say by atmospheric influences, as lichen-pictures do on rocks,--it were a grand Picture doubtless; yet nothing like so grand as the Picture, which, on opening our eyes, we everywhere in Heaven and on Earth see painted; and everywhere pass over with indifference,--because the Painter was not a Man.[5]

Carlyle's primary interest is in the "Painter" as a man. Although biography had entered criticism before his time, Carlyle's emphasis upon biographical material and, more particularly, the interpretation which he placed upon the word biography constituted something new in criticism. Alfredo Obertello, comparing Samuel Johnson and Carlyle, gives Carlyle credit for introducing into criticism the biographical method that concentrates upon the inner life of the subject and attempts to show the relation of the man to his times:

> Whilst Johnson confined himself mainly to the facts of the poet's external life, Carlyle relates it to the life of the age in which the poet lived and, by following its intellectual and spiritual currents, shows how the influences exerted on the poet by the routine of his daily life and the atmosphere surrounding him formed his character and determined the quality of his productions.[6]

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[4]Works, XXVI, 199.

[5]Works, XXVIII, 46.

[6]Carlyle's Critical Theories: Their Origin and Practice (Genoa, 1948), p. 5.

Perhaps the most succinct statement of Carlyle's requirements for biography is contained in his essay on Burns, one of his most successful biographical criticisms:

> Nevertheless, we are far from thinking that the problem of Burns's Biography has yet been adequately solved. We do not allude so much to deficiency of facts or documents,--though of these we are still every day receiving some fresh accession,--as to the limited and imperfect application of them to the great end of Biography. Our notions upon this subject may perhaps appear extravagant; but if an individual is really of consequence enough to have his life and character recorded for public remembrance, we have always been of opinion that the public ought to be made acquainted with all the inward springs and relations of his character. How did the world and man's life, from his particular position, represent themselves to his mind? How did coexisting circumstances modify him from without; how did he modify these from within? With what endeavours and what efficacy rule over them; with what resistance and what suffering sink under them? In one word, what and how produced was the effect of society on him; what and how produced was his effect on society? He who should answer these questions, in regard to any individual, would, as we believe, furnish a model of perfection in Biography.[7]

Carlyle's particular interest in biography was the inner life of the subject—his intellectual and spiritual development. The two distinguishing points of Carlylean biography may be said to be (1) that the "inward springs and relations of a man's character" must be explored by the biographer; and (2) that such exploration will reveal the intellectual and spiritual struggles that are the lot of every man. This latter point is perhaps best expressed in "Biography," where Carlyle says that every man's life contains a "Problem of Existence" and that his attempts to solve his problem are interesting and instructive to all men, since all are "indentured to live." This "struggle of

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[7]Works, XXVI, 261.

human Freewill against material Necessity" is not only "Poetry," but the "sole Poetry possible."[8] When it is recognized that by "Poetry" Carlyle means the highest type of literature, the production of the great artist, it is clear that he means that the study of an individual's struggle to reach a solution to the inevitable conflict within himself is the only subject worthy of the poet-seer. In the autobiographical portions of Sartor Resartus, he concentrates almost exclusively upon this aspect of his own experience; and at the beginning of the chapter in which he relates the outcome of his intellectual and spiritual struggles, he states that the experience must be common to all men:

> 'Temptations in the Wilderness!' exclaims Teufelsdröckh: 'Have we not all to be tried with such? . . . Our Life is compassed round with Necessity; yet is the meaning of Life itself no other than Freedom, than Voluntary Force: thus have we a warfare; in the beginning, especially, a hard-fought battle. For the God-given mandate, Work thou in Welldoing, . . . leaves us no rest, night or day, till it be deciphered and obeyed. . . . And as the clay-given mandate, Eat thou and be filled, at the same time persuasively proclaims itself through every nerve,—must not there be a confusion, a contest, before the better Influence can become the upper?'[9]

Teufelsdröckh is thankful for the afflictions which have led him to strength and freedom: "'O, thank thy Destiny for these; thankfully bear what yet remain: thou hadst need of them; the Self in thee needed to be annihilated.'"[10] By the annihilation of self Carlyle does not mean an extreme asceticism. The self to be annihilated is the self that

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[8]Works, XXVIII, 249.

[9]Works, I, 146-147.

[10]Works, I, 153.

demands personal happiness as the goal of life. True success is by definition the abandonment of personal goals in favor of cooperation with Nature's efforts to make something finer of the individual and of the species. In "The Hero as Poet," Carlyle speaks of Johnson's life as an "ordeal," in the process of which "Pride, vanity, ill-conditioned egoism of all sorts" must be cast-off. Similarly, society must go through that "manifold, inextricably complex, universal struggle," called the "progress of society." The man who goes through his ordeal successfully will be "one of the thousand arriving saved, nine-hundred-and-ninety-nine lost by the way."[11]

Again in "The Hero as Poet," Carlyle says of the dunce: "There is, in this world, no other entirely fatal person."[12] The man who cannot learn from experience, cannot come successfully through his spiritual "ordeal," stands apart and alone, unable to progress himself or to aid in the progress of society.

Carlyle was intensely interested in the process of change and growth. It is often noted that his histories all deal with revolutionary periods, in which this process is speeded up. From one point of view, he regarded the life of every man as a line or two in the Bible of World History. From another, he regarded it as an emblem of that History. Every man is "indentured to live"--an apprentice to life. This latter point of view has much in common with the apprenticeship view

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[11] Works, V, 166-167.

[12] Works, V, 106.

taken by Goethe in his Wilhelm Meister. Perhaps this similarity is the result of a direct influence of Goethe's Wilhelm Meister on Carlyle's theory of biography. Carlyle's unfinished novel, Wotton Reinfred, contains elements of the apprenticeship pattern, and many of the episodes in the book have autobiographical significance and were later adapted and incorporated into Sartor Resartus. The apprenticeship pattern is the ideal form for tracing the growth of a reflecting person who attempts to generalize upon his personal experience. Susanne Howe suggests that Goethe, whose Wilhelm Meister loosely parallels his life, may have concluded that "it was the only possible form a novel could take."[13] Perhaps Carlyle came to the same conclusion with regard to biography. He did much to popularize the apprentice pattern in England. Speaking of the English apprentice heroes, Miss Howe says:

> Their Sturm-und-Drang periods and learning from life by a kind of trial-and-error method, are all in some degree confessional of their author's own experience, from the sorrows of Carlyle's Wotton Reinfred up the ascending scale of subtlety in method to Meredith's Richard Feverel and Evan Harrington.[14]

It is, therefore, most likely that Carlyle's theory of biography was influenced by his interpretation of Wilhelm Meister. At any rate, his own autobiography, Sartor Resartus, bears a certain resemblance to the German Bildungsroman, and so does his Life of Sterling.[15]

Carlyle regarded Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship as something a

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[13] Wilhelm Meister and His English Kinsmen: Apprentices to Life (New York, 1930), p. 57.

[14] Ibid., p. 8.

[15] Ibid., p. 210.

little higher than fiction. He says that the work is "but ill represented by so trivial a title" as novel.[16] And in his preface to the second edition of the Apprenticeship and the Travels, he says:

> Few English readers can require now to be apprised that these two Books, named Novels, come not under the Minerva-Press category, nor the Ballantyne-Press category, nor any such category; that the Author is one whose secret, by no means worn upon his sleeve, will never, by any ingenuity, be got at in that way.[17]

At least once he refers to the Travels as a poem,[18] and by calling it a poem he seeks to raise it to a level above mere fiction; for poetry, as Carlyle used the word, meant no more than an idealization of reality--an idealization, moreover, in which Carlyle allowed only the great writer to indulge.

Through his translation of Meister, through his writings on Goethe and on literature in general, and particularly through his emphasis on the significance and worth of biography, Carlyle helped to turn the English novel to a more serious study of the problems of the individual and his relationship to society.[19] It was not until after the middle of the nineteenth century that the English novel concerned itself with these deeper issues of life.[20] Apart from his contribution to the novel in general, Carlyle played a special part in the formation

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[16]Works, XXIII, 20.

[17]Works, XXIII, 2.

[18]Works, XXIII, 23.

[19]See p. 22.

[20]David Cecil, Early Victorian Novelists: Essays in Revaluation (London, 1934), pp. 6-9.

of Meredith's theory of literature. This part is perhaps best exposed through an examination of Meredith's view of character-portrayal and a comparison of that view with Carlyle's theory of biography.

The reader of Meredith's work is at once struck with his predominant interest in character. Meredith, in fact, proclaims proudly his indifference to plot in comparison with character portrayal. He delights in pointing out the fact that his characters "move themselves"; that action in his novels proceeds from character; that, in short, his characters are not puppets moved at will by the plotmaker. In Beauchamp's Career, for example, he refers contemptuously to the "fictitious romances which mark out a plot and measure their characters to fit into it."[21] And in Sandra Belloni, speaking of the "Philosopher"--a literary device similar to Carlyle's Herr Sauerteig--he says:

> He points proudly to the fact that our people in this comedy move themselves,--are moved from their own impulsion,--and that no arbitrary hand has posted them to bring about any event and heap the catastrophe.[22]

In a letter to Mrs. Leslie Stephen written in 1884, Meredith speaks of his difficulty in completing Diana of the Crossways, alleging that Diana has "no puppet-pliancy."[23] And he closes his last novel, The Amazing Marriage, with a reaffirmation of his primary interest in character. Somewhat ironically he insists that he has to beg his audience to have patience while "philosophy and exposure of character block

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[21] Works, XII, 240.

[22] Works, IV, 186.

[23] Letters, II, 360-361.

the course along a road inviting to traffic of the more animated kind."[24]

The aspect of Meredith's interest in character-portrayal which is memorable, chiefly because of the frequency with which he defends it, is his insistence that the mental and spiritual "action" of the character must be treated as well as his physical action. In a letter to Canon Jessopp written in October of 1871, he speaks of Harry Richmond: "Consider first my scheme as a workman. It is to show you the action of minds as well as of fortunes. . . ."[25] In The Tragic Comedians, a work which J. B. Priestley calls "a new species, a cross between history or biography and fiction,"[26] Meredith states that his problem in the novel is to find out why his hero and heroine, who were historical personages, came to act as they did:

> And why this man should have come to his end through love, and the woman who loved him have laid her hand in the hand of the slayer, is the problem we have to study, nothing inventing, in the spirit and flesh of both. To ask if it was love is useless. Love may be celestial fire before it enters into the systems of mortals. It will then take the character of its place of abode, and we have to look not so much for the pure thing as for the passion. Did it move them, hurry them, animating the giants and gnomes of one, the elves and sprites of the other, and putting animal nature out of its fashionable front rank?[27]

This problem must be solved by study of the "spirit and flesh" of

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[24]Works, XIX, 510-511.

[25]An unpublished letter in the Altschul Collection of Meredithiana, Yale University Library.

[26]Meredith, p. 42.

[27]Works, XV, 2.

the characters. Is it possible, Meredith asks, that mental and spiritual currents, rather than animal nature, determined the fate of the characters? Although the question is uttered in Meredith's customary tone of irony, it suggests the questions which Carlyle lists as those which the biographer should answer; it suggests the Carlylean insistence that students of Burns's life need not so much to unearth additional facts about his life as to attempt to read the "inward springs and relations" of his character.[28]

In One of Our Conquerors, Meredith is again concerned to point out the necessity for treating action of the mind and spirit as well as that of the flesh; the writer who sees the complementary relation in which these stand will elect to give the full portrait, to paint mental and spiritual action as well as physical action:

> An ill-fortuned minstrel who has by fateful direction been brought to see with distinctness, that man is not as much comprised in external features as the monkey, will be devoted to the fuller portraiture.[29]

Only a few of the many statements which Meredith made on this subject have been cited or quoted here. These examples suffice to show that Meredith placed upon character-portrayal the same demand that Carlyle placed upon biography: that it treat the intellectual and spiritual processes of the subject.

Meredith shares with Carlyle, in addition, his conception of character as a becoming instead of a being. As has been noted, Carlyle

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[28]See p. 95.

[29]Works, XX, 305.

insists that every man's life contains struggle and conflict, through which growth and development take place. Life--experience--is a crucible for the formation of character. It is that process of growth, of change, which occupied Meredith, as it did Carlyle. As early as The Shaving of Shagpat, Meredith outlined his theory of spiritual growth through the buffetings of fortune. When Shibli Bagarag first attempts to shave Shagpat, he is soundly beaten and hurled from the city gates. Noorna finds him groaning and says to him:

> 'What! thou hast been thwacked, and refusest the fruit of it—which is resoluteness, strength of mind, sternness in pursuit of the object!'[30]

The fruits to be gained from the "thwackings" of fate are precisely those qualities needed for success in life, according to Carlyle.[31] To the extent that Shibli Bagarag conquers himself and destroys his vanity by means of the punishments and indignities he is made to suffer, he gains in resoluteness and in strength of mind and becomes the "Master of An Event." He destroys Illusion, which has been ruling over men. In the "Conclusion" of this work, Meredith reinforces and re-emphasizes his thesis in mocking verse:

> Ye that nourish hopes of fame!
> Ye who would be known in song!
> Ponder old history, and duly frame
> Your souls to meek acceptance of the thong.
>
> Lo! of hundreds who aspire,
> Eighties perish—nineties tire!
> They who bear up, in spite of wrecks and wracks,

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[30] Works, I, 15.

[31] See p. 97.

Were seasoned by celestial hail of thwacks.

Fortune in this mortal race
Builds on thwackings for its base;
Thus the All-Wise doth make a flail a staff,
And separates his heavenly corn from chaff.[32]

Galland suggests that the idea for the second stanza quoted above may have been borrowed from Carlyle's discussion of Johnson's struggles as a man of letters.[33] Certainly the import of The Shaving of Shagpat is contained in Carlyle's insistence that every man must conquer pride, vanity, and egoism before he can attain true success, and that he who so conquers is "one of the thousand arriving saved, nine-hundred-and-ninety-nine lost by the way. . . ."[34] Implicit in all of Meredith's work is the idea that egoism, the demand that life satisfy his desire for personal happiness, must be cast aside in the course of the hero's struggles. Something of this idea is reflected in a letter to Lady Ulrica Duncombe, about 1900:

> We cannot come to the right judgment in Biography unless we are grounded in History. It is knowledge of the world for the knowing of men. Question the character, whether he worked, in humanity's mixed motives, for great ends, on the whole: or whether he inclined to be merely adroit, a juggler for his purposes. Many of the famous are only clever interpreters of the popular wishes. Real greatness must be based on morality. These platitudes are worth keeping in mind.[35]

These words could have been penned by Carlyle.

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[32]Works, I, 294.

[33]Meredith, p. 111n.

[34]See p. 97.

[35]Letters, II, 518.

The correspondences between Shibli Bagarag's struggles and those mentioned by Carlyle in his discussion of Johnson's battle may or may not indicate an actual borrowing of words as well as ideas, but they become more noteworthy when it is recollected that in Meredith's first full-length novel, The Ordeal of Richard Feverel, he uses the word ordeal as Carlyle uses it in his statement on Johnson's life. Richard's ordeal is no single event in his life, but rather the "battle," "struggle," or "ordeal" of which Carlyle speaks: the series of events, impressions, and ideas which form his character. From Richard up to and including The Amazing Marriage, the problem which Meredith set himself was to trace the growth and development of the mind and spirit of his characters. In Sandra Belloni, he says of Wilfrid Pole:

> Wilfrid was a gallant fellow, with good stuff in him. But he was young. Ponder on that pregnant word, for you are about to see him grow. . . . The question asked by nature is, 'Has he the heart to take and keep an impression?' For, if he has, circumstances will force him on and carve the figure of a brave man out of that mass of contradictions.[36]

It is this process of character-formation through experience that Meredith portrays. In a letter to William Hardman, Meredith points to this process of growth as that which he attempts to show in Harry Richmond:

> Note, as you read, the gradual changes of the growing Harry, in his manner of regarding his father and the world. I have carried it so far as to make him perhaps dull towards adolescence and young manhood, except to one studying the narrative—as in the scenes with Dr. Julius.[37]

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[36]Works, III, 112.

[37]Letters, I, 229.

The goal toward which experience forces the subject is explained by Harry in a passage worthy of full quotation despite its length:

> The turn of the tide had come to him [Colonel Heddon]. And it comes to me, too, in a fresh spring tide whenever I have to speak of others instead of this everlastingly recurring I of the autobiographer, of which the complacent penman has felt it to be his duty to expose the mechanism when out of action, and which, like so many of our sins of commission, appears in the shape of a terrible offence when the occasion for continuing it draws to a close. The pleasant narrator in the first person is the happy bubbling fool, not the philosopher who has come to know himself and his relations toward the universe. The words of this last are one to twenty; his mind is bent upon the causes of events rather than their progress. As you see me on the page now, I stand somewhere between the two, approximating to the former, but with sufficient of the latter within me to tame the delightful expansiveness proper to that coming hour of marriage-bells and bridal-wreaths. It is a sign that the end, and the delivery of reader and writer alike should not be dallied.[38]

In other words, when Harry "has come to know himself and his relations toward the universe," Meredith's task is completed. His task has been to show character in the actual process of <u>becoming</u>. In order to do so, he has shown not only the events through which Harry passes, but also their effect upon him. The "mechanism when out of action"—the reflections, the mental processes of the characters--is as instructive as when in action.

Captain Welsh, who compels Harry and his friend to accompany him upon a sea voyage, says to the boys: "You share my cabin while you're my guests, shipmates, and apprentices in the path of living. . . ."[39] This remark suggests Carlyle's statement in "Biography" that every man

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[38] <u>Works</u>, X, 332.

[39] <u>Works</u>, IX, 155.

is "indentured to live."[40] It also serves as still another indication that Meredith's chief purpose in Harry Richmond is to show Harry's intellectual and spiritual growth. It is this same purpose that governs all of Meredith's studies of character--his novels. The title of Chapter XIV of Diana of the Crossways is, significantly, "Giving Glimpses of Diana Under Her Cloud Before the World and of Her Further Apprenticeship." In a letter to Mrs. J. B. Gilman written in 1888, Meredith confirms the fact that his primary interest is in the growth of the spirit through experience:

> I have written always with the perception that there is no life but of the spirit; that the concrete is really the shadowy; yet that the way to spiritual life lies in the complete unfolding of the creature, not in the nipping of his passions. An outrage to Nature helps to extinguish his light. To the flourishing of the spirit, then, through the healthy exercise of the senses.[41]

Meredith subscribes also to Carlyle's belief that the story of a man's life must include his spiritual crisis, the story of how he has fared in the struggle between the "clay-given" mandate and the "God-given" one. Before Teufelsdrockh can proclaim his "Everlasting Yea," he must go through a spiritual crisis. Wilfrid Pole's wrestle with the "two men composing most of us" is like Teufelsdrockh's period of "Temptations in the Wilderness":

> The two men composing most of us at the outset of actual life began their deadly wrestle within him, both having become awakened. If they wait for circumstance, that steady fire will fuse them into one, who is commonly a person of some strength; but throttling is the custom between them, and we are used to

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[40]See p. 95.

[41]Letters, II, 409.

> see men of murdered halves. These men have what they fought for: they are unaware of any guilt that may be charged against them, though they know that they do not embrace Life; and so it is that we have vague discontent too universal. Change, O Lawgiver! the length of our minority, and let it not end till this battle is thoroughly fought out in approving daylight. The period of our duality should be one as irresponsible in your eyes as that of our infancy. Is he we call a young man an individual—who is a pair of alternately kicking scales? Is he educated, when he dreams not that he is divided? He has drunk Latin like a vital air, and can quote what he remembers of Homer; but how has he been fortified for this tremendous conflict of opening manhood, which is to our life here what is the landing of a soul to the life to come?[42]

Before the spiritual part of a man's character can become the dominant part, there must be struggle; there must be growth. In a passage from Sandra already quoted, Meredith says that if Wilfrid has "the heart to take and keep an impression," circumstances--life--will equip him to bring the two parts of his nature into proper relation—to come through victorious the spiritual battle which everyone has to face. He must be, as Carlyle says, "teachable," if he is ever to realize the import of his struggles. He must cross his spiritual "Rubicon." He may, however, fail the test which Nature puts to him, in which case he will be cast aside by Nature, whose purpose is to speed the evolution of his character. In a passage from Richard Feverel, redolent of Carlyle, Meredith speaks of this spiritual crisis:

> Although it blew hard when Caesar crossed the Rubicon, the passage of that river is commonly calm; calm as Acheron. . . . heroes may be over in half an hour. Only when they stand on the opposite bank, do they see what a leap they have taken. . . . There they have dreamed: here they must act. There lie youth and irresolution: here manhood and purpose. They are veritably in another land: a moral Acheron divides their life. . . . each

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[42] Works, III, 297.

> man has, one time, or other, a little Rubicon--a clear or foul water to cross. It is asked him: 'Wilt thou wed this Fate, and give up all behind thee?' And 'I will,' firmly pronounced, speeds him over. . . . by far the greater number of carcasses rolled by this heroic flood to its sister stream below, are those of fellows who have repented their pledge, and have tried to swim back to the bank they have blotted out. . . . and who wonders that Madam Fate is so indignant, and wears the features of the terrible Universal Fate to [them]? Fail before her, either in heart or in act, and lo, how the alluring loves in her visage wither and sicken to what it is modelled on! Be your Rubicon big or small, clear or foul, it is the same: you shall not return.[43]

Each man is an apprentice to Life, or Nature. Sooner or later she will test him to see whether or not he has learned those lessons which she has been attempting to teach him. He must meet that test by crossing his spiritual and moral Rubicon.

Although Susanne Howe does not mention Harry Richmond in her study of the apprenticeship novel, she does classify three of Meredith's novels as in the genre: The Ordeal of Richard Feverel, Evan Harrington, and Beauchamp's Career. Of these she says:

> In all three there are faint echoes of Goethe's and Carlyle's ideas of the pilgrim hero journeying into far countries, learning from life as he goes, and finally settling down to practical, useful living. But on the whole, Meredith's heroes point forward to the modern world and to what we are pleased to call the new psychology. They are not of Wertherian or Byronic lineage; they are more practical, flesh-and-blood young men than most of their predecessors, and it is significant--as well as something of a relief--that none of them is a literary genius.[44]

The fact that Meredith's heroes are "not of Wertherian or Byronic lineage" is indicative of the influence of the mature Carlyle on Mere-

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[43] Works, II, 276.

[44] Wilhelm Meister and His English Kinsmen, p. 268.

dith's interpretation of the apprenticeship idea. It will be shown in a later chapter that Carlyle and Meredith both disliked the Byronic heroes of the sentimental imitations of Wilhelm Meister and that Meredith's avoidance of this type and his presentation of the "more practical, flesh-and-blood young men" who espouse the Carlylean doctrine of work are the result of Carlyle's influence. Miss Howe sees the doctrine of work as Carlyle's chief contribution to the make-up of the apprentice-hero:

> Through Carlyle the sane and corrective power of action was the moral lesson that Wilhelm Meister taught its English readers and imitators, and Goethe's eighteenth-century Bildung, or harmonious self-development motif, became subsidiary. Our heroes became too busy finding something to do, to envisage life very clearly as an artistic creative process. Thus the English apprentice heroes, often derived only indirectly from Goethe through Carlyle's translation of Meister and his interpretation of Goethe in general, pass through their black period of Werterism and Byronism to the Carlylean conviction that they must find something to do in the world, and do it whole-heartedly.[45]

For the "harmonious self-development" motif of Goethe, Meredith substitutes the Carlylean theme of moral and intellectual growth. In other words, Meredith attempts to show the development of "spirit" out of "blood" and "brain." That "blood" and "brain" working in harmony produce "spirit" is Meredith's so-called "evolutionary" viewpoint:

> Pleasures that through blood run sane,
> Quickening spirit from the brain.
> Each of each in sequent birth,
> Blood and brain and spirit, three
> (Say the deepest gnomes of Earth),
> Join for true felicity.[46]

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[45] Wilhelm Meister and His English Kinsmen, pp. 10-11.

[46] Works, XXV, 43.

