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CARLYLE, FASCISM, AND *FREDERICK*: FROM VICTORIAN PROPHET TO
FASCIST IDEOLOGUE

by

Jonathan Claymore McCollum

A thesis submitted to the faculty of

Brigham Young University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of History

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

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This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Jonathan Claymore McCollum in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

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ABSTRACT

CARLYLE, FASCISM, AND *FREDERICK*: FROM VICTORIAN PROPHET TO FASCIST IDEOLOGUE

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Master of Arts

The Victorian Author Thomas Carlyle was in his day a meteoric voice but his popularity and reputation declined significantly due in part to his link to fascism. In the politically polarized era of the Second World War, academics and propagandists dubbed him a fascist or Nazi in both defamation and approval. Fascist scholars pressed Carlyle into service as a progenitor and prophet of their respective totalitarian regimes. Adolf Hitler, in his final days, assuaged his fears of his imminent fall with readings from Carlyle's *History of Frederick the Great*. This fascist connection to the once esteemed "Sage of Chelsea" marks the apogee of his defamation. The following thesis sets Carlyle's decline in its historical context and demonstrates the presentist view scholars persistently take as they approach their subject. It further compares and contrasts the various fascist regimes, their distinct tenets, and their variegated ideologies that become evident in their interpretation and mobilization of the deceased Victorian's works.

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INTRODUCTION

The memory of Thomas Carlyle, Victorian essayist, polemicist, and most especially historian, has long persisted with the stigma of its relation to fascism. To label Carlyle a fascist is, of course, anachronistic and a-historical. His death in 1881 absolves him of any direct complicity with the totalitarian movements of the twentieth century. Yet, his validity as an author and a historian, not to mention perceptions of his influence, has been consumed in a vortex of historical events that impelled scholars to denigrate him as a prophet of fascism.

The following study is primarily a historiographical inquiry that attempts to locate and trace Carlyle's flagging reputation in the polarized political atmosphere of the First and Second World Wars and their aftermath. It demonstrates how both fascist and anti-fascist academics dubbed Carlyle, most often through dubious scholarship, a progenitor of fascism. I will not only throw into sharp relief the opposing conceptions that led some to champion Carlyle and others to abhor him, but employ German, Spanish, and Italian interpretations of Carlyle to likewise underscore the divergence of various fascist regimes and their distinct ideological underpinnings.

Finally, the study will redress the loose connections and misinterpretations that beset the varied appraisals of Carlyle's fascist tendencies and exemplify how often his subject matter caused the most controversy. His Hero-worship provided fodder for Western scholars to accentuate his fascist politics and validated the Leader Cult of Italy and Germany. His *History of Frederick the Great* substantiated notions of his alleged

Prussian or Nazi leanings and granted the leaders of both the Second and Third Reich a heroic biography of a mythic national figure.

I.

Carlyle's Drift into the Abyss: Western Perceptions of Carlyle's "Fascism"

"In future years, in future centuries, strangers will come from distant lands—from America, from Australia, from New Zealand from every isle or continent where Carlyle was born, to see the green turf under which his dust is lying. Scotland will have raised a monument over his grave; but no monument is needed for one, who has made an eternal memorial for himself in the hearts of all to whom truth is the dearest of possessions." J. A. Froude, 1884.

"What of his [Carlyle's] contribution to history? I have said that he put the clock back. The great achievement of the eighteenth century historians had been to bring the explanation of history down to earth. Carlyle and his German contemporaries, including Marx, with whom he has much in common, put it firmly into the stratosphere. Not into the will of a Judeo-Christian God, but into a world-plan, a Hegelian dialectic, a metaphysical providence. This is not incompatible with technical advance. Ranke's smug concept of *Weltgeschichte* animated him in introducing new techniques of documentary study; the Hegelians gave great impulse to intellectual, the Marxists to economic and social history. But Carlyle's revolt against the eighteenth century was accompanied by no technical advance as a historian. Technically, as intellectually, it is a regression; which is no doubt why, as a historian he left so few disciples." Hugh Trevor-Roper, 1981.

In an article in 1976, G. B. Tennyson asked how Carlyle's reputation had changed over the years. He recounted the story of a suffragette who had attacked a portrait of Carlyle in the National Gallery, presumably because of his notorious opposition to parliamentary politics. Along similar lines, Tennyson related a similar experience of his. He had "read in a book published in 1969 that only an occasional campus Carlylean still seeks to exonerate Carlyle of the darker charges hinting at Naziism that are leveled against him, these being simply proven facts."¹ Tennyson concluded that "so, like the suffragette, we are still slashing Carlyle from forehead to eye on certain subjects."²

The work to which Tennyson referred was John Gross's *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters*. Gross claimed that had Carlyle been so fortunate as to die at fifty—before he wrote what he termed the "diatribes" of his later years, he would have been

¹ G. B. Tennyson, "Carlyle Today" in *Carlyle: Past and Present*, ed. K. J. Fielding and Rodger L. Tarr (London: Vision Press, 1976), 40.

² *Ibid.*, 40.

brought to rest with a near spotless reputation.³ But his later works, so Gross pointed out, “bring the rest of his work into disrepute,” especially “after Hitler.”⁴ Gross thereafter underscored Carlyle’s evident anti-semitism and his more unsavory tracts such as his 1853 essay “Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question.” These, he reckoned, did not lead directly to fascism per se but to the *trahison des clercs*, “the long procession of artists and intellectuals whose hatred of the modern world has led them to flirt with brutally authoritarian regimes or to clutch at obscurantist dogma.”⁵ Gross did not properly define “obscurantist dogma” but his allusion to authoritarian regimes appears clear enough. Gross is right. This association between Carlyle’s works and fascist or Nazi doctrine stands out as one of the greatest blemishes on his memory and is one of the contributing factors that led to the decline of his once prominent voice.

That is not to suggest that solely Carlyle’s purported fascist tendencies resulted in the waning of his posthumous popularity. There are, of course, innumerable factors that have served to detract from his acclaim. G. M. Trevelyan noted when introducing his edited anthology of Carlyle’s works that “in the modern flat little accommodation can be

³ John Gross, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters: Aspects of English Literary Life since 1800* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), 30.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 31. With the phrase *trahison des clercs*, Gross was recalling the work of the eminent twentieth-century French philosopher Julien Benda. See: Julien Benda, *La Trahison des Clercs* (Paris: Grasset, 1927). Benda’s work in English was entitled *The Betrayal of the Intellectuals* but the title would be better rendered “the Treason of the Clerks.” Benda employed the word *clerc* in its medieval sense which had formerly been used to define any person whose principal occupation was the pursuit of knowledge. Benda maintained that intellectuals had betrayed the cause of disinterested learning by mobilizing themselves as a mere consortium of political hacks. Benda most vehemently criticized men such as the French intellectual Charles Maurras, whose *Action Française* is sometimes considered the first fascist movement. Yet Benda, who criticized prominent English writers such as Rudyard Kipling, did not direct any accusations towards Carlyle.

found for bulky classical authors.”⁶ Arthur and Vonna Adrian agreed that what the reading public increasingly demands is “ease and brevity” which must unavoidably preclude the reading of Carlyle’s more lengthy works.⁷ Yet they added that the public also insists on “what it is pleased to term relevance,” and Carlyle, who is often perceived as a staunch advocate of the autocrat hero and an opponent of ballot boxes, seems less able to appeal to a democratic society.⁸ William Ferguson noted that Carlyle’s reputation as a historian was already on the wane before his death when a new breed of historian, the scientific historian, appeared on the scene and began to mock the so-called literary amateurs such as Carlyle.⁹ This movement gained status as historians began to triumph the rigid practices of record scholarship introduced by, most notably, Leopold von Ranke. But to all these reasons I would like to add the severe misfortune his regard suffered during and after the two world wars—that, by being dubbed a devotee of the Germans and adherent of their *Kultur*, Carlyle has slipped from tremendous fame.

Carlyle’s fame and rapport in his own time cannot be disputed. Both Charles Dickens and Friedrich Engels applauded his social endeavors and extolled his work *Past and Present*.¹⁰ Ralph Waldo Emerson maintained a close relationship with the author and was instrumental in securing the publication of *Sartor Resartus* in America which sold

⁶ G. M. Trevelyan ed., *Carlyle, an Anthology* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1953), 1.

⁷ Arthur A. and Vonna H. Adrian, “*Frederick the Great*” in *Carlyle: Past and Present*, ed. K. J. Fielding and Rodger L. Tarr (London: Vision Press, 1976), 196.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 196.

⁹ William Ferguson, *Carlyle as Historian* (Edinburgh: The Carlyle Society, 1966), 3-4.

¹⁰ Fred Kaplan, *Thomas Carlyle: A Biography* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1983), 329. Carlyle’s 1843 work *Past and Present*, a social commentary on the state of affairs in Victorian England, attracted the praise of both Engels and Dickens. Dickens would later dedicate his novel *Hard Times*.

150 copies before the date of its publication and attracted great interest in Carlyle across the Atlantic.¹¹ His *Sartor* would later become scripture for the American Transcendentalists and attracted admirers like Henry David Thoreau.¹² And George Eliot declared that even if all Carlyle's books were burnt, "it would be only like cutting down an oak after its acorns have sown a forest. For there is hardly a superior or active mind of this generation that has not been modified by Carlyle's writings; there has hardly been an English book written for the last ten or twelve years that would not have been different if Carlyle had not lived."¹³ Yet his reach did not merely extend to intellectuals and fellow authors. His final history, *Frederick the Great*, earned him £3,000 shortly after its publication, an impressive sum and more lucrative than any of his previous works.¹⁴ An 1870 six pence publication of *Sartor Resartus* sold over seventy thousand copies. Carlyle stands above all other writers of his time as the meteoric voice of the Victorian era.

As great as his authority was in his own day, nonetheless, his voice has faded to near obscurity, at least outside of graduate schools. What Gross had labeled "professional campus Carlyleans" seems to be an increasingly esoteric group. For, although there remains a flourishing scholarly fascination for the Victorian prophet, this

¹¹ Emery Neff, *Carlyle* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1932), 165. By 1836, *Sartor Resartus* was on book shelves in America due in part to Emerson's efforts.

¹² Sharon L. Gravett, "Carlyle's Demanding Companion: Henry David Thoreau," *Carlyle Studies Annual* 15 (1995): 21-31. Gravett contends that Carlyle may have exerted a greater influence over Thoreau's later career once he began to distance himself from his mentor Emerson.

¹³ George Eliot, *The Writings of George Eliot: Essays and Uncollected Papers* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1909), 311.

¹⁴ Ian Campbell, *Thomas Carlyle* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1974), 128.

interest does not reach most students.¹⁵ Whereas Dickens, Eliot, and even Thackeray remain household names in the United States, Carlyle is nearly unheard of.

Contributing to this near obsolescence are the two world wars. For all those that had decried Carlyle as an opponent of democratic government or for his support of the Prussian cause at the expense of France the Great War verified the perfidy of Carlyle's "Prussianism."¹⁶ Carlyle's connection to German *Kultur* and most especially his *History of Frederick the Great* and his defense of the Prussian cause in the Franco-Prussian War in his letter to the *Times* of November 11, 1870 gave plenty of fuel to his critics. Yet, just as quickly as the pervading anti-German sentiment of the period subsumed Carlyle's name into a furry of vitriolic tracts, diatribes of Carlyle's Prussianism decreased markedly after the First World War; but worse was still to come.

In the 1930's, with the apparent failure of democracy throughout Europe and the rise of Fascism and Nazism, Carlyle's criticism of liberal government and his advocacy of autocratic rule became prophetic for some, repugnant for others. In a lecture in 1940, H. J. C. Grierson noted that "some of his prophecies have come true."¹⁷ Not only Germany and Italy had rejected democracy, but it seemed to be a growing trend with other states emulating the perceived successes of Mussolini and Hitler in European power politics. The outcome in those dark days of 1940 looked very bleak indeed for the

¹⁵ For instance, recently in a lecture with thirty history undergraduates I asked the class who was familiar with Thomas Carlyle; only two students were acquainted with the author—one had read a short selection of his writings in an English class, the other had heard his name only in passing. Likewise, I enrolled in a Victorian literature graduate seminar in 2005 and was disappointed to find not one of Carlyle's works on the syllabus.

¹⁶ Cf.: Stuart F. Sherman, "Carlyle and Kaiser Worship," *The Nation*, 14 September 1918, 286-289. Sherman in an incredible bout of irony recommended the burning of all of Carlyle's works.

¹⁷ Herbert J. C. Grierson, *Thomas Carlyle* (Pennsylvania: Forcroft Press, 1969), 305.

champions of liberal democracy. In 1930, Grierson had given a lecture entitled *Carlyle and the Hero*, but published the work three years later, after Hitler had been appointed Chancellor of Germany, as *Carlyle and Hitler* noting that “the recent happenings in Germany illustrate the conditions which lead up to, or at least make possible, the emergence of the Hero as Carlyle chiefly thought of him.”¹⁸ The rise of strong authoritarian regimes emerging as a pervasive current throughout the interwar period induced Grierson, in an attempt to profit from the sensationalism of these events, to retitle his work, and, in all truth, he only mentioned Hitler once in the lecture.¹⁹

Along similar lines, Joseph Ellis Baker of Northwestern University published a pithy article entitled “Carlyle Rules the Reich” in which he proclaimed Carlyle to be “one of the major prophets of the twentieth century because he was hopelessly out of harmony with the nineteenth.”²⁰ Baker introduced Carlyle and Hitler’s ideals as nearly identical, and, as such, Carlyle could serve as an interpreter for Hitler’s “strange” philosophy.²¹ Baker admitted that Hitler’s virulent anti-semitism eclipses that of Carlyle’s but was quick to mention that Carlyle did not shy away from expressing an occasional anti-Jewish remark. All in all, Baker’s article portrays both Carlyle and Hitler in a remarkably positive light. The Victorian historian and the newly appointed Reichskanzler’s ideas appear especially congruent when it comes to labor. Downplaying the significance of anti-semitism in Hitler’s ideology, Baker accentuated the paramount position of work in

¹⁸ H. J. C. Grierson, *Carlyle and Hitler* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), 5.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 59.

²⁰ Joseph Ellis Baker, “Carlyle Rules the Reich,” *The Saturday Review of Literature*, 25 November 1933, 291.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 291.

both Carlyle and Hitler's worldview. "These," he maintains, "are not superficial parallels, since they lay at the very foundation for the doctrines of both Carlyle and Hitler."²² In the end, the article comes forth as an apologia for Hitler's dogma employing Carlyle as a mediator and interpreter for the not-so-German world.

Likewise, Ernest Seillière perceived the relevance of Carlyle to contemporary political philosophy publishing a volume entitled *Un Précurseur du National-Socialisme: l'Actualité de Carlyle* in 1939.²³ Carlyle, he believed, stood between two competing ideologies, which he termed "le Socialisme démagogique" and "le Socialisme national et racial."²⁴ *Le Socialisme démagogique*, he clarified, emerged from French Romanticism, and, not surprisingly, its antithesis *le Socialisme national et racial* proceeded from German Romanticism. These two dialectical ideologies, he hoped, would eventually "consentissent à converger vers un Socialisme *rationnel*" (agree to converge towards a rational socialism)—a higher form of socialism which would integrate reason into the humanistic goals of socialism. Carlyle, he pointed out, often approached this synthesis of reason and humanity only to succumb to his philoteutonic sentiments. Seillière determined that Carlyle reached the apogee of Prussianism with his notorious 1870 letter to *The Times*. "La longue lettre théorique qu'il adressa le 11 novembre au *Times* ... est une sorte de résumé de la philosophie allemande, et surtout prussienne, de l'histoire (philosophie dictée par le Naturisme racial)" (The long theoretical letter that he addressed on November 11 to the *Times* ... is a summary of the German, and above all Prussian,

²² Ibid., 291.

²³ Ernest Seillière, *Un Précurseur du National-Socialisme: l'Actualité de Carlyle* (Paris: Éditions de la Nouvelle Revue Critique, 1939).

²⁴ Ibid., 7.

philosophy of history (a dictated philosophy for racial naturalism)).²⁵ Carlyle, by the end of his life, thus became in essence, at least from Seillière's perspective, a sort of proto-Nazi. Having imbibed German romantic thought, he vacillated between the two intellectual currents of his day but proved incapable of incorporating "la Raison" into his worldview and, in his old age, became a putative champion of "romantisme racial germano-prussien."²⁶

Alan Carey Taylor recognized the contemporary relevance of Carlyle's works in his 1937 dissertation *Carlyle et la pensée latine*.²⁷ Whereas in France Taylor noted a steady decline in his popularity during the interwar period, the advent of authoritarian governments elsewhere created a favorable ambience for the penetration of Carlyle's ideas.²⁸ Emery Neff had already pointed out these surges of interest in Fascist Italy and the then politically polarized Weimar Republic in 1932.²⁹ Taylor concluded that Carlyle's reputation within Mussolini's Italy was such that he might soon be considered a prophet of the regime if the Anglophobia stirred up by the Abyssinian War did not undermine his esteem amongst his newly acquired admirers.³⁰ Taylor underscores the correspondence of Carlyle's Hero-worship to the Fascist and Nazi cult of the leader recalling Baker's article to evince this affinity. Yet despite their resemblance, Taylor does not consider Carlyle as an influential factor in the genesis of fascist ideology.

²⁵ Ibid., 210.

²⁶ Ibid., 211, 214.

²⁷ Taylor conducted his graduate studies at the University of Paris.

²⁸ Alan Carey Taylor, *Carlyle et la pensée latine* (Paris: Boivin & Cie, 1937), 377.

²⁹ Emery Neff, *Carlyle* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1932), 268-269.

³⁰ Taylor, 381.

