

INTRODUCTION

CARLYLE AND THE LITERARY REVIEW

ALTHOUGH the works included in this volume were collected as “essays,” they began their lives under the more modest guise of the literary review. The difference might be defined in terms of the role of the writer. Essayists present their own ideas, whereas reviewers recapitulate and critique the ideas of others. This distinction was familiar to Carlyle and his contemporaries. According to Joanne Shattock, “The difference between an essay and a review was never articulated by reviewers and editors, but it is clear from correspondence that most reviewers considered themselves to be writing either one or the other” (110). Nonetheless, as Carlyle’s essays reveal, while many reviewers aimed primarily to convey the basic qualities and ideas of the work under review, they could, and often did, use the occasion of commenting on someone else’s writing as an opportunity for developing their own ideas. The review often metamorphosed into the essay.

Literary reviews first appeared in England in the early eighteenth century, with the number of periodicals publishing reviews increasing rapidly after mid-century. The standard for the latter half of the century was set by the *Monthly Review*, which began publication in 1748. Other reviews (the most widely circulated of which was the *Critical Review*) soon appeared, but they all followed more or less the same model. They aimed to be comprehensive, reviewing all publications of substance, which meant that they included many short reviews and a smaller number of more in-depth reviews. The *Monthly* is also credited with introducing evaluation along with the abstracts and summaries typical of the earliest reviews. The aim of these periodicals was to present the current state of knowledge (Roper 20), and thus, while reviews assessed the quality of books, they primarily sought to convey to the reader what the book said.

While the *Monthly* and its imitators survived well into the nineteenth century, they were supplanted as the leading reviews by the *Edinburgh Review*, which first appeared in 1802, and the *Quarterly Review*, introduced in 1809. As Derek Roper has pointed out, the goal of reviewing all new publications had by the end of the eighteenth century become unsustainable because of the rapid increase in their number (28). Francis Jeffrey therefore determined from the beginning that the *Edinburgh Review* would be selective in what it reviewed and thereby freed authors not only to review in depth but also to write something more like

an essay.¹ These reviews continued to cover a wide range of topics—indeed, commentary on literature and literary authors represented a small percentage of all reviews—but they did not confine themselves to conveying the substance and providing evaluation of the works reviewed. Nor did they attempt to be neutral; on the contrary, in keeping with their sponsorship—the Whigs for the *Edinburgh* and the Tories for the *Quarterly*—they sought to provide a point of view and to present an argument. Most significantly, they attempted to provide a broad context for understanding the work under review. Thomas Babington Macaulay’s famous essay on Milton is a case in point. While putatively reviewing Milton’s *De Doctrina Christiana*, Macaulay used its discovery as an occasion, as he put it, “to say something of his moral and intellectual qualities” and so to “commemorate . . . the genius and virtues of John Milton” (306). That said, reviews continued to rely heavily on description, in the service of which they often printed extensive extracts of the work reviewed. For example, Jeffrey’s review of Carlyle’s translation of *Wilhelm Meister* begins with ten pages of general commentary and then provides a thirty-page summary consisting primarily of extracts, before proceeding to a brief conclusion.

Carlyle’s reviews mirror this historical shift. As we might expect, his early reviews adhere to the norms of the day. His first review, of Joanna Baillie’s *Metrical Legends of Exalted Characters* (1821), is largely descriptive, with extensive summary and quoted extracts. However, it is also, in keeping with the recent trend, evaluative. Carlyle begins with a series of criticisms of what he takes to be the shortcomings of Baillie’s dramas. He also emphasizes biographical and historical contexts, privileges content over form, and showcases his own formidable learning and taste in the increasingly rich allusiveness that he would continue to develop as a hallmark of his style. Nonetheless, the focus remains firmly on Baillie’s text, and Carlyle does not stray into a general discussion of drama. When he became a reviewer of German literature, this pattern continued. If anything, summary and quotation became more prominent, no doubt because he was introducing material unfamiliar to readers for whom his translations of extracts often provided the first exposure of these works to an English-speaking audience.