Throughout his poetry, Meredith maintains this spiritual interpretation of man's "evolution," asserting:

> That life begets with fair increase
> Beyond the flesh, if life be true.[47]

When Meredith applies his spiritual interpretation of man's development to life in his novels, it turns out to have little in common with Darwinism. On the contrary, his theory of personal development is seen to have much more in common with Carlyle's theory of biography than with Darwinian evolution. In this connection, E. A. Baker says:

> Impressed by the doctrine of evolution, he gave it a spiritual interpretation. Nature was to him spirit, the spirit of life pervading all things; and her processes were spiritual processes, with which man could labour in unison. . . .
> Personal development was the phase of evolution in which he was pre-eminently interested. In Feverel, "personality is a progressive activity." He blends the theme with the Carlylean idea of biography.[48]

At first sight, Baker's last statement is rather startling. It would seem impossible on the surface of it for anyone to reconcile Darwinian evolution and the Carlylean idea of biography, but the truth is that Meredith's spiritual interpretation of evolution is much nearer to Carlyle's concept of growth than it is to evolution in the biological sense. Meredith did not concern himself with physical evolution as such. Leo J. Henkin says:

> Though George Meredith has been variously referred to as the "poet of evolution," in his novels there is no evidence that he had more than a most general knowledge of the principles of evolution. . . . Passing references to the theory of evolution

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[47] Works, XXV, 223.

[48] History of the English Novel, VIII, 275.

> and to Darwinism are to be found in his novels, but none that would suggest an assimilation of their ideas.[49]

Meredith's interest was, as Baker says, in the spiritual implications of evolution. In Darwin's theory Meredith possibly found scientific support for an evolutionary concept of the spiritual or ideal world--probably derived from Carlyle--which he already had in 1859. In his study of the influence of the theory of evolution on nineteenth-century poetry, Lionel Stevenson notes the similarity between Meredith's interpretation of evolution and Carlyle's philosophy, but he hesitates to attribute this similarity to Carlyle's influence:

> The ethical law which Meredith derived from his evolutionary "reading of Earth" turns out to be practically identical with the two chief tenets of his revered friend and patron, Carlyle. His poetry is largely an exposition of the doctrines of work and leadership in the light of the evolutionary theory, though they fit so perfectly into his general concept of Earth and man that it is impossible to decide how far they are the inevitable deduction from it and how far a heritage from the elder philosopher.[50]

The fact that Meredith's evolutionary theory fits so perfectly into his general concept of Earth and man is actually good reason to suspect a strong influence of Carlyle on Meredith because the basis of Meredith's concept of Earth and man itself is found in Carlyle's philosophy. Guy B. Petter points out that Meredith's belief in the close union of Earth and man is not derived from the scientific hypothesis that man evolved out of the earth, but from romantic thought, and

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[49] Darwinism in the English Novel 1860-1910 (New York, 1940), p. 204.

[50] Darwin Among the Poets (Chicago, 1932), p. 229.

asserts that "Meredith was closely linked in thought with Carlyle."[51] And in his study of the concept of nature in the nineteenth century, Joseph Warren Beach says:

> There is one imaginative prose writer whose influence was so widespread, and who had so much to do with the dissemination among poets of the German romantic feeling for nature, that we cannot afford to pass him by without some brief consideration. Carlyle was eagerly read by poets like Emerson, Whitman, Meredith, and even, I believe, by Longfellow, and served particularly as a means of passing on to them in popular form certain elements in the thought of Goethe and of the German transcendental philosophers.[52]

Then, later, when he discusses Meredith, Beach says that "Meredith's emphasis on work and his use of the word reality are perhaps echoes of his admired Carlyle."[53]

There is even foundation for Meredith's concept of Earth as Mother in Carlyle's early attitude toward Nature. In the chapter of Sartor Resartus entitled "The Sorrows of Teufelsdröckh," the pilgrim hero experiences a romantic union with nature under the stimulation of majestic mountain scenery:

> . . . never till this hour had he known Nature, that she was One, that she was his Mother and divine. . . . he felt as if . . . the Earth were not dead, as if the Spirit of the Earth had its throne in that splendour, and his own spirit were therewith holding communion.[54]

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[51] George Meredith and His German Critics (London, 1939), p. 182.

[52] The Concept of Nature in Nineteenth-Century English Poetry (New York, 1936), p. 301.

[53] Ibid., p. 495.

[54] Works, I, 123.

And after his spiritual rejuvenation, Teufelsdröckh says: "'The poor Earth, with her poor joys, was now my needy Mother, not my cruel Step-dame.'"[55]

Carlyle frequently expresses this same attitude toward Nature or Earth in his early works. In Heroes, for example, he speaks of the "kind just Earth," who makes use of the seeds cast into her bosom and ignores the chaff mixed with them, which, like Nature everywhere, "is true and not a lie; and yet so great, and just, and motherly in her truth. She requires of a thing only that it be genuine of heart; she will protect it if so; will not, if not so."[56]

Carlyle's picture of Nature is not all rosy, however. She receives and protects the true, but she rejects the false. She must be approached in the proper spirit before she will reveal her motherhood. Teufelsdröckh says: "'But Nature, which is the Time-vesture of God, and reveals Him to the wise, hides Him from the foolish.'"[57] From the standpoint of the individual, Nature is not all good. Like everything else in the universe, Nature is imperfect--part good and part evil. Nature is just, however, and it is the duty of man to align himself with the good and the true in Nature. In Past and Present, Carlyle compares the dual aspect of Nature to the Sphinx:

> Nature, like the Sphinx, is of womanly celestial loveliness and tenderness; the face and bosom of a goddess, but ending in

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[55] Works, I, 151.

[56] Works, V, 62.

[57] Works, I, 210.

> claws and the body of a lioness. There is in her a celestial beauty,—which means celestial order, pliancy to wisdom; but there is also a darkness, a ferocity, fatality, which are infernal. She is a goddess, but one not yet disimprisoned; one still half-imprisoned,--the articulate, lovely, still encased in the inarticulate, chaotic. How true! And does she not propound her riddles to us? Of each man she asks daily, in mild voice, yet with a terrible significance, 'Knowest thou the meaning of this Day? What thou canst do Today; wisely attempt to do?' Nature, Universe, Destiny, Existence, howsoever we name this grand unnamable Fact in the midst of which we live and struggle, is as a heavenly bride and conquest to the wise and brave, to them who can discern her behests and do them; a destroying fiend to them who cannot. Answer her riddle, it is well with thee. Answer it not, pass on regarding it not, it will answer itself; the solution for thee is a thing of teeth and claws; Nature is a dumb lioness, deaf to thy pleadings, fiercely devouring.[58]

In Carlyle's philosophy, though God is not identified with Nature, the divine is immanent in the world. Its spirit is discernible in the order, in the good and the true, in Nature and in Nature's laws. Carlyle recognizes a degree of truth in pagan mythologies in that they reveal an awareness of the spiritual powers manifested in Nature:

> The essence of . . . all Pagan Mythologies, we found to be recognition of the divineness of Nature. . . . Man first puts himself in relation with Nature and her Powers, wonders and worships over those; not till a later epoch does he discern that all Power is moral. . . .[59]

The divine is immanent not only in the forces of external Nature but also in the inner consciousness of man. Here, in his own soul, man can find the divine. In "Diderot," Carlyle says:

> . . . that seeking for a God <u>there</u>, and not <u>here</u>; everywhere outwardly in physical Nature, and not inwardly in our own Soul, where alone He is to be found by us,--begins to get wearisome.

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[58] <u>Works</u>, X, 7.

[59] <u>Works</u>, V, 30-31.

> . . . God is not only There, but Here or nowhere, in that life-breath of thine, in that act and thought of thine. . . .[60]

Carlyle defines his own spiritual enfranchisement as the recognition that it is in this world and in himself that man must find his ideal. In Sartor, he says:

> The Situation that has not its Duty, its Ideal, was never yet occupied by man. Yes here, in this poor, miserable, hampered, despicable Actual, . . . here or nowhere is thy Ideal. . . . Fool! the Ideal is in thyself, the impediment too is in thyself; thy Condition is but the stuff thou art to shape that same Ideal out of. . . .[61]

Nature for Carlyle is not static and mechanic, but living and organic, and includes mankind. As a matter of fact, it is only through man that Nature has meaning and existence. Mankind, with his institutions and ideas, is the most important aspect of Nature. The apparent contradiction in Carlyle's nature philosophy results from his changing viewpoint. J. W. Beach distinguishes two periods in the development of Carlyle's philosophy of Nature--the transcendental period and the pragmatic period. Beach says:

> It is in the second period that Carlyle applies the term nature in his criticism of political and social institutions and his interpretation of history. Nature is here understood as the order of the universe as it manifests itself in history and human institutions. . . .[62]

The transition from one period to the other was not abrupt, and probably never complete. Thus in the same work, Sartor Resartus, Car-

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[60] Works, XXVIII, 233.

[61] Works, I, 156-157.

[62] Concept of Nature, p. 312.

lyle views Earth (Nature) as the mother of man, asserts that man himself is an integral part of Nature, and applies the term Nature to the order of the universe. Precisely the same attitudes are found in Meredith's philosophy of Nature and in his use of the term. In Sartor Resartus, Carlyle says:

> 'Yea, truly, if Nature is one, and a living indivisible whole, much more is Mankind, the Image that reflects and creates Nature, without which Nature were not. As palpable life-streams in that wondrous Individual Mankind, among so many life-streams that are not palpable, flow on these main-currents of what we call Opinion; as preserved in Institutions, Polities, Churches, above all in Books. Beautiful it is to understand and know that a Thought did never yet die; that as thou, the originator thereof, hast gathered it and created it from the whole Past, so thou wilt transmit it to the whole Future. . . .
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> 'Noteworthy also, and serviceable for the progress of this same Individual, wilt thou find his subdivision into Generations. Generations are as the Days of toilsome Mankind: Death and Birth are the vesper and matin bells, that summon Mankind to sleep, and to rise refreshed for new advancement. . . . Thus all things wax, and roll onwards; Arts, Establishments, Opinions, nothing is completed, but ever completing.'[63]

Mankind, as well as Nature, is viewed as a living whole; and there is progress, a type of evolution, in the spiritual and ideal realm. In the last sentence of the above passage, Carlyle states his doctrine of evolution. Charles Frederick Harrold, in discussing Carlyle's "theory of evolution," says:

> Sartor brilliantly expresses, at times, the modern concept of "growth," or development, which has its basis in the Entwicklung of the post-Kantians. It is not, to be sure, the evolutionism of Darwin; for Carlyle's world of Teufelsdröckh in 1830, could of course have no place for evolution in the biological sense; its evolution at best approximates the Fichtean concept of the realization of an idea, the unfolding or actualization of a

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[63] Works, I, 196-197.

> plan. The gospel of labour involves a belief in order, and in the possibility of fulfilling a purpose. Evolution occurs in Teufelsdröckh's world in the sense that an inherent design becomes more and more explicit. Yet even while Teufelsdröckh has no place for biological evolution, he does perceive that Entwicklung requires an organic world in which to occur.[64]

Carlyle's morality is based firmly upon his concept of an organic universe--a living, growing, unified world, in which not only thoughts but also the consequences of deeds cannot be suppressed. In Sartor, he says:

> What changes are wrought, not by Time, yet in Time. For not Mankind only, but all that Mankind does or beholds, is in continual growth, re-genesis and self-perfecting vitality. Cast forth thy Act, thy Word, into the ever-living, ever-working Universe: it is a seed-grain that cannot die; unnoticed today (says one), it will be found flourishing as a Banyan-grove (perhaps, alas, as a Hemlock-forest!) after a thousand years.[65]

In Carlyle's philosophy, Nature came to mean the just order in the universe. It is not, however, the static order of eighteenth-century Deism. Carlyle's "order" is a progressive order. It is the principle of cosmic spiritual life which is progressively eliminating everything alien to it.[66] In The French Revolution, Carlyle says:

> Or, apart from all Transcendentalism, is it not a plain truth of sense, which the duller mind can even consider as a truism, that human things wholly are in continual movement, and action and reaction; working continually forward, phasis after phasis, by unalterable laws, towards prescribed issues? . . . so is it ordered not with seedfields only, but with transactions, arrangements, philosophies, societies, French Revolutions,

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[64]Sartor Resartus, ed. Charles Frederick Harrold (New York, 1937), p. liv.

[65]Works, I, 31.

[66]John Holloway, The Victorian Sage (London, 1953), p. 23.

> whatsoever man works with in this lower world. The Beginning holds in it the End, and all that leads thereto; as the acorn does the oak and its fortunes.[67]

Man's duty is to align himself with this progressive order or law of the universe. He must cooperate with it; he should recognize that it is good and just, and work actively with it. In Heroes, Carlyle says:

> It has ever been held the highest wisdom for a man not merely to submit to Necessity—Necessity will make him submit,—but to know and believe well that the stern thing which Necessity has ordered was the wisest, the best, the thing wanted there. . . .
> I say that this is yet the only true morality known. A man is right and invincible, virtuous and on the road towards sure conquest, precisely while he joins himself to the great deep Law of the World. . .; he is victorious while he cooperates with that great central Law, not victorious otherwise;—and surely his first chance of cooperating with it, or getting into the course of it, is to know with his whole soul that it is; that it is good, and alone good.[68]

It is wisdom to see that though judgment of evil is often delayed, it always comes eventually, that there is justice in the universe. In Past and Present, Carlyle says:

> Foolish men imagine that because judgment for an evil thing is delayed, there is no justice, but an accidental one, here below. . . . [Know] That there is justice here below; and even, at bottom, that there is nothing else but justice![69]

Whatever faint spark of optimism crept into Carlyle's somewhat dour view of the universe was the result of this belief of his in ultimate justice and in the final triumph of good. In Frederick, Carlyle says:

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[67] Works, III, 103.

[68] Works, V, 56-57.

[69] Works, X, 8.

> Only what of the Past was true will come back to us. That is the one asbestos which survives all fire, and comes out purified; that is still ours, blessed be Heaven, and only that.[70]

To sum up briefly: In his early works, Carlyle frequently gives expression to the romantic attitude toward Nature, speaking of Earth as the tender and loving mother of man. This attitude is qualified, however, by his recognition of a sternness in Nature. Nature is kind to those who obey her laws; to those who disobey or ignore them she is a vicious destroyer. Carlyle embodies this conception of a dualistic external Nature in the figure of the Sphinx. As his conception of Nature becomes more and more abstract, Carlyle applies the term to the order or just law manifested in the processes of nature and in history and human institutions. He sees in this order the principle of cosmic life, which is progressively eliminating from the universe everything which is alien to it. It is the duty of each man to cooperate with this principle, to recognize that it is just and good. There is justice in the world; evil is eventually punished and good rewarded. Evolution occurs in Carlyle's world in the sense that the bad is progressively eliminated and the good preserved; all things move forward; there is continual change and growth.

Carlyle's idea of biography is intimately bound up with his philosophical view of reality. The problem presented by life to each man is to determine his relationship to the absolute as it is manifested in the world and in human society. This relationship is an inner spiri-

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[70] Works, XII, 16.

tual condition, bodied forth in deeds and words. The important fact about a man is his spiritual status: "The man is the spirit he worked in; not what he did, but what he became."[71] The business of the biographer, according to Carlyle, is to show the spirit a man worked in and to trace the development of that spirit, which like the universe itself, is ever in a process of becoming. In a word, the biographer must show what solution his subject found to the problem of existence in this ever-changing universe. Although the problem is essentially the same for every man, theoretically a new generation should advance somewhat ahead of the previous one; thus some progress in the spiritual and ideal realm can occur in each generation. In Heroes, Carlyle says:

> I do not make much of 'Progress of the Species,' as handled in these times of ours; nor do I think you would care to hear much about it. The talk on that subject is too often of the most extravagant, confused sort. Yet I may say, the fact itself seems certain enough; nay we can trace-out the inevitable necessity of it in the nature of things. . . . Absolutely without originality there is no man. No man whatever believes, or can believe, exactly what his grandfather believed: he enlarges somewhat, by fresh discovery, his view of the Universe,--which is an infinite Universe, and can never be embraced wholly or finally by any view or Theorem, in any conceivable enlargement: he enlarges somewhat, I say, finds somewhat that was credible to his grandfather incredible to him, inconsistent with some new thing he has discovered or observed. It is the history of every man; and in the history of Mankind we see it summed-up into great historical amounts,--revolutions, new epochs.[72]

Thus the society of man moves ever forward, each generation adding to the knowledge and to the work of the previous one. The history

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[71] Works, I, 161.

[72] Works, V, 118.

of every man, moreover, epitomizes the history of mankind. Each man learns from the whole past and adds his contribution in thought and deed to the whole future. Carlyle's doctrine of work and leadership is the ethical law which he derived from his "reading of Earth."

Meredith's conception of reality, of Earth and man, is strikingly similar to Carlyle's. This similarity is perceived by G. M. Trevelyan, who says of Meredith's philosophy:

> . . . since his ethic is not as dour as Carlyle's he has been labelled an optimist. He preaches acceptance and joy as a part of duty. He has written, as it were, a new edition of Sartor, with joy superadded.[73]

Carlyle preaches acceptance of stern reality as a part of duty--willing acceptance, whereas Meredith preaches joyful acceptance. Differences in temperament and difference in age and background account for Meredith's strong emphasis on joy and for his easy acceptance of biological evolution. These superficial differences aside, Meredith's interpretation of Nature, from which he derived his ethics, can almost be equated to Carlyle's. When Meredith speaks poetically of the Earth as mother, he does not imply a literal or scientific relationship, but a spiritual one. In "Ode to the Spirit of Earth in Autumn," he says:

> Earth, the mother of all,
> Moves on her stedfast way,
> Gathering, flinging, sowing.
> Mortals, we live in her day,
> She in her children is growing.[74]

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[73]The Poetry and Philosophy of George Meredith (London, 1906), p. 112.

[74]Works, XXIV, 259.

Meredith is here asserting a spiritual kinship, not a biological one. Earth, which for Meredith means Nature, is a growing and living reality; and man is a part of this reality. He is Nature's latest development--the pinnacle of a growing universe--with infinite possibilities for spiritual evolution.

Though Meredith speaks of Earth as mother, he does not say she is totally beneficent. Good and evil are both present in the world. Nature reveals her beneficent motherhood to those who approach her in the right spirit and recognize her basic justice. On this aspect of Meredith's thought, Lionel Stevenson says:

> Fundamental, therefore, in his creed, is the perception of the spiritual as existing through all Nature, accessible by anyone who approaches her lovingly. The one essential is that man should not regard Nature from the point of view of physical comfort and material satisfactions. Whoever does so will find in her only cruelty and destruction.[75]

Carlyle expresses this same conception of Nature in the metaphor of the Sphinx quoted earlier. Nature, as Meredith uses the term, does not apply to external physical Nature alone. The term is more general and abstract than that: It means the cosmic principle of life, the order in the universe, destiny--necessity--very much the same thing it meant for Carlyle. Man must align himself with this principle or suffer the consequences. Meredith's poem "The Riddle For Men" is so similar to the passage from Past and Present on the Sphinx that it is difficult not to believe that he is indebted to Carlyle for the image and idea. For that reason, it is quoted here despite its length:

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[75]Darwin Among the Poets, pp. 206-207.

This Riddle rede or die,
Says History since our Flood,
To warn her sons of power:--
It can be truth, it can be lie;
Be parasite to twist awry;
The drouthy vampire for your blood;
The fountain of the silver flower;
A brand, a lure, a web, a crest;
Supple of wax or tempered steel;
The spur to honour, snake in nest:
'Tis as you will with it to deal;
To wear upon the breast,
Or trample under heel.

And rede you not aright,
Says Nature, still in red
Shall History's tale be writ!
For solely thus you lead to light
The trailing chapters she must write
And pass my fiery test of dead
Or living through the furnace-pit:
Dislinked from who the softer hold
In grip of brute, and brute remain:
Of whom the woeful tale is told,
How for one short Sultanic reign,
Their bodies lapse to mould,
Their souls behowl the plain.[76]

Like Carlyle, Meredith sees life, or nature, as a riddle propounded to men, which they answer incorrectly at their peril. Their leaders can see the spiritual significance of it, or they can view it as only a brute struggle. Unless they adopt the former view, history will continue to be a bloody story, a tale of the flesh; for nature will respond to each man with the aspect with which he clothes her.

Meredith seems to show familiarity with another image in the Sphinx passage in Diana of the Crossways, where Diana says of the world: "'From the point of view of the angels, this ugly monster, only half out

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[76]Works, XXVI, 14.

of slime, must appear our one constant hero.'"[77] And Meredith interprets her remark to mean that "our world is all but a sensational world at present, in maternal travail of a soberer, a braver, a brighter-eyed."[78] The image in the first quotation is strikingly like Carlyle's picture of nature as "a goddess, but one not yet disimprisoned; one still half-imprisoned,—the articulate, lovely, still encased in the inarticulate, chaotic."[79] In addition, Meredith's image and its interpretation contain two central points in Carlyle's philosophy: that the ideal must be found in the actual, in the world; and that the universe, or world, is organic--a living and growing whole.

Though Meredith does not always use the specifically religious language which Carlyle employs, he agrees with him that God is immanent in the world and in man. Sir Austin Feverel says, "'The God of this world is in the machine--not out of it.'"[80] And in Lord Ormont and His Aminta, Meredith says directly:

> We do not get to any heaven by renouncing the Mother we spring from; and when there is an eternal secret for us, it is best to believe that Earth knows, to keep near her, even in our utmost aspirations.[81]

And in the poem "Earth and Man," Meredith castigates man for not recognizing that the ideal must be found in the actual, here on earth, and

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[77] Works, XVI, 12.

[78] Ibid.

[79] See p. 115.

[80] Works, II, 331.

[81] Works, XVIII, 173-174.

that "spiritual enfranchisement" is dependent, as Carlyle says in the passage from Sartor quoted earlier, upon that recognition.[82]

Like Carlyle, Meredith sees in paganism a recognition of the presence of spiritual powers in Nature. In "The Woods of Westermain," he says:

> Banished is the white Foam-born
> Not from here, nor under ban
> Phoebus lyrist, Phoebe's horn,
> Loved of Earth of old they were,
> Loving did interpret her.[83]

The pagan inventors of myths perceived a truth that still today is

> . . . nor less alive renewed
> Than when old bards, in nature wise,
> Conceived pure beauty given to eyes,
> And with undyingness imbued.[84]

Mere communion with external nature, however, is not enough. True knowledge comes only from a study of Earth and man. In "Earth's Secret," Meredith says that the secret is open only to those who consider man and nature as indivisible. Through man, who is a part of her, nature is growing spiritually.[85] In order to perceive this growth, he must subordinate the demands of the "blood"--the self of the senses--to those of the spirit. In Evan Harrington, Meredith says:

> When we have cast off the scales of hope and fancy, and surrender our claims on mad chance, it is given us to see that some plan is working out; that the heavens, icy as they are to the

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[82] Works, XXV, 94-97.

[83] Works, XXV, 35-36.

[84] Works, XXV, 218.

[85] Works, XXV, 12.

> pangs of our blood, have been throughout speaking to our souls; and, according to the strength there existing, we learn to comprehend them. But their language is an element of Time, whom primarily we have to know.[86]

Meredith's universe is organic. The process of change and growth, of regeneration and decay, so plainly observable in external nature, is duplicated by the universe. Diana's vision of the world as "in travail of" something better is a central point in Meredith's philosophy. Man must learn to accept the fact that nothing is complete, that all things are in a state of flux, of becoming. It is man's duty to align himself with the good in the universe, and in so doing, to further the cause of ethical progress. Only those who, accepting nature's laws, struggle forward through suffering and toil, will be able to see the spiritual goal, the

> . . . rose unfold,
> The soul through blood and tears.[87]

Those who see this goal do so by subordinating their egoism--the self of the senses--to the universal spiritual goal. The good they do lives even though their bodies die. In "The Thrush in February," Meredith says:

> Full lasting is the song, though he,
> The singer, passes: lasting too,
> For souls not lent in usury,
> The rapture of the forward view.
>
> With that I bear my senses fraught
> Till what I am fast shoreward drives.

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[86] Works, VI, 118.

[87] Works, XXV, 238.