Bien entendu, ces rapprochements ne tendent nullement à démontrer que l'influence directe de l'œuvre de Carlyle a joué un rôle dans la formation des idéologies des régimes fascistes. Il s'agit tout simplement de l'évolution et de la vulgarisation d'idées qu'un grand nombre d'auteurs répétaient depuis un siècle. Mais parmi ces précurseurs, aucun n'avait exprimé si nettement les principes qui devaient être adoptées par les chefs des mouvements fascistes.³¹

(These parallels do not tend in any way to demonstrate that a direct influence of Carlyle's works played a role in the formation of the ideology of fascist regimes. It is a matter of the evolution and vulgarization of the ideas that a great number of authors have repeated for over a century. But among these precursors, no other has expressed so clearly the principles that would be adopted by the leaders of fascist movements.)

So although Taylor does not locate Carlyle in the pedigree of fascist progenitors, he effectively labels Carlyle's thought fascist or, we could say, he identifies fascism as doctrinaire Carlyleanism.

Bertrand Russell, on the other hand, in a concise and cursory article entitled "The Ancestry of Fascism" identified Carlyle as a definite genealogical antecedent of Fascism but provides no evidence to corroborate his claim.³² On a more fanciful note, G. K. Chesterton, acclaimed Christian apologist and author of the Father Brown short stories, reacting to the rise of Nazism in 1930s Germany, sardonically wrote of his amazement "at the sudden reappearance of all that was bad and barbarous and stupid and ignorant in Carlyle, without a touch of what was really quaint and humourous in him."³³

Chesterton, Russell, and Taylor, although differing in approach, correlate in their

³¹ Ibid., 382.

³² Bertrand Russell, "The Ancestry of Fascism" in *In Praise of Idleness* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1935), 103.

³³ G. K. Chesterton, *The End of the Armistice* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1940), 66. This book was compiled and published in 1940 from Chesterton's various reactions to the rise of Hitler in Germany before his death in 1936. Chesterton had more than a passing interest in Carlyle and had even published a biography on the Victorian author. See: G.K. Chesterton, *Thomas Carlyle* (London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1902).

portrayal of Carlylean thought as a precursor to the development of fascist regimes in Europe.

Yet, what is most fascinating about these pre-war comparisons between the ascending totalitarianism in Europe and Carlyle's hero-worship is their general innocuous portrayal of Carlyle and his ideas. Carlyle, in many ways is conceived as a verifiable prophet of contemporary politics. Baker introduced Carlyle as an "international interpreter" for the Anglophonic world to explore the workings of these modern totalitarian movements and identifies fascism not as a reactionary movement but as a putative third path that departs from the capitalist communist dichotomy of political thought.³⁴ Mario Palmieri, a U.S. naval architect, acclaimed civil engineer, and author of a work on the theory of relativity praised by Einstein himself, asserted in his defense of fascist philosophy that Mussolini "is fulfilling all the words of Carlyle" and, adopting the language of Carlyle's Hero-worship, labeled him a "new type of Hero, the Hero of the times, the Hero as Leader."³⁵ Taylor underscored his *au courant* significance with the following statement:

Les ressemblances que nous venons de relever entre les idées de Carlyle et les théories dominantes des deux grands régimes autoritaires [Germany and Italy], qui servent en quelque sorte de modèle aux autres Etats totalitaires, montrent que les doctrines politiques que le grand écrivain anglais essaya en vain d'imposer à son pays et à sa génération, sont en train de se voir adoptées dans un grand nombre de pays à l'heure actuelle.³⁶

(The resemblances that we have just revealed between Carlyle's ideas and the dominant theories of the two great authoritarian regimes [Italian and German],

³⁴ Baker, 291.

³⁵ Mario Palmieri, *The Philosophy of Fascism* (Chicago: The Dante Alighieri Society, 1936), 237-238.

³⁶ Taylor, 381.

which serve to some degree as models to other totalitarian states, demonstrate that the political doctrines that the great English writer attempted in vain to impose upon his country and generation, are currently about to be adopted in a great number of countries.)

Taylor reverberates Carlyle's position as prophet of the twentieth century but at the same time excludes him from any collusion with Mussolini and Hitler's regimes noting that Carlyle "aurait donc vraisemblablement vu avec beaucoup de méfiance l'arrivée au pouvoir de toute une pléiade de héros, et il aurait probablement trouvé que certains de ces nouveaux Napoléons n'étaient que des *Copper-Captains*, comme il appelait avec mépris Napoléon III" (would probably have viewed with suspicion the rise to power of a plethora of heroes and would probably have deemed a certain number of the new Napoleons as nothing more than *Copper-Captains*, as he, with scorn, called Napoleon III."³⁷ Grierson equally exculpated Carlyle of any conjectural postmortem support for the rise of totalitarianism across Europe reminding his audience that "what Carlyle would have thought of the happenings in Russia, Italy and Germany to-day is hard to say, for he was never quite unaffected by his humours and prejudices."³⁸ And even Seillière's more acerbic portrayal of Carlyle identifies his only error as his inability to generate a synthesis of the two predominating intellectual currents of his time which would have put him on the path towards a "socialisme *rationnel*."³⁹

These relatively temperate views of both Carlyle and the dictatorships of Hitler and Mussolini are not surprising considering that terms like totalitarianism and fascism were yet to be anathematized by the Second World War. As late as 1933, Winston

³⁷ Ibid., 383.

³⁸ Grierson, *Carlyle and Hitler*, 60.

³⁹ Seillière, 214.

Churchill was hailing Mussolini as the “greatest living legislator.”⁴⁰ Sigmund Freud sent the Duce a signed copy of one of his books with the inscription: “To Benito Mussolini, from an old man who greets in the Ruler the Hero of Culture.”⁴¹ Bernard Shaw even went so far as to exonerate Mussolini for the murder of Matteotti.⁴² Within Germany, Hitler’s allure was enough to attract such notable scholars as Martin Heidegger and Carl Schmitt, and, across the Atlantic, Henry Ford and Charles Lindbergh were among his admirers. English author Henry Williamson, after a visit to Germany in 1935, applauded National Socialism and Adolf Hitler for his transformation of Germany believing the more disparaging reports about the conditions under the Nazi government to be exaggerations.⁴³

These positive assessments of fascist governments to which Carlyle was attached predictably dissipated under the strains of European conflagration. Writing in 1942, Margaret Ball argued that “any theory of the state which seeks to justify the right of One or Few to rule the Many (no matter how benevolently), manifestly involves an assumption of the basic inequality of men.”⁴⁴ Carlyle’s ideology, of course, falls into this category and is therefore to be condemned. Ball established Carlyle, Treitschke, Nietzsche, Wagner, and Spengler as central agents in the formation of the fascist

⁴⁰ Piero Melograni, “The Cult of the Duce in Mussolini’s Italy,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 11:4 (Oct. 1976): 233.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 233.

⁴² Alastair Hamilton, *The Appeal of Fascism: A Study of Intellectuals and Fascism 1919-1945* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971), 271

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 266.

⁴⁴ Margaret Ball, “The Leadership Principle in National Socialism,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 3, no. 1 (Jan. 1942): 74.

leadership principle. In regards to Carlyle, she pointed out that “the leadership principle bears traces ... of the idea of the supreme importance of the Great Man, of the Hero, in history.”⁴⁵ “Carlyle,” she maintained, “exercised a considerable influence upon later German thought.”⁴⁶ Although she provided no evidence to make such assertions and even less to substantiate a causal link between Carlyle and National Socialism, Ball indicted Carlyle for his Hero-Worship ideology as an unequivocal originator of the fascist leadership cult.

Another scholar writing in the years of the war, Schapiro, like Ball, criticized Carlyle as the “Prophet of Fascism.”⁴⁷ He warned his readers that “every master must, in time, undergo re-evaluation. And a re-evaluation of a social philosopher can be made only in the present.”⁴⁸ His re-examination arraigns Carlyle as an insidious proto-fascist, “a prophet with a sinister message for our generation.”⁴⁹ Yet Schapiro failed to establish any tangible connection between Carlyle and Nazism aside from citing Neff’s account of the German and Fascist affinity for his work. Instead, he merely compared Carlyle’s political sentiments to fascist ideology emphasizing Carlyle’s “penchant for militarism” and his disdain for the common man.⁵⁰ He underscored Carlyle’s “anticipation of totalitarianism” and accounted for the writer’s premonitions of fascism due to his

⁴⁵ Ibid., 76.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 76.

⁴⁷ J. Salwyn Schapiro, “Thomas Carlyle, Prophet of Fascism,” *The Journal of Modern History* 17, no. 2 (Jun. 1945): 97.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 97.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 97.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 103, 105.

“historic situation,” that England of the nineteenth century was unique in its industrialization conferring Carlyle “a glimpse, not a full view, of totalitarianism.”⁵¹ Furthermore, it was Britain’s distinctiveness as overlord of a world-wide empire that contributed to Carlyle’s “racial doctrines” that adumbrated fascism’s passionate racial identity.⁵² Of course, such arguments verge on absurdity because, although he did retain prejudices as did many in his day, prejudice and the sort of biological racism to which Schapiro alludes are immeasurably distinct. Schapiro’s zealous attempts to portray Carlyle as a fascist pioneer attest to the poverty of his arguments and the superheated political atmosphere in which he was writing. Most salient in his arguments was Carlyle’s hero-worship for “his ‘hero’ is none other than the Fascist ‘Duce’ and the Nazi ‘Fuehrer,’ dressed in moral garments tailored for him by the Puritan Carlyle.”⁵³ Aside from alluding to some direct connections between fascism and Carlyle (most of them spurious), Schapiro justified his denunciation of the Victorian author on loose analogies between Hero-worship and the *Führerprinzip*.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Ibid., 106

⁵² Ibid., 106.

⁵³ Ibid., 110.

⁵⁴ Schapiro rightly points out that G. Liciardelli authored a book on Mussolini and Carlyle, although he does not provide any documentation. He also claims that “Mussolini incorporated Carlyle’s views on labor in his famous ‘Charter of Labor’” (115) of which there is no evidence and then cites A.C. Taylor’s *Carlyle et la Pensée Latine* as his source. Taylor indeed mentions the “*Carta del Lavoro*” when reporting Liciardelli’s comparisons between Mussolini and Carlyle’s views on labor, but if Schapiro had gone back to the original source he would have encountered that Liciardelli devotes his entire work to the parallels between Carlyle and Mussolini’s belief on labor but never once claims that Carlyle’s works inspired, let alone were incorporated into, the “*Carta del Lavoro*.” Even more suspect is Schapiro’s citation of Emery Neff’s 1932 work on Carlyle which he uses to substantiate his claim that Carlyle’s *Heroes and hero-worship* was made required reading in Nazi schools. Apparently, Neff’s powers of prophecy surpass Carlyle’s in that he predicted, according to Schapiro, the rise of Hitler and the subsequent curriculum he would implement in the National Socialist school system prior to 1933.

Eric Bentley's *A Century of Hero-worship*, Perhaps the most cogent and balanced critique of Hero-worship penned during the war, correlates the intellectual developments of Carlyle, Friedrich Nietzsche, Richard Wagner, Stefan George, and D. H. Lawrence.⁵⁵ Bentley does not attempt to distill a single philosophical system from these thinkers nor does he locate all of them on the same monochromatic and menacing path towards Hitlerism as Ball did. What he does extract from their congruities is a shared *Weltanschauung* which he labels "Heroic Vitalism." Its origins, he contends, are in despair—the despair that afflicted both the personal lives and political outlooks of these men. With its roots in despondency with the modern world, Heroic Vitalism compels its adherents to reject optimistic systems, to deplore positivist notions. The mutual tenets of its champions are a general repudiation of liberal ideals of gradual progress, laissez-faire economics, and, most acutely, the equality of men. Bentley does not, however, perceive these abnegations of liberalism to necessarily eschew democracy per se, but rather to censure those who sought to establish the crew as the captains of society. Nor is this Heroic Vitalism to be perceived as purely reactionary. On the contrary, Heroic Vitalism may very well be the antithesis of liberalism but it displays its own developed ideology grounded firmly in experience. History—human experience—and intuition form an intellectual foundation that conceives history as cyclical, progress as violent and saltatory, and life as a contest.⁵⁶ "Men kill each other. Most men are stupid. A few rule.

⁵⁵ This work, so Bentley claims, was written chiefly in 1940. It first appeared in print in the United States in 1944. Bentley later republished the work in England with the title *The Cult of the Superman* in 1947. In 1957, a second American edition was published with the original title.

⁵⁶ Eric Bentley, *A Century of Hero-worship: A Study of the Idea of Heroism in Carlyle and Nietzsche with Notes on Wagner, Spengler, Stefan George and D. H. Lawrence* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), 239-240.

These are the facts on which Heroic Vitalists insist.”⁵⁷ The ultimate weakness of Heroic Vitalists, Bentley contends, is their lack of practicality. Although proselytizers of action and pragmatism, of youth and vitality, “Heroic Vitalists have pretended to be men of action while retaining all the merits, in intelligence and understanding, of the man of thought.”⁵⁸ While they point out “pent-up energies” and expose sentiments that the liberals have erroneously discounted, their doctrine founders on its fanatical exaltation of the heroic in a world where few are to be found. “Unless the rational and fruitful element in it can be assimilated by a more rational fruitful philosophy than that of Hitler and Mussolini,” Bentley lamentably portends the relegation of these Heroic Vitalists—Carlyle, Nietzsche, Wagner, Lawrence—to a premature death, to be remembered only as a passing European obsession with nihilism.⁵⁹

Despite Bentley’s fair-minded approach to Carlyle—C. S. Lewis noted that he had “a sympathy” for his subject matter that he himself could not emulate, he often falls into the same quagmire of fascist name-calling he professes to disdain.⁶⁰ He rails critics for attempting to “prove a man fascist or to prove him the reverse” and proposes “an interpretation of Carlyle that is neither saint nor mentor, but which gives to his life-work not indeed a perfect unity yet a rough homogeneity, a unity of effort and tendency.”⁶¹

For all his avowals of aloofness from the polemics he exercises little restraint in labeling

⁵⁷ Ibid., 240.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 251.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 251.

⁶⁰ Eric Bentley, *The Cult of the Superman: A Study of the Idea of Heroism in Carlyle and Nietzsche, with Notes on other Hero-Worshippers of Modern Times* (London: Robert Hale Limited, 1947), v. C. S. Lewis contributed an appreciation to the work.

⁶¹ Bentley, *A Century of Hero-worship*, 62, 257.

Carlyle a Nazi. He explains that even the catharsis of writing *Frederick the Great* “had not disabused Carlyle of his National Socialism.”⁶² Bentley considers Carlyle’s mental state to be a contributing factor to the development of his hero-worship reminding the reader that the loss of three patriarchal figures in his life—God, his father James Carlyle, and Goethe—tendered his hero with a dictatorial flavor. Moreover, it was his “neurosis” that “made him a fascist; for though all fascists may be neurotics, not all neurotics are fascists, nor are all neurotics Thomas Carlyle.”⁶³ Introducing the second edition of his work, Bentley warns the reader that he was incapable of writing “in the spirit of detached scholarship.”⁶⁴ And so, even though Bentley’s work stands out as a more balanced approach to Carlyle’s link to fascism, his work often portrays Carlyle as the proto-Nazi of Ball and Seillière’s more politically polarized tracts.

His inclusion of a stanza of Bertolt Brecht’s “Lied einer deutscher Mutter” on the opening page of the work right above a refrain from *On Heroes and Hero-worship* indicates the destination to which Bentley believes Carlyle and Nietzsche’s philosophy led.⁶⁵

Mein Sohn, ich hörte dich reden
 Von einem Heldengeschlecht
 Wusste nicht, ahnte nicht, sah nicht
 Du warst ihr Folterknecht.⁶⁶

⁶² Ibid., 52.

⁶³ Ibid., 31.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 1.

⁶⁵ Ibid., vii.

⁶⁶ Ibid., vii.

The “Folterknecht” of Brecht’s poem is a German youth seduced by the Brown Shirts whose service to the Nazi cause as their torturer eventually leads to his death. Thus, Bentley’s opening page expresses a direct correlation between Nazi ideology and the ideals of “Heroic Vitalists” like Carlyle and, although he admits that their work has a “positive element” in it and is not to be lightly dismissed as “Hitlerism,” he suggests compellingly—more so than Russell, Seillière, or Ball—that Carlyle had at least one foot in the fascist camp.⁶⁷

That is not to say that Bentley is averse to the reading of Carlyle. On the contrary, Bentley, in an article for a 1945 issue of *The American Scholar*, argued that Carlyle’s death was regrettably “premature.”⁶⁸ Noting the lifespan of Carlyle’s influence he concluded that

His ‘good’ influence lasted till—early in the twentieth century—it petered out in women’s clubs and elementary classes. His ‘evil’ influence has also ended—for the present at any rate—with the death of Hitler and Mussolini, exactly 150 years after Carlyle’s birth. Abandoned even by freshman English, the last refuge of yesterday’s favorites, Carlyle is a nullity.⁶⁹

Bentley recapitulates with incredible accuracy Carlyle’s then growing obscurity and ostensibly ascribes his waning popularity to the first and second world wars. Five years earlier, Grierson had witnessed a revival of interest in Carlyle which he contributed to “the suspicion that Hitlerism represents a development of the revolt against reason,” incipient in the romantic rebellion from the *Aufklärung* and far more pronounced and

⁶⁷ Ibid., 8. Although Carlyle is sometimes categorized as a romantic, many studies demonstrate his Enlightenment affinities which date back to his education in his formative years in “Enlightened” Edinburgh.