By the end of the 1820s, however, Carlyle was eager to become an author in his own right and sought to emulate reviewers like Macaulay. A key moment was Carlyle’s 1828 pronouncement that he would only “pretend reviewing” John Gibson Lockhart’s *Life of Robert Burns* and would instead produce his own

¹ This paragraph is indebted to Roper chapter 1 and Shattock chapter 1.

essay on the qualities of Burns's poetry (*Letters* 4:383). The review itself bears out his intentions, commencing as it does with Carlyle's views on the nature of poetry and how Burns, and by comparison Byron, fail or succeed in meeting the standards implied by these pronouncements. The opportunity in 1832 to review a new edition of Boswell's *Life of Johnson* led Carlyle to speculations on biography so distinctive that James Fraser published them as a separate essay, introductory to Carlyle's review of Boswell. The contrast between Carlyle's and Macaulay's reviews is instructive. For Macaulay, the imperative lesson, as in many of his writings, is to demonstrate the Whig myth of progress in contrast to the backwardness and provinciality of Toryism in all its guises, including that of Johnson, one of its most famous and stalwart defenders. Carlyle, on the other hand, argues that Johnson's greatness transcends his Toryism, that Johnson is great in spite of his Tory affiliation, however limiting such an affiliation might be.

Another sign of Carlyle's growing independence was that he began proposing his own topics. He had sought a commission from the *Edinburgh Review* to review Boswell's *Life*, and, when this offer was declined (in preference to Macaulay), he obtained one from *Fraser's Magazine*. In proposing a review of the relatively obscure "Corn-Law Poet" (Ebenezer Elliott) later that year, he sought an opportunity to make his own intervention in the contemporary debates over passage of the Reform Bill. Similarly, his essay on Diderot can be classed with his "Count Cagliostro" and "The Diamond Necklace" as occasions to sketch out views of the French Revolution that he would expand on in his history of that event, which he began writing a year and a half later.

Ultimately, Carlyle's desire to express his own views brought his career as a literary reviewer to an end. His last two substantial reviews, "Sir Walter Scott" and "Varnhagen Von Ense's Memoirs," appeared in 1838. While he wrote a few essays during the lean years before his books began producing income, by the end of the 1830s proceeds from *The French Revolution* and new editions of *Sartor Resartus* and the *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays* improved his financial position considerably, relieving him of the necessity of writing periodical articles. The last two items in this volume, his review of Heintze's translation of Burns's poems and his preface to Emerson's *Essays*, both brief pieces, were, as discussed below, written as favors to the authors and probably did not result in any income for Carlyle. His infrequent contributions to periodical publications would henceforth deal with subjects associated with the longer historical works or with topics of contemporary social or political import. Now established as a major literary figure, he had realized his ambition of trading his role as reviewer for that of author reviewed.

Carlyle's critical principles, to which he adheres consistently throughout his writings on literature, are for the most part in keeping with nineteenth-century aesthetics. In accord with Romantic views of literature, he regards the artist as an inspired visionary who has the capacity to comprehend the deepest aspects of human existence. At the same time, he fears that artists may become too focused on themselves as prophetic seers or on aesthetic objects themselves. Accordingly, he is among those who first set forth the Victorian principle that art should serve a higher moral purpose.

For Carlyle the true artist has the capacity to reveal the divine within the natural world. The authors he admires gaze into the infinite, interpret it, and give it voice in human language. As he writes in "Burns": "Man's life and nature is, as it was, and as it will ever be. But the poet must have an eye to read these things, and a heart to understand them; or they come and pass away before him in vain. He is a *vates*, a seer; a gift of vision has been given him. Has life no meanings for him, which another cannot equally decipher; then he is no poet, and Delphi itself will not make him one" (below 39). He thus describes Samuel Johnson as an author who "can . . . hold real communion with the Highest" (181), and he insists that Ebenezer Elliott, the Corn-Law Rhymer, "is an earnest, truth-speaking man; no theorizer, sentimentalizer, but a practical man of work and endeavour" (206). While he contends that Scott has serious limitations as an artist, he praises him for being "a genuine man, which itself is a great matter. No affectation, fantasticality or distortion, dwelt in him; no shadow of cant" (288). By contrast, Diderot's failure is that his writings manifest "no Seer, but only possibilities of a Seer, transient irradiations of a Seer looking through the organs of a *Philosophe*" with the consequence that his "habitual world . . . is a half-world, distorted into looking like a whole; it is properly a poor, fractional, insignificant world; partial, inaccurate, perverted from end to end" (261-62, 261).