> They are the vessel of the Thought.
> The vessel splits, the Thought survives.[88]

The demand for the survival of the "vessel" is that of a man who sets his ego in opposition to Nature's decree that only the spirit endures. Individual identity is lost in the grand progress of universal nature, but an individual can contribute to that progress and so live in his deeds. In a letter to Maxse written in 1884, Meredith says:

> We live in what we have done--in the idea: which seems to me the parent fountain of life, as opposed to that of perishable blood. I see all round me how much Idea governs; and therein see the Creator; that other life to which we are drawn: not conscious, as our sensations demand, but possibly cognizant, as the brain may now sometimes, when the blood is not too forcefully pressing upon it, dimly apprehend.[89]

The universe is stern, but just. The doctrine that a man's deeds live after him includes the idea that Nature will punish him for his misdeeds. In The Amazing Marriage, Lord Fleetwood asks Woodseer: 'Did you ever tell any one, that there's not an act of a man's life lies dead behind him, but it is blessing or cursing him every step he takes?"[90] Whether a man does good or evil, his every act "flows on for ever to the great account."[91] In a sense, even the punishment for misdeeds is good. It gives man an opportunity to learn and to grow. Nature is not arbitrary. Meredith had no patience for those who spoke of the "irony of fate." In Diana of the Crossways, Thomas Redworth, responds thus to the

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[88]Works, XXV, 222.

[89]Letters, II, 362.

[90]Works, XIX, 420.

[91]Works, V, 149.

mention of that "irony":

> 'Upon my word,' he burst out, 'I should like to write a book of Fables, showing how donkeys get into grinding harness, and dogs lose their bones, and fools have their sconces cracked, and all run jabbering of the irony of Fate, to escape the annoyance of tracing the causes. And what are they? nine times out of ten, plain want of patience, or some debt for indulgence. . . . We prate of that irony when we slink away from the lesson —the rod we conjure. And you to talk of Fate! It's the seed we sow, individually or collectively.[92]

When man learns the lesson Nature sets for him, there is progress of the race. Thus the laws of Nature serve the greater good. To those who perceive that Nature is ultimately good and just, she is a kind mother. God, in Meredith's philosophy, is identified with the law of ethical progress and is immanent in Nature and in the spirit of man. Morality for the individual consists in serving the good cause, the cause of ethical progress. In a letter to Mrs. Duff written in 1900, Meredith says: "Be sure that nothing good is ever lost."[93] And as late as 1907, he writes to Mrs. Wheatcroft: "For History tells us that the good cause triumphs in the end, though the individuals may not live to see it. But we strive for the cause, not for ourselves."[94]

Personal happiness and self-interest must be sacrificed for the larger cause of society. In "The Woods of Westermain," Meredith makes this point clearly:

> Drink the sense the notes infuse,
> You a larger self will find:

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[92] Works, XVI, 423.

[93] Letters, II, 511.

[94] Letters, II, 596.

Sweetest fellowship ensues
With the creatures of your kind.[95]

In this growing and developing universe, institutions, and theories, like individuals, serve their purpose and become outmoded. In a letter to Maxse written in 1863, Meredith writes pure Carlylese:

> The truth is that everything that is would be right (according to the optimist, who sees half the truth) would be right, I say, if we were just wise enough to pluck the flower and not tie ourselves to the roots. So the age of an Institution (quiconque) becomes the slavery of its supporters. To know when a thing hath perished, or is vital, is one of the tests of wisdom. . . . We all cling to the days that were and won't be sons of Time.[96]

Meredith's, and Carlyle's, view of life is perhaps best summed up in a statement which Meredith made to W. T. Stead in March of 1904:

> I see the revelation of God to man in the history of the world, and in the individual experience of each of us in the progressive triumph of God, and the working of the law by which wrong works out its own destruction. I cannot resist the conviction that there is something more in the world than Nature. Nature is blind. Her law works without regard to individuals. She cares only for the type. To her, life and death are the same. Ceaselessly she works, pressing ever for the improvement of the type. If man should fail her, she will create some other being; but that she has failed with man I am loath to admit, nor do I see any evidence of it. It would be good for us if we were to take a lesson from Nature in this respect, and cease to be so wrapped up in individuals, to allow our interests to go out to the race. We should all attain more happiness, especially if we ceased to care so exclusively for the individual I. Happiness is usually a negative thing. Happiness is the absence of unhappiness.[97]

Meredith, like Carlyle, did not use the terms Earth and Nature

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[95] Works, XXV, 36.

[96] Letters, I, 102-103.

[97] Quoted in Hammerton, Meredith, p. 325.

with scientific precision. Sometimes Earth means the planet Earth; sometimes it is used poetically to mean the whole of Nature, of which the planet Earth is but a part. Nature is just another word for reality, or for what Carlyle calls "Nature, Universe, Destiny, Existence, howsoever we name this grand unnamable Fact in the midst of which we live and struggle." It should not be surprising that the ethical law which Meredith derived from his "reading of Earth" turns out to be practically identical with Carlyle's two favorite tenets, the doctrines of work and of leadership in the interest of the greater good; for Meredith's conception of reality bears a strong resemblance to Carlyle's. The resemblance is such, in fact, that the conclusion that Meredith was indebted to Carlyle for the core of his philosophy is a reasonable one. Meredith's favorite passage from his own poetry, the passage which is inscribed on his tombstone, expresses both his and Carlyle's conclusion:

> Our life is but a little holding, lent
> To do a mighty labour: we are one
> With heaven and the stars when it is spent
> To serve God's aim: else die we with the sun.[98]

In his novels Meredith attempts to apply his philosophy to life and to show in terms of actual human experience the meaning and significance of his conception of reality. The problem which he sets himself in the novels is to trace the growth and development of the mind and spirit of his characters within the framework of reality. Since Meredith's conception of reality is very similar to Carlyle's, it is

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[98] Works, VII, 252.

only natural that his idea of the problem of existence facing each individual should also correspond to Carlyle's. It follows that his method of presenting an account of a character's solution to the problem of life should be similar to Carlyle's idea of biography. Thus when Baker says that Meredith blends the theme of evolution with the Carlylean idea of biography, he gives undue importance to evolution. Meredith's theory of the development of character and his conception of reality would have been very much the same had Darwin never published The Origin of Species. His theory of spiritual growth through the struggles of life is very much in evidence in The Shaving of Shagpat, a work published almost four years before The Origin of Species. Meredith's interest in growth, moreover, was not scientific. His speculations begin where the scientist's end. Growth was to him, as it was to Carlyle, a moral question. Meredith placed evolution on a spiritual plane. The evolutionary purpose of Nature is a moral and spiritual one. Change is the law of the spirit of life pervading all things. Complete unfolding or development of the best intellectual and spiritual possibilities in a person constitutes the ideal of Nature. Growth or development of the intellect and of the spirit is not, however, entirely automatic. Man must make a conscious effort to cooperate with Nature. Nature will guide him, prod him, and finally punish him for failing; but he has freedom of choice. Meredith's novels are so many variations on this theme applied to individuals.

The individual who grows intellectually and spiritually will come to realize that Nature's processes are spiritual processes that

have as their end the well-being and progress of mankind as a whole. Nature's laws, then, are in opposition to an egocentric viewpoint. The individual matters in so far as he can contribute to the progress of society. Individuals, however, are not born saturated in altruism. They are egoistic, selfish, and they mistakenly believe that the end of life is in their personal happiness, by which they most often mean the gratification of their senses. There is a conflict between the instinct of survival and the larger impulse toward the good of the whole. In the philosophy of both Carlyle and Meredith, the progress of mankind, which is the aim of Nature, is dependent on man's ability to learn from experience, both collective and individual, past and present. If a person is capable of taking and keeping an impression, he will, under the guidance of Nature and circumstance, come to understand his relation to the universe and to his fellow man. He will find, however, that the thing he originally valued most--his personal happiness--is of no real consequence and that the cause of the fierceness of the struggle to grow up has been the conflict between his spirit and his ego, the self of the senses.

If he read it, Meredith probably smiled at the criticism of George Parsons Lathrop, who, in 1888, said of him: "He is too much like a biographer. We look for a novelist and find an annalist."[99] Meredith deliberately wrote biography--biography of the kind which Carlyle recommended as the highest kind of writing. The didactic aim of Meredithian

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[99]Quoted in Hammerton, Meredith, p. 164.

fiction is to show a character growing to an understanding of himself and of his relations to the universe. Obviously this form of the novel owes something to the apprenticeship tradition. It is from Carlyle's interpretation of the apprenticeship pattern, however, and not directly from Goethe's Wilhelm Meister that Meredith's inspiration derives. Meredith's characters do not consciously seek the classic harmonious development of a Wilhelm Meister that is Goethe's ideal. They are more nearly akin to Teufelsdröckh. The development they undergo is a moral development, resulting in the realization that the right use of life is to serve the good of society as a whole. They come to accept reality as Carlyle and Meredith conceived it, and a personal responsibility to the whole resembling Carlyle's doctrine of work.

Since Meredith's philosophy itself is essentially the same as Carlyle's, it is not surprising that the Meredithian novel should be Carlylean biography in fiction. It was not a great feat of synthesis for Meredith to blend the theme of spiritual evolution with the Carlylean idea of biography because the principles of Carlylean biography were designed specifically as a means of tracing spiritual growth. The conclusion that Meredith's treatment of character is derived from Carlyle's writings on biography appears to be a reasonable one.

## CHAPTER VI

## THE FIRST ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Beauchamp's Career (1876) has been described by several of Meredith's critics as the first novel of his artistic maturity.[1] And many of those who have not discussed the novel in terms of its place in Meredith's literary development have recognized its importance by devoting complete chapters to it, in contrast to a more-curtailed examination of his other works.[2] It may be significant, too, that Beauchamp's Career was Meredith's favorite of his novels. In singling it out to Edward Clodd he seems to agree with his critics that it represents a firmer grasp of his medium than he had hitherto achieved: "There is a breezy, human interest about it, and the plot has a consistency which Feverel lacks. Then, a thing which weighs with me, the French critics liked it; they said Renée is true to life."[3]

A novel in which the artist exercises for the first time a true mastery of his craft is of prime importance in a study of his literary practice, and the fact that the novel is his favorite underscores that importance. When it happens, as it does in Beauchamp's Career, that the novelist departs from his text to introduce comments on his literary theory and to make an acknowledgment of literary indebtedness, weight is

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[1]Baker, History of the English Novel, VIII, 303; Stevenson, Meredith, p. 200.

[2]See, for example, Wright, Art and Substance.

[3]Memories, p. 148.

certainly added to his statements by the place in which they are communicated.

In view of the attention that has been given this novel by Meredith's critics, it is difficult to understand why no effort has heretofore been made to identify the "sage and seer" to whom Meredith pays tribute in its first chapter. He avows that he is following the counsel of that sage in respect to his method of treating his subject:

> I give you the position of the country undisturbed by any moralizings of mine. The youth I introduce to you will rarely let us escape from it; for the reason that he was born with so extreme and passionate a love for his country, that he thought all things else of mean importance in comparison: and our union is one in which, following the counsel of a sage and seer, I must try to paint for you what is, not that which I imagine. This day, this hour, this life, and even politics, the centre and throbbing heart of it (enough, when unburlesqued, to blow the down off the gossamer-stump of fiction at a single breath, I have heard tell) must be treated of: men, and the ideas of men, which--it is policy to be emphatic upon truisms--are actually the motives of men in a greater degree than their appetites: these are my theme; and may it be my fortune to keep them at blood-heat, and myself calm as a statue of Memnon in prostrate Egypt! He sits there waiting for the sunlight; I here, and readier to be musical than you think. I can at any rate be impartial; and do but fix your eyes on the sunlight striking him and swallowing the day in rounding him, and you have an image of the passive receptivity of shine and shade I hold it good to aim at, if at the same time I may keep my characters at blood-heat.[4]

The counsel given by Meredith's sage can be stated simply as advice to stick to reality, delivering a true and impartial picture of the times; but such a simplification of it ignores the hints and whimsical allusions whereby Meredith draws the portrait of the person whose counsel he avows that he is following. Meredith has been instructed not

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[4]Works, XI, 6-7. My italics.

only to paint "what is," but to eschew fiction ("that which I imagine"). Reality is superior to fiction, adds the sage. And he goes on to say that in treating reality, Meredith must treat his times, which will amount to treating men and the ideas of men. Men's ideas are denominated separately so that the sage can make the point that the actions of men are rooted in their ideas "to a greater degree" than in their "appetites." It is possible, too, that Meredith's resolve to be "musical" is related to the counsel of the sage. Meredith's manner of expressing this resolve suggests the connection. He describes himself as "readier to be musical than you think."

It should be noted, in addition, that Meredith's attitude toward his "sage" is not unmixed respect. The whimsical "I have heard tell" which he adds to his description of reality as "enough, when unburlesqued, to blow the down off the gossamer-stump of fiction at a single breath" suggests a tongue-in-cheek attitude. And Meredith's remark that "it is policy to be emphatic upon truisms" has all the earmarks of a jest at the expense of the sage.

Despite the veil of humor which hangs over Meredith's statements about his sage, however, he evidently means himself to be taken seriously in his resolve to follow the advice given if he can do so and still keep his characters at "blood-heat." In his final summation of his intentions, he speaks of "the passive receptivity of shine and shade" which he thinks it good to attempt with every indication of communicating a serious resolve.

When the recommendations of Meredith's "sage and seer" are ex-

amined in the light of Meredith's attitude to him and to his "counsel," it seems more than probable that they are the words of advice to Meredith of the Sage of Chelsea himself—Thomas Carlyle. Interpreted as a drastically condensed précis of Carlyle's essays upon literature, Meredith's statement gains meaning and significance. In addition, it goes a long way toward eliminating some of the difficulties that have puzzled critics of Beauchamp's Career.

In his letters, Meredith frequently refers to Carlyle as a sage and a seer,[5] and, significantly, he bestows these epithets on no other modern writer. Still more conclusive, however, than the fact that Meredith calls his counselor a "sage and seer" is the advice proffered by the sage: Besides urging all and sundry to "turn to the study of reality," Carlyle urged Meredith specifically to write history, as Meredith states repeatedly. Meredith, in addition, could very well have read such a passage as this one from "The Diamond Necklace," in which Carlyle maintains that the nineteenth century is as worthy of the writer's interest and attention as any age that preceded it:

> Such being the intrinsic quality of this time, and of all Time whatsoever, might not the Poet who chanced to walk through it find objects enough to paint? What object soever he fixed on, were it the meanest of the mean, let him but paint it in its actual truth . . ., his picture of it were a Poem. . . .
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> The present Writer, who unhappily belongs to that class [of prosaists], has nevertheless a firmer and firmer persuasion of two things: first, as was seen, that Romance exists; secondly, that now, and formerly, and evermore it exists, strictly speaking, in Reality alone. The thing that is, what can be so wonderful; what, especially to us that are, can have such significance? Study Reality, he is ever and anon saying to himself;

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[5]See pp. 39, 45.

> search out deeper and deeper its quite endless mystery; see it, know it; then, whether thou wouldst learn from it, and again teach; or weep over it, or laugh over it, or love it, or despise it, or in any way relate thyself to it, thou hast the firmest enduring basis: that hieroglyphic page is one thou canst read on forever, find meaning in forever.[6]

It is perhaps unwise to see verbal echoes in Carlyle's "the thing that is" and Meredith's "what is"; and certainly many authors speak of the writer as one who "paints" pictures of life. It can be suggested, however, that to speak of reality as <u>what is</u> is almost to use Carlylese. Certainly no writer has ever spoken more vehemently against fiction and for that writing which paints reality than Carlyle did. In the essay "Biography," he expresses much the same ideas as those which have been noted in "The Diamond Necklace":

> Sweep away all frothiness and falsehood from your heart; struggle unweariedly to acquire, what is possible for every god-created Man, a free, open, humble soul: <u>speak not at all, in any wise, till you have somewhat to speak</u>; care not for the reward of your speaking: then be placed in what section of Space and of Time soever, do but open your eyes, and they shall actually <u>see</u>, and bring you real <u>knowledge</u>, wondrous, worthy of belief; and instead of one Boswell and one White, the world will rejoice in a thousand,--stationed on their thousand several watchtowers to instruct us by indubitable documents of whatsoever in our so stupendous World comes to light and <u>is</u>! O, had the Editor of this Magazine but a magic rod to turn all that not inconsiderable Intellect, which now deluges us with artificial fictitious soap-lather, and mere Lying, into the faithful study of Reality,--what knowledge of great, everlasting Nature, and of Man's ways and doings therein, would not every year bring us in! Can we but change one single soap-latherer and mountebank Juggler, into a true Thinker and Doer, who even tries honestly to think and do,--great will be our reward.[7]

If it is too much to assume that Meredith is actually nominating

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[6] <u>Works</u>, XXVIII, 329-330.

[7] <u>Works</u>, XXVIII, 59-60.

himself in Beauchamp's Career as the answer to this plea for a man who will paint "whatsoever in our so stupendous World comes to light and is," it is not too much to say that the sense of the quotation and, again, an occasional choice of word, are in agreement with Meredith's statement of indebtedness to a "sage and seer." Carlyle's "whatsoever . . . is" and Meredith's "what is" are enlarged upon by contrast in each case—with "artificial fictitious soap-lather" on Carlyle's part, and on Meredith's with the "gossamer-stump of fiction." It is evident that Carlyle is attempting to indicate the lightness, flimsiness, of fiction as opposed to the solidity of biography and history. Meredith makes the same attempt. The use of gossamer to describe the "stump" of fiction indicates that fiction is flimsy in comparison with reality. In addition, this reference may involve still another Carlylean idea. In the essay "Stump-Orator," Carlyle describes each of the "talking activities" as a stump, or rostrum, for ideas.[8] Meredith's figure suggests that he has this meaning of stump in mind, especially since he has it that "what is" can "blow" the down from the stump of fiction.

From Meredith's phraseology and punctuation, it is clear that he is still echoing his counsellor when he says that his own day ("This day, this hour, this life, and even politics, the centre and throbbing heart of it") must be treated of. He equates the treatment of these with the painting of men and the ideas of men; in other words, he says that he will treat the former by treating the latter. And he adds em-

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[8]Works, XX, 190.

phatically that the ideas of men, to a greater degree than their appetites, impel men to action.

Here, briefly set forth, is Carlyle's theory that the proper way of writing history is to write biographies of men. Though he early proclaimed that "History is the essence of innumerable biographies,"[9] he later came to the conclusion that history is best epitomized in the life of a man. In the essay "Jesuitism," he says: "What this universe is, what the Laws of God are, the Life of every man will a little teach it you. . . ."[10] The life of a great man, he concludes, is "the synopsis and epitome of his age, with its interests and influences. . . ."[11] He complains bitterly of the historians of the eighteenth century, alleging that the detailed picture of events which they give does not unfold the age itself, and insisting that what he wants to know is the "LIFE OF MAN" in England.[12] Boswell's Life of Johnson, he says, gives more insight into the history of England than the so-called histories provide.[13]

Having decided that biography is the basic form of history, Carlyle decreed further that good biography must trace the intellectual and spiritual development of the protagonist as well as unfold the events of

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[9]Works, XXVIII, 46.

[10]Works, XX, 326.

[11]Works, XXVIII, 90.

[12]Works, XXVIII, 81.

[13]Works, XXVIII, 80, 83.

his life. In uncovering the motives of men, it must treat these aspects because they help to explain men's conduct. Carlyle waged constant warfare against the "Motive Millwrights" of the empirical school, who, he said, tried to reduce the task of tracing the springs of men's conduct to the application of an equation in which all actions are assumed to arise from motives of self-interest, of appetite.[14] He insisted that in the important decisions of life men act upon the basis of ideas and of spiritual convictions, that men are more than "digesting-machines"; that they have souls as well as stomachs, and that "Soul is not synonymous with Stomach."[15] And he concluded that the biography which does not show the workings of a man's spirit does not show the man.[16]

Meredith's compressed representation of his intention to write history by writing biography, and Carlylean biography, to be exact, in accordance with the counsel of his sage and seer, hardly leaves it open to doubt that he is talking about Carlyle, who urged him repeatedly to write history. Evidently Meredith was perfectly serious when he told Carlyle that novel-writing was his way of writing history.[17]

Meredith's promise to spare the reader any "moralizings" of his and to be "impartial" in treating his subject is entirely in keeping with his sage's advice that he paint <u>what is</u>. And it is interesting to

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[14] <u>Works</u>, I, 176-180.

[15] <u>Works</u>, I, 129.

[16] See p. 95.

[17] See p. 28.

note that Carlyle inveighed incessantly against the writer who allowed his own theories to come between him and the thing he was portraying. In "The Diamond Necklace," the same work in which he speaks so eloquently in behalf of "the thing that _is_," Carlyle castigates the historian for this error:

> 'Of all the blinds that shut-up men's vision,' says one, 'the worst is Self.' How true! . . . Alas now for our Historian. . . . Instead of looking fixedly at the _Thing_, and first of all, and beyond all, endeavouring to _see_ it, and fashion a living Picture of it, not a wretched politico-metaphysical abstraction of it, he has now quite other matters to look to.[18]

Carlyle's works are studded with statements of this sort; in addition, it was his habit to pass on this piece of advice to writers and would-be writers of his acquaintance. In her autobiography, Harriet Martineau says:

> Readers who thus read for amusement, and skip the politics, liked my second book best; and so did those who, like Carlyle, wisely desire us to see what we can, and tell what we see, without spinning out of notions, which, as self-derived, are no part of our business or proper material in giving an account of an existing nation. Carlyle wrote me that he had rather read of Webster's cavernous eyes and arm under his coat-tail, than all the political speculation that a cut-and-dried system could suggest.[19]

When Meredith says that no moralizings of his will come between the reader and the facts ("position of the country"), he means that he will not obscure "what is" by abstracting it in terms of his own theories. The last image in the quotation from _Beauchamp's Career_ supports that interpretation. Meredith uses the Memnon Statue, said to produce

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[18] _Works_, XXVIII, 326.

[19] _Autobiography_, p. 407.

musical sounds when struck by the rays of the morning sun, to symbolize his attitude toward his material. He is to remain as "calm as a statue of Memnon in prostrate Egypt," to wait with the "passive receptivity" of the statue for the sunlight. And the material he treats will, he hopes, strike chords in him and produce a harmony unclouded by his own reflections: He is "readier to be musical than you think."

It has already been indicated in a previous chapter, that Meredith, like Carlyle, offers harmony of word and thought as a test of truth and of poetic achievement and that Carlyle describes as one of the attributes of the poet-historian the ability to see and record "musically."[20] It is even possible that Meredith had Carlyle's particular application of the Memnon figure in mind when he wrote the passage under discussion, though the image is very common with poets of the nineteenth century. It seems to have been a favorite of Carlyle's.[21] In at least one place he uses it precisely as Meredith employs it. In "Signs of the Times," he is describing the ideal attitude of the writer in the act of creation. Speaking specifically of the literature of the day, he says:

> But omitting this class [the journalists], and the boundless host of watery personages who pipe, as they are able, on so many scrannel straws, let us look at the higher regions of Literature, where, if anywhere, the pure melodies of Poesy and Wisdom should be heard. Of natural talent there is no deficiency: one or two richly-endowed individuals even give us a superiority in this respect. But what is the song they sing? Is it a tone of the Memnon Statue, breathing music as the <u>light</u> first touches it? A 'liquid wisdom' disclosing to our sense the

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[20]See p. 61.

[21]<u>Works</u>, XXVII, 41, 148.

deep, infinite harmonies of nature and man's soul? Alas, no![22]

With this image Meredith concludes his explanation of what he is attempting in Beauchamp's Career: He will follow in fiction the advice Carlyle gives to the historian: will portray his times by painting the men of his times, their mental and spiritual aspects as well as the events through which they pass. And he hopes to do so "musically," to come up to the high standard which Carlyle sets for the poet-historian.

If Meredith's words are translated correctly in respect to his sage's ideas, then the envelope of humor in which they are wrapped deserves special attention. It is easy to see why Meredith would adopt a tongue-in-cheek attitude toward Carlyle's animadversions against fiction; after all, he was following Carlyle's advice to treat reality in the novel, not in orthodox biography. The reference to Carlyle's fondness for emphasis upon truisms is perhaps best documented by the letter to Maxse quoted in Chapter II, in which Meredith says that Carlyle "beats his own brains out with emphasis."[23] And Meredith indicates specific knowledge of Carlyle's fight against the mechanistic school when he notes that his ideas are "a good set-off to the doctrines of what is called the 'Empirical school.'"[24] Perhaps Meredith's somewhat whimsical treatment of his sage's advice is best explained by the letter to Lady Duncombe in which he insists upon his "right to smile" at great

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[22] Works, XXVII, 77-78.

[23] See p. 39.