⁶⁸ Eric Bentley, “The Premature Death of Thomas Carlyle,” *The American Scholar* (Winter, 1945): 76.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 69.

developed in Carlyle's writings.⁷⁰ His dwindling popularity which Bentley termed his "premature death" does not preclude the discussion of Carlyle among an abstruse circle of scholars but implies the disappearance of Carlyle from the college classroom or from "freshman English" as Bentley puts it. And so, in 1945, Bentley witnessed a trend in attitude towards Carlyle that in many ways persists until today. That is not to say he agreed with it. Although he labels Carlyle "morally dangerous, aesthetically boring or repellent and personally a neurotic," he nonetheless reminds his readers that "there is another Carlyle."⁷¹ There is the Carlyle whose writings excited the social philosophies of Engels, Dickens, Ruskin, and Emerson, whose voice reached the hearts and minds of readers across the globe. Ultimately, Bentley makes no attempt to conceal his opinion that there is much of Hitler and Bonaparte in Carlyle's political philosophies but forcefully advances him as a brilliant questioner—one who exposed the flaws of democracy, one who was just as much right as he was wrong, one whose advancement of a "Government of the Best" remains a noble aspiration even if such a concept of government was advocated (or exploited) by the antipodal figures of Thomas Jefferson, Napoleon Bonaparte, William James, and Adolf Hitler.⁷²

In the postwar period, the noted Dutch historian Pieter Geyl's critique of Carlyle follows in the tradition of Bentley's analysis. His balanced and cool portrayal of Carlyle's fascist affinities belies his emotional involvement in the subject.⁷³ As did

⁷⁰ H. J. C. Grierson, review of *Thomas Carlyle and the Art of History*, by Louise Merwin Young, *The English Historical Review* 55 (April 1940):318.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 70, 71.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 76.

Bentley, Geyl locates Carlyle as a proprietor of a *Weltanschauung* that rejected the reason-centric philosophies of the eighteenth century and culminated in the rise of Hitler.⁷⁴ Where he differs from Bentley is his avoidance of any perceptible recognition of the deficiencies of parliamentary rule which Carlyle exposed and Bentley seconded. Although he often bears more sympathy for Carlyle's struggle with the writing of his histories calling his career "profoundly tragic" and is far more approving of the Victorian's singular style, his appraisal of his substantive political views is far harsher.⁷⁵ He is less apt to excuse Carlyle for his politics and advances that he has been "placed where undoubtedly he belongs, in a line of which the present-day totalitarian movements constitute, if not the straight prolongation, yet a normal branch."⁷⁶ Geyl refers to Carlyle's revolt against reason and democracy as a revolt against "humanity," a claim that is not too difficult to profess when he parallels Carlyle's political ideology to Nazism. Indeed, as many of his precursors have done, he warns of identifying the Victorian prophet too hastily with the interwar totalitarian regimes because "neither Carlyle nor Nietzsche would have hit it off with Lenin or Stalin, with Mussolini or with Hitler; propaganda with their work was only possible because they themselves were safely dead."⁷⁷ So, mirroring Grierson's 1930 analysis yet with less reverence and more disdain, Geyl contends that Carlyle is to be perceived as an originator of totalitarian

⁷³ Geyl, a Dutch historian, was interned in Buchenwald concentration camp for 13 months. After the war, his rigid belief in empiricism led him into a long and bitter debate with the English historian Arnold Toynbee.

⁷⁴ Pieter Geyl, *Debates with Historians* (New York: Meridian Books, 1958), 65.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 66, 277.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 52.

precepts and, from his known personal proclivities, we can only presume that he would not have associated himself with Mussolini or Hitler had he lived to the ripe old age of 140.

Basil Willey makes a similar claim in his study of nineteenth-century British philosophy. Carlyle, he believes, would not have mistaken Hitler for his hero as a king, any more than Plato would have mistaken the *Führer* or the *Duce* for philosopher-kings.⁷⁸ Willey points out that Carlyle's real misjudgment was not in his criticism of democracy but in his cure therefore. With the Second World War in hindsight, Willey is able to allege that Carlyle's hero-worship as a remedy for the failings of parliamentary rule was far worse than the disease.⁷⁹ After all, the human instinctive desire "for a Leader might be satisfied quite as easily by a Hitler as by a Cromwell."⁸⁰

And still Willey's verdict, like Geyl and Bentley's, is less derogatory than a great deal of postwar studies. Gross, in a three-page treatment of Carlyle felt compelled to point out Carlyle's loose connections to Nazism, underscoring the fact that the Victorian had maintained correspondence with the German ideologue Paul Lagarde, "an indubitable forerunner of the Nazis" and that he seems to have coined the term "anti-semitism" 20 years before its generally acknowledged fabrication.⁸¹ To commemorate the hundredth anniversary of Carlyle's death, the noted historian Hugh Trevor-Roper summarized his contribution to the field of history. Carlyle, he contended in masterful

⁷⁸ Basil Willey, *Nineteenth Century Studies: Coleridge to Matthew Arnold* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949), 130.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁸¹ Gross, 31.

Whiggish fashion, did a disservice to the field of history and indeed “put the clock back” on historical philosophy.⁸² Although the article’s title may allude to a scholarly discussion of Carlyle’s historical method, Trevor-Roper’s terse tract is nothing more than a 4-page diatribe against the Victorian author. He labels his historical writing “vulgar worship of personal power” and locates Carlyle “in the intellectual pedigree of Nazism.”⁸³ Carlyle’s answers to the social problems of his day, so he puts it, were “heroic leadership and conquest of *Lebensraum*.”⁸⁴ Trevor-Roper, a historian criticizing another historian’s methodology, inserts Nazi rhetoric into a Victorian’s speech with little concern to avoid anachronism. Ultimately, Carlyle did little but point “the way forward to some of the darkest experiences of the twentieth century,” and in so doing he made a spectacle of himself.⁸⁵ Trevor-Roper leaves us with the conviction that Carlyle’s history is defunct and derelict; his politics are even more in shambles.

Is this then the surviving memory of the once acclaimed Victorian Prophet? Indeed it is one of them. Jorge Luis Borges, in his introduction to his 1979 translation of *Heroes and Hero-worship*, noted that one of the most central aspects of Carlyle was his political theory. “Los contemporáneos no la [su teoría política] entendieron, pero cabe en una sola y muy divulgada palabra: nazismo”(His contemporaries did not understand it [his political theory], but it can be defined in one single and pervasive word: Nazism).⁸⁶

⁸² Hugh Trevor-Roper, “Thomas Carlyle’s Historical Philosophy,” *TLS* (26 June 1981), 734.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 732, 734.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 734.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 731.

⁸⁶ Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson, *De los héroes, hombres representativos*, translated by Jorge Luis Borges (Mexico: Grolier International, 1979), x.

Carlyle, he explained, concerned with the moribund faith of the English people, introduced a cure “la abolición de los parlamentos y la entrega incondicional del poder a hombres fuertes y silenciosos” (the abolition of parliaments and the unconditional delivery of power to strong and silent men).⁸⁷ Borges, thus, distills Carlyle’s Hero-worship to his hispanophonic readers in a few terse sentences and thereafter alludes to its results. “Rusia, Alemania, Italia han apurado hasta las heces el beneficio de esa universal panacea; los resultados son el servilismo, el temor, la brutalidad, la indigencia mental y la delación” (Russia, Germany, and Italy have hurriedly advanced towards the benefit of this universal panacea; the results have been slavery, fear, brutality, mental poverty and alarm).⁸⁸ Borges, Bentley, Geyl, Russell, Chesterton, Trevor-Roper—a veritable list of intellectual giants of the twentieth century—have all positioned Carlyle in a constellation of fascism, Nazism, and totalitarianism—the veritable sewage of the modern era. This then may be Carlyle’s legacy.

But are we not too quick to discount Carlyle, to name him a proto-Nazi and discard his ideas as pro-fascist propaganda? But if we seek to retain Carlyle, what then? Do we neglect those cogent critiques which expose his “fascist tendencies”? Do we consider him harmless and convict or absolve him grounded on speculations as to whether he would have advocated or lambasted Hitler’s regime? Are we to denounce his later works calling Hitler’s reading of *Frederick* “appropriate” while extolling *Sartor* as humanistic and anticipatory of en vogue postmodernism? The best response I have

⁸⁷ Ibid., xii.

⁸⁸ Ibid., xii.

encountered was Bentley's conclusion drawn in 1940 and one that has yet to be attempted:

Each [Carlyle, Nietzsche, etc.] has been called a fascist or proto-Nazi by both supporters and opponents of fascism and Nazism. None is so, yet those who suggested a connection with fascism were wiser than those who denied all such allegations. Unfortunately the whole discussion was polemical. The critics have tried either to prove a man fascist or to prove him the reverse. It would have been better to separate out fascist and non-fascist elements and draw conclusions, better to paint the portrait of Janus and speculate on his significance than to be indignant or enthusiastic about one face on the assumption that the other does not exist.⁸⁹

It is lamentable not only that Bentley's observations exposed the deficiencies of scholarly treatment of Carlyle's "fascism" that endured long after he penned them, but, rather than attending to such deficiencies, that most have perpetuated a subscholarly smear campaign against the deceased author. Few have attempted to deny such allegations of fascist tendencies, and the vast majority of Carlylean scholars persist in either ignoring charges of his fascism (in which they are partially justified as it is indeed an a-historical and anachronistic argument to level such charges) or introduce it as validation for their adoration of his more palatable works and vindication for their derision of his later Hero-worship tracts.

Ultimately, the preceding accumulation of articles and books on Carlyle's alleged fascism is conspicuous as it does not converge as a scholarly dialog. Most of the works repeat similar arguments, reintroduce identical evidence based on shaky analogies between Carlylean and fascist dogma, and fail to include any definition of fascism, totalitarianism, or Nazism. In fact, I have employed these terms as synonyms in my previous discussion, not because they are but because that is precisely how the preceding

⁸⁹ Bentley, *A Century of Hero-worship*, 256-257.

authors have used these terms. Seton-Watson noted in 1966 that “twenty years after the destruction of the Third Reich, the essence of fascism is still elusive.”⁹⁰ Those less initiated into scholarly interpretations of fascism are bound to pigeonhole the disparate regimes of Hitler, Mussolini, Franco, and even Stalin into an ill-defined drawer of barbaric tyrants. The recent growth in more theoretical and conceptual approaches to fascism and totalitarianism permits us to surmount the politically heated atmosphere which surround such terms and transcend their pejorative use.

Current trends in fascist studies indicate a growing consensus amongst scholars on interpretations of fascism.⁹¹ Gone is the day when fascism was summarily dismissed as a tendency towards the dissolution of all human values and violent nihilism.⁹² Nor should we persist to perceive fascism as a “myth” that defies “logical definition or rational analysis.”⁹³ Fascism is not to be explicated as a mere transient or mystical European obsession with nihilistic sadism. This would amount to sweeping fascism and the lessons to be learned thereby into the dust bin of history and ignoring its widespread appeal. Eatwell points out quite rightly that “any ‘ism’ is a heuristic construction, whose

⁹⁰ Hugh Seton-Watson, “Fascism, Right and Left,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, 1, 1 (January 1966): 183.

⁹¹ See: Roger Griffin, “The Primacy of Culture: The Current Growth (Or Manufacture) of Consensus within Fascist Studies,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, 1, 1 (January 2002): 21-43. Griffin suggests that we are currently in the “formative” phase of fascist studies and argues that the introduction of the Weberian “ideal type” as a heuristic and taxonomic device for the study of fascism has proved useful in our approach to understanding this ever elusive political ideology. Also see: Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995).

⁹² Hermann Rauschning, *Die Revolution des Nihilismus: Kulisse und Wirklichkeit im Dritten Reich* (Zurich: Europa Verlag, 1938), 10.

⁹³ Hamilton, xix.

value derives from generating more insights than confusion.”⁹⁴ Approaching fascism in this way, as a political archetype, and not solely as the anathema of civilization has proffered the appearance of more succinct and convincing definitions of fascism.⁹⁵

A more exact definition of fascism is precisely what has plagued attempts to dub Carlyle a fascist. If we are to situate or extricate him from a constellation of fascist ideologues, we must first locate the boundaries of fascism. Thereafter, we can determine, as Bentley suggested, what elements of Carlyle’s political and social philosophies can be considered proto-fascist notions.

Perhaps the best method of sifting Carlyle’s works for fascist parallels is an appeal to the fascist exploitation of his works. Few have approached Carlyle in this manner and none well. Certainly, many have reminded us that Goebbels read to Hitler from *Frederick* as the Reich began to collapse but, aside from a pithy article from Alan Steinweis in 1995, none have attempted to canvass the fascist appropriation of his work.⁹⁶ Steinweis devotes only one paragraph to Nazi publications on or of Carlyle and speciously contends that *Frederick* was Goebbels’s favorite work. Steinweis merely expands Trevor-Roper’s brief accusation that Hitler and Carlyle shared an identical belief in “historical greatness” with a terse addendum of a few of Carlyle’s patrons in the Third Reich. Instead of attempting a minimalist treatment to prove complicity, I intend the

⁹⁴ Roger Eatwell, “Towards a New Model of Generic Fascism,” *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 4, 2 (1992): 166.

⁹⁵ See: Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991). Griffin defined fascism with elegance and brevity as “a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism” (p. 44). Stanley Payne noted that this was “the best work on comparative fascism to appear in a decade”: Payne, 5.

⁹⁶ Alan Steinweis, “Hitler and Carlyle’s ‘Historical Greatness,’” *History Today*, 45, 6 (June 1995): 33-36.

following chapters to coalesce as a broad study that seeks to include but differentiate the disparate regimes of Mussolini and Hitler.

The following chapters will thus combine as a rectification of the abovementioned deficits. I do not aspire to vindicate Carlyle but rather to clarify how fascists used his works. This investigation carries a twofold purpose: 1) to demarcate those elements of Carlyle's writings that most appealed to fascists and 2) to highlight the protean nature of fascism as it functioned as a governing system and the idiosyncratic features of various "fascist" regimes. I will not attempt to put forth my own working model of generic fascism as there are many works which handle this subject cogently and with considerable elegance. Nonetheless, the existing models will form an indispensable part of this discussion and will thus necessitate a distillation and a synthesis of these various taxonomic efforts. Finally, the following chapters will chart Carlyle's reception most acutely in Germany to unravel the string of events that culminated in the appearance of *Frederick* in Hitler's bunker.

II.

From the Other Side of the Looking Glass: Carlyle under Fascism

“Liberty? The true liberty of a man, you would say, consisted in his finding out, or being forced to find out the right path, and to walk thereon. To learn, or to be taught, what work he actually was able for; and then by permission, persuasion, and even compulsion, to set about doing of the same” Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present*

“From the outset he [Carlyle] had clearly seen that the relation of right to might was a problem not easy of solution, that justice conceived abstractly offered no solution for many of the problems of internal government on the one hand and the relation between nations on the other. But it is absurd to suggest that Carlyle ever came to such an identification of right with might as is frankly accepted by a Nietzsche or Hitler or Stalin.” Herbert J. C. Grierson

“In the intellectual pedigree of Nazism, Carlyle cannot be refused a place.” Hugh Trevor-Roper

For those who find in Carlyle’s writings distinct and inveterate fascist tendencies it must be of interest that his pseudo-autobiographical character Herr Teufelsdröckh’s intended ultimate and “Transcendental” volume of his work *On Clothes* had the tentative title “*On the Palengenesia, or New Birth of Society*.”⁹⁷ This obsolescent word, *palingenesia* or *palingenesis*, has recently been revitalized by Roger Griffin in his definition of fascism. In a sweeping but parsimonious phrase Griffin asserted that “Fascism is a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism.”⁹⁸ Although this brief and abstract description is not universally accepted,⁹⁹ Griffin’s definition remains the most novel and

⁹⁷ Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus, The Life and Opinions of Herr Teufelsdröckh* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1896), 173.

⁹⁸ Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991), 26.

⁹⁹ A. James Gregor, *Interpretations of Fascism* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1997), xviii-xxii. Gregor argues rather convincingly that Griffin’s defining features of fascism, namely that each “permutation” of fascism must be *palingenetic*, *populist*, and *ultra-nationalist*, are not exclusive to fascism and can include any number of totalitarian regimes from Mao’s China to the Soviet Union.

acclaimed restructuring of previous attempts to present a generic or “ideal type” of fascism.¹⁰⁰ Key to Griffin’s explication of fascism is its emphasis upon *palingenesis*. In fact, Griffin edited an entire fascist reader which posited that generic fascism can be uncovered and defined by its invariable expressions of “palingenetic ultra-nationalism.”¹⁰¹ Can then one ask if Carlyle’s incessant ruminations on the rebirth of a decadent society, his discernible Romantic nationalist affinities, and his tracts on hero-worship merit him at the least a footnote in the annals of fascist scholarship?

Indeed, the purported proto-fascist inclinations of Carlyle have been cited by both detractors and apologists of fascist dogma. Scholars since the emergence of Mussolini’s black shirt dictatorship have sought to locate the roots of fascism and to unravel its genesis. Likewise, scholars under both Nazi and Fascist regimes attempted to reconstruct their ideological genealogy and often aspired to mitigate their lack of perceived intellectual acceptance by appropriating deceased intellectuals for their cause. It is not therefore surprising that Carlyle’s name has a tendency to appear even in the most recent and general accounts of fascism. Robert Paxton includes a short paragraph on Carlyle in his work on generic fascism, singling him out as an illustration of European intellectuals who feared the loss of community to the nascent and malignant individualism of liberal democracy.¹⁰² In Ian Kershaw’s acclaimed biography of Hitler, Carlyle turns up in a foot

¹⁰⁰ Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 221. Paxton calls Griffin’s work “the most influential recent attempt to define fascism” but is critical of the brevity of his definition. Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 5. Payne considers his definition “accurate and useful,” but also points out that, although succinct, it cannot sufficiently describe some of the fundamental features of fascism.

¹⁰¹ Roger Griffin, ed., *Fascism*, Oxford Readers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 4.

¹⁰² Paxton, 35.

note as the “British Germanophile biographer of Frederick the Great.”¹⁰³ Most often scholars of fascism designate him as an influential contributor to a stream of antidemocratic and antirational thought that swept through Europe in the nineteenth century and informed the political philosophy of both Hitler’s National Socialism and Mussolini’s Fascism.¹⁰⁴ Ultimately, the nexus between Carlyle and fascist ideology cannot be ignored, but are we then to brand him a proto-fascist as so many scholars have done?