Equally important for Carlyle is that the artist's insight reveal to us not only the nature of our universe but also how we ought to act in it. He disdains literature that aims merely to entertain and, while he does not espouse overt didacticism, insists that art must be morally serious. Voltaire cannot be called a great man, he argues, because of "his inborn levity of nature, his entire want of Earnestness" (86). Although Scott is genuine and eschews cant, he nonetheless fails to meet this standard of earnestness: "If Literature had no task but that of harmlessly amusing indolent, languid men, here was the very perfection of Literature; that a man, here more emphatically than ever elsewhere, might fling himself back, exclaiming, 'Be mine to lie on this sofa, and read everlasting Novels of Walter Scott!'" (317). "Literature," Carlyle concludes, "*has* other aims than

that of harmlessly amusing indolent, languid men: or if Literature have them not, then Literature is a very poor affair" (318). By contrast, he writes apropos of Johnson: "Such knowledge of the *transcendental*, immeasurable character of Duty, we call the basis of all Gospels, the essence of all Religion: he who with his whole soul knows not this, as yet knows nothing, as yet *is* properly nothing" (180). It is no coincidence that Carlyle here compares the writings of the true seer with the most profound religious teaching. Here he unites Romantic claims for the author as visionary seer with Victorian demands for moral high seriousness in order to cast the poet as heroic shaper of a society and its beliefs.

THE WRITING, PUBLISHING, AND RECEPTION OF THE ESSAYS ON LITERATURE

The success and prestige of the *Edinburgh Review*, and then of the *Quarterly*, meant that up-and-coming authors wanted to be reviewed and to review there. As Shattock points out, "Almost from its inception the *Edinburgh* became the Review for which most reviewers wished to write and in which authors wished to be reviewed" (8). Although reviews were published anonymously, they could still bring one fame. The leading reviewers were well known, and readers often knew or guessed their identity (Shattock 15-18). Moreover, these reviewers could earn a decent income. Because the quarterlies published longer, and fewer, reviews than the *Monthly* and its imitators, they paid better. Jeffrey established the minimum rate of sixteen guineas a sheet, with some authors getting up to twenty-five, and he allotted them two or three sheets, meaning that an author could earn up to seventy-five guineas per review.

Not surprisingly, then, the young Carlyle, seeking to establish a career in literature, aimed to write for the *Edinburgh Review*. Since at least the mid-1810s he had been following the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly*, usually, like his contemporaries, reading them from cover to cover (*Letters* 1:23-24 and 46-47n11). Like others, he recognized the emergence of Macaulay as a leading reviewer, and in his notebooks we can see him implicitly measuring himself against his rival when he insists that, in spite of his obvious talent, Macaulay has no "*divine idea*," the latter being the essential quality of the literary man in the formulation of Johann Gottlieb Fichte that became Carlyle's own measuring stick (*Two Note Books* 236; see 276-77). In the winter of 1819-1820, he wrote a review in the hopes of publishing it in the *Edinburgh* and left it at Jeffrey's home, but, to his extreme disappointment, never heard back from him.²

² *Reminiscences* 316; see *Letters* 1:216. For a detailed discussion of this episode, see Campbell.

Unable to obtain a commission from the *Edinburgh*, Carlyle began his career writing encyclopedia articles, translations, and biography.³ Not long after the failure of his attempt to publish in the *Edinburgh*, he received an introduction to write for the *New Edinburgh Review*, which in July 1821 had been converted from a monthly to a quarterly and which, as the notice published at that time indicates, sought to compete with the major quarterlies in breadth and quality. This invitation resulted in his first two reviews, the aforementioned “Miss Baillie’s *Metrical Legends*,” in October 1821, and “Goethe’s *Faust*,” in April 1822, but did not immediately lead to further opportunities for reviewing. During the five years that followed, he returned to the translations and kindred literary work that slowly established his reputation as a man of letters and eventually led to the long-sought opportunity to contribute to the *Edinburgh Review*. One of these, his translation of Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister*, was noticed by Jeffrey in the October 1825 *Edinburgh Review*. Carlyle was “gratified” by this review no doubt not only because being reviewed there was itself a benefit but also because it meant that his work had at last come to the attention of its powerful editor (*Letters* 3:400).

Carlyle’s real career as a writer of reviews began when, two years later, in 1827, he finally received the opportunity to write for the *Edinburgh Review*. His work for the *Edinburgh* bookended the principal period of his career as a literary reviewer, from 1827 to 1832. This work in turn established his credentials as a literary authority and led to commissions from a number of other reviews. His first two essays in the *Edinburgh* were soon followed by the first of eight reviews in the *Foreign Review*, which was eventually absorbed into the *Foreign Quarterly Review*, where three additional reviews appeared. During this period, he also published in the *Westminster Review* and (after it merged with the *London Review*) its successor, the *London and Westminster Review*. In 1830, prospects for publication in the *Edinburgh* having become uncertain and the *Foreign Review* having gone broke, he began writing for *Fraser’s Magazine*, which would be his most financially rewarding venue, publishing nine of his essays as well as a number of miscellaneous poems and fictions, including *Sartor Resartus*. In what follows, we discuss in more detail the history of the publication of the essays included in this volume.