[24] See p. 36.

men even while reverencing them.[25] In another letter to the same lady, he says specifically that "an accurate perception of foibles in those whom we love does not lessen the love, or perhaps even the reverence."[26]

Since the identification of Meredith's "sage and seer" is not a difficult task for the student of Carlyle, it may be suggested here that those students of Carlyle who have also studied Meredith have passed over Meredith's first acknowledgment of indebtedness to him because of the idea that the sage mentioned is merely a brother to the "Philosopher" of Sandra Belloni, whose resemblance to Carlyle's Sauerteig has already been noted.[27] The contrary is indicated, however, not only by reference to Carlyle's writings, but also by study of the novel itself, as annotated by Meredith's letters to friends about it. Especially relevant to Meredith's expressed intention to write Carlylean biography in fiction is a letter which he wrote to Moncure D. Conway in June of 1874. He describes Beauchamp's Career in this letter in terms that almost might pass for a definition of Carlylean biography:

> It is philosophical-political, with no powerful stream of adventure: an attempt to show the forces round a young man of the present day, in England, who would move them, and finds them unutterably solid, though it is seen in the end that he does not altogether fail, has not lived quite in vain. Of course, this is done in the concrete. A certain drama of self-conquest is gone through, for the hero is not perfect. He is born of the upper class, and is scarcely believed in by any class, except when he vexes his own; and it /sic/ is then to be hated. At the same time the mild spirit of a prosperous middle class, that is

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[25]See p. 48.

[26]Letters, II, 516.

[27]See p. 100.

> not extremely alarmed, is shown to be above persecuting; so that the unfortunate young man is in danger of being thought dull save by those who can enter his idea of the advancement of Humanity and his passion for it. In this he is a type. And I think his History a picture of the time--taking its mental action, and material ease and indifference, to be a necessary element of the picture.[28]

This letter--which is clearly a serious statement--confirms what Meredith says in the passage quoted from Beauchamp's Career. When Meredith says that his novel is "an attempt to show the forces round a young man of the present day, in England," and adds that he considers his "History" to be "a picture of the time--taking its mental action, and material ease and indifference, to be a necessary element of the picture," he is clearly giving part of the formula for Carlylean biography. And when he points to the "drama of self-conquest" which his subject undergoes, he is, to all intents and purposes, presenting the remaining part of the formula. That Carlyle's insistence that the biographer portray the spiritual struggles of the protagonist is met by this drama will be shown more fully later in this chapter.

When examined in the light thrown upon it by Meredith's statements about the novel, Beauchamp's Career can be seen to be an astounding tribute to Carlyle in more ways than one. For one thing, Nevil Beauchamp, the protagonist, selects as his favorite author that "beloved Incomprehensible," who "dedicated volumes to the praise of a regicide,"[29] and whose style is described in the memorable lines already

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[28] Letters, I, 243.

[29] Works, XI, 23.

quoted in Chapter II of this work.[30] Critics have had no difficulty in identifying this author as Carlyle.

It is only to be expected that Beauchamp should have acquired some of his views from his favorite author, but it is of particular significance that Meredith's summing-up of Beauchamp's character is accomplished wholly in terms of Carlyle's teachings. Because this description of Beauchamp sheds light upon Meredith's artistic principles, it will be examined in some detail. Taking a remark of Beauchamp's uncle as his point of departure, Meredith says:

> The hero is chargeable with the official disqualification of constantly offending prejudices, never seeking to please; and all the while it is upon him the narrative hangs. To be a public favourite is his last thought. Beauchampism, as one confronting him calls it, may be said to stand for nearly everything which is the obverse of Byronism, and rarely woos your sympathy, shuns the statuesque pathetic, or any kind of posturing. For Beauchamp will not even look at happiness to mourn its absence; melodious lamentations, demoniacal scorn, are quite alien to him. His faith is in working and fighting. With every inducement to offer himself for a romantic figure, he despises the pomades and curling-irons of modern romance, its shears and its labels: in fine, every one of those positive things by whose aid, and by some adroit flourishing of them, the nimbus known as a mysterious halo is produced about a gentleman's head. And a highly alluring adornment it is! We are all given to lose our solidity and fly at it; although the faithful mirror of fiction has been showing us latterly that a too superhuman beauty has disturbed popular belief in the bare beginnings of the existence of heroes: but this, very likely, is nothing more than a fit of Republicanism in the nursery, and a deposition of the leading doll for lack of variety in him. That conqueror of circumstances will, the dullest soul may begin predicting, return on his cockhorse to favour and authority. Meantime the exhibition of a hero whom circumstances overcome, and who does not weep or ask you for a tear, who continually forfeits attractiveness by declining to better his own fortunes, must run the chances of a novelty during the interregnum. Nursery Legiti-

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[30]See pp. 40-41.

> mists will be against him to a man; Republicans likewise, after a queer sniff at his pretensions, it is to be feared. For me, I have so little command over him, that in spite of my nursery tastes, he drags me whither he lists. It is artless art and monstrous innovation to present so wilful a figure, but were I to create a striking fable for him, and set him off with scenic effects and contrasts, it would be only a momentary tonic to you, to him instant death. He could not live in such an atmosphere. The simple truth has to be told. . . .[31]

The overall significance of this passage is that Meredith's hero is not the sentimental hero or the realistic hero. He differs from the former in several important respects and from the latter in others. In the quotation the sentimentalists are called Nursery Legitimists, and realists are designated Republicans. Further, Meredith states his belief that realism is merely a temporary aberration, "a fit of Republicanism in the nursery," and that sentimentalism will soon return to favor. Both the sentimentalists and the realists will be against Beauchamp: he is too realistic for the former, and too idealistic for the latter. In other words, Meredith says, he is a real person, not a puppet of the writer's creation.

And it is here, in the conception and treatment of the hero, that Carlyle's influence is immediately discernible. Meredith says that Beauchampism stands "for nearly everything which is the obverse of Byronism," that Beauchamp "will not even look at happiness to mourn its absence," and that "his faith is in working and fighting." If the letter to Conway may be said to contain a near definition of Carlylean biography, these remarks upon Beauchamp can be said to define the dis-

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[31] Works, XI, 38-39.

ciple of Carlyle. The allusion to Carlyle's doctrine of work is obvious. It was Carlyle, too, who used the term "Byronism" to describe the stereotyped sentimental hero, the English Werter.[32] In his essay on Goethe, Carlyle says:

> If Byron's life-weariness, his moodly melancholy, and mad stormful indignation, borne on the tones of a wild and quite artless melody, could pierce so deep into many a British heart, now that the whole matter is no longer new,—is indeed old and trite,—we may judge with what vehement acceptance this Werter must have been welcomed. . . . For Werter, infusing itself into the core and whole spirit of Literature, gave birth to a race of Sentimentalists, who have raged and wailed in every part of the world. . . .[33]

In Past and Present, Carlyle makes Byron the butt of his remarks concerning "happiness":

> A gifted Byron rises in his wrath; and feeling too surely that he for his part is not 'happy,' declares the same in very violent language, as a piece of news that may be interesting. It evidently has surprised him much. One dislikes to see a man and poet reduced to proclaim on the streets such tidings but on the whole, as matters go, that is not the most dislikable. Byron speaks the truth in this matter. Byron's large audience indicates how true it is felt to be.[34]

And Carlyle's advice to the person who frets and fumes about his happiness is succinctly given in Sartor. He says: "'Close thy Byron; open thy Goethe.'"[35] Meredith indicates knowledge of Carlyle's writings on Byron in the Essay on the Idea of Comedy and the Uses of the Comic Spirit (1877), in which he says that both Goethe and Carlyle treat Byron

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[32]Works, XXIX, 39.

[33]Works, XXVI, 218.

[34]Works, XXVI, 154.

[35]Works, I, 153.

"in the humourous manner."[36] And it is interesting to note that two of the sentimentalists in Sandra Belloni discuss the question of happiness and make what may be still another reference to Carlyle. Purcell Barrett talks with his beloved Cornelia:

> 'And if you are wretched, must not I be? You pluck from me my last support. This, I petitioned Providence to hear from you--that you would be happy! I can have no comfort but in that.'
>
> 'Happy!' Cornelia murmured the word musically, as if to suck an irony from the sweetness of the sound. 'Are we made for happiness?'
>
> Mr. Barrett quoted the favourite sage, concluding: 'But a brilliant home and high social duties bring consolation.'[37]

Barrett is a Byronic hero, blaming fate instead of his own sentimentality for his misery. Meredith says of him that it "did not offend his sentiment to charge [his unhappiness] upon the order of the universe."[38]

It is possible that Barrett's "favourite sage" is Carlyle, especially since, as has already been noted, Meredith applies this appellation to Carlyle frequently. It is not out of character for Barrett to like Carlyle's works, since the sentimentalist, in his case, is a man who pretends to a large degree of "culture," who would pride himself on his acquaintance with the works of Carlyle--an acquaintance which would be superficial, of course.

Apart from the fact that he rejects Byronism, with its emphasis

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[36] Works, XXIII, 43.

[37] Works, III, 221.

[38] Works, IV, 260.

on personal happiness, Beauchamp has another side which reflects Carlyle's ideas. The realists, too, will not like him. His "pretensions" will turn them against him. Perhaps those pretensions are best summed up in the words Meredith uses in the letter to Conway quoted above. Meredith says that he may be thought dull "save by those who can enter his idea of the advancement of Humanity and his passion for it." Meredith's meaning here will become clear later in this chapter, when Beauchamp's ideas are more fully explored; it suffices to note here that Meredith has labelled Beauchamp an idealist as well as a Carlylean man of action.

The passage from Beauchamp's Career under discussion also contains another possible reference to Carlyle. In a paragraph from "Diderot," cited in Chapter III, Carlyle says that eventually novelists must "either retire into nurseries, and work for children, minors, and semi-fatuous persons of both sexes"; or else give up fiction in favour of history and biography.[39] For his part, Meredith speaks of fiction itself as the nursery. Realism is only a "fit of Republicanism in the nursery." The sentimentalists are the "Nursery Legitimists." Of his hero, Meredith says: "For me, I have so little command over him, that in spite of my nursery tastes, he drags me whither he lists." This bit of whimsy on Meredith's part is quite possibly a direct reference to Carlyle's statement that novelists should retire into "nurseries." Meredith's meaning is clear: He views the new realism as a revolt, des-

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[39]See p. 54.

tined to be ultimately unsuccessful, against sentimentalism. The sentimentalists are the "Nursery Legitimists" because they favor the sentimental hero, who has ruled the realm for some time now, and though temporarily threatened by the realistic hero, shows no signs of withdrawing permanently. The sentimentalists, moreover, first brought fiction to the level of the "nursery," and if they have their way will keep it there.

The presence of sentimentalism is one of the reasons Carlyle condemns fiction to the nursery and offers as the only alternative the recording of <u>what is true</u>, or, in other words, the writing of history. Meredith's phrase "in spite of my nursery tastes," therefore, is given full meaning if interpreted as another whimsical allusion to his controversy with Carlyle over the relative merits of history and fiction. He certainly does not mean to say that he has a taste for sentimentalism. His taste is for fiction rather than for history. When he professes no control over his hero in this novel, he is simply being consistent with his earlier promise to treat reality in this work. And he confirms this promise again in his concluding statement: "The simple truth has to be told. . . ."

In a letter to John Morley, dated July 23, 1874, Meredith shows that he introduced this description of Beauchamp with some deliberation. The letter also sheds some light upon Meredith's attitude toward the novel itself:

> I find I can say what should be said of Beauchamp in a paragraph at the head of the 4th chapter--I am very shy of prefaces, and by introducing my one or two remarks incidentally I hope to escape from a tone that seems to avoid the apology only by some

> loftiness—or the reverse. I am afraid it would not be I who could put the intermediate touch. . . . I own that you might do it for one of your own works: but for a piece of fiction having a serious aim, and before a public that scorns the serious in fiction, and whose wits are chiefly trained to detect pretension, it is more than commonly difficult.[40]

This letter to Morley reveals the fact that the passage under discussion is in some sort a substitute for a preface to Beauchamp's Career. As such, it can be considered a "serious statement" in what Meredith describes as "a piece of fiction having a serious aim."

Beauchamp is firmly established from the beginning, then, as a disciple of Carlyle. Carlyle is his favorite author, and Meredith sums up his character in terms of Carlyle's doctrine of work, his rejection of non-productive Byronism, and his refusal to consider personal happiness as his end in life. These three ideas are, of course, interrelated in Carlyle's writings, and they are fused in Meredith's conception of his hero.

Meredith gives Beauchamp another characteristic of the disciple of Carlyle later in the novel when he points to the fact that Beauchamp's virtue is an unconscious one. Beauchamp is an idealist and inevitably takes the course of the idealist, whatever the cost to himself in terms of worldly advantage. Since he does not consider the universe to be under the obligation of affording him personal happiness, it does not enter his head to substitute self-righteousness for satisfaction of his desires of the flesh. Meredith points out this aspect of his character with great care, concluding:

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[40] Letters, I, 244.

> Conscious rectitude, too, after the pattern of the well-behaved Aeneas quitting the fair bosom of Carthage in obedience to the Gods, for an example to his Roman progeny, might have stiffened his backbone and put a crown upon his brows.[41]

But Beauchamp does not have this comfort, for he conforms to the Carlylean maxim: "The healthy know not of their health, but only the sick."[42] This theory is central to Carlyle's conception of the heroic person. In "The Diamond Necklace," he says explicitly that the "true hero, your true Roland, is ever unconscious that he is a hero: this is a condition of all greatness."[43]

Some indication of Beauchamp's true significance to Meredith may be gleaned from Meredith's explanation that Beauchamp's "rectitude" is an unconscious one. Since that attitude is characteristic of the Carlylean hero, it may be suggested at this point that Beauchamp is not only a disciple of Carlyle but, more particularly, Meredith's picture of the Carlylean hero in the society of the nineteenth century. This view of Beauchamp is borne out by the fact that Meredith pictures the young Beauchamp as a worshipper of heroes, one who is "possessed by his reverence for men of deeds."[44] Meredith makes these revealing remarks about him:

> How could he think of himself, who had done nothing, accomplished nothing, so long as he brooded on the images of signal Englishmen whose names were historic for daring, and the strong

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[41] Works, XII, 152.

[42] Works, XXVIII, 1.

[43] Works, XXVIII, 327.

[44] Works, XI, 13.

> arm, all given to the service of the country?--men of a magnanimity overcast with simplicity, which Nevil held to be pure English; our type of splendid manhood, not discernible elsewhere. . . . A family resting its pride on mere ancestry provoked his contempt, if it did not show him one of his men. He had also a disposition to esteem lightly the family which, having produced a man, settled down after that effort for generations to enjoy the country's pay.[45]

And Nevil insists even as a boy that the aristocracy, of which he is a member, should lead the people, "insist on their following. . . ."[46] To his uncle he says that "it seems to me we're treated like old-fashioned ornaments!"[47] and that the "way to defend them [our privileges] is to be worthy of them."[48]

When Beauchamp becomes a young politician, his attitude has not changed materially:

> 'One may venerate old families when they show the blood of the founder, and are not dead wood. I do. And I believe the blood of the founder, though the man may have been a savage and a robber, had in his day finer elements in it than the common. But let me say at a meeting that I respect true aristocracy, I hear a growl and a hiss beginning: why? Don't judge them hastily: because the people have seen the aristocracy opposed to the cause that was weak, and only submitting to it when it commanded them to resist at their peril; clinging to traditions, and not anywhere standing for humanity: much more than the people themselves. Ah! well, we won't talk of it now. I say that there is no aristocracy if it does not head the people in virtue--military, political, national: I mean the qualities required by the times for leadership.'[49]

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[45] Works, XI, 13.

[46] Works, XI, 29.

[47] Works, XI, 30.

[48] Works, XI, 31.

[49] Works, XI, 310.

Beauchamp, then, both expresses Carlyle's call to the upper classes to take up their burden of leadership, expressed most clearly in "Shooting Niagara: And After?"[50] and offers himself as an example. This is to be indeed a hero of Carlyle's.

Beauchamp also expresses other Carlylean ideas. In one place he speaks of the gap between the rich and the poor and says that the wealthy only see the danger "when fever comes up from back alleys and cottages. . . ."[51] This remark calls to mind Carlyle's story of the poor Irish widow, whose kinship with her neighbors is tragically established when she catches fever and gives it to them.[52] And in another place, Beauchamp plans for a journal which will expose the "covert Toryism, the fits of flunkeyism, the cowardice, of the relapsing middle-class, which is now England before mankind because it fills the sails of the Press. . . ."[53] This journal is to be "very lungs to the people, for them to breathe freely through at last. . . ."[54] Flunkeyism is a Carlylean coinage.[55] The journal that will give "lungs" to the people recalls Carlyle's statement in "Stump-Orator" that society needs "vital lungs," that it needs "methods of summoning aloft into the high places,

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[50] Works, XXX, 15ff.

[51] Works, XI, 164.

[52] Works, X, 149.

[53] Works, XII, 185.

[54] Works, XII, 186.

[55] Oxford English Dictionary.

for its help and governance, the wisdom that is born into it in all places, and of course is born chiefly in the more populous or lower places."[56]

Against the background of the fact that Meredith points out Beauchamp's admiration for Carlyle, that he describes Beauchamp generally in terms of Carlylean ideas, and that he has Beauchamp express Carlyle's attitude toward heroes and toward the aristocracy, these remarks of Beauchamp's can be construed as actual echoes of Carlyle. While the connection seems somewhat tenuous when considered alone, it assumes strength from these other factors. In addition, it can be noted that the essay "Stump-Orator" is possibly the one from which Meredith drew his image of fiction as a "stump." Furthermore, Meredith's use of another idea and image from this essay elsewhere in Beauchamp's Career will be examined later in this chapter.

Other and more detailed ideas which Beauchamp shares with Carlyle are expressed in the novel through a figure known as Dr. Shrapnel, who is pictured as Beauchamp's political mentor. Shrapnel's relationship to Beauchamp is such in the novel that there can be no question that he speaks for Beauchamp as well as for himself.

Attempts to identify this philosophical Radical with various figures of Meredith's day have been numerous, for, like many of Meredith's novels, Beauchamp's Career has its foundation in actual events. The novel is based primarily on Meredith's political experiences in the year

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[56] Works, XX, 183.

1868, when he campaigned for his friend Frederick Maxse, who stood as Radical candidate for Southampton and was defeated. It has been pointed out frequently that nearly all the important characters in the book are taken from life.[57] Nevil Beauchamp is Maxse himself, and Blackburn Tuckham, Beauchamp's rival for the hand of Cecilia Halkett, is drawn from Meredith's close friend Sir William Hardman. The prototype for Dr. Shrapnel, as Stevenson points out, is a matter of some disagreement among Meredith's critics.[58] Although a certain Dr. Edwin Hearne, of Southampton, who was one of Maxse's supporters in the election, seems to have provided the basis for the figure, it is generally agreed among critics that Shrapnel is not a full portrait of Hearne.[59] Galland sees the character as a composite of Mill, Ruskin, Carlyle, and Meredith.[60] Stevenson believes that something of Ruskin, Carlyle, and Meredith went to make up the character.[61]

Several critics suggest that Dr. Shrapnel is a portrait of Meredith himself. Crees says: "As for Meredith himself, he is a more genial Dr. Shrapnel. . . ."[62] S. M. Ellis sees a slight physical resem-

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[57]Henderson, Meredith, p. 121.

[58]Meredith, p. 200.

[59]Ibid.

[60]Meredith, p. 342.

[61]Meredith, p. 200.

[62]Meredith, p. 214.

hero of a novel. . . ."[68] It seems more likely that Meredith is referring in the sentence quoted to the burlesque letter itself. In any event, although Hill has established the fact that Shrapnel expresses some of Meredith's own ideas, no fixed identification of Shrapnel has heretofore been made.

A distinction must be made here between a final identification of the original of Shrapnel, based upon detailed study of his opinions and ideas, and an intuitive grasp of the elements that go to make up the character. Morris Edmund Speare recognizes the resemblance of Shrapnel to Carlyle, but he does not identify the two:

> For Nevil Beauchamp, too, his "political mentor and the mouthpiece of his ideals" throughout the novel is a Dr. Shrapnel, who has a soul as violent, as enthusiastic, as savage, and as void of measure, taste, and order as Carlyle's; who suggests something of the colossal range of Carlyle's opinions: who certainly talks in none other than Carlyle's semi-chaotic language.[69]

Speare's comparison is entirely justified by study of the ideas expressed by Shrapnel in Beauchamp's Career. Perhaps these are best represented by a letter which Shrapnel writes to Beauchamp after the results of the election, unfavorable for the Radicals, are known. This letter opens in what is practically pure Carlylese, both in idea and style:

> My brave Beauchamp--On with your mission, and never a summing of results in hand, nor thirst for prospects, nor counting upon harvests, for seed sown in faith day by day is the nightly harvest of the soul, and with the soul we work. With the soul we

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[68] Meredith, p. 193.

[69] The Political Novel: Its Development in England and in America (New York, 1924), p. 239.

blance between Meredith and Dr. Shrapnel,[63] and Moffatt states that Dr. Shrapnel's characteristic opinions are simply those expressed by Meredith in many of his poems.[64] Wright says: "At times, Shrapnel is much like Meredith himself, both in his ideas, and in his habits."[65] Charles J. Hill, however, in an article devoted exclusively to this problem, goes even further, arguing that Dr. Shrapnel is "the figure with whom Meredith probably identified himself more or less fully."[66] Although Hill demonstrates successfully, chiefly by quotations from Meredith's letters and poems, that many of Meredith's opinions are those of Dr. Shrapnel, his thesis suffers from an unfortunate error in the date and meaning of a burlesque letter which Meredith wrote to Maxse in December of 1866 and post-dated to December of 1870. Meredith concludes the letter, which relates in sober tones various imaginary deeds ascribed to Maxse, with this statement: "I have just finished the History of the inextinguishable Sir Harry Firebrand of the Beacon, Knight Errant of the 19th century, in which mirror you may look and see--my dear Fred and his loving friend, GEORGE MEREDITH."[67] Stevenson says of this letter that in 1866 Meredith "had imagined himself in 1870 making his friend the

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[63]Meredith, p. 240.

[64]Meredith, p. 225.

[65]Art and Substance, p. 113.

[66]"The Portrait of the Author in Beauchamp's Career," JEGP, LII (July, 1953), 338-339.

[67]Letters, I, 220.

see.[70]

In "Characteristics," Carlyle defines the "good man" as he "who works continually in well doing. . . ."[71] And he contrasts with him the "self-seeking" person who engages in "an unprofitable looking behind as to measure the way we have made. . . ."[72] The sole concern, he says, should be "to walk continually forward, and make more way."[73] And in a passage from Sartor already cited in Chapter V, he says: "Cast forth thy Act, thy Word, into the ever-living, ever-working Universe: it is a seed-grain that cannot die. . . ."[74] In other words, what Shrapnel counsels is Carlyle's doctrine of work. He uses not only the idea but an image which Carlyle uses to express the same idea. In addition, the image is one which Carlyle uses so frequently that it needs no additional documentation: on this subject Carlyle uses it throughout his work.

Furthermore, it is surely no exaggeration to say that it was one of Carlyle's basic tenets that it is only through the soul, the spirit, that men can see and work. For Carlyle, the spiritual everywhere has dominance over the physical. A typical pronouncement of his is this statement from "Jesuitism":

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[70] Works, XII, 3.

[71] Works, XXVIII, 7-8.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Works, XXVIII, 8.

[74] See p. 118.

> The Spiritual, it is still often said, but is not now sufficiently considered, is the parent and first-cause of the Practical. The Spiritual everywhere originates the Practical, models it, makes it, so that the saddest external condition of affairs among men, is but evidence of a still sadder internal one.[75]

Shrapnel and Carlyle evidently share the insistence that a man should labor faithfully and uncalculatingly and that the source and import of his work is spiritual. In addition, they both use the "seed" image to express this idea.

Shrapnel goes on to attack those "Professors, prophets, masters," who have attempted to put forth creeds and systems "good mayhap for the term . . . for the truth everlasting."[76] Similarly, Carlyle attacks bitterly those who have tried "by eternal creeds, eternal forms of Government and the like . . . to chain the Future under the Past. . . ."[77] Carlyle insists that man shall not be bound down by the "old clothes" represented by systems, creeds, and institutions which he has outgrown.[78]

Shrapnel proceeds to disclaim all creeds, insisting that "We truly are his [the Master's] disciples, who see how far it was in him to do service. . . ."[79] And he proclaims: "So, in our prayers, we dedicate the world to God, not calling him great for a title, no--showing

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[75] Works, XX, 296.