To define him as an originator of fascist ideology necessitates a definition of this political philosophy. Fascism’s perceived incoherence has over the decades since its conception spurred much debate as to whether the disparate regimes of Hitler and Mussolini bear enough similarities to warrant an inclusive term such as “generic fascism.”¹⁰⁵ Yet, despite its weaknesses generic fascism and its current cultural interpretations provide a variety of criterial descriptions of how fascism is precisely manifested.¹⁰⁶

It is in these criterial descriptions of fascism that Carlyle’s viability as a proto-fascist ideologue begins to lose credibility. Any attempt at a comparative analysis between Carlyle’s political philosophies and fascism’s core manifestations underscores their definite inconsistencies further demonstrating the anachronism of labeling him a

¹⁰³ Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889-1936: Hubris* (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1998), 601.

¹⁰⁴ Karl Dietrich Bracher, Wolfgang Sauer, and Gerhard Schulz, *Die Nationalsozialistische Machtergreifung* (Cologne: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1960), 264.

¹⁰⁵ Gregor, 5.

¹⁰⁶ See: George L. Mosse, *The Fascist Revolution* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1999).

fascist. For instance, Stanley Payne's typological description of fascism includes its pervasive exaltation of youth as a paradigmatic element of fascist government and style which can in no way be related to the main thrusts of Carlyle's works.¹⁰⁷ We see similar incompatibility in Paxton's "mobilizing passions" of fascism, his attempt to give body to the "elusive fascist minimum," which ranged from ideas that appear very congruous to Carlyle's hero-worship such as "the need for authority by natural chiefs (always male), culminating in a national chieftain who alone is capable of incarnating the group's historical identity" to features, for example fascist notions of an international "Darwinian struggle" that alone sets their group apart as a chosen people, that are undeniably dissonant with the political philosophies of Carlyle.¹⁰⁸ Even Griffin's concise definition, when more acutely scrutinized, reveals palpable differences between Carlyle's political sentiments and fascism's purported mythic core, "a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism." Despite Carlyle's Romantic nationalist tendencies,¹⁰⁹ it would be difficult to label him an "ultra-nationalist," of which there exists no appreciable definition, and it would be even more absurd to qualify Carlyle as a "populist" because the legitimacy of his heroes never relied upon "people power" but upon their divine capacity of discernment. When Carlyle's didactic hero Samson is elected Abbot of St. Edmundsbury, it is not by the will of his people but by a fateful decision of his king and

¹⁰⁷ Payne, 8.

¹⁰⁸ Paxton, 219-220.

¹⁰⁹ For Carlyle's nationalist tendencies see: Yoon Sun Lee, *Nationalism and Irony: Burke, Scott, Carlyle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Lee indicates that Carlyle, like Burke and Scott, retained some reservations about the reality of national cohesion within Britain and, despite the fact that he sought in his writings to galvanize the British nation, his pervasive use of irony belied his belief that Britain was anything but "a perfect, homogenous, indivisible whole." [Richter 21]

the subtle devices of his fellow monks.¹¹⁰ It is by those who knew him that his hero of *Past and Present* emerges as the appointed attendant of his people. Carlyle indeed expressed little faith in any popular selection of heroes. “Ballot-boxes, Reform Bills, winnowing-machines: all these are good, or are not so good;—alas, brethren, how *can* these, I say, be other than inadequate, be other than failures, melancholy to behold?”¹¹¹

Carlyle’s principle work on Hero-worship was his 1840 series of lectures entitled *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* which were later published under the same title. His oft quoted aphorism from his first lecture perhaps best introduces his belief in Hero-worship and its import to his conception of history: “Universal History, the history of what man has accomplished in the world, is at bottom the History of Great Men who have worked here.”¹¹² Carlyle, we must remember, was first and foremost a historian. He considered heroic men to be the central motivators of human achievement which signals not only the affinity he may have shared with fascist conceptions of history but also the significance of these lectures and their centrality to his own worldview. He confided to his mother after his final lecture that “it was my *best* course of Lectures” despite his general aversion to lecturing.¹¹³ Each of the six lectures featured the Hero in a different manifestation from the very primordial origins of Hero-worship with his lecture

¹¹⁰ Carlyle’s 1843 work *Past and Present* is for the most part a diatribe against the current state of Britain and the then pervasive liberal ideology of nineteenth century political economy. Carlyle employed the Abbot Samson as a historical example of the necessity of strong and righteous leaders to provide the kind of humanistic and patriarchal government that he perceived to be so absent in English government and its reverence towards constitutions and parliaments.

¹¹¹ Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present* (London: Chapman and Hall: 1897), 83.

¹¹² Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes and Hero-worship and the Heroic and the Heroic in History* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1901), 1.

¹¹³ Charles Richard Sanders and Kenneth J. Fielding, ed., *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*, vol. 12 (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1985), 151.

on “the Hero as Divinity” to his final “Hero as a King.” Chris Vanden Bossche emphasizes the implications of Carlyle’s last minute alteration to the order of the lectures which, when originally planned, would have concluded with a lecture on “the Hero as Man of Letters” instead of “the Hero as King.”¹¹⁴ Concluding with a piece on Napoleon and Cromwell as “Kings” for the modern age, Carlyle revealed the didactic nature of these lectures in which he attempted to employ history to instruct his contemporaries about the necessity of authority in a world deranged by its reverence not to Great Men but to Benthamite Utilitarianisms. The hero as king was for him “the most important of Great Men” who embodied an “earthly or spiritual dignity” to “*command* over us, to furnish us with constant practical teaching, to tell us for the day and hour what we are to *do*.”¹¹⁵ The hero as king stands as the final incarnation of Carlyle’s hero; Carlyle’s belief in his practical importance and his authority to command his men to action suggests a similarity to fascism’s exaltation of the leader and its focus on movement and action.

Yet, in this final lecture on heroes we also see a divergence in Carlyle’s hero-worship and the fascist leadership principle. Carlyle implored his listeners:

Find me the true *Könning*, King or Able-man, and he *has* a divine right over me. That we knew him in some tolerable measure how to find him, and that all men were ready to acknowledge his divine right when found: this is precisely the healing which a sick world is everywhere, in these ages, seeking after! The true King, as guide of the practical, has ever something of the Pontiff in him,—guide of the spiritual, from which all practical has its rise.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Chris Vanden Bossche, *Carlyle and the Search for Authority* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 1991), 97.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 196.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 199.

Carlyle's king, the summation of all his Heroes, secured his divine sanction of rule not from a populist following but from his spiritual mastery. Carlyle's king should reign as a "living light-fountain," a "natural luminary shining by the gift of Heaven."¹¹⁷ Indeed, his ideal government should be a theocratic meritocracy with the hero stationed at the head of a people not by popular consent and ballot boxes, or nationalist fervor in the fascist case, but by genuine talent and divine right.¹¹⁸ Fascism, even when anatomized into its essentials, does not reveal a uniform similarity with Carlyle's hero-worship.

Just as he cannot be classified as a fascist by the most generic definitions thereof, so to are accounts of Carlyle as a causal agent of fascism equally specious despite the fact that many have argued as much.¹¹⁹ The flamboyant Gabriele D'Annunzio, whose call for a "march on Rome" and institution of the "Roman Salute" inspired Mussolini, pioneered the first "fascist" regime with his attempt to redeem Italy's *vittoria mutilata* (Italy's claims upon Fiume and the Dalmatian coast were dismissed as the "Big Four" carved up the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the Paris Peace Conference) by invading and occupying the port city of Fiume with a cadre of militant dissidents.¹²⁰ When asked in an

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 2.

¹¹⁸ Carlyle's appreciation for the hero as both a spiritual oracle and a palpable king to his people is likewise prevalent in a recently discovered manuscript on the Mormons. See: Paul Kerry, "Thomas Carlyle's Draft Essay on the Mormons," *Literature and Belief* 25 (2005): 261-288. Kerry argues that Carlyle's search for a modern hero may have directed his interest towards the Mormon religion and its spiritual leaders (274). The early Mormon prophets as both religious guides and secular leaders may have presented a fascinating dichotomy, one that Carlyle saw fit to be emulated.

¹¹⁹ As noted above Hugh Trevor-Roper located Carlyle in the "intellectual pedigree" of Nazism. Hugh Trevor-Roper, "Thomas Carlyle's Historical Philosophy," *TLS* (26 June 1981), 734. Schapiro contends that Carlyle "was one of the influential writers in the nineteenth century who continued the intellectual tradition that led to fascism." J. Salwyn Schapiro, "Thomas Carlyle, Prophet of Fascism," *The Journal of Modern History* 17, no. 2 (Jun. 1945): 110.

¹²⁰ Aside from his invasion of Fiume, D'Annunzio was a celebrated author whose *fin-de-siècle* writings quickly acquired international notoriety. Among his most famed works are his 1894 *Il trionfo*

interview about the intellectual origin of his heroic literary characters, D'Annunzio denied the influence of Carlyle's hero-worship upon his writings and asserted that he modeled the heroes of his theatrical works after Nietzsche's *Übermensch* rather than Carlyle's heroes.¹²¹ Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, he explained, did not serve the multitude as did Carlyle's hero. D'Annunzio thus located himself in the tradition of Nietzsche rather than Carlyle. And of course, Nietzsche himself ridiculed Carlyle's religiosity.

In the 35 volumes of Benito Mussolini's writings and speeches the Italian dictator mentions Carlyle only once in a speech to la Camera dei Fasci e delle Corporazioni in November of 1942. To underscore the hypocrisy of the British government he cites Carlyle stating "*Nessuna razza umana, da Adamo in poi, è stata vestita di cenci così sporchi di menzogne come la nostra*" (Not one human race, from Adam and henceforth, has ever dressed itself in such sorts of lies as ours).¹²² We can thus deduce that Mussolini was at the very least familiar with Thomas Carlyle and that he had his books on hand to prepare his speech. Yet, this is the only appearance of Carlyle's name and given Mussolini's schooling as a socialist it would be illogical to conclude that Carlyle had any sort of paramount effect on the development of Mussolini's political or ideological philosophies.

Likewise, it is difficult to estimate Adolf Hitler's knowledge of the writings of Thomas Carlyle, let alone to attribute any sort of influence the Victorian author may have

della morte (*The Triumph of Death*) and his 1900 *Il fuoco* (*The Flame of Life*). Despite the popularity he once enjoyed, his works have fallen into disrepute due to his ties to fascism.

¹²¹ Gianni Oliva, *Interviste a d'Annunzio: 1895-1938* (Lanciano: Casa Editrice Rocco Carabba, 2002), 611.

¹²² Benito Mussolini, *Opera Omnia di Benito Mussolini*, ed. Edoardo and Duilio Susmel (Florence: La Fenice, 1960), 31: 129.

had on the Nazi dictator's *Weltanschauung*, directly or indirectly. From Joseph Goebbels's diary we know that Hitler claimed to be familiar with Carlyle's *History of Frederick the Great*.¹²³ Yet, beyond his acquaintance with this work, there is no evidence that Hitler ever picked up a book of Carlyle's in his entire life. In fact, if any author had an impact on Hitler and his direction of the Nazi state, it would have to be the children's novelist Karl May whose Wild West adventure books enthralled him as a Linz schoolboy and continued to hold his interest even until adulthood.¹²⁴ Joseph Goebbels's first mention of Carlyle in his copious diary does not appear until 1944 and only in conjunction with his reading of *Frederick*.¹²⁵ The chief ideologue of the Nazi state, Alfred Rosenberg, never once cited Carlyle in any of his numerous works, although he did often quote Friedrich Nietzsche whom he exalted as a prophet.¹²⁶

The most vociferous indictment against Carlyle as a contributor to the formation of fascist or National Socialist theory came from M. Margaret Ball at the height of the Second World War. Ball asserts that Carlyle "exercised a considerable impact on later German thought" but she fails to unfold the pathology of this supposed influence.¹²⁷ This "considerable impact" must necessarily refer to Carlyle's hero-worship as she is

¹²³ *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels*, ed. Elke Fröhlich, (Munich and London: K. G. Sauer Verlag, 1995), 15:384. 28 February 1945, Goebbels confides that "Ich erzähle ihm (Hitler), daß ich den letzten Tagen das Buch von Carlyle über Friedrich den Großen gelesen habe. Der Führer selbst kennt das Buch sehr genau.

¹²⁴ Kershaw, 15. Kershaw explains that Hitler's school teacher in Linz, Dr. Eduard Huemer imputed Hitler's ill temper to "too great an addiction to Karl May's Indian Stories" (17).

¹²⁵ *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels*, 13:269.

¹²⁶ Alfred Rosenberg, *Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts, Eine Wertung der seelisch-geistigen gestaltenkämpfe unserer Zeit* (Munich: Hoheneichen Verlag, 1941), 530.

¹²⁷ Ball: 76.

attempting to trace the ideological roots of “the leadership principle in National Socialism.” Ball’s unsupported accusation against Carlyle could refer to the written contact he maintained with Paul de Lagarde, a radical-conservative critic of the late nineteenth-century Germany, whose writings inspired nationalist movements of the right. Indeed, Lagarde’s correspondence with his British counterpart is documented. Elated at his discovery of a fellow radical conservative, a term which he used to describe political philosophers such as himself, Lagarde is reported to have written Carlyle in 1875, informing the Briton “we ... are conspirators of the future.”¹²⁸ Griffin considers that ideologues like Lagarde and Houston Stewart Chamberlain with their incessant jeremiads about the moral malaise afflicting their societies served as incubators for the rise of fascism.¹²⁹ Chamberlain, as well, whose popular and vehement racist tracts demonstrate the ubiquity and ascendancy of racialism and anti-Semitic thought in Wilhelmine Germany, recalled being “*vertieft*” (absorbed) by his readings of “Kant, Plato, Leibniz und Lichtenberg, Gibbon, Carlyle und Treitschke” in his youth.¹³⁰ Before his death in 1927, Chamberlain’s radical racist and philo-teutonic attitudes won him friendship with Adolf Hitler. Moreover, Alfred Rosenberg exalted him as his precursor and a pioneer of Aryan racial theory.¹³¹ But to attest Carlyle’s influence upon Chamberlain’s proto-Nazi tendencies by his love for his work would entail examining Leibniz, Plato, or Gibbon for

¹²⁸ Robert W. Lougee, *Paul de Lagarde, 1827-1891; A Study in Radical Conservatism in Germany* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962), 148.

¹²⁹ Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, 203.

¹³⁰ Houston Stewart Chamberlain, *Lebenswege meines Denkens* (Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1919), 318.

¹³¹ Geoffrey G. Field, *Evangelist of Race, the Germanic Vision of Houston Stewart Chamberlain* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 225.

their similar roles in establishing the philosophical opinions of a notorious racist.

Carlyle's connections to the German nationalist, Lagarde, and Chamberlain, the racialist, lend little support to Carlyle's complicity in the emergence of Nazism. Lagarde's discovery of Carlyle came long after he had already formulated his radically conservative philosophies, and Chamberlain's principal contribution to Nazism was not so much his political theories but his racialist dogma.

Without any sort of verifiable evidence of Carlyle's impact on the germination of fascist doctrine what remains of Carlyle's ideological link to fascism is a mere semblance of ideas. This, in fact, has remained the chief vituperation against Carlyle since Mussolini's "March on Rome." The "leader cult," which for some scholars is a debatable element of fascism, bears arresting similarities to Carlyle's hero-worship.¹³² Yet, attempts to equate Carlyle's thought with fascism collide with inevitable difficulties because, it seems, every ideology can be commensurate with the core principles of fascist ideology. For instance, Adrian Lyttelton has argued that Italian Fascism, when "reduced to its essentials, is the ideology of permanent conflict."¹³³ As such, Fascism is, in consummation, anti-utopian, which differentiates it from the National Socialist utopian dreams of a racially pure society, which "transcended" Italian Fascism. Being anti-utopian and championing eternal conflict, Fascism is thus not so distinct from pluralist liberalism which also postulates the benefits of conflict and competition, albeit not to the

¹³² Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, 42. Griffin rejects the leader cult as a "core component of generic fascism." The leader cult, evident in both Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, became a "pragmatic necessity" for both regimes as they attempted to conceal the widening disparities between party propaganda and ideology and reality.

¹³³ Adrian Lyttelton, ed., *Italian Fascisms, From Pareto to Gentile* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 12.

extremes that fascists did.¹³⁴ If Fascism harbors some parallels to liberalism, it also exhibits definite resemblances to various Marxist-Leninist systems. Fascism defined as antidemocratic, elitist, statist, mass-mobilizing, militaristic, and prone to charismatic leadership fails to offer any distinction from rightist regimes, such as Franco's Spain, to a whole slew of leftist regimes from Maoist China to Castro's Cuba. After all, Hannah Arendt's pioneering work *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, even with all its difficulties, long ago demonstrated to us how polarized ideologies can be easily homogenized by distilling their similarities.¹³⁵ It should thus be no surprise that Carlyleanism and Fascism can readily bear comparisons.

This is not to say that comparisons between Carlyle's thought and fascist ideology are baseless, but rather the efforts to compare the two have afforded precarious results at best. Rather than seeking to declare the Victorian polemicist a proto-fascist by mere semblance or vilipend the author as some sort of causal agent in the germination of a nefarious ideology with nominal evidence, the following study attempts to approach Carlyle's link to fascism from a fresh angle.

Fascist academicians lauded Thomas Carlyle as their precursor just as much as their Western counterparts sought to vitiate him as an ideological antecedent of fascism, yet none have systematically investigated the publications of these pro-fascist scholars to garner how, why, and what from Carlyle's writings appealed to Italian and German intellectuals of this period. The following analysis of these fascist writings and publications on and of Thomas Carlyle attempts to redress this gap. In both Fascist Italy

¹³⁴ Ibid., 12.