Early in his career, Carlyle’s friend Robert Mitchell put him in contact with

³ These included articles on several literary figures, including Montaigne, Montesquieu, and Lady Montagu. They are not included in this edition precisely because of the limited scope of this genre of writing. They have been reprinted in *Essays*, vol. 5.

Baillie John Waugh (*Letters* 1:147n1; see 153), who was launching the *Edinburgh Monthly Review*. The initial introduction, in late 1818, came to naught, and it was not until March 1821, when Waugh was relaunching his journal as the *New Edinburgh Review*, that he offered Carlyle a commission for his review of Joanna Baillie's *Legends*: "Waugh (the Review-man) sent me a book the other day, with a wish and an assurance that I 'would write a very elegant and spirited critique on it'—which I am not so certain of as the magistrate pretends to be, but shall attempt notwithstanding" (*Letters* 1:342; see also 331-32). Although he was busy with his *Life of Schiller* (1825), translations, and articles for the *Edinburgh Encyclopedia*, Carlyle seems to have been eager to undertake the review, perhaps because it gave him greater freedom to express his own views, but perhaps also because he had heard that Waugh paid well. As it turned out, Carlyle was somewhat disappointed when he received only "fifteen pounds, where there should have been five-and-twenty" (*Letters* 2:80).

Given that it was Carlyle's first attempt at writing a review, it is perhaps not surprising that the editor, Richard Poole, wanted to discuss changes with him. Carlyle conjectured that Poole thought it was too long, and when he received the proofs in late September, the novice reviewer acknowledged that the more experienced editor "has done some good by retrenching and less evil than I expected: he has only made *two* pieces of *sheer* nonsense in the whole paper" (*Letters* 1:385-96). The review appeared in the October number.

In 1827, Bryan Waller Procter (Barry Cornwall) provided him with an introduction to Francis Jeffrey at the *Edinburgh Review*, who, as discussed above, had reviewed his translation of *Wilhelm Meister* two years earlier. Because Carlyle's translations and biography of Schiller had established him as a leading exponent of contemporary German literature, Jeffrey commissioned him to write a review of Heinrich Doering's biography of Jean Paul Friedrich Richter (*Letters* 4:185 and n. 9). His next five reviews were also concerned with German literature, and with them, as he later wrote, he felt "launched upon" a career in "Literature" (*Reminiscences* 318).

While his expertise in German literature provided him with many review commissions, he was eager to survey a broader range of literature. In October 1827, he conjectured that his next article for the *Edinburgh* would be on Tasso (*Letters* 4:263, 270). This project came to nothing, but in June 1828, Jeffrey commissioned him to write a review of John Gibson Lockhart's *Life of Robert Burns*. By this time he had promised two articles for the *Foreign Review* ("Goethe" and "The Life of Heyne") and so did not begin "Burns" until August. On August 25, he reported that he was "very busy, and third part done, with a 'fair full and free'

Essay on *Burns*," which he finished in September (*Letters* 4:399, 407).

Now brimming with self-confidence and no longer the acquiescent novice who reviewed Joanna Baillie six years earlier, he insisted privately that he would only "pretend reviewing" Lockhart's biography, as he intended to use his essay as a means of delineating his own views on Burns (*Letters* 4:383). Not surprisingly, then, he found himself for the first time in direct conflict with an editor, commenting, when he received the proofs in early October:

Jeffrey had clipt the first portion of it all into shreds (partly by my permission), simple [sic] because it was too long. My first feeling was of indignation, and to demand the whole back again, that it might lie in my drawer and worm-eat, rather than come before the world in that horrid souterkin shape. . . . However, I determined to *do nothing for three days*; and now by replacing and readjusting many parts of the first sixteen pages . . . I have once more put the thing into a kind of publishable state; and mean to send it back, with a private persuasion that probably I shall not soon write another for that quarter. Nevertheless, I will keep friends with the man; for he really has extraordinary worth, and likes me, at least heartily wishes me well. (*Letters* 4:413-14)

Although Carlyle suggests that Jeffrey made cuts merely to shorten the essay, another reference to the conflict suggests that, like others to follow, he also wanted Carlyle to tone down the "Mysticism" that often baffled his readers (*Letters* 5:6). That the episode still rankled two years later is apparent from his warning to Macvey Napier, Jeffrey's successor: "Your Predecessor had some difficulty with me in adjusting the respective prerogatives of Author and Editor: for tho' not, as I hope, insensible to fair reason, I used sometimes to rebel against what I reckoned mere authority; and this partly perhaps as a matter of literary conscience; being wont to write nothing without studying it if possible to the bottom, and writing always with an almost painful feeling of scrupulosity, that light Editorial hacking and hewing to right and left was in general nowise to my mind" (*Letters* 5:195-96). Ten years later he was still complaining about the "Editorial blotches" that were "common in Jeffrey's time in the *Edinr Review*" (*Letters* 10:229).