[76] Works, XII, 4.

[77] Works, XXVIII, 37.

[78] Works, XXVIII, 38.

[79] Works, XII, 5.

him we know him great in a limitless world, lord of a truth we tend to, have not grasped."[80]

The attitude toward religion which Shrapnel indicates here is precisely Carlyle's. In "Jesuitism," he insists that the "Jew old-clothes," the creeds in which religion has been wrapped, are now outgrown, that the reading of "God's laws" as given therein is no longer satisfactory to him.[81] And in the same essay he emphasizes the "service" of the life of Jesus: "Through this," he says, "the heaven of Martyr Heroisms, the 'divine depths of Sorrow,' of noble Labour, and the unspeakable silent expanses of Eternity first in man's history declare themselves."[82] In other words, Carlyle sees Jesus as an embodiment of his doctrine of work. Jesus represents the highest kind of hero, the priest who reads God's laws, and at the same time demonstrates in his life the ideal of service, Carlyle's doctrine of work.

Like Shrapnel, too, Carlyle sees the world as limitless, infinite.[83] And Shrapnel's conception of God as "lord of a truth we tend to" is entirely in line with Carlyle's conception of man as developing spiritually toward something infinitely better. In "Characteristics," he says specifically: "The progress of man toward higher and nobler developments of whatever is highest and noblest in him, lies not only

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[80] Works, XII, 5.

[81] Works, XX, 330-331.

[82] Works, XX, 332.

[83] See p. 121.

prophesied to Faith, but now written to the eye of Observation, so that he who runs may read."[84] Shrapnel's "tend to" is like Carlyle's wird, used in the same essay to denote the concept of organic development. "Truth," Carlyle says, "in the words of Schiller, immer wird, nie ist; never is, always is a-being."[85] And Carlyle applies the same doctrine to mankind; he sees it as an organism that is a-being.[86]

Shrapnel's attitude to prayer also has some kinship with Carlyle's conception of the spiritual. "Prayer," Shrapnel says, "is the recognition of laws; the soul's exercise and source of strength; its thread of conjunction with them. . . . We that fight the living world must have the universal for succour of the truth in it."[87] Carlyle, too, sees the spiritual world as man's source of strength. The whole aim of the study of man's history is, to him, to interpret the "eternal covenants," the "Laws of God."[88] And in "Jesuitism," he says men will have "Blessings and success, most surely, if our notion of this Universe, and our battle in it be a true one. . . ."[89] It is not too much, in fact, to say that Shrapnel's statements on this subject could easily have been written by Carlyle. They not only represent Carlyle's ideas

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[84]Works, XXVIII, 37.

[85]Works, XXVIII, 38.

[86]Ibid.

[87]Works, XII, 6.

[88]Works, XX, 324-326.

[89]Works, XX, 297.

but are clothed in the language he uses when he expresses them.

Another attitude, then, which Shrapnel and Carlyle have in common is their viewpoint on religion. The agree that there are no fixed formulas (systems, creeds, institutions) for the expression of man's religious instincts; that Jesus of Nazareth represents an ideal of service (the doctrine of work); that man is a developing being, on the road to a nobler state; and that the spiritual world offers man the strength he needs for his earthly struggles.

The next portion of Shrapnel's letter is given by Meredith only in a series of phrases—phrases highly suggestive of Carlyle's writings:

> History—Bible of Humanity; . . . Permanency--enthusiast's dream--despot's aim--clutch of dead men's fingers in live flesh . . . Man animal; man angel; man rooted; man winged.[90]

These phrases might almost be read out from Carlyle's essays. The first, Carlyle's characterization of history as the "Bible" of humanity, is very common in his writings. In the essay "Jesuitism," for example, he says: "The early Nations of the world . . . knew without teaching that their History was an Epic and Bible. . . ."[91] And in the same essay: "All History . . . is an inarticulate Bible. . . ."[92]

The second item in the list is "Permanency," which stands in close relation with the next three phrases--"enthusiast's dream," "despot's aim," and "clutch of dead men's fingers in live flesh." Taken

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[90] Works, XII, 6.

[91] Works, XX, 323.

[92] Works, XX, 325.

together, these phrases constitute a vivid summary of ideas already expressed by Shrapnel: the idea chiefly that man is unfolding toward a nobler state and that his progress must not be stopped by those who, as Carlyle puts it, wish to "chain the Future under the Past." Although Carlyle has a chapter entitled "Permanence" in Past and Present in which he praises the idea of permanent contract between men, that idea does not seem to be the one to which Shrapnel has reference. In view of Carlyle's habit of repetition for the sake of emphasis, it does not seem unlikely that Shrapnel repeats the idea here.

The last group of phrases--"Man animal," "man angel," "man rooted," and "man winged"--stand in the same close relation as the parts of the preceding group. They express Carlyle's idea of the "strange dualism" of man.[93] This dualism is embodied in the name Diogenes Teufelsdröckh. Man has a soul and a body; the one must have dominance over the other, says Carlyle.

Through these phrases, then, Meredith conveys Shrapnel's agreement with Carlyle that man's history is a Bible; that those who seek to bind him down to permanent systems, creeds, and institutions are in error; and that man is moved by spiritual as well as physical impulses.

When Shrapnel begins his attack upon the English god Comfort, he again echoes Carlyle. He says that though "a word of dissent holds you up to execration," he and Beauchamp must speak out against their "passive idolatries." These worshippers of Comfort "live like swine,

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[93] Works, XXVIII, 4.

craving only not to be disturbed at the trough."[94] The phrases selected for quotation are part of a long peroration on the subject, but they give its essence.

In the essay "Jesuitism," Carlyle, too, warns that those who speak for truth must expect no quarter from the followers of Comfort. "'If it isn't orthodox truth,'" he quotes his foe, "'it will play the very devil with you.'"[95] In spite of the dangers involved, he accuses the English of transferring their religion from the "head" and "heart" to the "stomach" and "purse." And he gives a list of the principles of what he calls this "Pig Philosophy," of which the first tenet is that the universe is "an immeasurable Swine's trough."[96] The whole purport of the essay is, in fact, that the English have embraced the god Comfort and fallen away from the spiritual God.

The agreement between Shrapnel and Carlyle here is striking. Both of them see the great mass of people as behaving like swine, as adopting the pig's view of the universe. And both speak this truth in spite of the dangers they admit exist for the truth-teller.

Shrapnel's conception of the proper leaders for society is conveyed in a passage that might be lifted straight from "The Hero as King":

> Where kings lead, it is to be supposed that they are wanted. Service is the noble office on earth, and where kings do service

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[94] Works, XII, 7.

[95] Works, XX, 311.

[96] Works, XX, 316.

> let them take the first honours of the State: but the English middle class, which has absorbed the upper, and despises, when it is not quaking before it the lower, will have nothing above it but a ricketty ornament like that you see on a confectioner's twelfth-cake.[97]

The doctrine that the king is by definition he who leads the people is implicit in Carlyle's conception of society. For his example of the hero as king, he selects Cromwell, the man who deposed an hereditary king and was active in securing his execution. And in The French Revolution he points to the fact that "little more than ornamental figures" were at the head of the state as one of the causes of the revolution.[98] In "Characteristics," he says: "The gods of this lower world sit aloft on glittering thrones, . . . indolent . . . and impotent."[99]

Later in the letter, Shrapnel is more specific about the kingly function. He insists that "the people might be won by visible forthright kingly service to . . . loyalty . . .; ay, that, the people verily thirst to love and reverence. . . ."[100] Here is a central thesis of Carlyle's conception of society. He repeats again and again the idea that it is natural for man to obey his superiors, that the people are eager to find their natural leaders and to do them reverence.[101]

From the political arena Shrapnel proceeds again to the spiritu-

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[97] Works, XII, 8.

[98] Works, II, 12.

[99] Works, XXVIII, 20.

[100] Works, XII, 19.

[101] Works, X, 55.

al, insisting that the same bad conditions prevail there. He says that in the hands of the Comfort-worshipping, the church "goes to decay in vestments—vestments! flakes of mummy-wraps for it. . . ."[102] Here is a repetition of Carlyle's conception of the formulas or creeds as the "old clothes" of religion. And it may be of significance, too, that in "Jesuitism" Carlyle says that the priests of Rome are in the condition of a "spiritual mummy."[103] The connection is strengthened by the fact that Shrapnel proceeds immediately into a lengthy dissertation upon the danger of Roman Catholicism's seducing the leaderless people. He speaks scathingly of the "ranked and black-uniformed host" and says that the "helpless poor and the uneasy rich are alike open to the seductions of Romish priests and intoxicated ranters."[104] Carlyle, too, conceives of such a danger; in "Jesuitism," he insists that the "black militia" of Ignatius Loyola has helped to spread the doctrine of the "salutary nature of falsehood" and the "divine authority of things doubtful" over the world.[105]

Shrapnel's elaboration of the danger from Rome is mingled with a recognition of the danger of the tyrant. The "intoxicated ranters" are those who would lead the people, not from spiritual motives, but from motives of self-interest. And he concludes: "They walk in a dream.

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[102]Works, XII, 9.

[103]Works, XX, 300.

[104]Works, XII, 10.

[105]Works, XX, 305.

The flesh is a dream. The soul only is life."[106] A surface examination of the passage under discussion would see Shrapnel as following Carlyle in respect to the former danger only, but despite the attacks upon Carlyle as an advocate of dictatorship,[107] careful perusal of his work shows that he had no brief for any leader who governed from motives of self-interest, although, as Meredith notes, he could be "wilful" in his choice of a hero.[108] In the splenetic "Shooting Niagara: And After?" he warns of the danger of the people's following the false leadership of the "big Queen Bee," who has no more spiritual light to shed on life than her followers have.[109] It is spiritual light above all that his hero must possess; those stigmatized as walking in a dream of the flesh are his opponents.

Shrapnel describes the people as "the Power to come." They are, he says:

> Oppressed, unprotected, abandoned; left to the ebb and flow of the tides of the market, now taken on to work, now cast off to starve, committed to the shifting laws of demand and supply, slaves of Capital, the whited name for old accursed Mammon: and . . . no pastor to come out of the association of shepherds, and proclaim before heaven and man the primary claim of their cause.[110]

This description of the abandoning of the people to blind econom-

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[106] Works, XII, 11.

[107] See, for example, Eric Russell Bentley, A Century of Hero-Worship: A Study of the Idea of Heroism in Carlyle and Nietsche with Notes on Hero-Worshippers of Modern Times (Philadelphia, 1944).

[108] See p. 44.

[109] Works, XXX, 3.

[110] Works, XII, 9.

ic law might have come straight from the pages of Carlyle's Past and Present, where he insists that the cash-payment relation between men, which is the basis of the laissez-faire philosophy, cannot continue. "If," he says, "at any time a philosophy of Laissez-faire, competition and Supply-and-demand, starts up as the exponent of human relations, expect that it will soon end."[111]

Shrapnel ties his picture of economic injustice, and the failure of the leadership principle involved in it, to one fault of the leaders: "egoism." Egoism causes the able-man who becomes king to decree that his son, regardless of his qualities, shall succeed him; it causes the barons, who rise to power later, to fail also; the traders who succeed them succumb to the same malady. Finally the people are left leaderless.[112]

Carlyle makes exactly this connection in Past and Present. He says that the presence of the cash-payment idea in society indicates failure in the leaders of men. It is the "sure and even swift, forerunner of great changes."[113] And he continues:

> Expect that the Old System of Society is done, is dying and fallen into dotage, when it begins to rave in that fashion. Most systems that I have watched the death of, for the last three thousand years have gone just so. The Ideal, the True and Noble that was in them having faded out and nothing now remaining but naked Egoism, vulturous Greediness, they cannot live; they are bound and inexorably ordained by the oldest Des-

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[111] Works, X, 188.

[112] Works, XII, 11-12.

[113] Works, X, 188.

tinies, Mothers of the Universe, to die.[114]

And both Carlyle and Shrapnel see the on-coming rule of the numbers, democracy, as an inevitable outgrowth of the failure of men and groups intrusted with leadership to perform that function. Shrapnel says: "Numbers win in the end; proof of small wisdom in the world."[115] Carlyle says: "To what extent Democracy has now reached, how it advances irresistible with ominous, ever-increasing speed, he that will open his eyes on any province of human affairs may discern."[116] And he adds that democracy is the "despair of finding any Heroes to govern you. . . ."[117] It is only fair to state here that Meredith does not picture Shrapnel as a firm opponent of democracy: he sees its weaknesses, but accepts it as the only possible solution to the situation. Carlyle, of course, never despaired of persuading the people that they should seek out their natural leaders. Perhaps the compromise is reached when Beauchamp, the aristocrat, tries to gain a position of leadership within the framework of democracy. Just as Carlyle preached undauntedly in the face of the on-coming triumph of numbers, that men should find leaders and obey them, so Shrapnel undauntedly counsels Beauchamp not to give up his attempt to lead.[118]

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[114] Works, X, 188.

[115] Works, XII, 12.

[116] Works, X, 215.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Works, XII, 7.

The closing note of Shrapnel's letter concerns a personal problem of Beauchamp's. The latter is in rebellion against the laws of society, which decree that he must be separated from his beloved Renée because of her marriage to another man. Beauchamp is given the Socratic warning that he must not flout the laws of society:

> Society is our one tangible gain, our one roofing and flooring in a world of most uncertain structures built on morasses. Toward the laws that support it men hopeful of progress give their adhesion. . . . Rebellion against Society, and advocacy of humanity run counter. Tell me Society is the whited sepulchre, that it is blotched, hideous, hollow: and I say, add not another disfigurement to it; add to the purification of it. And you, if you answer, what can only one? I say that is the animal's answer, and applies also to politics, where the question, <u>what can one</u>? put in the relapsing tone, shows the country decaying in the individual.[119]

It is almost superfluous to note that this attitude toward society is Carlyle's own. He lists society as "the most important of man's attainments on this earth. . . ."[120] And the central thesis of all of his work is that the individual must reform himself before society can be reformed. Through the doctrine of work, he preached the idea that each man must do his duty so that mankind can grow socially and spiritually.

In summary, it may be said that Shrapnel's characteristic opinions and modes of expression are those of Carlyle. Shrapnel and Carlyle hold in common the doctrines of work and of leadership; the conception of society as organic, developing, outgrowing formulas

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[119] <u>Works</u>, XII, 12-13.

[120] <u>Works</u>, XXVIII, 12.

(creeds, systems, and institutions); the idea that the spiritual is the only source of man's strength; the perception of man's "strange" duality; the revulsion against materialism; the opposition to economic injustice; the conception of egoism as the fault that has dogged man's leaders; and the refusal to engage in anti-social behavior. In addition, Shrapnel and Carlyle use many of the same images and phrases to express these ideas. It is not necessary to review the verbal echoes in the material presented. Only one of them--the correspondence of Shrapnel's "History--Bible of Humanity" with Carlyle's description of history--is enough to suggest that Meredith in portraying Shrapnel had in mind not only Carlyle's ideas but also some of his actual phrases.

Perhaps Meredith wished to call attention to the many similarities of style between Shrapnel and Carlyle. At any rate, he has Beauchamp compare Shrapnel's style to Carlyle's. Beauchamp defends Dr. Shrapnel's letter to Cecilia Halkett, whose good opinion of Dr. Shrapnel he is soliciting:

> 'Dr. Shrapnel makes use of strong words now and then, but I undertake to produce a totally different impression on you by reading the letter myself--sparing you,' (he turned to Cecilia) 'a word or two, common enough to men who write in black earnest and have humour.' He cited his old favourite, the black and bright lecturer on Heroes. 'You have read him, I know, Cecilia. Well Dr. Shrapnel is another, who writes in his own style, not the leading-article style or modern pulpit stuff. He writes to rouse.'[121]

And it may be significant, too, that Beauchamp applies to Dr. Shrapnel the epithet which Meredith usually reserves for Carlyle: He

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[121] Works, XII, 94.

calls him a "sage and a prophet."[122]

The conclusion to be drawn from the similarities of idea and of style between Shrapnel and the "lecturer on Heroes" seems almost inescapable: Shrapnel is a portrait of Carlyle, in so far as his opinions represent the man. And when it is recognized that Nevil Beauchamp is an admitted disciple of Carlyle, a nineteenth-century edition of the Carlylean hero, it seems extremely natural that he should choose as his mentor and sage a man patterned on his favorite author.

It must not be forgotten, either, that Shrapnel speaks for Beauchamp as well as for himself. When the whole picture of Beauchamp is assembled, he is found to represent Carlyle's ideas in the spiritual, political, and social realms.

As has already been noted, the emphasis in Beauchamp's Career is upon Beauchamp's mental and spiritual convictions. Like Teufelsdröckh, he goes through a spiritual crisis, in which his self of the senses struggles against his ideal for the advancement of humanity. These correspond exactly to the two mandates which Carlyle sees man as needing to resolve: the clay-given mandate (Eat thou and be filled) and the God-given mandate (Work thou in Welldoing). Beauchamp must decide whether to follow the desires of the flesh by eloping with Renée, his French sweetheart, or to pursue his duty to humanity, his work:

> The slumberer roused in darkness by the relentless insane-seeming bell which hales him to duty, melts at the charms of sleep, and feels that logic is with him in his preference of his pillow; but the tireless revolving world outside, nature's piti-

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[122] Works, XI, 305.

> less antagonist, has hung one of its balances about him, and his actions are directed by the state of the scales, wherein duty weighs deep and desirability swings like a pendant doll: so he throws on his harness, astounded, till his blood quickens with work, at the round of sacrifices demanded of nature: which is indeed curious considering what we are taught here and there as to the infallibility of our august mother. Well, the world of humanity had done this for Beauchamp. His afflicted historian is compelled to fling his net among prosaic similitudes for an illustration of one thus degradedly in its grip. If he had been off with his love like the rover!--why, then the Muse would have loosened her lap like May, showering flower-buds, and we might have knocked great nature up from her sleep to embellish his desperate proceedings with hurricanes to be danced over, to say nothing of imitative spheres dashing out into hurly-burly after his example.[123]

Here Meredith reaffirms his statement that "Beauchampism" is the opposite of "Byronism." Beauchamp cannot act the part of the desperate lover; he must give up Renée in favor of his duty. His actions will be governed by his ideas, his mental and spiritual convictions, rather than by his appetites.

The pervasiveness of Carlyle's influence in Beauchamp's Career is indicated further by the fact that in two instances the author deals directly with Carlylean ideas. The first of these is in a chapter entitled "The Leading Article and Mr. Timothy Turbot," which may be profitably compared with Carlyle's essay "Stump-Orator." The chief burden of this chapter is a dissection of Mr. Timothy Turbot, the "heaven-endowed man of speech." Meredith says of him that he is

> . . . the artistic orator of Corn Law Repeal--the Manchester flood, before which time Whigs were, since which they have walked like spectral antediluvians, or floated as dead canine bodies that are sucked away on the ebb of tides and flung back on the flow, ignorant whether they be progressive or retro-

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[123] Works, XII, 151-152.

grade.[124]

This vivid image seems to be directly borrowed from Carlyle's description in "Stump-Orator" of the politician who plays to the gallery:

> The dog that was drowned last summer and that floats up and down the Thames with ebb and flood ever since,--is it not dead? Alas, in the hot months, you meet here and there such a floating dog; and at length, if you often use the river steamers, get to know him by sight. "There he is again, still astir there in his quasi-Stygian element!" you dejectedly exclaim (perhaps reading your Morning Newspaper at the moment); and reflect, with a painful oppression of nose and imagination, on certain completed professors of parliamentary eloquence in modern times.[125]

It is quite like Meredith to turn "dead dog" into "dead canine"!

Another passage from "The Leading Article" that seems to owe something to Meredith's reading of "Stump-Orator" is Meredith's description of the article in question:

> But for an occasional drop and bump of the sailing gasbag upon catch-words of enthusiasm, which are the rhetoric of the merely windly, and a collapse on a poetic line, which too often signalizes the rhetorician's emptiness of his wind, the article was eminent for flight, sweep, and dash, and sailed along far more grandly than ordinary provincial organs for the promoting and seconding of public opinion, that are as little to be compared with the mighty metropolitan as are the fife and bugle boys practicing on their instruments round melancholy outskirts of garrison towns with the regimental marching full-band under the presidency of its drum-major.[126]

Carlyle discusses the man who delivers an eloquent speech and will not perform anything of what he promises, and he generalizes:

> How many pretty men have gone this road, escorted by the beautifulest marching music from all the 'public organs'; and have

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[124] Works, XI, 139.

[125] Works, XX, 200.

[126] Works, XI, 135-136.

> found at last that it ended where? It is the broad road, that leads direct to Limbo and the kingdom of the Inane. Gifted men, and once valiant nations, and as it were the whole world with one accord, are marching thither, in melodious triumph, all the drums and hautboys giving out their cheerfullest Ça-ira. It is the universal humour of the world just now.[127]

The similarity here is easier to detect than it is to describe. Both passages are on the subject of meaningless speech. Both writers employ "band" figures. Both mention newspapers as organs and play upon the musical meaning of the word as well as its meaning as an instrument of a political party. In view of the other correspondences to ideas and figures of "Stump-Orator" cited in this chapter, it is scarcely to be doubted that Meredith is indebted to Carlyle for the broad figure here.

One other direct reference by the author to Carlyle's teachings stands out in the novel. In a chapter entitled "Concerning the Act of Canvassing," Meredith brings up Carlyle's recommendation that the wisest be summoned to govern the nation[128] and subjects it to whimsical examination. He begins by dissecting the suggestion that the people should turn in loyal obedience to their true leader. Meredith says ironically that the result of this action might be that we would have "our choicest rather than our likest" to govern us--a Carlylean goal which he affects to view with alarm. Such an oligarchy, he says, would be despotic in the extreme; a "domination of the Intellect in England" would be "no benefit to burly freedom."[129] He adds that

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[127] Works, XX, 182.

[128] Works, X, 30.

[129] Works, XI, 181.

> . . . the good old-fashioned shouldering of separate interests, which, if it stops progress, like a block in the pit entrance to a theatre, proves us equal before the law, puts an end to the pretence of higher merit in the one or the other, and renders a stout build the safest assurance for coming through ultimately, would be transformed to a painful orderliness, like a City procession under the conduct of the police, and to classification of things according to their public value. . . .[130]

It is clear that Meredith is here exercising his "right to smile" at ideas which the sober Carlyle did not think at all funny. It is hardly necessary to say that Carlyle was entirely serious in his proposal that the wisest in the nation be straightway gathered together and entrusted with the reins of government. Meredith's good-natured attack on this "practical" suggestion of Carlyle's illustrates what he meant when he said of Carlyle: "Spiritual light he has to illuminate a nation. Of practical little or none. . . ."[131]

It is not to be supposed that all of the Carlylean characteristics and ideas to be found in Beauchamp's Career have been exhausted by this examination. A thorough study of this subject would require a detailed analysis of nearly every chapter of the novel; but the evidence obtained by such a study would add nothing to the picture which has been presented. When Baker observes that "in Beauchamp's Career Carlyle's ideas are seen in action,"[132] he accurately describes the contents of the book. The protagonist is the Carlylean hero in the nineteenth century, a young aristocrat who scorns happiness and whose faith is in

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[130] Works, XI, 181.

[131] See p. 39.

[132] History of the English Novel, VIII, 288.

working and fighting. His favorite author is Carlyle; and his political mentor, who expresses many of Carlyle's basic beliefs in the Carlylean style, is an imaginative portrait of Carlyle. And, finally, the author himself deals directly with several Carlylean ideas in the course of the book.

It might be possible, of course, for Meredith to be indebted to Carlyle for many of the ideas in Beauchamp's Career without being further indebted to him for form. But this is not the case. Meredith is indebted to Carlyle for the form and purpose of Beauchamp's Career, as well as for much of the content. It is the failure to recognize Meredith's debt to Carlyle for the theory governing the form of the novel that has caused its critics so much difficulty. In his study of the political novel, Morris Edmund Speare frankly admits that Beauchamp's Career cannot be judged by the same standards that apply to other political novels:

> Style is so conscious a force in the structure of this novel, and so singular is the strategy the author employs in depicting both his political hero and the politics (singular by comparison with all the other novels of the political genre studied here), that no possible square and plumb-line can be used to guide our estimate of the work, or to control our judgment of it. By the side of the others this is, somehow, sui generis. By which it must not be inferred that there is anything capricious about its texture. There would be nothing capricious in a political novel written by Thomas Carlyle or by Robert Browning. The comparison between what they might have done and what Meredith did do is, in any discussion of Beauchamp's Career, an apt one to make.[133]

Speare does not pursue further his suggested analogy between what Carlyle might have done in a political novel and what Meredith did do.