¹³⁵ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1951).

and Nazi Germany a resurgence of interest in Carlyle was perceived with the advent of Mussolini's dictatorship and even before Hitler's appointment to the chancellorship indicating the repute he would posthumously obtain as a fascist thinker.¹³⁶ The following study will scrutinize this resurgence of interest in Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, and Franco's Spain. The inclusion of Spain during the regency of Francisco Franco may appear as a solecism, after all it is rarely considered to be a true fascist regime.¹³⁷ Furthermore, it may be questioned why Admiral Horthy's Hungary or Romania under King Carol do not deserve a place in such a study. Indeed, both regimes were authoritarian in nature and their fascist parties, Hungary's Arrow Cross and Romania's Legion of the Archangel Michael, enjoyed far more electoral support than the Spanish Falange ever did. The distinction for this investigation among these semifascist or para-fascist states is that Carlyle's works had gained a considerable following in Spain, like they had in Italy and Germany as well, with numerous translations readily available to the public long before the appearance of fascism. Carlyle never enjoyed such notoriety in Romania or Hungary.¹³⁸ Spain in this study will serve to highlight the distinctions often made between the entrenched fascist regimes of Italy and Germany and the more

¹³⁶ Taylor, *Carlyle et la Pensée Latine*, 377. In 1937 he writes "Dans les pays où les doctrines autoritaires devaient triompher, il se créa une atmosphère très favorable à la pénétration des idées de Carlyle, et son œuvre fut l'objet d'une nouvelle poussée de curiosité qui ne s'est pas encore produite en France ni en Angleterre."

¹³⁷ Stanley Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945*, 264-267. Although Franco co-opted the Spanish fascist party (*Falange Española de las JONS*) into his coalition during the Spanish Civil War and later elevated it to the *partido único* (the single state party), the *Falange* remained merely a convenient revolutionary façade for Franco's otherwise staunchly conservative and reactionary government. Near the end of the Second World War, Franquist Spain had expunged most of its momentary fascist trappings and had successfully transitioned from a "partially mobilized, semifascist state to a Catholic, corporative, and increasingly demobilized authoritarian regime."

¹³⁸ Taylor, 374.

conservative authoritarian dictatorships of the Iberian Peninsula. This investigation of how Carlyle was interpreted and appropriated to validate these regimes will not only distill which elements of Carlyle's thought appealed most acutely to fascist intellectuals but also differentiate these disparate regimes. What becomes most evident, however, is that, although academics of the nations under scrutiny varied in their appraisal of elements of Carlyle's works, the monolithic adhesive that holds these appraisals together is not so much Carlyle's fervent belief in work but his exaltation of hero-worship.

This may of course seem obvious as the leader cult remains one of the most salient, and memorable, elements of fascist politics; however, the primacy of the *Führertum* in Germany or *ducismo* in Italy in terms of fascist ideology has always been debatable. In fact, Piero Melograni has demonstrated that Mussolinianism and Fascism were not identical, the cult of the duce actually solidifying while Fascism faltered.¹³⁹ Likewise, Ian Kershaw's eminent work *The 'Hitler Myth'* distinguished the *Führertum* from National Socialism.¹⁴⁰ The image of the *Führer* swelled with enthusiasm from common Germans as the party, the SA, and local Nazi functionaries were despised. The manufacture of the "Hitler Myth" often accelerated at the expense of the party and its ideology. A case in point is the Night of the Long Knives, Hitler's brutal liquidation of long-time party devotees including Ernst Röhm, the leader of the SA, and Gregor Strasser, the leftwing head of the party who incidentally considered the *Führerprinzip* to

¹³⁹ Piero Melograni, "The Cult of the Duce," *Journal of Contemporary History* 11 (October 1976): 221-237.

¹⁴⁰ Ian Kershaw, *The 'Hitler Myth,' Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

be a lamentable import of “fascist origin.”¹⁴¹ This unleashing of bloodshed, rather than attracting criticism, was met with a sigh of relief, the vast majority of Germans sympathizing with the *Führer* and excusing his actions as necessary to rid Germany of the revolutionary wing of the Nazi party.¹⁴² Hitler himself was aware of his increasing popularity as a messianic figure despite the growing disdain for his party.¹⁴³ “The ‘Hitler Myth’ can be seen as providing the central motor for integration, mobilization, and legitimation within the Nazi system of rule.”¹⁴⁴ Nazism and Fascism, in effect, became Hitlerism and Mussolianism respectively, the *Führer* and the *duce* embodying their nation and not so much their movement.

Carlyle’s hero-worship, thus, lent intellectual legitimacy to these authoritarian regimes where Carlylean ideas had previously penetrated academic circles and popular readership. While Western academics derided the “sage of Chelsea” as a postmortem fascist sympathizer, Italian, German, and even Spanish scholars erected him as both a prognosticator of totalitarian rule and an apostle of their respective regimes. In Germany, Carlyle became a prophet of National Socialism, in Spain, a defendant of Franquismo, and in Italy, a prescient architect of Mussolini’s regime.

Carlyle in Fascist Italy

“Due epoche, due uomini due temperamenti diversi, ma quale sorprendente incontro nell’avvento di una nuova aristocrazia, tra l’idealista e il realizzatore, tra il veggente romantico e il costruttore ardito e sapiente.” G. Licciardelli, *Benito Mussolini e Tommaso Carlyle*

¹⁴¹ Payne, *A History of Fascism*, 464.

¹⁴² Kershaw, *The ‘Hitler Myth’*, 85.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 104.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 257.

As occurred in Germany with Goethe's praise for Carlyle, the Victorian's reputation in Italy was immediately enhanced due his contact with a meteoric voice of his era. Giuseppe Mazzini, founder of the *Giovine Italia* movement and prominent champion of the Italian *Risorgimento*, was a frequent guest at Carlyle's home in Chelsea, and, although the two very rarely saw eye to eye in political matters—Carlyle disdained Mazzini's "Republicanism" as "Rousseau fanaticism"—a mutual respect soon germinated between the father of modern Italy and the Victorian Prophet.¹⁴⁵ Carlyle, for his part, considered Mazzini "a most valiant, faithful, considerably gifted and noble soul" and in 1871 he lauded him as "the most *pious* living man I now know."¹⁴⁶ Mazzini, who equally repudiated Carlyle's political sentiments and even penned a rather searing review of *The French Revolution*, nonetheless located Carlyle as a figure "troppo alto nella stima de'suoi contemporanei e di me" (a very elevated figure in the esteem of his contemporaries and myself).¹⁴⁷ In solemn praise of his Victorian contemporary Mazzini would aver "nel santuario dell'anima, Carlyle si congiungerà sempre in amore e rispetto con tutti gli eletti che adorano Dio e il Vero, soffrono senza maledire e si sacrificano senza sdegno o disperazione" (in the sanctuary of the soul, Carlyle will always join in love and respect with all those elect that worship God and the Truth, suffer without cursing and sacrifice themselves without scorn or despair).¹⁴⁸ Alfredo Oriani, a

¹⁴⁵ Thomas Carlyle, *Reminiscences* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1887), 1:110.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:110.

¹⁴⁷ Giuseppe Mazzini, *Scritti editi e inediti di Giuseppe Mazzini* (Milan: G. Daelli, 1862), 4:262.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 4:261.

prominent literary voice and a posited “precursor” to the Fascist movement, noted that Carlyle and Mazzini were “the two noblest spirits of the past century.”¹⁴⁹

Carlyle’s works excited considerable interest in Italy compelling publishers to translate even his longest works and attracting much commentary from distinguished Italian authors. Whereas Carlyle’s *History of Frederick the Great* was spurned by critics in France and elicited no translation, in Italy it had quite the opposite impact receiving universal praise and, in fact, an Italian adaptation of the work was already in print before Carlyle’s death.¹⁵⁰ Luigi Pirandello, among others, admitted the significant influence of Carlyle in his writing noting that Carlyle was among the greatest humorists to take up the pen.¹⁵¹ The deeply religious novelist Antonio Fogazzaro and Alfredo Panzini, lexicographer, historian, and author who, like Carlyle, perceived history as primarily the work of a few exceptional individuals, both bear the influence of Carlyle’s writings.

Thus, Carlyle’s work had received acclaim from and contributed to the intellectual development of some of Italy’s most renowned authors, and, although interest in his work fluctuated, there seems to have been a revival of interest in Carlyle in the years following the First World War. By 1905, Italian translations of the majority of Carlyle’s prominent works were available including *Past and Present* which included an introduction from Professor Luigi Einaudi, economist and eventually president of the republic in 1948.¹⁵² However, Taylor, in his work on the penetration of Carlylean

¹⁴⁹ Alfredo Oriani, *Matrimonio* (Bologna, 1935), 339.

¹⁵⁰ Taylor, 209.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 355.

thought in the Romance speaking nations of Europe, perceived a considerable decline in academic attention to Carlyle between the years 1911 and 1920, but popular appeal seems to have remained constant with new editions of *History of the French Revolution* and *On Heroes* being published, respectively in 1916 and 1917.¹⁵³ Following the *Vittoria Mutilata* and in the wake of the *Biennio Rosso*, two years of communist agitation and workers' strikes that alarmed the middle and upper-classes, a variety of excerpts of Carlyle's writings were printed which Emery Neff points out "accompanied the rise of Fascism to power in Italy."¹⁵⁴ Neff posits that economic despair and political turbulence attracted and revitalized interest in Carlyle throughout Europe at this time.¹⁵⁵

This renewed interest in Carlyle, at least in Italy, extended through the 1920s and 30s, an invigorated curiosity for the Victorian prophet saturating Fascist Italy. Italian Editions of *Sartor Resartus*, *the French Revolution*, and *On Heroes* came off the presses every few years, yet the dates of these publications are remarkable. Although numerous excerpts from Carlyle's writings appeared in the early twenties, there seems to have been a respite in which few of his works were published after 1922.¹⁵⁶ In the years following 1926, however, the publication of Italian editions of Carlyle's *On Heroes* increased

¹⁵² Thomas Carlyle, *Passato e presente. Con prefazio del Prof. Luigi Einaudi* (Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1905).

¹⁵³ Taylor, 362.

¹⁵⁴ Emery Neff, *Carlyle* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1932), 268. Among others Neff was referring to: Thomas Carlyle, *Pagine scelte e pensieri*, trans and ed. by Angiolo Biancotti (Turin: G. B. Paravia, 1921), the Italian translation of the popular German *Arbeiten und nicht Verzweifeln*: Thomas Carlyle, *Lavora e non deperarti: brani scelti dalle sue opere*, trans. by V. Moralli (Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1920), and Thomas Carlyle, *Pagine scelte*, trans. by Gino Valori (Milan: Facchi, 1920).

¹⁵⁵ Neff, 268-269.

¹⁵⁶ The only work to be published between 1923 and 1926 was *Sartor Resartus*: Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor resartus = il sarto rappezzato*, trans. by F. e G. Chimenti (Bari: Giuseppe Laterza & Filgi, 1924).

markedly. Whereas the last publication of *Heroes* left the presses in 1921, publication runs began to recur de rigueur between 1926 and 1943.¹⁵⁷

This manifest enthusiasm for *Heroes* corresponds to the great inroads achieved by Mussolini's regime after the Matteotti crisis. Before 1925, the Fascist position in Italy had been tenuous. Indeed, Mussolini had served as Prime Minister since his October 1922 "March on Rome," yet he continued to confront an obstinate socialist minority in parliament and was compelled to make concessions at every turn to his fair-weather liberal supporters. The kidnapping and murder of the outspoken moderate socialist Giacomo Matteotti by a *squadra* under the express orders of a personal assistant to Mussolini further exacerbated his predicament and seemed to portend the end of the Fascist Revolution in Italy. Yet, Fascist opposition misapprehended the situation and retreated from the government in protest in what came to be called the Aventine Secession. The absence of the elected ministers may have given publicity to their plight but it also provided Mussolini with an auspicious opportunity. His hand forced by the ensuing disarray of a parliament now deemed ineffectual, Mussolini, in front of a parliamentary audience now dominated by Fascist ministers, accepted personal responsibility for the murder of Matteotti to a riotous and sustained applause and to cheers of "we are with you."¹⁵⁸ Mussolini quickly asserted full authority of the

¹⁵⁷ The Florence based Barbera firm pressed their edition of *Gli eroi* into service in 1926 after a five year hiatus—Thomas Carlyle, *Gli eroi*, trans. by Maria Pezze Pascolato (Florence: G. Barbera, 1926). Barbera made yet another printing only 2 years later and a third in 1933. The Turin firm Unione Tipografico published editions of *Gli eroi* in 1934, 1936, and even 1943—Thomas Carlyle, *Gli eroi e il culto degli eroi e l'eroico nella storia*, trans. and ed. by Rosina Campanini (Turin: Unione tipografico—editrice torinese, 1934, 1936, 1943). The press Corbaccio also ran a publication in 1939—Thomas Carlyle, *Gli eroi*, trans. by Giorgio Varchi (Milan: Corbaccio, 1939).

¹⁵⁸ Griffin, *Fascism*, 50.

government superseding the rule of parliament and set about “fascistizing” the nation. Mussolini, now holding the reigns of government more securely, was empowered to institute the *leggi fascisstissime* (ultra-Fascist laws) which included the abolishment of all other political parties in 1926.¹⁵⁹ The years following the Matteotti crisis thus mark the entrenchment and consolidation of the Fascist movement in Italy. The Mussolini dictatorship was firmly established and the Fascist ruler became subject only to the king.

It is in this context that we see a flurry of interest in Carlyle and, more precisely, in his views on labor and leadership. Some of Mussolini’s first acts after solidifying rule and establishing a one party system were the implementation of his envisaged corporatist state. He advanced a system of national syndicalism and passed his *Carta del Lavoro dello Stato fascista* guaranteeing the right to work to all Italians.¹⁶⁰ Dr. Licciardelli, a professor of political economy at the University of Pavia, in his work entitled *Benito Mussolini e Tommaso Carlyle, la nuova aristocrazia*, sought to equate Mussolini’s corporatism to Carlyle’s call for “captains of industry” in *Past and Present*.¹⁶¹ Licciardelli portrays Mussolini as the “il costruttore ardito e sapiente” (the daring and learned builder) whose *Carta del Lavoro* consummates “le mistiche e profetiche concezioni di un insigne inglese...Tommaso Carlyle” (the mystic and prophetic ideas of a distinguished Englishman...Thomas Carlyle).¹⁶² Licciardelli often conceives Carlyle as a spiritually gifted oracle who forecasted a novel coordination of social forces:

¹⁵⁹ Payne, 115-116.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹⁶¹ G. Licciardelli, *Benito Mussolini e Tommaso Carlyle, la nuova aristocrazia* (Milan: Istituto Editoriale Cisalpino), 1931.

Ma dove egli, il più originale degli storici inglesi, si eleva sopra tutti, e la sua parola improntata da un profondo misticismo presagisce una nuova gerarchia sociale, è nell'esaltazione del lavoro. Egli, il profeta dell'Inghilterra della prima metà del Secolo XIX, che aveva vissuto l'angoscia dei tristi giorni della propria Nazione, è l'apostolo di un nuovo ordine sociale che, a distanza di un secolo, era dato alla geniale e ardita mente di un italiano, di Benito Mussolini,... iniziando la fondazione dell'opera che il grande idealista inglese aveva congetturato e perseguito col suo mirabile pensiero.¹⁶³

(But where he, the most original of the English historians, surpasses all others, and his word imprinted by profound mysticism presages a new social hierarchy, is in the exaltation of labor. He, the prophet of England from the first half of the nineteenth century, who had lived through the anguish of the miserable days of his own nation, is the prophet of a new social order that, over the distance of a century, was given to the ingenious and forward mind of one Italian, Benito Mussolini,... starting the foundation of the work that the great English idealist had conjectured and pursued with his remarkable thinking)

Carlyle is thus portrayed as the originator of a social organization that would only be actualized by the ingenuity of Mussolini. Licciardelli constantly emphasizes Carlyle's "mysticism" which he uses to explicate the uncanny augury of the Victorian's thought and its reappearance and effectuation in Italy a century later. He never once attempts to trace a possible influence that the works of Carlyle may have had on the cultivation of Mussolini's views on labor. Carlyle and Mussolini are portrayed merely as spiritual brothers whose solutions for the needs of a nation present a remarkably similar acumen. In addition, Carlyle's "mysticism" serves to disambiguate the line between Mussolini's corporatism and its correlations to Marxism. Licciardelli avers "*Il misticismo del Carlyle coincide con la rinascita moderna delle tendenze spirituali e ideali, ed è reazione vigorosa contro il materialismo che imperversava nella seconda metà del secolo scorso*" (The mysticism of Carlyle coincides with the modern rebirth of the spiritual and ideal

¹⁶² Ibid., 5.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 32.

tendencies and is a vigorous reaction against the materialism that became all the rage in the second half of the past century).¹⁶⁴ Marxism and its materialist aspects are devoid of the spiritualism and idealism that pervade the thinking of both Mussolini and Carlyle. Licciardelli attempts to enlist Carlyle in the fight against socialism recasting him as an anti-Marxist and redirecting his disgust with the Liberalism of the nineteenth century to the Marxism of the twentieth century.¹⁶⁵

In reframing Carlyle as an anti-Marxist, Licciardelli also molds Mussolini into the acme of the Carlylean hero. Licciardelli's last half of his book devolves into a panegyric of exceptional sycophancy as he exalts Mussolini as "il ministro auspicato dal Carlyle" (the minister whom Carlyle was awaiting).¹⁶⁶ He explains that, to implement his novel hierarchical organization which would secure the right to labor for all, Carlyle awaited a hero "un uomo, un capo" who would direct the masses and ameliorate the situation that plagued industrial society with "una passione ardente e di una lealtà che sconfiggerebbe ogni cosa" (an ardent passion and of a loyalty that defeats all things).¹⁶⁷ Who would fulfill these yearnings of Carlyle? "Ecco Benito Mussolini."¹⁶⁸ Thus, Carlyle remains the mystical "veggente" (seer), and Mussolini becomes not only "il costruttore" but the veritable hero longed for by Carlyle.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 39.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 36.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 52.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 52.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 54.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 108.