Nonetheless, Carlyle managed to maintain cordial relations with Jeffrey, with whom he and his wife, Jane Welsh Carlyle, became fairly close (*Letters*

4:424). His move away from the *Edinburgh Review* was prompted in large part because Jeffrey gave up the editorship in the middle of 1829, and Carlyle felt uncertain how the new editor, Macvey Napier, would receive his work. At first it seemed that Napier was eager to retain Carlyle as one of his reviewers, writing in November of 1830 that he would welcome articles from Carlyle. Carlyle soon thereafter resumed his contributions to the *Review*, but, as it turned out, he would contribute only three more essays, all published in 1831-1832 (*Letters* 5:196).

In the meantime, Carlyle had developed a good relationship with William Fraser and the *Foreign Review*. Having already made the valuable introduction to Jeffrey, Proctor also introduced Carlyle to Fraser, and in 1828 Carlyle began contributing essays to the *Foreign Review* at an even faster pace than for the *Edinburgh* (*Letters* 4:290). Most of these were reviews of German literature, but in November 1828 he reported plans to write on the memoirs of Voltaire, which had been published in 1826 (*Letters* 4:422). He was working on this review by early March and seems to have finished by the end of the month (*Letters* 5:9, 15-16) for it appeared in the April number.

In the spring or summer 1831, he became eager to review John Wilson Croker's new edition of James Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (see *Letters* 5:245). He proposed reviewing it for the *Edinburgh*, but Napier had already promised it to the much better established Macaulay (*Letters* 5:310n1, 311), so Carlyle approached James Fraser, in whose *Fraser's Magazine* he had begun publishing in early 1830 (*Letters* 5:419). At this time, the *Foreign Review* was failing, and William Fraser (no relation to James) suggested that two essays that had been scheduled for publication there be transferred to *Fraser's Magazine*. Because *Fraser's* was just getting off the ground, resulting in delays and difficulties, Carlyle approached James Fraser with some diffidence, all the more because he felt that "*Fraser's Magazine* gives the most scurvy remuneration of any Periodical extant, and shall have no more stuff of mine at that rate, barring worse fortune than I have yet seen" (*Letters* 5:215). However, when that December Carlyle inquired about delays in publishing "Schiller," Fraser conciliated him by commissioning a review of Boswell and promising fifteen guineas a sheet, a sum close to the standard payment at Jeffrey's *Edinburgh Review* (*Letters* 6:72, 79, 92). In early January 1832 Carlyle was still reading the *Life* (*Letters* 6:85), but by January 21 he had begun writing an introductory piece that would eventually be published separately as "Biography" (*Two Note Books* 245-46). He originally hoped to have both parts done by mid-February (*Letters* 6:96) but did not finish until about March 8 (*Letters* 6:130; *Two Note Books* 252). When he wrote on March 5 to settle the terms for the articles, he insisted that Fraser take it as is or allow him to offer it

to another editor (*Letters* 6:124, 125, 137–38). In the end, there was some confusion about the rate of pay—Carlyle regarded Fraser’s promise of fifteen guineas a sheet as equivalent to the one pound per page of the *Foreign Review*—and they had to negotiate the difference (*Letters* 6:137–38 and n. 1). They finally came to terms on March 17, two days after Carlyle submitted the manuscript (*Two Note Books* 252, 255).

From the beginning he was uncertain whether his review would suit Fraser, whose *Magazine* he compared to a “dog’s-meat cart” (*Letters* 6:85; see *Two Note Books* 255). Perhaps for this reason, Carlyle sought to try a new “more *currente calamo* [extempore] style of writing” that he thought “more suitable” for “magazines and the like” (*Two Note Books* 230; see 246). After the review appeared, he somewhat diffidently reported that he had heard from “the Fraser’s Magazine people” that his “Paper on *Johnson* [was] reckoned by some (unhappily very simple persons) to be ‘singularly excellent,’” and he was clearly pleased with the response of John Stuart Mill, whose “approval,” he reported, “gratified” him “more than a Stoic philosopher should be willing to confess” (*Letters* 6:169, 174).