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[133] The Political Novel, p. 238.

Had he done so, the study would have provided him with a "square and plumb-line" with which to guide his estimate of the work; and the reason is not so much that distinct traces of Carlyle's political thought are to be found in the novel, but rather that Carlyle's theory of literature is the basis of Meredith's "style" and of the "strategy the author employs in depicting both his political hero and the politics." Beauchamp's Career is not a "political novel" in the ordinary meaning of the words. It is a Carlylean biography in fiction. It is, as Meredith says in the letter to Moncure D. Conway already quoted in this chapter, "an attempt to show the forces round a young man of the present day, in England, who would move them, and finds them unutterably solid. . . ." Beauchamp, Meredith goes on to say, is a "type" and "his History a picture of the times." When the final ingredient, "a certain drama of self-conquest," is added, the recipe for Carlylean biography is complete.

It is evident that when Meredith says he is following Carlyle's advice in Beauchamp's Career, he is perfectly serious. Meredith does give his reader the position of the country undisturbed by any moralizings of his, in the sense that he does not offer any "system" as a political panacea. Though it is clear from the beginning that his sympathies are with the Radicals, Beauchamp and Dr. Shrapnel, Meredith presents other points of view with laudable impartiality and fairness. By taking a representative "type" as his central character and by tracing his mental and spiritual development, his struggle to conquer self and to discover his relation to the universe and to his fellows,

as a means of writing history, Meredith follows Carlyle's advice to the letter. It is not too much to say that the whole book, containing as it does numerous echoes from Carlyle's works and representing an avowed attempt on Meredith's part to write Carlylean biography-history, is a tremendous tribute to Carlyle's influence upon nineteenth-century thought.

Meredith's serious acknowledgment of his debt to Carlyle in this novel indicates that the conclusion of Chapter V is entirely correct, at least as far as Beauchamp's Career is concerned. Meredith did write Carlylean biography in fiction. Fortunately, it is not necessary to rely upon this statement of indebtedness alone as an indication that Meredith was a conscious follower of Carlyle's theory of literature. Meredith's second acknowledgment of his debt to Carlyle for the basic principles of his art is a general one, clearly applicable to all of his works. This acknowledgment will be examined in detail in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER VII

## COMEDY

If Meredith's acknowledgment of indebtedness to Carlyle in Beauchamp's Career can be said on the face of it to speak only for that novel, no such statement can be made concerning the remarks upon the principles of his art which he prefixed to The Egoist (1879), The Tragic Comedians (1880), and Diana of the Crossways (1885), the next three novels which he wrote. Taken together with Meredith's Essay on Comedy (1877), these remarks constitute a consistent exposition of Meredith's broad literary theory and a plain statement of indebtedness to Carlyle for that theory.

Nor do these principles, as they are stated in these later works, contradict in any particular the passing glimpses of Meredith's view of fiction which have been provided by earlier statements cited from his letters and his remarks to friends upon his literary principles and by his acknowledgement of indebtedness to a "sage and seer" in Beauchamp's Career. When Meredith told Carlyle that novel-writing was his "way of writing history,"[1] and Baker that he considered that the novel by "exposing and illustrating the natural history of man" should help man to understand his fellows and the laws of existence,[2] he indicated a point of view that is fully explained by study of the three novels which suc-

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[1]See p. 28.

[2]See p. 55.

ceeded Beauchamp's Career. And when he said in Beauchamp's Career that he intended to paint "what is" by picturing men and their ideas, he demonstrated an attitude which is entirely consistent with his statements in the later novels.

It is the purpose of this chapter to study Meredith's literary theory as it is communicated in the works indicated, with a view to discovering whether or not his acknowledgment of indebtedness to Carlyle in Beauchamp's Career is to be construed as applicable to his work in general. The emphasis throughout will be upon the theory which Meredith states, and practice will be consulted only when it serves to illumine some point in theory.

Critics have universally complained of the obscurity of the "Prelude" to The Egoist. The latest biographer, Stevenson, repeats with evident agreement the story that Henry Duff Traill, later to be an editor of Carlyle's works, tells about his discussion of the subject with Meredith. According to this account, Traill had the introductory chapter read to him by Meredith before the book was published, and he replied to Meredith's query as to whether or not he understood it with a frank, "I'll be damned if I do." And Meredith said, with a laugh, that he supposed that it was rather hard.[3]

For the most part, critics have limited their discussion of this prelude to the notation that it is, in some sort, related to Meredith's

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[3]Meredith, p. 217.

Essay on Comedy.[4] Galland points to what he calls a "parody" of Carlyle in it, but he does not treat it otherwise.[5] Moffatt says that there are "not indistinct echoes" of Carlyle in it, but he never examines it.[6] It seems apparent that the obscurity of the passages in it have discouraged critics from close study of it; and their failure to examine it in detail has resulted in certain important misunderstandings of Meredith's literary theory.

Read, first, in the light of Meredith's Essay on Comedy and, second, in conjunction with Carlyle's writings upon history and biography, especially the essay "Jesuitism," the "Prelude" is an extremely informative essay on Meredith's art. It opens with a definition of "comedy":

> Comedy is a game played to throw reflections upon social life, and it deals with human nature in the drawing room of civilized men and women, where we have no dust of the struggling outer world, no mire, no violent crashes, to make the correctness of the representation convincing. Credulity is not wooed through the impressionable senses; nor have we recourse to the small circular glow of the watchmaker's eye to raise in bright relief minutest grains of evidence for the routing of incredulity. The Comic Spirit conceives a definite situation for a number of characters, and rejects all accessories in the exclusive pursuit of them and their speech. For, being a spirit, he hunts the spirit in men; vision and ardour constitute his merit; he has not a thought of persuading you to believe in him.[7]

If "comedy" is considered for the moment simply as Meredith's

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[4]Crees, Meredith, p. 192; Baker, History of the English Novel, VIII, 356; and Sassoon, Meredith, pp. 145-146.

[5]Meredith, p. 369.

[6]Meredith, p. 10.

[7]Works, XIII, 1.

name for the kind of fiction which he advocated and wrote, it becomes clear that he is attempting to define that kind of fiction by contrasting its aims and methods with those of naturalism and realism. The aim of comedy is "to throw reflections upon social life." The aim of both naturalism and realism is to present a picture of life. In the Essay, Meredith says that the realist (who here represents both the naturalist and the realist) merely "paint/s/ from life; he leaves his audience to the reflection of unphilosophic minds upon life, from the specimen he has presented in the bright and narrow circle of a spy-glass."[8]

In Beauchamp's Career, Meredith had already made a point about his characters which illuminates this distinction between the aim of the realist and the aim of the writer of comedy:

> My way is like a Rhone Island in the summer drought, stony, unattractive and difficult between the two forceful streams of the unreal and the over-real, which delight mankind, honor to the conjurors! My people conquer nothing, win none; they are actual, yet uncommon. It is the clockwork of the brain that they are directed to set in motion, and--poor troop of actors to vacant benches!--the conscience residing in thoughtfulness which they would appeal to; and if you are there impervious to them, we are lost: back I go to my wilderness, where, as you perceive, I have contracted the habit of listening to my own voice more than is good. . . .[9]

Comedy, then, is to cause the reader to think, to stimulate intelligent thought rather than to "delight" mankind, as both the unreal and the over-real are intended to do. The unreal, of course, represents the fashionable novel, and the over-real includes both realistic and

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[8]Works, XIII, 54.

[9]Works, XII, 236-237.

naturalistic novels.

In method, too, comedy is unlike naturalism and realism. The former tries to convince the reader that its picture of life is a correct one by presenting the "dust," "mire," and "violent crashes" of the "outer" world. Elsewhere, Meredith refers to naturalism as "sheer Realism--breeder at best of the dung-fly!"[10] The milder realism, as distinguished from naturalism, attempts to establish the accuracy of its picture by holding the microscope to life, by representing minute details of the "outer" world with fidelity. Comedy is not concerned with the "outer" world, but the inner world, with "human nature in the drawing room." The contrast here is intended to be shown between the world of events and physical objects and the world of the mind, the spirit. Comedy, like Carlyle's biography, is concerned chiefly with the latter world.

Meredith himself makes the connection with Carlyle's theories of history and biography when he comes to the question of justifying comedy as a form. He not only borrows Carlyle's image of history as a big book, an enormous volume in which man's experience is recorded, but also makes use of Carlyle's principle of compression:

> Now the world is possessed of a certain big book, the biggest book on earth; that might indeed be called the Book of Earth; whose title is the Book of Egoism, and it is a book full of the world's wisdom. So full of it, and of such dimensions is this book, in which the generations have written ever since they took to writing, that to be profitable to us the Book needs a power-

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[10] Letters, II, 401.

ful compression.[11]

Carlyle speaks of this document, the record of man's experience, as a "Prophetic Manuscript,"[12] a "Letter of Instructions, which the old generations write and posthumously transmit to the new. . . ."[13] He also calls it the "Book of Nature."[14] In "Jesuitism," the last essay in the Latter-Day Pamphlets, he says that it is the "Epic" and "Bible" of humanity.[15] In "On History," he says that this book, including as it does all records of the past, begins with man's "earliest expression" of thought.[16] The most primitive tribes make some attempt at history. And in "On History Again," Carlyle goes on to say that history is the "most profitable" of studies.[17] It must, however, be reduced in bulk before it can be profitable: "History, then, before it can become Universal History, needs of all things to be compressed."[18] The essay "Jesuitism" begins with a reference to "the history of human things, which needs above all to abridge itself."[19]

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[11]Works, XIII, 1.

[12]Works, XXVIII, 90.

[13]Works, XXVIII, 167.

[14]Works, XXVII, 91.

[15]Works, XX, 323.

[16]Works, XXVII, 83.

[17]Works, XXVIII, 167.

[18]Works, XXVIII, 172.

[19]Works, XX, 293.

Meredith's paragraph, then, is an imitation of Carlyle's writings on history. And in the succeeding paragraph he admits the debt, though somewhat obliquely, to be sure:

> Who, says the notable humourist, in allusion to this Book, who can studiously travel through sheets of leaves now capable of a stretch from the Lizard to the last poor pulmonary snips and shreds of leagues dancing on their toes for cold, explorers tell us, and catching breath by good luck, like dogs at bones about a table, on the edge of the Pole? Inordinate unvaried length, sheer longinquity, staggers the heart, ages the very heart of us at a view. And how if we manage finally to print one of our pages on the crowscalp of that solitary majestic outsider? We may with effort get even him into the Book; yet the knowledge we want will not be more present with us than it was when the chapters hung their end over the cliff you ken of at Dover, where sits our great lord and master contemplating the seas without upon the reflex of that within![20]

It is easy to understand why critics have characterized the "Prelude" as unnecessarily obscure, and why they have unanimously avoided the task of exploring Meredith's meaning in this particular passage. Read in company with Carlyle's essays, however, the passage does not present a great deal of difficulty. The "notable humourist" is, of course, Carlyle. Meredith frequently refers to Carlyle as a humourist,[21] as he does in the Essay on Comedy, in a fine passage that has already been quoted.[22] It is hardly necessary to add that the context is such that Carlyle, and Carlyle only, will fit it. Both the image and the theory given are from the pen of the sage. The plain sense of the first part of Meredith's statement is that Carlyle says that the book of

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[20] Works, XIII, 2.

[21] See p. 36.

[22] See p. 44.

history has become so huge that it now stretches from the "Lizard" to the "Pole." The metaphor probably signifies "from the tropics to the polar regions," though it has overtones of the theory of evolution. Whatever the source of the figure, the meaning of the passage is clear: Man is appalled by the sheer size of the volume of his history.

Carlyle speaks, in essentially the same manner, of the "forty-eight longitudinal feet" of history in the daily newspaper, and comments that in them, or indeed in the "forty-eight longitudinal miles" into which they eventually stretch, there may not be the "forty-eighth part of a hairsbreadth that will turn to anything."[23] And he also says that Roman memories alone would make "belts that would go round the Globe!"[24] Compression is needed to make what Carlyle calls mankind's "Autobiography"[25] intelligible to man.

In the second part of the cryptic passage under discussion, Meredith refers to Carlyle's idea that history provides man chiefly with a record of what the sage calls, in "Jesuitism," the "Divine Appearances in this lower world."[26] From this point of view, history is indeed the "Bible" of humanity. In "On History," Carlyle approaches this subject with the argument that perfect history can only be written by one possessed of all-knowledge. In view of this fact, the historian should

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[23]Works, XXVIII, 171.

[24]Works, XXVIII, 172.

[25]Works, XXVIII, 173.

[26]Works, XX, 325.

pursue his task with vigilance and reverent humility, pausing over "the mysterious vestiges of Him, whose path is in the great deep of Time, whom History indeed reveals, but only all History, and in Eternity, will clearly reveal."[27]

No matter how vigilant the historian may be, he lacks the knowledge to interpret man's history to him perfectly, with its revelations of God as well as man, says Carlyle. And Meredith states that even if that "solitary majestic outsider" is got into the book, man will still be lacking in the knowledge he needs to interpret it. Meredith's description of the deity is not inappropriate here, since the book has already been identified as the record of man's experience. And this interpretation of his phrase is bolstered by an examination of the comparison he proceeds to make. The knowledge man will lack is the same thing he lacked "when the chapters hung their end over the cliff you ken of at Dover, where sits our great lord and master contemplating the seas without upon the reflex of that within." It is not unlikely that this reference represents a sarcastic fling at Matthew Arnold, whose poem "Dover Beach" compares the "seas without" and the "sea within." The possibility is strengthened by the subject matter of the poem--an inability to interpret man's struggles on earth, to reconcile them with religious faith. It is also aided by Meredith's attitude toward Arnold, as recorded in a letter to Lady Ulrica Duncombe in late 1902. Meredith says of him:

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[27] Works, XXVIII, 89.

> Matthew Arnold was born from the pulpit and occupied it, and might have sermonized for all time, but that he conceived the head of the clerk below to be the sconce of the British public, and that he must drum on it with an iterated phrase perpetually to awaken understanding.[28]

That Meredith was quite capable of referring to Arnold ironically as "our great lord and master" is evident from this statement.

Meredith continues his discussion of the volume of man's history through the principle of condensation in the next paragraph, where he shows further knowledge of Carlyle's writings on history:

> In other words, as I venture to translate him (humourists are difficult; it is a piece of their humour to puzzle our wits), the inward mirror, the embracing and condensing spirit, is required to give us those interminable milepost piles of matter (extending well-nigh to the very Pole) in essence, in chosen samples, digestibly. I conceive him to indicate that the realistic method of a conscientious transcription of all the visible, and a repetition of all the audible, is mainly accountable for our present branfulness, and for that prolongation of the vasty and the noisy, out of which, as from an undrained fen, steams the malady of sameness, our modern malady. We drove in a body to Science the other day for an antidote; which was as if tired pedestrians should mount the engine-box of headlong trains; and Science introduced us to our o'er hoary ancestry--them in the Oriental posture: whereupon we set up a primaeval chattering to rival the Amazon forest nigh nightfall, cured, we fancied. And before daybreak our disease was hanging on to us again, with the extension of a tail. We had it fore and aft. We were the same, and animals into the bargain. That is all we got from Science.[29]

The first statement in Meredith's "translation" might well be drawn from the essay "Jesuitism," where Carlyle says that though men lack the knowledge to interpret their history perfectly, certain gifted persons have been endowed by heaven with qualities that enable them to

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[28] Letters, II, 542.

[29] Works, XIII, 2. For a definition of branfulness, see p. 195.

read enough of it to help man. It is possible that Meredith had this passage in mind:

> Who are they, gifted from above, that will convert voluminous Dryasdust into an Epic and even a Bible? Who will smelt, in the all-victorious fire of his soul, these scandalous bewildering rubbish-mountains of sleepy Dryasdust till they give up the golden ingot that lies imprisoned in them.[30]

And Carlyle continues with the statement that the "Fine Arts, Literature, Poesies" have been "wool-gathering these centuries long" while this task remained undone.[31] Shakespeare, possessed of the insight of the great artist, could have done it:

> In Shakspeare, more than in another, lay that high vates talent of interpreting confused human Actualities, and unfolding what divine melodious Ideals, or Thoughts of the Supreme, were embodied in them: he, more than any other, might have done somewhat towards making History a Bible.[32]

In other words, the "inward mirror, the embracing and condensing spirit" is needed for the task of compressing man's history for him. This mirror is given only to the great artist. It substitutes for the "knowledge" which all men lack. This mirror will reflect "chosen samples" of their history to men. The meaning of this last phrase will be explored later, since Meredith goes into it more fully later.

Carlyle says, or implies, in "Jesuitism" that the result of the failure of the great artist to do the work of interpreting the book of human experience is a condition in man amounting almost to spiritual

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[30] Works, XX, 326.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid.

death. Modern man's religion, he says, must be winnowed-out from the "fugle-motions, fantasies, sentimentalisms, make-believes, and other multitudinous chaff. . . ."[33] Meredith says that he conceives Carlyle to mean that "a realistic transcription of all the visible and a repetition of all the audible" have caused man's "branfulness." Branfulness is a Meredithian coinage, meaning a state or condition of being full of bran, as unsifted flour.[34] The image is, of course, strikingly like Carlyle's picture of man as full of chaff as well as grain, from which the grain needs to be winnowed out. It may be taken to have Carlyle's implication of spiritual stasis.

The lack of proper interpretation of his history has caused not only man's "branfulness," but also "that prolongation of the vasty and the noisy, out of which, as from an undrained fen, steams the malady of sameness, our modern malady." Meredith defines this "sameness" in the Essay as "incubus--our dreadful familiar--by some called boredom."[35] Carlyle refers to it in "Jesuitism" as "this ignoble sluggishness, sceptical torpor" and the "restless gnawing ennui which afflicts man to-day."[36] He defines this "ennui" in a long peroration, in which the word "ennui" appears repeatedly.

Meredith completes his picture of man's spiritual paralysis and

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[33]Works, XX, 315.

[34]Oxford English Dictionary.

[35]Works, XXIII, 36.

[36]Works, XX, 335.

boredom by saying that science, for example the theory of evolution, holds no antidote for our modern malady. And his comparison of men to "tired pedestrians, who mount the engine-box of headlong trains," is strikingly like Carlyle's insistence, at the end of "Jesuitism," that man must interpret his "Sermon from the Deeps," the book of his history, that he cannot get away from his "ennui" by speed or science:

> Mount into your railways; whirl from place to place, at the rate of fifty, or if you like of five hundred miles an hour: you cannot escape from that all-encircling ocean-moan of ennui. No; if you would mount to the stars, and do yacht-voyages under the belts of Jupiter, or stalk deer on the ring of Saturn, it would still begirdle you. . . . That prophetic Sermon from the Deeps will continue with you, till you wisely interpret it and do it, or else till the Crack of Doom.[37]

Of course, Meredith's evolution-image is not drawn from Carlyle. "Jesuitism" was published in 1850, almost ten years before Darwin's Origin of Species came out. Meredith's use of it here suggests, however, that it has little to do with his own view of man's development, a theory that has already been advanced in Chapter V.[38] All that it emphasizes is man's "animal" nature: Meredith says that when men returned from their visit with science, they were "the same, and animals into the bargain." Meredith's explanation that "comedy" studies the spirit in men, examined earlier in the chapter, contributes to the impression that the theory of evolution made very little difference in his view of life.

Having stated Carlyle's ideas upon the need for proper interpre-

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[37] Works, XX, 336-337.

[38] See pp. 111ff.

tation of man's history, even to the point of attributing man's spiritual paralysis and his "ennui" to the fact that his history has not been properly interpreted for him, and of concurring in his view that science will not answer man's problem, Meredith proceeds to discuss the form which the interpretation of the book of experience should take. He appropriates Carlyle's arguments against "voluminous Dryasdust," and for biography, for the field of fiction, substituting realism for the former and comedy for the latter:

> Art is the specific. We have little to learn of apes and they may be left. The chief consideration for us is, what particular practice of Art in letters is the best for the perusal of the Book of our common wisdom; so that with clearer minds and livelier manners we may escape, as it were, into daylight and song from a land of fog-horns. Shall we read it by the watchmaker's eye in luminous rings eruptive of the infinitesimal, or pointed with examples and types under the broad Alpine survey of the spirit born of our united social intelligence, which is the Comic Spirit? Wise men say the latter. They tell us that there is a constant tendency in the Book to accumulate excess of substance, and such repleteness, obscuring the glass it holds to mankind, renders us inexact in the recognition of our individual countenances; a perilous thing for civilization. And these wise men are strong in their opinion that we should encourage the Comic Spirit, who is, after all, our own offspring, to relieve the Book. Comedy, they say, is the true diversion, as it is likewise the key of the great Book, the music of the Book. They tell us how it condenses whole sections of the Book in a sentence, volumes in a character; so that a fair part of a book outstripping thousands of leagues when unrolled, may be compressed in one comic sitting.[39]

Although Meredith does not say specifically that he is still following Carlyle in this passage, the fact is clear when his recommendations for the "perusal of the Book of our common wisdom" are examined closely. The question is clear: Shall the book of human history be in-

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[39] Works, XIII, 3.

terpreted, compressed, by the realist, who concentrates upon the narrative of events and seeks to image the minute details of life; or shall it be interpreted by the writer of comedy, who studies character by choosing examples and types of men for portrayal? Meredith argues for the latter solution, upon the ground that the face of the individual tends to be blurred or lost in realism's concentration upon events. Comedy can show the countenances of men, or, as Carlyle puts it, "the faces of our vanished Fathers."[40] Meredith says in the letter to Conway quoted in Chapter VI that Nevil Beauchamp is a "type" and that his "History" is intended to show the times.[41] Beauchamp's Career, then, is an example of Meredith's "comedy"; and "comedy" is biography in fiction. Since comedy is concerned with the "spirit in men," it is, moreover, Carlylean biography in fiction.

Meredith characterizes comedy as not only the "key" of the book of experience, the "music" of the book--perhaps another reference to Carlyle's conception of great writing as inherently musical—but also the "true diversion." He is not content to allow realism to amuse and delight mankind while comedy instructs: comedy, he says, is the kind of fiction which should please man as well as instruct him.

In the light of his appropriation of Carlyle's idea that the book of experience can best be compressed through biography, and his insistence that such biographies offer man the "true diversion," Mere-

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[40]See p. 93.

[41]See p. 147.

dith's Comic Spirit assumes the appearance of a sustained metaphor, in which Meredith makes it plain that the kind of fiction he is advocating will treat not only the heroes, the idealists (such as Nevil Beauchamp) but also the sentimentalists, the followers of sham (such as Wilfrid Pole). As an artist, he takes the responsibility, which the realist will not assume, of attempting to help man distinguish between these two groups. He does so by appealing to the mind, to "our united social intelligence." Meredith says of the Comic Spirit that it is an instrument for the correction "of pretentiousness, of dulness, and of the vestiges of rawness and grossness to be found among us."[42] Sentimentalism is its special prey.[43] The laughter produced by comedy is the laughter of "reason refreshed."[44] In the Essay, Meredith says of Molière's characters:

> The Misanthrope and the Tartuffe have no audible laughter; but the characters are steeped in the Comic Spirit. They quicken the mind through laughter, from coming out of the mind; and the mind accepts them because they are clear interpretations of certain chapters of the Book lying open before us all.[45]

In other words, any element of the "comic" which is to be found in comedy results from the mind's perception of the incongruity of the false and the unreal when they are placed in close conjunction with the true, the real.

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[42] Works, XIII, 4.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Works, XXIII, 50.

It is with Meredith's statements in the "Prelude" to The Egoist in mind that the novel itself should be examined. And here, again, it seems likely that Meredith is indebted to Carlyle. In the essay "Jesuitism," which Meredith seems to have had clearly in mind when he wrote the introduction to The Egoist, Carlyle chooses Ignatius Loyola as the "historical symbol" of the past two centuries.[46] As he examines Loyola's life, he is examining the times. Carlyle sees Loyola's chief fault as his failure to annihilate "Self"--his transfer of his "Ego I" from the realm of the physical to that of the spiritual. Carlyle interprets his thoughts on this subject thus: "My pruriency being terribly forbidden on one side, let it have terrible course on another."[47] And he goes on to describe Loyola's plans to "make his Ego I still available on Earth, and still keep Heaven open for him."[48] Since Loyola is the symbol of the times, the fault of the times is this transfer of egoism from the sphere of the physical appetites to that of the spiritual.