Licciardelli's ennoblement of Mussolini and his *Carta del Lavoro* elucidates the dichotomy between Mussolinianism and Fascism that Piero Melgrani has called to attention.¹⁷⁰ In ascribing to Mussolini the honor of being the sole architect of corporatism and assigning Carlyle the role of a prophet or "veggente" of such actions Licciardelli has rendered Mussolini a messianic figure. National syndicalism and corporatism were rather diffused ideas and a principle element of Fascist ideology when Mussolini finally cut his lines to the socialist party, and, as we can see, even Carlyle's "captains of industry" can be seen as a precedent for corporatist ideas.¹⁷¹ Yet Licciardelli consistently minimizes the role of the Fascist party in the *Carta del Lavoro* portraying it as a secondary instrument wielded by the hero Mussolini. Licciardelli, writing in 1931 at the height of the world-wide depression, can triumphantly assert the brilliancy of Mussolini's labor policy as the reason for Italy's avoidance of the economic devastation experienced by the other European nations following the global downswing. Carlyle's appearance in this discourse serves to encapsulate Mussolini's grand economic and social solutions in a mystical context. Carlyle is literally portrayed as a prophet who does not so much presage the emergence of Fascism but testifies of the heroic figure of Mussolini.

Not surprisingly, the interpretation of Mussolini as Carlyle's hero and as the veritable embodiment and consummation of the Victorian's envisaged political hierarchy

¹⁷⁰ Melgrani, 221-237.

¹⁷¹ See: A. James Gregor, *Phoenix, Fascism in Our Time* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1999). Gregor perceives Fascism as distinct from National Socialism, and its ideology "was the product of, and attuned to, the needs of the developmental and reactive nationalism that typifies many of the revolutions of our time" (21). As a form of developmental nationalism, Fascism can be equated with the ideology of National Syndicalism in its elevation of corporatism as the only solution to the ever widening conflicts extending from the liberal capitalist system. In a way, Fascism can be perceived as heterodox socialism which sought to impose an organic hierarchy and morality on the amorphous and uncontrollable masses, as Georges Sorel and others had expounded.

abounded in Fascist Italy, yet most authors tended to be far more subdued in their treatment of the Italian dictatorship as a Carlylean polity.¹⁷² Laura Fermi, in her dissertation of 1939, argued that Carlyle revered “l'uomo di azione” (the man of action) who “praticamente realizza l'ideale nel reale” (pragmatically realizes the ideal into the real).¹⁷³ Indeed, this is the interpretation of Carlyle's hero which, she believes, extends from his “aver fuso la concezione romantica e germanica di genio riferita all'artista con quella latina classica di duce, condottiero, riferita all'uomo d'azione” (having fused the romantic and Germanic conception of the artist with the classical Latin conception of the captain, leader, referring to the man of action).¹⁷⁴ This is the “originalità” of Carlyle which “rappresenta una vera e propria tendenza umana, la quale è di tutti i tempi, ma che assume tonalità nuove in ogni nuove personalità” (represents a true human tendency, which exists in all times, but assumes novel tonality in each new personality).¹⁷⁵ Thus, Carlyle's heroes remain an eternal tendency, one that in each hero is protean in its manifestations. With his novel interpretation which strikes at an ageless verity, Carlyle, Fermi avers, adapted philosophy into pragmatism and presaged modern developments in the political field:

¹⁷² The studies of Mario Vinciguerra, a renowned Italian scholar of English literature, were the only works I came across which remained immune to this politicization (or fascisticization) of scholarship in the era of the “Fascist Revolution.” See: Mario Vinciguerra, *Romantici e Decadenti Inglesi: Carlyle, Emerson, Poe, Wilde, Hardy, Stevenson, Moore, Synge* (Foligno: Franco Campitelli, 1926) and Mario Vinciguerra, *I girodini del 900* (Naples: Francesco Razzi, 1926). Both works represent excellent scholarship on Carlyle, and rather than subjecting his works to presentist comparisons with Mussolini's regime, he even enters into a scholarly dialogue criticizing G. M. Trevelyan's dualist interpretation of a young and old Carlyle from his then recent article “The Two Carlyles.”

¹⁷³ Laura Fermi, *Thomas Carlyle* (Milan: Casa Editrice Giuseppe Principato, 1939), 97-98.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 174.

Ed è interessante studiare questo sorgere del nuovo pensiero in Carlyle perchè egli é forse l'unico degli scrittori del secolo scorso che così dichiaratamente porta questa tendenza nel campo sociale ed economico fino a propettare delle soluzioni pratiche, soprattutto per quanto riguarda il problema dell'organizzazione del lavoro, che sono, talvolta, delle vere anticipazioni del pensiero moderno.¹⁷⁶

(And it is interesting to study this emergence of novel thought in Carlyle because he is almost the only writer of the past century that thus avowedly brought this tendency into the social and economic field in order to propitiate practical solutions, above all in regards to the problem of labor organization, that are, at times, veritable anticipations of modern thought.)

Although she is far more subtle, Fermi echoes Licciardelli's interpretation of Carlyle as an antecedent to Mussolini's organization of labor and places this solution firmly in the context of the hero. It is the hero that must and can coordinate (or corporate) the disparate elements of the economy.

As with Licciardelli and Fermi, for the majority of scholars in Fascist Italy concerned with Carlyle he remained an astute prophet or prognosticator. Rosina Campini, whose introduction would be repeated in numerous editions of Carlyle's works over the next decade, introduced the 1934 edition of *Gli eroi* repeating the present significance of his work. "Nella nostra epoca eroica il pensiero del Carlyle assurge, così, al valore di una vera profezia" (In our heroic era, Carlyle's thought emerges, thus, with the value of a true prophecy).¹⁷⁷ Most exceptionally prophetic for Campini was his "critiche feroci" against parliamentarianism that makes him "tutto dei nostri giorni" (very much of our day).¹⁷⁸ Roberto Michels, a chief ideologue of the Fascist state, includes Carlyle in his "Appunti sul concetto di autorità" as an exponent of authoritarian rule

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 175.

¹⁷⁷ Thomas Carlyle, , *Gli eroi e il culto degli eroi e l'eroico nella storia*, trans. and ed. by Rosina Campanini (Turin: Unione tipografico—editrice torinese, 1934), 15.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 15.

adapted by Mussolini.¹⁷⁹ Between the years 1926 and 1943 more Italian editions of Carlyle's *Heroes* hit the presses than any other work by Carlyle combined most of which contained introductions portraying Carlyle as a "profeta e veggente" and an expounder of "concezioni che solamente oggi si sono fatte strada tra i popoli" (concepts that only today have pushed their way into the people).¹⁸⁰

This general enthusiasm for *Heroes* and the pervasive treatment of the "Victorian Prophet" as an *auspex* for Mussolini's Roman Dictatorship distill those most attractive elements of Carlyle's writings for Fascist Italy. The primary appeal for advocates of Mussolini's regime was Carlyle's hierarchical design for society. Although Licciardelli attempted to draw comparisons between Carlyle's "Captains of Industry" and Mussolini's *Carta del Lavoro*, his work tended to degenerate into a crude hero-worship homily for the *duce*. Ultimately, Carlyle's hero-worship provided a precedent for Mussolinianism or the leader cult in Fascist Italy. There are not any comparisons between Fascist ideology and Carlylean thought that become evident but merely a common conviction for the necessity of strong leadership, especially over the economy, that remain the controlling idea of these publications. Mussolini absorbs a sort of messianic flare as he becomes the embodiment of a prophesied paternalist hero. Carlyle is thus portrayed not as a prophet of fascism but a harbinger of the *duce*.

Carlyle in Nazi Germany

¹⁷⁹ Roberto Michels, "Appunti sul concetto di autorità," *La Stirpe* (August 1932), 340-341.

¹⁸⁰ Thomas Carlyle, *Gli Eroi e il culto degli eroi e l'eroico nella storia*, trans. and ed. by Rosina Campanini, 15. This same introduction appears in three editions of *Gli Eroi* published in 1934, 1936, and 1943. A total of seven editions of *Gli Eroi* were published as apposed to four editions of *The French Revolution* and one of *Sartor Resartus*.

“Wenn Carlyle noch unter uns lebte, er würde Hitler neben Mussolini als die Helden dieses Jahrhunderts, als die modernsten Verkörperungen antiken Heldentums feiern: als die großen Revolutionäre, die ihrem Volk einen Neuen Geist und einen Neuen Willen Gaben.” K. O. Schmidt, *Der Held in uns: Die Wiedergeburt des Heroischen in der Deutschen Notwende*

If Italian publications in the Fascist era avoided drawing comparisons between Carlylean thought and Fascism itself, parallels between Nazism and Carlyle’s principle tenets abounded in the Third Reich. That is, of course, not to say that the general emphasis on hero-worship changed. Hero-worship and most especially Carlyle’s “heroes” emerged as the primary concerns of most academics working within the confines of the National Socialist system.

With the advent of National Socialism Carlyle’s reputation, which had always enjoyed considerable acclaim in Germany, was amplified by numerous publications which sought to associate the renowned Scottish author with Nazism. Peter Zenzinger noted that there is “probably no other country outside the English-speaking world” in which Carlyle’s works have attracted so much attention as they have in Germany.¹⁸¹ Although Carlyle’s reputation had remained constant even throughout the years of the Weimar Republic, Hitler’s appointment as chancellor and the immediate influence the Nazi party sought over academia brought a renewed interest in Carlyle. By 1933, K. O. Schmidt was already couching the “National Socialist Revolution” in Carlylean terms as “*die Wiedergeburt des Heroischen in der Deutschen Notwende*” (the rebirth of the heroic in the German emergency change).¹⁸² Theodor Deimel composed an entire dissertation

¹⁸¹ Peter Zenzinger, “Thomas Carlyle’s Reputation in Germany,” *Scottish Studies* vol. 1 (Frankfurt: Verlag Peter Lang, 1981), 331. Zenzinger presents an excellent overview of Carlyle’s reputation in Germany tracing publications about the Victorian author from the late nineteenth century into the post war period.

entitled *Carlyle und der Nationalsozialismus* which over 150 pages effected a detailed enumeration of the parallels between Carlylean and Nazi philosophy.¹⁸³ Within a few years Carlyle came to be considered by many “den ersten englischen Nationalsozialisten” (the first English National Socialist).¹⁸⁴

Carlyle, as he had for Mussolini’s supporters in Italy, provided a highly regarded voice to champion the National Socialist leadership principle. In a 1935 article for the journal *die Deutsche Höhere Schule*, Theodor Jost explained that currently:

im neuen Deutschland, haben die Schriften des englischen Philosophen und kritikers eine besondere Bedeutung gewonnen. Sie muten uns fast seherisch an, sind sie doch voll von nationalsozialistischen Gedankengut unserer Tage, vor allem sein hauptwerk: „Über Helden und Heldenverehrung und das heroische in der Geschichte“ (1841). Carlyle hat in der Tat den Gedanken von der Sendung des Führers sozusagen geschichtlich-philosophisch begründet. Er kämpft, selbst ein Führer, heftig gegen die Masse, er ... wird ein Wegbereiter für neue Gedanken und Formen¹⁸⁵

(in new Germany, the writings of the English philosopher and critic have won a special meaning. They appear almost visionary to us, they are full of National Socialist ideas from our days, particularly his primary work: *On Heroes and Hero-worship and the Heroic in History* (1841). Carlyle established, in fact, the mission of the *Führer* historically and philosophically. He fights, himself a *Führer*, vigorously against the masses, he ... becomes a pathfinder for new thoughts and forms.)

Jost portrays Carlyle much in the same way as Licciardelli. Carlyle’s writings on hero-worship take precedent over all others and forecast the advent of a hero, however in this

¹⁸² K. O. Schmidt, *der Held in uns, die Wieder Geburt des Heroischen in der Deutschen Notwende* (Pfullingen: Johannes Baum Verlag, 1933).

¹⁸³Theodor Deimel, *Carlyle und der Nationalsozialismus: Eine Würdigung des englischen Denkers im Lichte der deutschen Gegenwart* (Würzburg: Druckerei und Verlag wissenschaftlicher Werke Konrad Triltsch, 1936).

¹⁸⁴ Schmidt, *der Held in uns*, 4.

¹⁸⁵ Theodor Jost, “Von Führertum, Helden und Heldenverehrung,” *Die Deutsche Höhere Schule* 15 (1935): 535.

case the *Führer* rather than the *duce*. Carlyle himself as he did in Liciardelli's account takes on the qualities of the fascist leader—a lone hero fighting against a mass of unbelievers but nonetheless preparing the way for a newer brighter future. Nazi critics perceived Carlyle's Hero-worship as a veritable precursor to their *Führerprinzip*. Walter Meseke, likewise, in a 1935 dissertation notes that "Der wesentliche Berührungspunkt zwischen Carlyle und uns aber ist das Bekenntnis zum Gedanken von Führertum und Gefolgschaft" (the essential point of contact between Carlyle and us is his commitment to the idea of the *Führertum* and obedience).¹⁸⁶ Wilhelm Vollrath echoes these sentiments arguing that Carlyle's exaltation of the heroic as a purely "Nordic" tendency which reveals the reason for congruity between the Victorian's thought and present German politics.¹⁸⁷ Yet in all these studies, the authors maintain a strict scientific tone and avoid allusions to any mystical clairvoyance as had Licciardelli. Carlyle is not so much a "prophet" of the *Führer* but a visionary or progressive theorist, a man fully engrossed in German literature, art, and history and, thus, shaped by the same forces that engendered National Socialism.¹⁸⁸ Carlyle stems from the same roots as the National Socialists or the Germans in general, so they argue, and even shares the same "Nordic" blood.

¹⁸⁶ Walter Alexander Meseke, *Mensch, Geschichte und Staat bei Thomas Carlyle* (Munich: Druck von Knorr und Hirth, 1935), 58.

¹⁸⁷ Wilhelm Vollrath, *Thomas Carlyle and H. St. Chamberlain, zwei Freunde Deutschlands* (Munich: J. F. Lehmanns Verlag, 1935), 41, 50.

¹⁸⁸ Most studies on Carlyle and publications of his writings from the Nazi era contain long biographical portions that emphasize the writer's absorption of German literature and philosophy. See: Thomas Carlyle, *Heldentum und Macht: Schriften für die Gegenwart*, ed. Michael Freund (Leipzig: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1935). Vollrath, *Th. Carlyle und H. St. Chamberlain, zwei Freunde Deutschlands*, 27-37. Hans Borbein, "Thomas Carlyle im Lichte des deutschen Schicksals," *Neuphilologische Monatsschrift* 6 (1935): 167-184.

This expected appearance of an emphasis on blood and race expose one of several differences between the Nazi interpretations and those of the Italian Fascists. Germans, to begin with, conceived themselves to have a lot more in common with the Sage of Chelsea. This commonality surpasses a mere conceptualized relation between Germans and their British neighbors, although that did remain an important element in German interpretations of Carlyle even before Hitler's regime. The bonds that held Carlyle to Germany seemed to be a lot stronger than those that tied him to Italy. Carlyle's and Germany's intersecting history, their shared "ancestry", and, most especially, Carlyle's *History of Frederick the Great* coalesced in the minds of Nazi scholars as a vindication of the Victorian's proper Teutonic nature.

Carlyle's contact with Goethe, his defense of the German cause in the Franco-Prussian War, and praise from Bismarck and Treitschke reappear constantly in writings from the Nazi era to remind readers of the amicable and interwoven relationship between Germany and the British writer and may in fact manifest German scholars' attempts to assuage relations with their neighbors across the North Sea. In Deimel's introduction to his dissertation, *Carlyle und der Nationalsozialismus*, he begins by reminding his readers of Carlyle's "Verleihung des Ordens Pour le Mérite" (recipience of the *Pour le Mérite*), the Second Reich's highest award, for his intervention on behalf of the Prussian cause just as English popular opinion swayed against the Germans when they began their siege of Paris.¹⁸⁹ He further proclaims that Hitler himself mentioned Carlyle "in seinem Schlußwort vor dem Volksgericht als maßgebender Geschichtsschreiber des großen

¹⁸⁹ Deimel, 1.

Friedrich” (in his closing words to the court as the authoritative historian of Frederick).¹⁹⁰ After reviewing the intersecting destinies of Carlyle and the German people, Deimel portends that if his comparative work on the similar ideologies of Carlyle and National Socialism “dem Engländer die vielumstrittenen Ideen des Nationalsozialismus näherbringt durch den eingehenden Vergleich mit den Grundgedanken seines großen Landsmannes, kann sie eine praktische Aufgabe erfüllen im Sinne deutscher Kulturpropaganda” (gives the English an understanding of the very controversial ideas of National Socialism through an incisive comparison with the basic thoughts of their great countryman, it can fulfill a practical role in the sense of propaganda for German culture).¹⁹¹ Thus, he hopes his work will assert a near diplomatic role in some sort of envisioned *rapprochement* with England.

Deimel’s optimism is shared by many other German critics who see Carlyle as somehow being able to recover his capacity as an intermediary of German culture. Vollrath contends that both Houston Stewart Chamberlain and Thomas Carlyle stand “an der Schwelle zweier Reiche” (on the thresholds of two empires).¹⁹² Hans Borbein points out in his article on Carlyle’s influence upon German destiny that the allegiance to the value of labor was mutual to both Germany and England.¹⁹³ It appears that for most Nazi scholars that Carlyle could serve as a cultural attaché for the German people and bridge the perceived gap between British and German morals.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 1.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 2.

¹⁹² Vollrath, 10.

¹⁹³ Borbein, 170.