At the end of that year (December 23, 1831), Carlyle recorded that he had been reading the poems of Ebenezer Elliott, a self-taught iron worker and manufacturer, who became known as the “Corn Law Rhymer” after his most famous volume, *Corn Law Rhymes* (1831), which had been receiving some attention in the literary reviews (*Two Note Books* 230).⁴ He soon began thinking about a review of the Rhymer (*Two Note Books* 233), and on February 6, 1832, wrote to Napier:

I write at present mainly to ask you about some Poetical Pieces, entitled *Corn-Law Rhymes*, the *Village Patriarch*, &c; and whether a short notice of them would be acceptable for your next Number. The Author appears to be a middle-aged Mechanic, at least Poor Man, of Sheffield or the neighbourhood; a Radical, yet not without devoutness; passionate, affectionate, thoroughly in earnest. His *Rhymes* have more of sincerity, and genuine natural fire than anything that has come in my way of late years: both on himself and his writings, and their

⁴ It is likely that Carlyle encountered Elliott’s writings in the *New Monthly Magazine*. Soon after he became editor of the *Magazine*, in November 1831, Edward Bulwer-Lytton indicated his desire to have contributions from Carlyle, and it is possible that he suggested Elliott as a topic. In any case, Carlyle began reading the *Magazine* soon thereafter (*Letters* 6:71; see 85) and likely would have seen Bulwer-Lytton’s notice on Elliott’s poetry in the January 1831 issue (31:289–95). Carlyle could also have seen the review of Elliott published in the June 11, 1831 issue of the *Athenaeum* (189:369–71).

social and moral purport, there were several things to be said. I would also willingly do the unknown man a kindness, or rather a piece of justice; for he is, what so few are, a *man* and no *Clotheshorse*.— If you approve of this little project, perhaps Mr Rees can favour me with a loan of the Volumes; there are three, I think, and very thin ones: at all events, have the goodness to let me hear from you. (*Letters* 6:116)

Napier quickly accepted Carlyle's proposal, stipulating only that an article on "so obscure a Rhymer" should not be too long (*Letters* 6:130n5). Carlyle failed to meet the mid-March deadline for the April issue, then Goethe died, on March 22, and his "Death of Goethe" took priority (*Letters* 6:144, 145-46). As it turned out, he did not finish until "about the 4th of May" and did not manage to submit the manuscript until the end of that month (*Two Note Books* 267; *Letters* 6:161, 166). In the message accompanying the proofs, Napier apparently asked for some cuts to fit the article into the current number. While insisting that he could "find no passage in this Article which could be cut out without *great loss of blood*," Carlyle did suggest cuts in the extracts of Elliott's poetry (*Letters* 6:176). When, in July, the article appeared intact, he exclaimed, "There is Life in Macvey!" (*Letters* 6:213; see 216). He earned about £25 for the essay.⁵

Carlyle seems to have been pleased to appear in the guise of a "radical," writing to Mill: "I am astonished to find on reading the thing over that it is 'speculative-radical' to an almost frightful degree; and glances, in a poisonous manner, at Whiggism itself" (*Letters* 6:154). Carlyle probably refers not to working-class radicalism but to the philosophic radicalism of James and John Stuart Mill and their mentor Jeremy Bentham. While Carlyle would never fully align himself with the Benthamite radicals and in his later writings would repeatedly attack the principle of *laissez-faire* that was gospel for them, in his opposition to the Corn Laws—which contravened the principle of free trade—he was *de facto* joining with them. In addition to joining the radicals in support of repeal, he may also have felt, as a passage in the essay suggests (see 204.32-33 and note), that he was joining the radicals in their disappointment at the government's failure to pass the Reform Bill, which had twice been rejected by the House of Lords earlier in 1831. A third version was passed in December while he was thinking about writing this review, and it did not receive final approval until

⁵ On August 17, 1832, he wrote that Napier owed him sixty pounds for "Characteristics" and "Corn-Law Rhymes," "some of it for nine or ten months" (*Letters* 6:247). The estimate of the payment is based on the proportion of pages in each article.

May 1832, just as he was completing it. Even so, John Ramsey MacCulloch, who wrote on economic topics and had in 1826 published an essay in the *Edinburgh* arguing for repeal of the Corn Laws, was mystified as to why Napier had published “Corn-Law Rhymes” and suggested he cease publishing Carlyle’s reviews (Shattock 39–40). It was, in fact, Carlyle’s final contribution to the *Edinburgh*.