In a chapter entitled "In the Heart of the Egoist," Meredith points out that Sir Willoughby Patterne, the egoist, has performed this same transfer. In fact, this is his great fault. He has, Meredith says, "discovered a greater realm than that of the sensual appetites, and he [has] rushed across and around it in his conquering period with

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[46]Works, XX, 294.

[47]Works, XX, 303.

[48]Works, XX, 304.

an Alexander's pride."[49] The whole purport of the book is contained in this description. Meredith says that the egoist has turned away from the early egoism of sensual appetites, of which society now disapproves, to the "upper sphere, or circle of spiritual Egoism: he has become the civilized Egoist; primitive still, as sure as man has teeth, but developed in his manner of using them."[50] And Meredith states the general application to be made of this view when he says of the egoist: "He is not only his own father, he is ours; and he is also our son. We have produced him, he us."[51] In other words, the egoist is to Meredith the symbol of his age, just as he is to Carlyle. The implication of this correspondence of The Egoist with "Jesuitism" is an important one: Carlyle has given Meredith not only the literary theory behind his comedy, but also the "type" whose life embodies the characteristics of the times in The Egoist.

In summary: In the "Prelude" to The Egoist, Meredith acknowledges a debt to Carlyle for the broad literary theory upon which his novels are based. He defines his comedy as Carlylean biography in fiction and uses Carlyle's arguments against the traditional historian as his own arguments against realism. In the process of so doing, he "translates" Carlyle's ideas (for the most part, as they are expressed in "Jesuitism") from Carlylese into Meredithese. According to Carlyle,

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[49] Works, XIII, 183.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Works, XIII, 182.

he says, man's history, his experience, needs to be compressed and interpreted for him. The failure of the artist to perform this task has left man in a condition approximating spiritual paralysis, accompanied by tremendous boredom with life. Science, which deals with man's animal nature, not with the spirit, holds no antidote for this malady. Art can accomplish the cure. The artist must digest experience and interpret it for man. The realist, like the traditional historian, prefers to "picture" life, concentrating upon the "outer" world, the world of events and physical objects. The artist of comedy, like the Carlylean biographer, views experience as composed of the lives of men. He compresses by selecting representative individuals, types, for study, giving his attention to the "inner" world, to the intellectual and spiritual progress of the characters. He portrays not only types who represent the virtues of the times, but also types who represent the faults of the age. His purpose is to stimulate intelligent thought in his audience, to bring into operation man's reason. The ultimate purpose is to help the reader to distinguish between the true and the good on the one hand, and the false and the evil on the other.

This statement in The Egoist can be regarded as Meredith's second attempt to acknowledge his debt to Carlyle for his theory of the novel. It reaffirms the first, which applied particularly to Beauchamp's Career, at least on the face of it; and it indicates a general debt to Carlyle for the so-called apprenticeship pattern. Although Meredith does not, after 1879, attempt to give Carlyle credit for his theories of fiction, he does make in later novels significant statements about

his art which reaffirm many of the principles involved, particularly its concentration upon the spirits and minds of men rather than upon their actions.

The novel which follows The Egoist is The Tragic Comedians, a work based upon the lives of Ferdinand Lassalle and Helene von Dönniges. Meredith assures his readers that this novel is, so far as the events narrated are concerned, a factual record:

> The pair of tragic comedians of whom there will be question pass under this word [fantastical] as under their banner and motto. Their acts are incredible: they drank sunlight and drove their bark in a manner to eclipse historical couples upon our planet. Yet they do belong to history, they breathed the stouter air than fiction's, the last chapter of them is written in red blood, and the man pouring out that last chapter was of a mighty nature not unheroical, a man of the active grappling modern brain that wrestles with facts, to keep the world alive, and can create them, to set it spinning. . . .[52]

Priestley calls this work a cross between history, or biography, and fiction.[53] In the light of Meredith's statement in The Egoist, it is clear that this is precisely what it is. It is a restricted form of Meredith's comedy: he restricts himself to the actual lives of the characters, while maintaining the novelist's freedom to portray the mental and spiritual workings of the characters. From one point of view, Meredith actually wrote a Carlylean biography: Carlyle was willing to allow the artist a great deal of freedom when he came to the point of painting the mental and spiritual aspects of the subjects. In order to do this, he himself found it necessary to employ many devices

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[52] Works, XV, 1.

[53] Meredith, pp. 41-42.

of fiction. Carlisle Moore, who has studied this aspect of Carlyle's relationship to fiction, points out that in his histories Carlyle permits the "extensive use of fictional methods and fictitious details"[54] for the purpose of achieving verisimilitude. Louise Young, also noting Carlyle's close affinity to creative literature, says:

> As a matter of fact, up to the completion of Sartor, it is quite possible to imagine Carlyle fashioning some form of the novel as a catch-all for his social criticism, his speculations, and his humane interests. Wotton Reinfred was an attempt at a "didactic novel" and admittedly not promising. But Sartor, also called a "didactic novel" by its author, was historical in method and autobiographic in content. In form it pointed the way to the historical romances, The Diamond Necklace and Cagliostro, in which Carlyle was deliberately experimenting with a "poetico-historical" narrative technique. These writings only hint at what Carlyle might have accomplished, had he chosen, working with historical materials, but using the flexible novel medium.[55]

The Tragic Comedians is reminiscent of "Count Cagliostro" and "The Diamond Necklace" in that Carlyle permitted himself a large degree of freedom in those works in handling the "inner" life of his subjects—perhaps as much as Meredith allots to himself in The Tragic Comedians. Perhaps Meredith had something of this freedom which Carlyle assumed in mind when he told Carlyle that so much fiction entered into history that he must stick to novel-writing.[56]

Meredith makes it clear in the preface to the novel that he is going to study the interior as well as the exterior of his characters'

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[54]"Thomas Carlyle and Fiction: 1822-1834," p. 177.

[55]Thomas Carlyle and the Art of History (Philadelphia, 1939), p. 95.

[56]See p. 29.

lives:

> And why this man should have come to his end through love, and the woman who loved him have laid her hand in the hand of the slayer, is the problem we have to study, nothing inventing, in the spirit and flesh of both. To ask if it was love is useless. Love may be celestial fire before it enters into the systems of mortals. It will then take the character of its place of abode, and we have to look not so much for the pure thing as for the passion. Did it move them, hurry them, animating the giants and gnomes of one, the elves and sprites of the other, and putting animal nature out of its fashionable front rank? The bare railway-line of their story tells of a passion honest enough to entitle it to be related. They are real creatures, exquisitely fantastical, strangely exposed to the world by a lurid catastrophe, who teach us, that fiction, if it can imagine events and persons more agreeable to the taste it has educated, can read us no such furrowing lesson in life.[57]

The question which Meredith poses about "passion" here restates his conviction, expressed in his paraphrase of Carlyle's recipe for biography in Beauchamp's Career, that the ideas of men, rather than their appetites, cause men to act. "Passion," of course, is here the mental process, rather than the physical. Meredith asks whether an idea or a conviction of his characters moved them, "putting animal nature out of its fashionable front rank." The problem of why they acted as they did must be studied in the "spirit and flesh" of both. The question will not be resolved by the "bare railway-line" of their story, any more than it can be resolved by the equations of the empirical school. Later in the novel, speaking through one of the characters, Meredith defends fiction as "the view within as well as without."[58]

Meredith, then, prefers to call his biography a novel; though it

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[57] Works, XV, 1-2.

[58] Works, XV, 62.

does not differ greatly from some of Carlyle's experiments in biography. The implication is that he considered that the investigation of man's spiritual and mental processes is the work of fiction, not of history or biography proper.

If some of these conclusions seem too conjectural at this point, their validity is demonstrated conclusively by Meredith in his next novel, Diana of the Crossways. Diana, like Beauchamp's Career, is based upon actual persons and events. Unlike The Tragic Comedians, however, it does not follow these without deviation. In general, it can be said that Meredith allows himself more freedom with events in Beauchamp and Diana than in The Tragic Comedians. The novel is based partly upon the life of Mrs. Caroline Norton, Sheridan's granddaughter.[59] Meredith's critics have castigated him severely for his attempt to stick to what is in this novel, particularly since, as it happened, his knowledge of the facts was incorrect in respect to a major incident in Mrs. Norton's life. As Baker points out, in his effort to stick to the facts which he believed to be true, Meredith forces Diana into an action which Mrs. Norton did not perform and which, in the light of his presentation of Diana's character, appears improbable in the novel.[60] Meredith himself was still defending the action as credible as late as 1902.[61]

In any event, although Meredith was still trying to follow Car-

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[59]Stevenson, Meredith, p. 254.

[60]History of the English Novel, VIII, 374-375.

[61]Letters, II, 543.

lyle's advice to paint what is when he wrote Diana, he apparently did not find his experiment with Carlylean biography proper, as distinct from his comedy, entirely successful, for he did not repeat it. Perhaps he found that his concentration upon the "within" of his characters was hampered by the necessity of fixing them to actual events.

Diana of the Crossways is particularly interesting to the student of Meredith because of its famous first chapter, in which Meredith has a great deal to say about the nature and function of the kind of fiction which he advocated and wrote. The whole "essay" amounts to a plea to the public to accept and encourage this kind of fiction. Meredith begins the essay with the statement that the public must embrace philosophy before it will appreciate this kind of fiction. He continues:

> Then, ah! then, moreover, will the novelist's Art, now neither blushless infant nor executive man, have attained its majority. We can then be veraciously historical, honestly transcriptive. Rose-pink and dirty drab will alike have passed away. Philosophy is the foe of both, and their silly canceling contest, perpetually renewed in a shuffle of extremes, as it always is where a phantasm falseness reigns, will no longer baffle the contemplation of natural flesh, smother no longer the soul issuing out of our incessant strife. Philosophy bids us see that we are not so pretty as rose-pink, not so repulsive as dirty drab; and that instead of everlastingly shifting these barren aspects, the sight of ourselves is wholesome, bearable, fructifying, finally a delight.[62]

As has been noted elsewhere, rose-pink is a Carlylean coinage describing sentimentalism.[63] Carlylean, too, is the essence of the message contained in these lines. When the public has embraced philos-

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[62] Works, XVI, 15.

[63] See p. 74.

ophy, the novelist will be able to give man a correct representation of his experience, to be "veraciously historical, honestly transcriptive." Both sentimentalism (rose-pink) and realism (dirty-drab) prevent man from seeing himself correctly, in the flesh and the spirit. The public must learn to bear the sight of real men, even to find pleasure in seeing them represented. Meredith continues with the notation that the rise of naturalism is a result of man's refusal to encourage the fiction that portrays human nature fully.

> And imagine the celestial refreshment of having a pure decency in the place of sham; real flesh; a soul born active, wind-beaten, but ascending. Honourable will fiction then appear; honourable, a fount of life, an aid to life, quick with our blood. Why, when you behold it you love it--and you will not encourage it?--or only when presented by dead hands? Worse than that alternative dirty drab, your recurring rose-pink is rebuked by hideous revelations of the filthy foul, for nature will force her way, and if you try to stifle her by drowning, she comes up, not the fairest part of her uppermost! Peruse your Realists, really your castigators for not having embraced Philosophy. As she grows in the flesh when discreetly tended, nature is unimpeachable, flowerlike, yet not too decoratively a flower; you must have her with the stem, the thorns, the roots, and the fat bedding of roses. In this fashion she grew, says historical fiction; thus does she flourish now, would say the modern transcript, reading the inner, as well as exhibiting the outer.[64]

Besides rose-pink and dirty-drab, the public now has filthy-foul (naturalism). Though it concentrates upon the physical--and chiefly the unpleasant side of that--it is essentially the artist's rebellion against the other two forms. It is a warning to the public that it must permit the artist to portray his subjects fully and freely, in the spirit and flesh. Such writers as Fielding and Smollett have, in the past,

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[64] Works, XVI, 15-16.

exercised the right to portray men's actions freely; the modern writer demands this right also, along with the right to show mental and spiritual action freely and fully.

Meredith's arguments for a full presentation of man are reminiscent of Carlyle's attacks on "respectable" biographies. In "The Diamond Necklace," he says:

> In our England especially, which in these days is become the chosen land of Respectability, Lifewriting has dwindled to the sorrowfulest condition; it requires a man to be some disrespectable, ridiculous Boswell before he can write a tolerable Life. Thus too, strangely enough, the only Lives worth reading are those of Players, emptiest and poorest of the sons of Adam; who nevertheless were sons of his, and brothers of ours; and by the nature of the case had already bidden Respectability good-day.[65]

This plea of Meredith's for the right to paint men fully in the flesh is most understandable when it is remembered that Richard Feverel had aroused the "snuffling moralist" of the public, as Meredith puts it.[66] His indirect plea for the right to portray the "inner" as well as the "outer" is, of course, a continuation of his insistence that comedy concerns the spirit in men and must treat the "inner" in order to portray the spirit.

When he approaches the problem of how the public shall attain the philosophic state, Meredith says that the "sentimental route," which starts in sham-spirituality rooted in the senses and winds up in Byronic gloom or Wertherian depression, from which the subject may possibly emerge to new understanding, is a lengthy road, to be rejected

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[65] Works, XXVIII, 326-327.

[66] Letters, I, 59.

if possible in favor of a "single flight of brains."[67] This route will "give you the savour of Truth, the right use of the senses, Reality's infinite sweetness. . . ."[68] And Meredith says emphatically that the "fiction which is the summary of actual Life, the within and without of us, is, prose or verse, plodding or soaring, philosophy's elect handmaiden."[69] Here is another definition of Meredith's comedy, and it corresponds exactly to his earlier characterization of it as Carlylean biography in fiction. Carlylean biography epitomizes, in one sense summarizes, life. It gives, or is intended to give, the "within and without" of its characters.

The purpose of this kind of fiction is to aid man's growth:

> To such an end let us bend our aim to work, knowing that every form of labour, even this flimsiest, as you esteem it, should minister to growth. If in any branch of us we fail in growth, there is, you are aware, an unfailing aboriginal democratic old monster that waits to pull us down; certainly the branch, possibly the tree; and for the welfare of Life we fall. You are acutely conscious of yonder old monster when he is mouthing at you in politics. Be wary of him in the heart; especially be wary of the disrelish of brainstuff. You must feed on something. Matter that is not nourishing to brains can help to constitute nothing but the bodies that are pitched on rubbish heaps. Brainstuff is not lean stuff; the brainstuff of fiction is internal history, and to suppose it dull is the profoundest of errors. . . .[70]

Meredith is here speaking figuratively of a law of progress, of the survival of the fittest. At first glance, it may appear that Mere-

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[67] Works, XVI, 16-17.

[68] Works, XVI, 17.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid.

dith's image of the "unfailing aboriginal democratic old monster" is drawn from Darwinian evolution, but examined in the light of the correspondences between Carlyle's and Meredith's view of life and of man, the passage takes on a different meaning. It is Carlyle's "evolutionary" view and not Darwin's that Meredith uses as the basis of his figure. This fact is most clearly brought out by his statement that "Matter that is not nourishing to brains can help to constitute nothing but the bodies that are pitched on rubbish heaps." It is not biological growth but spiritual growth that literature must nourish. The literature that does not grow itself cannot minister to the growth of ever-developing mankind. Like political institutions that do not develop, it will be thrust aside when it ceases to contribute to man's progress. The direction in which fiction should develop is that of exploring the "internal history" of man. Man's mental and spiritual workings, portrayed in fiction, will nourish his spiritual growth.

Meredith develops in some detail his idea that "internal history" is the province of modern fiction, asserting that it is in that province that man needs to be taught. He pleads for this kind of fiction, insisting that many writers will create it if a public for it develops. And he concludes: "The example might, one hopes, create a taste."[71] This is an ambition which he reaffirms in a letter to G. P. Baker in 1887:

> When at the conclusion of your articles on my works, you say that a certain change in public taste, should it come about,

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[71] Works, XVI, 18.

> will be to some extent due to me, you hand me the flowering wreath I covet. For I think that all right use of life, and the one secret of life, is to pave ways for the firmer footing of those who succeed us; as to my works I know them faulty, think them of worth only when they point and aid to that end.[72]

Continuing, Meredith deplores Thackeray's failure to trace the internal development of his characters, and so help to make this change, in these memorable lines:

> A great modern writer, of clearest eye and head, now departed, capable in activity of presenting thoughtful women, thinking men, groaned over his puppetry, that he dared not animate them, flesh though they were, with the fires of positive brainstuff. . . . Had he dared, he would (for he was Titan enough) have raised the Art in dignity on a level with History, to an interest surpassing the narrative of public deeds as vividly as man's heart and brain in their union excel his plain lines of action to eruption.[73]

Here again Meredith reveals his insistence that the painting of man's "internal history" is the province of fiction, that Carlyle's recommendations for biography can best be carried out in fiction. He concludes his "essay" with the warning that fiction itself cannot endure unless the public accepts and encourages the modern fiction which ministers to man's spiritual growth:

> The everlasting pantomime . . . is derided, not unrighteously, by our graver seniors. They name this Art the pasture of idiots, a method for idiotizing the entire population which has taken to reading, and which soon discovers that it can write likewise, <u>that</u> sort of stuff at least. The forecast may be hazarded, that if we do not speedily embrace Philosophy in fiction, the Art is doomed to extinction under the shining multitudes of its professors. They are fast capping the candle. Instead, therefore, of objurgating the timid intrusions of Philosophy, invoke her presence, I pray you. History without her

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[72] <u>Letters</u>, II, 398.

[73] <u>Works</u>, XVI, 18.

> is the skeleton map of events: Fiction a picture of figures modelled on no skeleton-anatomy. But each, with Philosophy in aid, blooms, and is humanly shapely. To demand of us truth to nature, excluding Philosophy, is really to bid a pumpkin caper. As much as legs are wanted for the dance, Philosophy is required to make our human nature credible and acceptable. Fiction implores you to heave a bigger breast and take her in with this heavenly preservative helpmate, her inspiration and her essence.[74]

To accept philosophy is to accept Meredith's view of fiction as instructive as well as diverting. It is to permit to the novelist what is permitted to the historian--the interpretation of man's experience. The historian cannot simply record; he must choose and select, must decide what events and persons stand out in the story of mankind. The novelist must also have that interpretative role. Meredith is obviously again concerned with the argument in the "Prelude" to The Egoist.

The novel Diana of the Crossways confirms most eloquently the fact that Meredith conceives his comedy to be a way of interpreting man's history for him. Meredith goes to great length to give the book the outward aspect of a biography. The first chapter opens with a discussion of the source-materials from which the author has composed the story of his heroine's life. Meredith refers to various diaries and memoirs, commenting upon their value to him much as Carlyle comments upon the source-materials for the life of Cromwell, of Frederick the Great, and of others. He comes early to the conclusion that the character of Diana Warwick is such that "vile" accusations against her cannot be credited. And he generalizes upon that conclusion to this effect:

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[74] Works, XVI, 19.

> Our temporary world . . . supposes it possible for a woman to be mentally active up to the point of spiritual clarity and also fleshly vile; a guide to life and a biter at the fruits of death; both open mind and hypocrite. It has not yet been taught to appreciate a quality certifying to sound citizenship as authoritatively as acres of land in fee simple. . . . The multitudes of evil reports which it takes for proof are marshalled against her without question of the nature of the victim. . . . It does not pretend to know the whole, or naked body of the facts. . . .[75]

Carlyle says practically the same thing of Cromwell in the review of previous scholarship which he prefixes to Cromwell's letters and speeches. The nature of the man, as it shines through the old documents, makes it plain to him that Cromwell was not a hypocrite, a traitor to the Puritan cause.[76] These accusations, so inconsistent with the character of the man, are made by persons who do not have the facts at command.[77] And, of course, Carlyle's chief interest is in portraying the character of Cromwell.

The similarity of Meredith's attitude toward Diana to Carlyle's attitude toward Cromwell suggests that, like Carlyle, Meredith is portraying the life of a hero. And, in fact, this suggestion is shown to be valid when it is examined in the light of Meredith's statements about Diana's character. Nevil Beauchamp is the <u>hero as leader</u>, or as would-be leader. In some respects, Diana is the <u>hero as man</u>—or woman—<u>of letters</u>. As a writer, she expresses such sentiments as these:

'Set descriptions are good for puppets. Living men and women

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[75]<u>Works</u>, XVI, 2.

[76]<u>Works</u>, VI, 12-13.

[77]<u>Works</u>, VI, 12-19, <u>passim</u>.

> are too various in the mixture fashioning them--even the "external presentment"--to be livingly rendered in a formal sketch. I may tell you that his [Percy Dacier's] eyes are pale blue, his features regular, his hair silky, brownish, his legs long, his head rather stooping (only the head), his mouth commonly closed; these are the facts, and you have seen much the same in a nursery doll. Such literary craft is of the nursery. So with landscapes. The art of the pen (we write on darkness) is to rouse the inward vision, instead of labouring with a drop-scene brush, as if it were to the eye; because our flying minds cannot contain a protracted description.[78]

Carlyle would certainly have approved Diana's definition of the "art of the pen." His own efforts were directed toward the rousing of the "inward vision."

As Meredith shows clearly, Diana is only incidentally the _hero as woman of letters_. She is more particularly the _hero as woman_. Diana is the inveterate opponent of sentimentalism, which she views as one of the blinds that keep men from seeing and following truth and reality.[79] Her attack on it gives Meredith the opportunity to point out that sentimentalism gives man a false ideal of woman:

> You have to teach your imagination of the feminine image you have set up to bend your civilized knees to that it must temper its fastidiousness, shun the grossness of the overdainty. Or, to speak in the philosophic tongue, you must turn on _yourself_, resolutely track and seize that burrower, and scrub and cleanse him; by which process, during the course of it, you will arrive at the conception of the right heroical woman for you to worship: and if you prove to be of some spiritual stature, you may reach to an ideal of the heroical feminine type for the worship of mankind, an image as yet in poetic outline only, on our upper skies.[80]

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[78] _Works_, VI, 170.

[79] _Works_, XVI, 12.

[80] _Works_, XVI, 19.

Man has a sentimental ideal of woman, based upon "the grossness of the overdainty." When he has freed himself of the blinds of sentimentalism, he will be able to understand what the hero as woman should be. And Meredith thinks that Diana Warwick, the feminine counterpart of Nevil Beauchamp, is an example of the heroical feminine. Diana's view of the world is the Carlylean view: She sees it as "all but a sensational world at present, in maternal travail of a soberer, a braver, a brighter-eyed."[81] And she speaks in Carlyle's own accents of the necessity for the dominance of the spiritual over the physical: "Our battle is ever between the flesh and the spirit. Spirit must brand the flesh, that it may live."[82] She describes herself as "at war" with herself, a phrase that recalls Carlyle's insistence that man's life is a battle between the flesh and the spirit.[83] And Meredith distinguishes her from the ordinary heroine of romance in these lines:

> [Dacier] said to himself, with little intuition of the popular taste: She wouldn't be a bad heroine of Romance! He said it derisively of the Romantic. But the right worshipful heroine of Romance was the front-face female picture he had won for his walls. Poor Diana was the flecked heroine of Reality: not always the same; not impeccable; not an ignorant-innocent, nor a guileless: good, under good leading; devoted to the death in a grave crisis; often wrestling with her terrestial nature nobly; and a growing soul; but not one whose purity was carved in marble for an assurance to an Englishman that his possession of the changeless thing defies time and his fellows, is the pillar of his home and universally enviable.[84]

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[81] Works, XVI, 12.

[82] Works, XVI, 13.

[83] Works, XVI, 48.

[84] Works, XVI, 399.