The notion that Carlyle himself is, by the very blood in his veins, a verifiable German reverberates through the words of nearly every scholar that took to writing about the Scottish historian. Carl Puhmann suggests that Carlyle, “ist von uns Deutschen immer tiefer verstanden als von den Engländern. Er ist als Schotte dem Niederdeutschen näher als dem Engländer” (is more deeply understood by us Germans than by the English. He is as a Scotsman closer to the Low German than the English).¹⁹⁴ The notion that race contributes to an individual’s worldview extending from some mystic harmony of blood reverberates throughout the National Socialist period. Karl Richter contends that “Die Weltanschauung und das Ethos einer Rasse aber bilden eine unauflösliche Einheit” (the worldview and the ethos of a race build an indissoluble unity) and that “Carlyles Ethos ist das Ethos der nordischen Seele schlechthin” (Carlyle’s ethos is the ethos of the Nordic soul par excellence).¹⁹⁵ The notion of a unity in the thought and “ethos” of a race subsumes Carlyle into this National Socialist grand and cosmic vision of a world united not by mutual experience but a consciousness (*Bewußtsein*) emerging from blood and earth (*Blut und Boden*).¹⁹⁶

That the National Socialist scholars perceived Carlyle as a “Geist von unserem Geist” (spirit from our spirit) from a posited Pangermanic consciousness should not astonish us but the fact that racialist views such as these are voiced in works that predate Nazism and by vehement opponents of Hitler’s regime manifest the weight and

¹⁹⁴ Carl Puhmann, *Thomas Carlyle, Eine Studie über seine Welt- u. Gesellschaftsanschauung* (Göttingen: University of Göttingen, 1938), 44.

¹⁹⁵ Karl Richter, “Carlyle—Nietzsche—Chamberlain: Ein Versuch zur Neuwertung im Ethos” *Deutschlands Erneuerung; Monatschrift für das deutsche Volk* 21 (1937): 661, 664.

¹⁹⁶ Meseke 59.

credibility of racial science in the German speaking world.¹⁹⁷ The preponderance of biological racism in National Socialism has even led some academics to exclude Nazism from generic definitions of Fascism.¹⁹⁸ Paul Hensel, as early as 1901, reported that Carlyle's "Volkscharakter" had preserved "die Eigenart des niederdeutschen Stammes" (the peculiarity of the Low German tribe).¹⁹⁹ It was not purely from Carlyle's reading of German romantics and idealists that he approximated his own worldview to German thought but by the fact that he retained some common ancestry with the German *Volk*. It, thus, comes as no surprise to Hensel that Carlyle, in place of his "früheren Ideen einer abstrakten allgemeinen Menschlichkeit" (earlier ideas of an abstract universal humanity), develops "die Idee eines pangermanischen Patriotismus" (the idea of a Pangermanic patriotism).²⁰⁰ Likewise, Egon Friedell, an ardent Austrian critic of the Nazi regime who himself was Jewish, also entertained these notions of an intense unity of a common racial bond between Germans and Carlyle.

Carlyle ist durch und durch Schotte, und zwar ein Schotte des Tieflands, wo der keltische Einschlag viel geringer ist als bei den Hochschotten und das

¹⁹⁷ Jost, 539.

¹⁹⁸ The most renowned and forceful of these academics is Zeev Sternhell. See: Zeev Sternhell, *Naissance de l'idéologie fasciste* (Paris: Fayard, 1989), 13. Sternhell explains that "*le fascisme ne saurait en aucune façon être identifié avec le nazisme... C'est le racisme dans son sens le plus extrême qui fait le fond du nazisme* (13). Yet, rather than reject all the commonalities that exist between fascist movements and Nazism because of its extreme racism, it seems more helpful, heuristically speaking, to employ the political scientist Roger Eatwell's "Spectral-Syncretic Model" to define generic fascism. See: Roger Eatwell, "Towards a New Model of Generic Fascism," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 4 (1992): 161-194. Eatwell considers fascism to differ from nation to nation because each particular movement, or permutation to use Griffin's terminology, is invariably affected by the culture in which it appears. This can explain why early Fascism in Italy was anti-clerical, yet the Spanish *Falange*, which José Antonio Primo de Rivera developed as an emulation of Mussolini's Fascist Party, remained a staunchly Catholic movement. The prevalence of biological racism in Germany thus led to its corporation in German permutations of fascism.

¹⁹⁹ Paul Hensel, *Thomas Carlyle* (Stuttgart: Fr. Frommanns Verlag, 1902), 9. Originally published in 1901.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 159.

niederdeutsche Element sogar stärker als bei den Engländern. Es mag damit zusammenhängen, daß er von allem Anfang an deutschem Geistesleben ein so tiefgehendes Interesse und Verständnis entgegengebracht hat und daß er andererseits in England anfangs so großes Befremden erregte.²⁰¹

(Carlyle is through and through a Scotsman, and, to be precise, a Scotsman of the lowlands, where the Celtic imprint is far more marginal than it is with the High Scottish and the Low German Element is even stronger than it is in England. Consequently, he brought from the very beginning such a deep interest and understanding to German thinking and, on the other hand, produced so much surprise in England.)

That Egon Friedell, who committed suicide jumping out his window when two SA men arrived at his door to arrest him shortly after the *Anschluss*, would express this identical conception of a racial and ancestral unity that effectuates common tendencies of thought attests to the very salience and diffusion of biological racist ideas amongst the German speaking people of early twentieth-century Europe.

This common identity with Carlyle that Germans and most especially National Socialists conceived was deepened by his famed *History of Frederick the Great* but became a point of contention for some critics. Indeed, Carlyle, in devoting his most lengthy work to the Prussian hero, demonstrated his reverence for German history which won him admiration from Nazi scholars. *Frederick* would be reprinted in numerous editions throughout the Nazi period the last appearing in 1943 and numerous critics would echo Bismarck's praise of the work reemphasizing Carlyle's service to the German nation.²⁰² Yet, the most entrenched National Socialists had trouble sustaining his treatment of Frederick's and Bismarck's Reich. Puhmann contends that Carlyle

²⁰¹ Egon Friedell, *Über das Heroische in der Geschichte*, ed. Wolfgang Lorenz (Bozen: Edition Raetia, 1997), 17. This work is a reprint of Egon Friedell's original *Carlyles Leben und Werk* printed in 1935.

²⁰² For more details see the following two chapters that will scrutinize *Frederick* and its special relation to the Third Reich.

misapprehended Prussia of the eighteenth century as identical to the Second Reich because he did not afford the French Revolution its due credit as a catalyst for the development of the political consciousness of nations which was the “entscheidendes Faktum.”²⁰³ Recalling the words of Moeller van den Bruck, another “posited” forerunner to the Nazis, Puhmann contends that “Geschichte ist nicht ein einfaches Auf und Ab, ein Wechsel von positiven und negativen, von gläubigen und ungläubigen, von heroischen und kritischen Zeiten, wie Carlyle glaubte. Geschichte ist Weitergabe” (History is not a simple give and take, an exchange from positives and negatives, from believing and disbelieving, from heroic and critical times, as Carlyle believed. History is a passing on).²⁰⁴ Puhmann’s staunch belief in the new Germany, a Germany of nationalized masses, is unable to concede a comparison between Frederick’s Prussia and the German Reich.

Although the less substantive comparisons between Carlylean thought and Nazi dogma are easily able to appropriate Carlyle as a National Socialist ideologue, more incisive studies by Nazi scholars tend to dislocate Carlyle from National Socialism evincing the sincerity with which these studies were effected. K. O. Schmidt’s claims that Carlyle was the first English Nazi or Peter Aldag’s infamous article, “*Thomas Carlyle und die Juden*,” in which he falsely attributes a brazenly antisemitic article to Carlyle, demonstrate the urgency with which the Victorian was pressed into service by Nazi scholars.²⁰⁵ Yet, more sober and academic comparisons, such as Deimel’s

²⁰³ Puhmann, 45.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 45.

²⁰⁵ Peter Aldag, “Thomas Carlyle und die Juden,” *Hochschule und Ausland* 15 (1937): 203-204.

dissertation, although imbued with National Socialist enthusiasm, demonstrate a more calm apprehension to append an undue Nazi stamp of approval on Carlyle.

Indessen muß schon hier mit Nachdruck darauf hingewiesen werden, was das Denken Thomas Carlyles grundsätzlich von dem des Nationalsozialismus trennt. Trotz aller Gemeinsamkeit ist doch die tiefste beider Weltanschauungen eine verschiedene. Carlyle macht eine religiöse Idee persönlicher Prägung zum Ausgangs- und Endpunkt aller Kritik und Reform. Sein letztes Ziel ist die religiöse Erneuerung seines Volkes. Der Nationalsozialismus dagegen als weltanschaulich-politische Bewegung geht von der völkischen Idee aus und legt diese seiner gesamten Politik zugrunde. Bei diesem tiefgehenden Unterschied, ... ist es trotz aller Übereinstimmungen verfehlt, Carlyle, wie es geschehen ist, als den „ersten Nationalsozialisten“ zu bezeichnen.²⁰⁶

(With this it must be pointed out with emphasis, how Carlyle's thought separates from that of National Socialism. Despite all commonality the foundations of both worldviews are different. Carlyle makes a personally shaped religious idea into the origin and end of all criticism and reform. National Socialism, on the other hand, as a *weltanschaulich* political movement begins with the *völkisch* idea and establishes this as the basis of its entire politics. With this profound difference, ... it is mistaken despite all the similarities, to designate Carlyle, as has been done, as the “first National Socialist.”)

Deimel's conclusion belies not only his conviction to Nazism but a scholarly fastidiousness and thoroughness that exceed that of some of his Western counterparts who seemed all too apt to dub Carlyle a Nazi. Indeed, Nazism permeated the academic professions in the Third Reich and deluded some of the sharpest minds, and, as dogmatic as their worldviews may have become, scholars such as Theodor Deimel soberly rejected the main thrusts of Carlyle's thought as too religious and not *völkisch* enough to be Nazi.

Carlyle in Franquist Spain

Speaking of Carlyle: “¿No vemos aquí al precursor de toda la Historia contemporánea, al padre de figuras tan eminentes como el germano Spengler o su compatriota Toynbee?” Francisco Cardona Castro—introduction to the 1965 edition of *On Heroes and the French Revolution*

²⁰⁶ Deimel, 12.

In sharp contrast to the fervently political interpretations of Carlyle's works in the Third Reich and Fascist Italy, Spanish interest in Carlyle remained rather subdued. That is not of course to say that there was not a revival of interest south of the Pyrenees, but that the interest in both scale and dogmatism was markedly less. Taylor mentioned a revival of interest in Carlyle's works on the eve of the Spanish Revolution noting that the enemies of the Second Republic had republished a new edition of *On Heroes*.²⁰⁷ This interest in *On Heroes* persisted throughout the Franco era with new publications appearing in 1946, 1959, and two separate editions in 1965.²⁰⁸ The introductions of these various works provide us with our only glance at Carlyle's reputation in Spain in this era.

Among Carlyle's admirers and his principal intermediaries in Spain were Miguel de Unamuno, a seminal voice of his era and a member of the influential "*Generación de 98*," and the distinguished critic Leopoldo Alas. Unamuno translated the first Spanish edition of *The French Revolution*, the volumes appearing between 1900 and 1902.²⁰⁹ Unamuno's exposure to Carlyle no doubt influenced the author's espousal of idealism rejecting the materialistic and progressivist trend that was sweeping the Iberian Peninsula at this time. In his novel *Amor y pedagogía*, we see evidence of his reading of *On Heroes* as when the tragic hero Avito, whose obsession with the marvels of science leads to his son's death, holds up the Scandinavian God Odin as an example of contemptuous

²⁰⁷ Taylor, 382. Taylor refers to the 1932 publication of *On Heroes: Thomas Carlyle, Obras filosóficas. Los Héroes. Culto á los héroes. Lo heroico en la historia*, trans. Francisco Galleh Palés (Madrid: Nueva Biblioteca Filosófica, 1932).

²⁰⁸ Thomas Carlyle, *Tratado de los héroes: de su culto y de lo heroico en la historia*, ed. and trans. J. Farran y Mayoral (Barcelona: Joaquín Gil, Editores, 1946). Thomas Carlyle, *Los héroes: el culto de los héroes y lo heroico en la historia*, ed. and trans. Pedro Umberto (Madrid: Aguilar, 1959 and 1965). Thomas Carlyle, *Los héroes y la Revolución Francesa, libros condensados*, ed. Francisco Cardona Castro, trans. Acosta Moro (Barcelona: Editorial Mateu, 1965).

²⁰⁹ See: Taylor, 366.

superstition.²¹⁰ Alas, penning the introduction to the first Spanish translation of *On Heroes*, emphatically intoned “Con toda sinceridad declaro que uno de los libros de cuantos he leído en mi vida, que más efecto han producido en mi ánimo, y en mi pensamiento, es éste de Los Héroes de Carlyle” (with all sincerity I declare that one of the many books I have read in my life, that have produced a great effect in my soul and in my thought, is this Carlyle’s *On Heroes*).²¹¹ Indeed, Carlyle’s entrance into Spain was marked with potent aficionados that performed as conduits for his thought and popularized his name, yet he would never develop the following he enjoyed in Italy let alone Germany.

Thus, the literature we are left to review is scant and offers only marginal evidence with which to assess Spanish perceptions of Carlyle’s thought under the authoritarian regime of Franco. What does become evident is that the works published even at the height of Franco’s despotism drew no comparisons between the Spanish regime and Carlyle’s political views as was common in both Italy and Germany. Written in 1938, at a time when the rhetoric of the Falangists was at its crescendo, Farran y Mayoral’s introduction to the 1946 edition of *On Heroes* makes no allusions to the Franco regime or its leadership cult. Farran y Mayoral does however offer an explanation for the difficulty proponents of the *Caudillaje*, the Spanish equivalent of *ducismo*, would encounter in Carlyle’s writings. Fearing that his writings were too anti-Catholic, Farran y Mayoral attempted to convince his readers of Carlyle’s balance contending that the Protestant Scotsman “afirma que el Papado, el catolicismo, no

²¹⁰ Miguel de Unamuno, *Amor y pedagogía* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2004), 108-109.

²¹¹ Monroe Z. Hafter, “Heroism in Alas and Carlyle’s *On Heroes*,” *MLN Hispanic Issue* 95 (March, 1980), 312.

morirán mientras quede un alma sincera que de vera crea en ellos” (affirms that the Papacy and Catholicism will not perish as long as one sincere soul remains that really believes in them). Although Carlyle’s writings seemed palatable enough to pass the strict censures for publication under *Franquismo*, it seems that it required some negotiating under a staunchly Catholic regime. In this we see a distinct division between the fascist regimes of Germany and Italy and the parafascist Spain, whose ideology was perhaps first Catholic and then authoritarian. In Italy, Mussolini made a historic concordat with the Vatican establishing its political autonomy and its preferential status as the state religion, but many of the Fascist ideologues remained inveterately anticlerical. From its beginning, the Falange and Antonio Primo de Rivera had interwoven Spanish fascism with Catholicism. Mussolini, never a Catholic himself, acquiesced in supporting the Church’s cause in Italy primarily out of pragmatism, but Franco’s faith remained firmly Catholic throughout his life and saw his regime as a protector of his religious faith.

III.

Frederick, the Second Reich, and Britain

Hitler's "fiery end" and Carlyle's *Frederick*

In August 1944, Joseph Goebbels first mentioned Thomas Carlyle's *History of Friedrich II, Called Frederick the Great* in his copious diary. As Goebbels picked up Carlyle's history of the legendary Prussian king, the situation for Germany had become desperate. The British and American forces contained within the Normandy peninsula for two months had recently broken through the German defensive line and were threatening Paris. On August 15, an Anglo-American force had landed in the French Riviera and was advancing on Nice, and the Allied forces in Italy had recently liberated Pisa, 200 kilometers north of Rome. In the East, the Russian steamroller was pouring into Romania and advancing mercilessly towards East Prussia. After reviewing these menacing developments on the front, Goebbels confided that he "read Carlyle's *Frederick the Great*. One can learn a lot from the wars of Frederick the Great for the present time."²¹² He found solace in comparing the dire circumstances that the Prussian monarch had experienced to Nazi Germany's own precarious conditions. "We are not the only ones," he remarked, "who have been subject to such weighty strains [:] ... also other

²¹² *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels*, ed. Elke Fröhlich, (Munich and London: K. G. Sauer Verlag, 1995), 13:269. Unless otherwise stated, all translations from German are mine.

generations have had to pull through similar circumstances and exactly for this reason shine with brighter glory in the annals of history.”²¹³

As the steel vice of the allies pushed the depleted ranks of the German Army deep into their own territory by the middle of April 1945, Goebbels hoped to assuage the fears of his ever more unnerved *Führer*, Adolf Hitler, with those so pertinent analogs he had uncovered in Carlyle’s text. The Red Army threatened to encircle Berlin from the east, and incessant air raids from the west compelled Hitler and his entourage to protect themselves in the underground bunker beneath the Reich Chancellery. In these final dreary days, Count Lutz Schwerin von Krosigk, Reichsminister of Finance, who was present in the bunker, recalled the scene of the ever faithful Goebbels reading from *Frederick*:

“Brave king!” says Carlyle, “wait yet a little while, and the days of your suffering will be over. Already the sun of your good fortune stands behind the clouds, and soon will rise upon you.” On February 12th the Czarina died; the Miracle of the House of Brandenburg had come to pass. At this touching tale, said Goebbels, “tears stood in the Fuehrer’s eyes.”²¹⁴

Hitler and Goebbels, touched by the reading and hoping to uncover “evidence” of a similar miracle to extract them from their beleaguered circumstances, discussed the matter and decided to have two horoscopes perused, one from January 30, 1933, the date of Hitler’s accession to the office of chancellor, and the other from September 9, 1918, the horoscope of the republic. After they had examined the documents with careful

²¹³ Ibid., 13:269.