In January 1832, around the time that Carlyle was beginning his essay on Elliott, John George Cochrane, for whose *Foreign Quarterly Review* he was writing an essay on Goethe’s collected works, asked him to “do something on *Diderot*,” more particularly to review Diderot’s works together with his memoirs, the latter having appeared in Paris the previous year (*Letters* 6:85–86). In July 1830, Cochrane had invited Carlyle to write for the *Foreign Quarterly*, which about this time absorbed its rival, the failing *Foreign Review*, but he did not make use of this invitation until a year later, when he contributed a portion of his abandoned history of German literature (*Letters* 5:122–23). In March he did some research on Diderot at the British Museum (*Two Note Books* 253) but seemed in no hurry to begin the essay, for he had first to read—“at the rate of one a-day”—some two dozen volumes of the philosophe’s works (*Letters* 6: 213; see 195, 206). He began this “tedious” project sometime in August, but by August 31, he had finished only eight volumes—if he was indeed reading one a day he must have begun about August 23—and expected to be working on the project until the end of September (*Letters* 6:216). The writing, together with the reading, took even longer, for he did not finish the manuscript until mid-October and did not send it to Cochrane until mid-November (*Letters* 6:240, 247, 258; see 243n2, 271). On January 24, Cochrane wrote to Carlyle asking him to “leave out [his] introductory reflections altogether” as they did not pertain directly to Diderot and so reduce the essay by about seven pages to forty-eight or forty-nine pages. For once Carlyle did not protest, tersely remarking to his brother only that he meant to “comply” (*Letters* 6:322 and n. 33). These changes likely account for the fact that publication was delayed from the March to the April number. He was paid about fifty pounds, calculated at the rate of £1 per page for the fifty pages (6:137–38).

While reviewing had been for several years his primary means of financial support, Carlyle increasingly sought to explore other forms of literary publication. Not only was a reviewer more or less subordinate to the author reviewed, but Carlyle also shared with many of his contemporaries the conviction that periodical reviewing was inferior to, and less serious than, the kinds of writing reviewed. For Carlyle, there was the additional problem that income from re-

views was unpredictable. A Macaulay could count on appearing in nearly every issue of the *Edinburgh*, but this was never the case for Carlyle. For a brief period in the late 1820s, Jeffrey regularly employed him for the *Edinburgh* and William Fraser for the *Foreign Review*, but they did not provide steady employment. The unreliability of his income from reviewing became clear when Jeffrey resigned his editorship in 1829 and the *Foreign Review* went broke in 1832. While James Fraser of *Fraser's Magazine* stepped in to replace Jeffrey and William Fraser (even taking articles written for the defunct *Foreign Review*), Carlyle clearly considered it a step down from the *Edinburgh*, not only because it was less prestigious but, just as important, because it did not pay as well.

In mid-1834, about a year after the appearance of "Diderot," Carlyle became occupied with writing *The French Revolution*, and his major articles during the next several years were on related historical topics. Still in need of income after the appearance of his history in 1837, he briefly returned to writing for periodicals. In 1834, while preparing to launch the *London Review* as a vehicle for the philosophic radicals, John Stuart Mill had indicated to Carlyle that he would welcome contributions from him, and Carlyle seems to have been eager to provide them (*Letters* 7:70-71 and n. 6). He followed with interest the attempts to get the review off the ground, and early in 1835 as the first issue was being prepared, he thought he might have the opportunity to become its editor, especially as Mill's employment at India House prevented him from officially occupying that post (*Letters* 8:51). Although Mill admired Carlyle, however, he and the others involved in launching the review were too committed to Benthamite principles to countenance Carlyle as editor, and so this prospect came to naught. Not surprisingly, given its perspective, Carlyle judged the articles in the first issue of Mill's new periodical "barren . . . as Saha[ra]," and he thereafter insisted on its aridity (*Letters* 8:104). Yet he remained interested in it not only, as he sometimes suggested, because it offered him the opportunity for much-needed income, but also because it approached contemporary issues with a seriousness missing in many of its competitors. In early 1835, after the first four issues had been published, the *London Review* merged with the older *Westminster Review* (in which Carlyle had published "The Nibelungen Lied" [1831]) to form the *London and Westminster Review*. The establishment of this new venue, together with the fact that his father, James, had died, prompted Mill to make the review more expansive than its predecessor, and he again encouraged Carlyle to contribute, with the result that two of his essays on the French Revolution era appeared there (*Letters* 8:307; see "*Westminster Review*,"

Wellesley Index). In June, the editors asked him to review Hannah More, but other obligations prevented him from doing so (*Letters* 8:124n1, 150).