This description of Diana reads very much like a paraphrase of Carlyle's prescription for biography, delivered in the midst of his attacks upon "respectable" biographies, which do not treat the struggles of the protagonist, show his growth in mind and spirit.[85] Meredith reaffirms this view of Diana as a "growing soul" through the thoughts of Redworth, who is destined to win Diana because he has a true, unsentimental conception of the heroical feminine:

> The difference between appetite and love is shown when a man, after years of service, can hear and see, and admit the possible, and still desire in worship; knowing that we of earth are begrimed and must be cleansed for presentation daily on our passage through the miry ways, but that our souls, if flame of a soul shall have come of the agony of flesh, are beyond the baser mischances: partaking of them indeed, but sublimely. Now Redworth believed in the soul of Diana. For him it burned, and it was a celestial radiance about her, unquenched by her shifting fortunes, her wilfulnesses, and, it might be, errors. She was a woman and weak; that is, not trained for strength. She was a soul; therefore perpetually pointing to growth in purification.[86]

And Redworth goes on to see such love as his as "divinely indicating more than happiness: the speeding of us, compact of what we are, between the ascetic rocks and the sensual whirlpools, to the creation of certain nobler races, now very dimly imagined."[87]

Diana herself comes to realize that the import of her experience is spiritual. In this statement to her friend Emma Dunstane, she indicates as much:

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[85]See p. 21.

[86]Works, XVI, 420.

[87]Works, XVI, 420-421.

> 'Who can really think, and not think hopefully? You were in my mind last night, and you brought a little boat to sail me past despondency of life and the fear of extinction. When we despair or discolour things, it is our senses in revolt, and they have made the sovereign brain their drudge. I heard you whisper, with your very breath in my ear: "There is nothing the body suffers that the soul may not profit by." That is Emma's history. With that I sail into the dark; it is my promise of the immortal: teaches me to see immortality for us. It comes from you, my Emmy.'[88]

And Emma is comforted by what she calls Diana's "return to mental harmony with the laws of life."[89] Diana has rejected Byronic gloom in favor not of what is commonly called happiness, which is the satisfaction of the desires of the senses, the personal ego, but in favor of understanding her relations with the universe, of perceiving the organic spiritual growth of mankind through the lessons provided by life.

When Diana has reached that position, the story of her "apprenticeship," as Meredith calls it in the title of Chapter XIV, is complete. This is the point to which all the struggles in Carlylean biography should bring the hero.

Meredith points out in some detail that he is writing a biography, a "history," as he calls it,[90] of Diana, and that in so doing he is epitomizing the heroical woman of her day. After insisting that he is not writing a "Romance of Fashionable Life," he says that he nonetheless is expected to "gather up the threads concerning her." The difficulty involved in this task is that "her resemblance to her sex and species of

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[88] Works, XVI, 492.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Works, XVI, 441.

a civilized period plants the main threads in her bosom."[91] Meredith goes on to make it clear that while Diana is a "princess," another "actual, yet uncommon" character, she is still "of her kind and time."[92] She is uncommon in that she is one "speaking a language distinct from the mercantile, trafficking in ideas."[93] In other words, Diana is a Carlylean hero: she realizes the import of her experiences; and she strives to cooperate with life, to accept it as a refining and chastening experience.

Although the fact that Diana of the Crossways is the biography of a heroic rather than a sentimental or egoistic "type" makes it closer in literary practice to Beauchamp's Career than to the two novels which directly preceded it, the literary theory behind all four novels is the same. The lives of Beauchamp and Diana epitomize the courage and idealism of the times; the lives of Sir Willoughby and Clotilde and Alvan epitomize the weakness and the sentimental egoism of the times. Beauchamp and Diana, in other words, are "good" pupils in the school of life: they respond intelligently to the tutoring which experience provides. Sir Willoughby and Clotilde and Alvan have a harder time. Experience--the teacher--struggles with them, but they are "backward" pupils. Both "types" exist. Through exposing their "inward mechanism," Meredith digests the intellectual and spiritual history of his day.

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[91] Works, XVI, 441.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid.

## CHAPTER VIII

## CONCLUSION

Although Meredith's recorded tributes to Carlyle are so many and so enthusiastic as to indicate great admiration and respect for the older writer, his imitation of Carlyle is, as the cliché has it, a still more potent tribute. Meredith's appropriation of Carlyle's literary theory, along with much of the philosophy behind that theory, establishes him firmly as a disciple of Carlyle. It is possible to see, now that the acknowledgments have been uncovered, the evidences provided by Meredith in his statements to interviewers and friends that he was, in many respects, a follower of Carlyle. Perhaps the fact that his admiration for his sage is not an uncritical one has tended to deceive those critics who have noted these evidences and have been reluctant to assume anything about the influence. When his disagreement with Carlyle upon matters practical is ignored, it is plain that Meredith not only had a deep affection for Carlyle, but in matters spiritual considered him to be an eminent guide.

It is important also to note that Meredith's admiration for Carlyle is based both upon knowledge of his writings and personal acquaintance with him. Meredith evidently read all or almost all of Carlyle's works. Casual references to _Heroes and Hero-Worship_, _The French Revolution_, _The Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell_, and to miscellaneous political essays occur in the letters, but the implication is inherent in Meredith's attitude toward Carlyle that his knowledge of Carlyle's

works is based on wide and careful reading of them. Concerning the personal relationship between the two men, very little is known. Meredith implies in his statements to interviewers and in his letters that at one time he saw the Carlyles frequently and that he and Carlyle often argued the merits of history and fiction. However warm or distant the relationship, Meredith evidently treasured his memories of his talks with the sage. He was still recounting them almost fifty years after their first meeting.

Both in person and through his writings Carlyle urged his young friend to abandon fiction in favor of history. Meredith must have been deeply sensible of the compliment involved, for his readings in Carlyle undoubtedly informed him that Carlyle considered the historian—the Carlylean historian, that is—to be a man charged with the spiritual leadership of men. Indeed, Carlyle's conception of literature and of the literary artist is so intimately connected with his ideas about the spiritual implications of man's life that it is not surprising that the young writer who saw Carlyle as an eminent spiritual guide should find his literary theory admirable.

From this point of view, the parallels between Meredith's and Carlyle's conception of the nature and function of the man of letters in society are seen as the logical result of Meredith's respect for Carlyle as a great teacher. From his guide Meredith evidently absorbed the idea that the great artist is primarily a spiritual teacher, interpreting experience to men in terms of their relationship to their fellows and to the laws of life. From Carlyle, too, he learned that the powers

of Shakespeare and Goethe, poets gifted with imagination and insight in combination with harmonious thought and utterance, are needed for this task. Even so common an idea as the conception that harmony and music are words interchangeable with truth and reality probably came to Meredith by way of Carlyle. At any rate, in Beauchamp's Career and in The Egoist, he shows himself aware of Carlyle's requirement that great writing be musical.

Since the noble workman is charged with the responsibility of interpreting life to man, his subject matter is necessarily reality. Meredith accepted this dictum of Carlyle's, too, agreeing with him that even the great artist must ground his work upon the real. Actually, he is an interpreter of reality. Lesser writers are assigned to the task of compiling the facts which the great artist is to interpret.

Similarly, Meredith's attitude toward sentimentalism in life and literature, as expressed in his novels, particularly Sandra Belloni and Diana of the Crossways, is probably derived from Carlyle's insistence that the first task of the noble workman is to clear the ground for his work by destroying sentimentalism. Meredith uses two Carlylean coinages to describe sentimentalism, and he attacks it upon the same grounds upon which Carlyle attacks it. Like Carlyle, Meredith sees sentimentalism as a viewpoint rooted in the senses but masquerading as spirituality. Sham-spirituality must necessarily be fought if true spirituality is to be taught. Both Carlyle and Meredith view it as a philosophy or attitude that blinds men to the spiritual implications of their history. They join, too, in condemnation of the literature pro-

duced by the sentimental school--the fashionable novel. It seems probable from these similarities, and from Meredith's use of Carlyle's coinages to describe sentimentalism, that Carlyle, and not Peacock, is the source of this attitude in Meredith.

Along with his responsibility to destroy the false view of life represented by sentimentalism, the noble workman was expected by Carlyle and Meredith to carry out his constructive work of interpreting life to man. Carlyle devised for his artist a special form of biography, which emphasizes not merely the events through which the subject passes, but, more specifically, the effect of experience upon character. This form of biography permits the great artist to explore the mental and spiritual aspects of character more directly than had been done earlier in biography. Meredith adopted the same basic ideas for the novel. Since Carlyle's conception of "Carlylean biography" probably owes something to the apprenticeship pattern of Goethe's Wilhelm Meister, it is only natural that Meredith's novels have been studied as apprenticeship novels rather than as Carlylean biographies in fiction. The difference between the two is primarily the emphasis in the latter upon moral and spiritual growth rather than upon harmonious aesthetic development. Although Goethe contributed something to the form of Carlylean biography, the spiritual and moral emphasis in it comes from Carlyle's view of life and of mankind. Briefly, he conceived of mankind as an organism that is developing spiritually toward a higher and nobler state. The individual can contribute to this growth by growing spiritually himself. This view naturally led him to see epitomized in the life of one man the spiritual

struggles of the species. Evidence that the form of Meredith's novels derives from Carlyle rather than from Goethe can be found in the fact that Meredith's novels are all concerned with the process of spiritual growth. In addition, Meredith shares with Carlyle the "evolutionary" concept that man is evolving spiritually toward something nobler. It is Carlylean (spiritual) evolution rather than Darwinian (biological) evolution that interests Meredith. Critics who have spoken of him as the "poet of evolution" have missed this point.

It is in the light of this independent study of the parallels between Meredith's and Carlyle's conception of literature as didactic and the great artist as a spiritual teacher, who must both attack sentimentalism, which emphasizes the physical, and advance man's spiritual development, that Meredith's first acknowledgment of indebtedness to Carlyle, in _Beauchamp's Career_, becomes entirely intelligible and credible. Meredith says in this work that he is following the counsel of a sage and seer, who instructs him to treat his times by treating the men of his times, emphasizing their ideas rather than their appetites as the motivating factors of their actions. And Meredith adds that he is ready also to be "musical" in his treatment of his subject. In view of Carlyle's ideas that history is best epitomized in the lives of men, that spiritual and intellectual processes rather than physical appetites are the motive-springs of men's actions, and that the noble workman who writes history must be musical in the sense that he must understand and communicate the harmony that lies at the basis of truth and reality, it is scarcely possible to doubt that this sage and seer is Carlyle, and

that Meredith is saying that he intends to be Carlyle's poet-historian, working, of course, in fiction. Whatever lingering doubts may exist are resolved by examination of the novel itself and by reference to certain letters which Meredith wrote about it. Meredith says in the novel that the favorite author of the protagonist, Nevil Beauchamp, is Carlyle, upon whose style and effect upon the reader Meredith contributes a striking paragraph. Meredith's summing-up of Beauchamp's character, which he points to in a letter as the substitute for a preface to the novel, is entirely in terms of Carlyle's ideas: Beauchamp is no Byronic hero wailing over his unhappiness, but a man whose faith is in working and fighting. The allusion to Carlyle's scorn for self-centered Byronism and to his doctrine of work are obvious. In addition, Meredith emphasizes the fact that Beauchamp is not self-righteous over his triumph against his sensual appetites, his desires of the flesh. He has the Carlylean hero's unconsciousness of virtue. Furthermore, the ideas which Beauchamp expresses also point to his being a portrait of the Carlylean hero in the nineteenth century: a member of the upper classes, he wants to lead the people; he thinks that the nobles should earn their privileges or give them up. He uses Carlyle's "fever" image to express the dangers that exist when men will not accept a spiritual kinship to each other, when they maintain a "cash-nexus" relationship. He also speaks with contempt of "flunkeyism," a Carlylean coinage describing the attitude of subserviency which many men have toward the established order of things; and he uses another Carlylean image to describe the uses of the journal which he hopes to found: it is to be "lungs" to the

people. Carlyle says in "Stump-Orator" that the people need such lungs.

In addition, Beauchamp's political mentor, with whose ideas Beauchamp is shown to agree, seems to be an attempt at a portrait of Carlyle. He expresses Carlylean ideas, in the Carlylean style, upon religious, political, social, and philosophical subjects. Especially noteworthy is his expression of the Carlylean "evolutionary" view--the view that mankind is in progress, in spiritual development. Shrapnel, like Carlyle, sees the spiritual as dominant in the world. He also expresses Carlyle's doctrines of work and leadership.

Furthermore, in two direct author-to-reader passages, Meredith seems indebted to Carlyle again. In the chapter "Timothy Turbot and the Leading Article," Meredith makes use of two images to be found in Carlyle's "Stump-Orator." The chapter and the essay are on the same subject: the "merely windy" orator. In a chapter on canvassing for votes, Meredith speaks whimsically of Carlyle's notion that the wisest should be summoned to govern the nation.

In accordance with Meredith's statement early in Beauchamp's Career that he is going to follow Carlyle's advice to the writer, the novel is Carlylean biography in fiction. The real action in the book is the struggle in Beauchamp of the flesh and the spirit. Spirit wins because Beauchamp is a hero--a Carlylean hero, that is. His struggles epitomize the spiritual struggles of his day, for the book is not only a biography of Beauchamp, but a history of his times. Since Carlyle regarded the story of the mental and spiritual currents of an age as the really significant history of the period, he concluded that biogra-

phy should concentrate upon those aspects of the experience of its subjects.

Beauchamp's Career offers not only a tribute to Carlyle the writer, but also a tribute to Carlyle the intellectual leader of the times. In the first novel of his artistic maturity, and his favorite of his novels, Meredith says that he is following Carlyle's advice to him to write history; that, following his sage's counsel, he will do this by writing a biography in which the mental and spiritual convictions (the ideas) of the subjects are shown to be the motive-springs of their actions. Examination of the novel shows that Meredith did what he said he was going to do. It also shows that Meredith considered Carlyle's influence upon his age to be very great, since the protagonist and his political mentor reflect those ideas. In other words, if Beauchamp's Career is considered as a history of the ideas of the nineteenth century, nineteenth-century thought is shown to be greatly influenced by Carlyle's pronouncements.

If any doubt still remains that Meredith's so-called "apprenticeship novels" actually are Carlylean biographies in fiction and that Meredith, in fact, appropriated Carlyle's literary theory and applied it to fiction, these are speedily resolved by the second acknowledgment of indebtedness to Carlyle, given in The Egoist, the novel which follows Beauchamp's Career. In the "Prelude" to that novel, Meredith defines his "comedy" specifically as Carlylean biography in fiction. He opens by contrasting the aims and methods of "comedy" with those of realism and naturalism. Since the aim of the last two is to present a picture

of life, they concentrate upon the "outer" world. Comedy has as its aim the causing its readers to think about social life. Although social life is normally considered the "outer" world, Meredith, like Carlyle, viewed society as essentially a spiritual relationship among men, involving the "inner" world, the "spirit" in men. Society, as viewed by both writers, is a reflection of the spiritual condition of men.

To justify comedy more thoroughly, Meredith paraphrases Carlyle's statements upon the need for man's experience to be interpreted to him clearly. He refers to Carlyle only as "the notable humourist," but the identification of that humorist is easily accomplished. Meredith, indeed makes no great effort to conceal his identity. He uses not only Carlyle's image of history as a big book which needs to be compressed for man, but also many figures from the essay "Jesuitism," the Carlylean essay which he appears to be "translating" from Carlylese into Meredithese. The sense of his paraphrase of Carlyle is that men are in a condition of spiritual paralysis and deadly boredom and that these conditions cannot be remedied by science. The remedy lies in the artist's ability to give man the import of his experience, to digest the book of history. Following Carlyle again, he says that this task can best be accomplished by the artist through biographies of "types" rather than through the realist's picture of events and the physical world in which they happen. In other words, he equates his comedy with Carlylean biography, and realism with the productions of voluminous Dryasdust, the historian of events. This kind of fiction, he says, offers not only a "key" to the book of experience, and the "music" of the book—possibly

another reference to Carlyle's insistence that the productions of the biographer-historian be musical--but also the "true diversion"--the proper amusement for the sons of Earth.

Through a metaphor--the Comic Spirit--Meredith makes it plain that as an artist he feels his responsibility to fight sham and imposture at the same time that he epitomizes man's history by writing biographies of "types." Perhaps the best way of understanding this statement is by study of The Egoist, which can be taken to represent Meredith's comedy. The protagonist of The Egoist, Sir Willoughby Patterne, is a type in whom the dominant fault of the age is expressed. Sir Willoughby is exposed in his real light not only by direct statements of the author, but by contrast with other characters who do not have this fault. Meredith says directly that Sir Willoughby has transferred his egoism from the forbidden physical realm to the spiritual world. He says, too, that this is the sin of the age as well as of the man portrayed. Interestingly enough, this is the sin of the age according to Carlyle also. In "Jesuitism," the essay which Meredith seems to be translating in the "Prelude" to The Egoist, Carlyle chooses Loyola as the symbol of the past two centuries and says that his chief fault is in his transfer of his egoism from the physical to the spiritual realm. The parallel can hardly be an accident.

Sir Willoughby's significance, as far as Meredith's Comic Spirit metaphor is concerned, is that he is a type or individual who is being disciplined by life without his having the ability to understand what his struggles mean. Yet the reader can see that significance; and if he

does not, Meredith steps in helpfully to point it out.

The Tragic Comedians is especially interesting in the light of Meredith's statements in Beauchamp's Career and The Egoist that he was writing Carlylean biography in fiction. In the next novel after these two, he can be found to be writing Carlylean biography proper, if freedom is allowed him in such a work to portray the interior workings of his characters. Meredith sticks to actual events in the book, but explores the mental and spiritual aspects of his characters with the freedom of the novelist. Critics have called it a cross between biography and fiction. Perhaps it is best called Carlylean biography proper. Carlyle's practice in "The Diamond Necklace" and "Count Cagliostro" indicates that at one time he would have yielded the artist the right to deal pretty freely with his interpretations of the emotions and convictions of the characters.

Meredith's next novel, Diana of the Crossways, is interesting both because it contains additional direct statements about Meredith's literary theory and because his practice in the novel throws light on his theory. In its famous first chapter, Meredith pleads for the right to be "veraciously historical, honestly transcriptive." He insists that man must be shown in the flesh and the spirit, and says that the fiction which is "the summary of actual Life, the within and without" of man is conducive to the growth of man, will help his spiritual development and fight his tendency to view life as chiefly a physical process and to substitute sham-spirituality rooted in the senses for true spirituality. With this statement Meredith completes the description of his literary

theory which is begun in Beauchamp's Career and ties it even more firmly to Carlyle's theory of literature. The whole purpose of the noble workman is to aid man's spiritual development.

From the standpoint of literary practice, Diana of the Crossways represents a return to the form of Beauchamp's Career. Like that novel, Diana is a biography of a hero. The protagonist's life does not epitomize the faults of the age, as in The Egoist and The Tragic Comedians, but the idealism of it. Though Beauchamp and Diana make mistakes, they come in time to understand the spiritual significance of their struggles and to cooperate with life's effort to make them grow spiritually. The protagonists of the other two novels mentioned cannot see that deeply into life. Diana's spiritual struggles finally bring her back into "harmony" with the "laws of life."

Meredith's literary theory, as enunciated in the four novels discussed, turns out to be precisely Carlyle's theory. Meredith not only borrows his form from Carlyle, but also the attitude that supports it. He regards his mission as a spiritual one; his novels are social histories, wherein each man may see himself portrayed, either as a believer in sham, whose conceptions of the spiritual are gross ideas rooted in the senses, or as a hero, who understands the spiritual import of man's battles. Since both Carlyle and Meredith were interested in the spiritual development of man, it is natural for them to think of literature as a tool of the prophet-priest man of letters, whose task it is to interpret experience to man. The Meredithian novel is the Carlylean biography.

In the light of Meredith's admission of his debt to Carlyle for the core of his literary theory, it seems probable that Carlyle's influence upon him is of such a nature that it cannot safely be ignored by his critics. It seems probable, too, that Galland is right in his thesis that Carlyle exercised a formative influence upon Meredith in his early years, helping to determine the whole course of Meredith's literary career. It is not the aim of this study to examine the formative influences upon Meredith in general, however, but only to establish the source of his broad literary theory.

In the light of Meredith's admission that he borrowed his literary theory from Carlyle, the historian, Priestley's statement that Meredith does with fiction what Carlyle did with history assumes particular force. Since the bare statement itself is all that Priestley provides and since he does not take this fact into account in his discussion of the principles governing Meredith's art, it must be assumed that it is based upon study of the literary practice of the two writers. If so, it is an unusual tribute to Meredith, for it indicates that in the eyes of one critic, at least, he achieved artistic success, if that be defined as hitting the mark at which he aimed.

Brownell's attack upon Meredith as an outsider who has no literary links with his predecessors or his contemporaries has already been partially answered by critics who have shown something of what Meredith learned from the novelists who came before him. It is answered most completely, however, by the statement that Carlyle is Meredith's chief link with the English literary tradition. Meredith's work derives from

Carlyle's, and tends toward the modern novel in its emphasis upon the "internal history" of the characters. It must be admitted, however, that in Meredith's treatment of moral and spiritual values, his work does differ greatly from modern fiction. Perhaps the fact that Carlyle's "Eternal Verities" do not form the spiritual background of the modern novel goes a long way toward explaining this difference.

Noble's assertion that Meredith is more the moralist than the novelist reveals a basic misunderstanding of Meredith's purpose as a man of letters. It is surely scarcely perceptive to accuse a professed moralist of being a moralist. Noble's criticism implies that fiction cannot serve as a vehicle for the prophet, the teacher, or, at least, that the novelist should disguise his efforts to teach. This statement strikes at the root of Meredith's attempt to create the kind of fiction that <u>could</u> teach, could aid man's spiritual growth. It is safe to say, too, that he had no thought of disguising his lessons, of making them into palatable pills for the public. He is extremely outspoken throughout his novels about the fundamental moral basis of his work.

The statement of a sympathetic critic, Jackson, that in Meredith's hands the novel is a fully conscious art form is fully borne out by this study from one point of view. Meredith made a conscious attempt to create a new type of fiction, and it must not be forgotten that he claimed for it in the first chapter of <u>The Egoist</u> that it is not only instructive but diverting as well. And although this study has not attempted to examine details of Meredith's literary practice except incidentally, it does indicate that Meredith was a conscious craftsman,

that he was distinctly aware of form as an element of a work of art.

Baker also has recognized that Meredith was trying to do something new in the novel. The general outline of what that something is emerges from this study. And Wright's statement that Meredith was an experimentalist, which is allied to Baker's comment, is also confirmed by this study. It shows the general lines which Meredith's experimentation took.

The most significant critical statement upon Meredith's art, as far as this study is concerned, is that of Crees, whose description of Meredith reads like a description of Carlyle's ideal man of letters, and whose characterization of Meredith's work as "the didactic prose epos, the philosophy of history applied to life and its problems," represents an accurate understanding of Meredith's work. What is remarkable is not so much the statement itself as Crees's complete failure to relate it to his criticism of Meredith's art.

The question of whether or not the criticism which Priestley and crees give of Meredith's work is influenced by the views which they express in the passages cited is an important one. For knowledge of the literary theory behind Meredith's work does make a difference in the criticism of his art. For one thing, special light is shed upon a subject dear to the hearts of Meredith's critics: the Comic Spirit. Almost unanimously, they join in pointing to this figure as particularly revelatory of Meredith's artistic principles. In the light of his statement in <u>The Egoist</u>, however, this image can be seen to be nothing more than Meredith's way of saying that in his biographies he will

portray such figures as the sentimentalist and the egoist, who represent the faults of their times, as well as the heroes, the idealists, who represent its virtues. His purpose in portraying the former is to bring into operation man's common sense, reason's social guise. The "comic" of comedy is nothing more than the recognition, by the reader, of sham and imposture as such. By picturing these in conjunction with idealism and truth, Meredith intends to perform the two functions of the noble workman: to destroy sentimentalism, which is essentially nothing more than a false view of man and of the world, and to interpret experience to man, emphasizing the spiritual import of his struggles.

It is safe to say that recognition that Meredith consciously borrowed his theory of literature from Carlyle and that he viewed his novels as biographies, as social histories, will make possible a new critical understanding of Meredith's literary product. It is certainly useful in any study of a writer's work to know his literary aims, to measure his accomplishments against them. Furthermore, this study also indicates that exploration should be made of the influence which Carlyle exercised upon Meredith in other directions. Some of the material covered in Chapters V and VI suggests that Carlyle had a more profound influence upon Meredith's philosophy than has heretofore been recognized. Since Meredith's poetry expresses his philosophy more directly than his novels do, perhaps a new study of the poetry is indicated.

In any event, this work provides both a firm basis for new and better criticism of Meredith's writings and a starting point for further exploration of the pervasive influence of Carlyle upon him.

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