In September 1837, Mill invited Carlyle to review John Gibson Lockhart's *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott* (*Letters* 9:311). In early October, Carlyle received six of the seven volumes, which he finished reading by the end of the month (*Letters* 9:327, 337, 350). Before writing the review, however, Carlyle decided to try to negotiate terms that would give him the steady income he had long desired (a steady income from his books was still a couple of years in the future). In a letter to Mill that anticipates his discussion of "permanence" of employment in *Past and Present* (4.5.171-76), he wrote:

Doubtless I have often told you how the Editorial world found it convenient to deal with me some five or six years ago. Today, work, work in breathless superfluity; tomorrow, whistled down the wind, left to go and die if you like, you know not for what! It is one of the damnablest positions a man can find himself in. After some reflexion, I have resolved not to get into it again. I think I either ought to make some engagement of some permanence, we will say for a year; or not to intermeddle with the Periodical concern farther at all.

The thing I want to ask you therefore is, contrasting honestly in your mind my capabilities with the wants of your Enterprise, What is the utmost amount of employment (I mean money-amount, at so much per page, or otherwise reckoned on what principle you liked) your Review could afford me, say from this December 1837 till the same date of 1838? That is the first of all questions. If (which is very likely) you can promise *nothing*, this Article only, and the rest on peradventure,—then my decision must be also, at least till there come something pressing me for utterance thro' this vehicle more than another, nothing. . . .

If, on the other hand, you answer Something; and your *maximum* of wages will meet my *minimum* of necessities, then I will joyfully say *Done*, and set myself forthwith to perform, to see on what terms performance may be possible, may be useful and pleasant for all of us. (*Letters* 9:337-38; see 342-43)

Mill met with Carlyle and explained that the finances of the *Review* made it impossible to offer such a long-term contract but that he would be happy

to accept an article every other issue. Carlyle agreed to write the Scott review and possibly others (including one on Davy Crockett!), but as it turned out, he made only one further contribution (“Varnhagen von Ense’s Memoirs”) (*Letters* 9:364; see 350 and n. 1). Once he committed himself to the essay on Scott, he set to work almost immediately, finishing it on December 6 (*Letters* 9:350–51, 357; see 364). He expected to be paid about fifty pounds (£1 per page [*Letters* 9:354]) but received only forty-five (*Letters* 10:23n4, 41). He recorded in his journal that “people seem to speak well of” the article, an especially satisfying result considering the audience of the review (*Letters* 10:23n4; see 41).

From that time forward, Carlyle only produced periodical articles under special circumstances, either in order to help out an editor (in which case he sometimes offered something he already had to hand) or because he had a special desire to write about a topic. Such an occasion arose when, in September 1840, Heinrich Heintze sent Carlyle a copy of his new German translation of Burns’s poetry. While Carlyle did not know Heintze, his admiration for Burns and, presumably, his appreciation of Heintze’s translation, prompted him to write to John Forster, editor of the *Examiner*, asking whether he knew “any good reader of German that would review it” (*Letters* 12:261; see 257). We do not have Forster’s reply, but the upshot was that Carlyle himself wrote the brief review, which appeared in the September 27 issue of the *Examiner*.

If Carlyle was willing to help out a German translator he did not even know, he was more than happy to provide an introductory appreciation for the English edition of Ralph Waldo Emerson’s first volume of essays. He had known Emerson since the American had sought him out during his 1833 visit to Great Britain. In the following years, Emerson acted more or less as Carlyle’s literary agent in America. The first edition of the *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays* (1838–1839), in which seven of the ten essays in this volume were first collected in book form, was published in Boston under Emerson’s direction, as was the first book edition of *Sartor Resartus*, in 1836. When, in 1841, Emerson published his first book, *Essays: First Series*, Carlyle reciprocated by arranging with his own publisher, James Fraser, for the publication of the first English edition (*Letters* 13:163). On May 8, Carlyle wrote to Emerson that he had been reading his book “all yesterday” and praising him as the “voice of one crying [in] the desert” (*Letters* 13:128). He made no mention of seeking to get the book published, but he must have set to work soon thereafter, for on June 21 he was working on his preface, and four days later he wrote to Emerson about the arrangements he had made (*Letters* 13:159, 163). With this preface, Carlyle had published his last commentary on a literary text. In a writing career that would extend into the 1870s, he would now devote himself to history and social commentary