²¹⁴ H. R. Trevor-Roper, *The Last Days of Hitler* (London: The Macmillan Company, 1962), 160. This quote is drawn from H. R. Trevor-Roper’s citation of the diaries of Count Lutz Schwerin von Krosigk, which remain unfortunately unpublished. Goebbels’s personal diary ends abruptly on the 10th of April, 1945. It is thus impossible to refer directly to Goebbels’s own words in regards to the incident.

scrutiny, the “astonishing fact” was discovered that “there was to be an overwhelming victory for us in the second half of April.”²¹⁵ On the hopes of a replay of the Miracle of the House of Brandenburg—the death of Tsarina Elizabeth and the subsequent Prussian peace with the Russian Empire—Goebbels and Hitler soothed themselves in the tedious confines of the Bunker. Oddly, an analogous event did occur. When news reached the bunker that President Franklin D. Roosevelt had died on April twelfth, Goebbels immediately considered his death the change in fortune: “the Czarina is dead,” he exclaimed.²¹⁶

The Problem

Of course the Tsarina had not died, and President Harry S Truman did not sue for peace but continued the war to the final unconditional surrender of the German Army. Hitler, following the example of Frederick, took his own life. Those last inglorious days in the bunker mark not only the final defeat of Hitler’s Germany but the culmination of Thomas Carlyle’s degradation and debasement from his once dignified status in Victorian England. Goebbels’s and Hitler’s solace in the words of Carlyle has tarnished the image of the once venerated “Victorian Prophet.” The tears in the eyes of the *Führer* and Goebbels’s praise for Carlyle give the work an unpalatable taste for the modern reader and cloud the judgment of scholars as they approach the work.

John D. Rosenberg, a modern scholar of Carlyle, pointed out that “the most revealing modern response to *Frederick*” comes from Hitler, who, in his last days, listened as his faithful minister of propaganda, Josef Goebbels, read aloud from

²¹⁵ Ibid., 160. Again, Trevor-Roper quoting Krosigk’s personal diary.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 162.

Carlyle.²¹⁷ In this, Rosenberg perceived an “appalling aptness” that Carlyle, “a recipient of the Order of Merit from Bismarck’s Prussia and an incessant prophet of apocalypse, should have figured in Hitler’s fiery last days.”²¹⁸ Trevor-Roper concluded that both Carlyle and Hitler had a naïve perception of power and its corrupting tendencies, and it was thus apt that Hitler listened “with egotistical relish to the reading from Carlyle’s *History of Frederick the Great* in the Bunker in Berlin.”²¹⁹ Trevor-Roper later condemned Carlyle’s affectionate portrayal of Frederick’s father, Friedrich Wilhelm, a “dreadful, brutal, boorish tyrant [who] ruled his country by stick and gallows, hanged innocent men without compunction, and forced his eighteen-year-old son to witness the summary execution of his closest friend.”²²⁰ Rosenberg disagrees that, in fact, Carlyle did not idolize the truculent king but rather tried to understand him, a much “more intelligent sin.”²²¹ Rosenberg opines that the recent “consensus on *Frederick* has been negative” and concludes that his final works demonstrate Carlyle’s estrangement from the world and his audience.²²²

Yet this moral judgment, attributing “sins” to Carlyle and this link between Carlyle and the Third Reich rest upon an anachronistic and teleological argument and lie at the very heart of much of the negative criticism of his work still prevalent today.

²¹⁷ John D. Rosenberg, *Carlyle and the Burden of History* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985), 117.

²¹⁸ Rosenberg, 117.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 293.

²²⁰ Hugh Trevor-Roper, “Thomas Carlyle’s Historical Philosophy,” *TLS* (26 June 1981), 733.

²²¹ Rosenberg, 166.

²²² *Ibid.*, 159. See also his introduction: vii.

Carlyle's history of Frederick the Great has never been extricated from its emergence in Hitler's bunker. Goebbels's affinity for the work and his admiration for the Scotsman as a fellow "glowing admirer" of the Prussian king represent the apex of a sequence of events that resulted in the mortification of Carlyle's repute in the English-speaking world.²²³

Carlyle's *Frederick* before Hitler's Third Reich

The critical view of Carlyle's *magnum opus*, his 4,500 page history of Friedrich II of Prussia, when traced from its original publication in 1858, reveals a significant revision, one of such prominence that it attests to the singular historiography of *Frederick*. Thus, the following is not intended to provide a novel interpretation of Carlyle's work but to introduce the interpretation of *Frederick* before it arrived in the hands of Hitler. The reception of *Frederick* in the nineteenth century, which was in general, yet not entirely, positive, shall stand for this analysis as a point of reference and present the changing perception of Carlyle's monumental history. Much of the negative criticism surrounding *Frederick* in the twentieth century inevitably involves the German reception of this work and its ultimate appearance in the bunker. It is therefore necessary to ask the question: How did Germans receive *Frederick* before the rise of Nazism? The answer to such a question can illuminate the German conception of their once beloved monarch and his role in the nationalistic bend of German history before the emergence of

²²³ *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels*, 15:587. These issues will be revisited in Chapter two of this thesis.

the Third Reich. After reviewing the perception of the work in the English-speaking world, I will concern myself with the critical reception and interpretation of *Frederick* in Germany from its publication in 1858 until 1933. Through this analysis, I will employ the English and German view of Carlyle's work to underscore the vicissitudes of Anglo-German relations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and to emphasize the distinct historical interpretations of the two nations. Thereby, I will highlight the distinct, insular, and often parochial interpretations patronized by the two nations. The Germans, in the tradition of Leopold von Ranke's *Quellenkritik*, tended to focus on the fallacy of Carlyle's factual presentation despite their definite affinity for its pro-German flavor. The British and American accounts demonstrate a developing aversion to the work as it is tossed about by the turmoil of the Great War. The English criticism during and following the First World War manifests a particular tendency to judge the work on its moral value. Although the judgments on the work polarized, both English and German accounts suggest a concerted politicization of the work.

The work itself represented for Carlyle a near insurmountable battle, one which would last thirteen long years—from 1851 to the final publication of the last two volumes of the work in 1865, he battled to revivify his hero, Frederick II of Prussia (1712-1786). In this massive history, Carlyle not only recounted the history of Frederick the Great, but expanded his subject to a two hundred-page genealogy of the Hohenzollern family and a history of Brandenburg. The end result of Carlyle's troubles was a hefty work of six volumes. Morse Peckham pointed out the "oddness" of the work's proportions—nearly 60 percent of the work is concerned with the period of the Silesian and Seven Years'

Wars (1740-1763).²²⁴ Carlyle, in his tradition of “hero-worship,” portrayed Frederick and his Father, Friedrich Wilhelm, as men who stood “on the truth of things.”²²⁵ Carlyle depicted Frederick as one of his examples of greatness in history. Although “by no means one of the perfect demigods,” Frederick appeared as the definite protagonist and received plenty of praise from the Victorian historian, who ostensibly wrote the work to serve as a didactic lesson for the need of a paternalistic government.²²⁶

Carlyle’s laud for the Prussian king, although not universally appealing upon its arrival on the bookshelves, acquired praise in England, where many of his long-time supporters applauded its entrance. Anthony Froude, his biographer and close confidante, opined that “in England it was at once admitted that an addition had been made to the national literature. The book contained, if nothing else, a gallery of historical figures executed with a skill which placed Carlyle at the head of literary portraits.”²²⁷ And, although he admitted that the English are often “insular” to any history other than their own, he proclaimed that “even in England it was better received on its first appearance than any of Carlyle’s other works had been, and it gave solidity and massiveness to his already brilliant fame.”²²⁸ The sales of the work seem to attest to Froude’s statement, and Carlyle collected almost £3,000 from his publishers immediately after its publication.²²⁹

²²⁴ Morse Peckham, “Frederick the Great” in *Carlyle: Past and Present*, ed. K. J. Fielding and Rodger L. Tarr (London: Vision Press, 1976), 199.

²²⁵ Thomas Carlyle, *History of Friedrich II of Prussia Called Frederick the Great* (London: Chaplan and Hall, 1897), 1:14.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:14.

²²⁷ John Clubbe, ed., *Froude’s Life of Carlyle* (Columbus: Ohio University Press: 1979), 580.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 580.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, whose inclination towards democratic government often conflicted with his British friend's more paternalistic theory of governance, nevertheless affirmed that *Frederick* was "infinitely the wittiest book that ever was written."²³⁰ In a letter to Carlyle, he eloquently declared the book "sovereignty written, above all literature, dictating to all mortals what they shall accept as fated & final for their salvation. It is mankind's Bill of Rights & Duties, the royal proclamation of Intellect ascending to the throne."²³¹ John Ruskin as well praised Carlyle's work and even employed the first volume of *Frederick* as the basis for an article on the political economy of Prussia.²³² A. S. Arnold reported in 1888 that "even now Ruskin asserts that the book oftenest in his hand is Carlyle's *Frederick the Great*, that in his opinion, 'in serious thought, his half-pages are generally only worth about a single sentence of Tennyson's or Carlyle's.'"²³³

Thomas Babington Macaulay represents the opposite side of the spectrum. He considered Carlyle's style "gibberish" and his philosophy nonsense.²³⁴ Macaulay, who had previously written a rather derisive work on the Prussian king, retained an obvious aversion to Carlyle's more sympathetic treatment of Frederick. Macaulay and Carlyle

²²⁹ Ian Campbell, *Thomas Carlyle* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1974), 128.

²³⁰ Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Art and Criticism," *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. E. W. Emerson, vol. 12 (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1904), 12.

²³¹ Joseph Slater, ed., *The Correspondence of Emerson and Carlyle* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1964), 534.

²³² See: *The Complete Works of John Ruskin*, vol. 7 (New York and San Francisco: The Wheeler Publishing Co., 1897), 113-135.

²³³ A. S. Arnold, *The Story of Thomas Carlyle* (London: Ward & Downey, 1888), 333.

²³⁴ R. C. Beatty, "Macaulay and Carlyle," *Philosophical Quarterly* 18 (1939): 32.

rarely saw eye to eye especially in regards to politics. Macaulay was utterly convinced of the magnificence of Victorian liberalism; Carlyle, on the other hand, was completely repulsed by it. Beyond politics a general rivalry and, some could say, a mutual distaste for one another persisted throughout their lives.²³⁵

Yet Macaulay was not alone, and many literary critics joined in his disapproval of the work and its distinctly Carlylean style.²³⁶ Elizabeth Barrett Browning pointed out that if any other man were to emulate his unique style it would degenerate into “a mere chaos of capitals, and compounds, and *broken language*,” but she reserved some considerable praise for his original parlance and cautioned “Let no man scoff at the language of Carlyle—for if it forms part of his idiosyncrasy, his idiosyncrasy forms part of his truth.”²³⁷ Yet many reviewers seemed to have grown weary of his idiosyncrasies—his pervasive yet inconsistent capitalization, his melodramatic bouts of fury, and his biting satirical allusions. The *Edinburgh Review*, when reviewing the first volume of the work in 1859, asserted that “we have little to praise and much to condemn in the volumes before us.”²³⁸ Weary of the “contemptuous scorn in which Mr. Carlyle affects to hold his own generation,” the critic condemned both Carlyle’s “rhapsodical ecstasies of

²³⁵ Carlyle confided to his brother Alexander that the “man [Macaulay] does not like me; ... I too most heartily *dislike* his whole way of thought, or even I might say detest it: no wonder he dislikes *me*.” Sanders and Fielding, ed., *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*, vol. 12, 204.

²³⁶ For more details on the literary reception of *Frederick* in England see: Arthur A. and Vonna H. Adrian, “Frederick the Great: ‘That Unutterable Horror of a Prussian Book,’” in *Carlyle Past and Present*, ed. K. J. Fielding and Rodger L. Tarr (London: Vision Press, 1976), 187-192. Although Arthur and Vonna Adrian stress the ambivalence and even negative nature of the reception of *Frederick*, a scrutiny of their report seems to attest that the main critiques of Carlyle’s work emphasized its eccentric and eclectic style. The criticism leveled at Carlyle rarely touched on the moral dimension of Carlyle’s ideology.

²³⁷ Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), 394.

²³⁸ *Edinburgh Review* (October 1859): 376.

admiration” for Friedrich Wilhelm and “his method and peculiar phraseology.”²³⁹

Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine likewise jeered at Carlyle’s “sardonic” tone and marveled at Carlyle’s popularity despite his “arrogant style.”²⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the critic extolled Carlyle’s “incessant care to represent people and events in the most vivid manner” and his aim “to reproduce with the greatest exactness all thoughts and all moods of the mind.”²⁴¹

In general, Carlyle’s critics voiced their distaste for his singular style, but there was little concern over his ideology and subject matter. Upon the publication of the fourth volume of Frederick, *The Athenaeum* reported to its readers that “in the style of his narrative Mr. Carlyle has not changed, except that in some instances he has rendered it, so to speak, more intensively peculiar.”²⁴² Yet despite the work’s peculiarities, the critic restrained his invective and noted that “Mr. Carlyle will have his way, and we are content to allow it.”²⁴³ *Fraser’s Magazine*, when reviewing the first two volumes, was far more positive and applauded his affixation of “anecdotes or an epithet” to make his characters “memorable.”²⁴⁴ *Fraser’s Magazine* further commended Carlyle for his “desire thoroughly to understand his subject” and his “unrivalled command of pathos.”²⁴⁵ In fact, the only negative assessment that *Fraser’s* voiced was a concern for the length of

²³⁹ Ibid., 385, 408.

²⁴⁰ *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* 85 (February 1859): 150, 153.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 150.

²⁴² *The Athenaeum*, 12 March 1864.

²⁴³ Ibid., March 12, 1864.

²⁴⁴ *Fraser’s Magazine*, December 1858.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., December, 1858.

the work, which “creaks under the weight of genealogies and the lumber of the past.”²⁴⁶ Ultimately, critics articulated their apprehension concerning his style or *modus operandi* but found little to censure in his moral philosophy.

His history, noted for its biased nature, and his adulation of the Prussian monarchs did not particularly frighten the Victorians. The reception of *Frederick* in Britain and America encompassed a myriad of opinions, yet, when evaluated as a whole, manifests a generally positive greeting of Carlyle’s latest work. To be certain, his unique style and ever more protracted prose evoked some disapproval, but there was little to question about the morality of his worship of the Prussian kings. It is also of note that Carlyle, having completed the last two volumes of *Frederick* in 1865, received one of the greatest honors of his career when he was chosen Rector of Edinburgh University, his *alma mater*. Froude asserted that “in *Frederick* he had given finish to his reputation; he stood now at the summit of his fame; and Edinburgh students mark their admiration in some signal way.”²⁴⁷ Froude’s placement of *Frederick* at the pinnacle of Carlyle’s career marks a distinct incongruity with the recent negative consensus on the work.

But events on the continent would significantly alter the English perception of Carlyle’s hero-worship. The German invasion of Belgium in the summer of 1914 brought Britain to the aid of the French to oppose the growing power of Imperial Germany. Carlyle’s seemingly benign interest in the Hohenzollerns was now viewed as a perfidious adulation of “Prussianism.” Near the close of the Great War, Stuart F. Sherman, in an article entitled “Carlyle and Kaiser Worship,” accused Carlyle of “living

²⁴⁶ Ibid., December, 1858.

²⁴⁷ Clubbe, 583.

with the founders of Prussia,” who “had completely corrupted and depraved him, destroyed the last shreds of his sense for human values.”²⁴⁸ Sherman further derided Carlyle and underscored the effect of the vicissitudes of war upon the perception of Carlyle and *Frederick*:

He who still desires a reason for hating Prussianism with all his might should read now in the light of the war Carlyle’s shameless glorification of Prussianism’s canonized forefathers, noting the curious barbaric pleasure that he displays in exhibiting the immitigable coarseness and harshness of the imperial race, as if his Victorian readers in a sudden revulsion of their own civility might fall in love with these heroic traits and be saved.²⁴⁹

Sherman’s assault on Carlyle and his history of Frederick attests to a mounting sentiment of disdain not only for the contemporary regime of Imperial Germany but for its history and predecessors. Sherman conflated history and current events when he opined that “the flame of this war . . . makes the dusky past two hundred years a part of our present day.”²⁵⁰ The tensions between the two nations manifest the distinct politicization of this history, intensified by the Great War. Writing shortly after World War I, Norwood Young considered Carlyle’s homage to Frederick pernicious as he was “one of the worst men known to history,” a fact that “came home to us in the terrible years of the Great War.”²⁵¹ Sherman had voiced a similar concern for the insidious nature of Carlyle’s work when he recommended the burning of all of Carlyle’s forty volumes.²⁵²

²⁴⁸ Stuart F. Sherman, “Carlyle and Kaiser Worship,” *The Nation*, 14 September 1918, 286-289.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 288.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 286.

²⁵¹ Norwood Young, *Carlyle, His Rise and Fall* (London: Duckworth, 1927), 294.

²⁵² Sherman, 289.

An analogous appraisal came from *The Times*, which was far less drastic and not imbued with the profound irony of Sherman's proposal for book burning. Under the pretence of demonstrating the "open and intelligent eyes" of the English, *The London Times* author recommended the reading of Carlyle's *Frederick the Great*.²⁵³ "For if we are to prove our superiority to Germany," the author proclaimed, "we can only do so by understanding all that is best in them."²⁵⁴ Yet there did not appear to be much good in either Carlyle's work or the Prussian kings, who were guilty of "paternal interference," a criticism that "applies with almost more justice to Carlyle himself than to Frederick."²⁵⁵ The author noted that this patriarchal government, which Carlyle espoused, was attempted only once in English history, "and was repudiated and never repeated."²⁵⁶ Therein lay the "weakness of Carlyle," who had never seemed "to have grasped this truth."²⁵⁷ Carlyle, like the Germans, had been misled to advocate a fallacious form of government, the rule of a despot, or so asserted *The Times*.

Positive assessments of *Frederick* in the English-speaking world at the time of the First World War were few and far between. One came from an odd work by Marshall Kelly, an American who supported the German cause in the war.²⁵⁸ Kelly argued that the war between Great Britain and Germany arose from the English misunderstanding of the German character and failure to heed the words of their "prophet." "Carlyle," he

²⁵³ *Times* (London), 4 January 1917.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 4 January 1917.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 4 January 1917.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 4 January 1917.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 4 January 1917.

²⁵⁸ Marshall Kelly, *Carlyle and the War* (New York: Jean Wick, 1915).

claimed, “was the greatest man of the nineteenth century.”²⁵⁹ Kelly’s work, written to encourage Americans to pursue a true course of neutrality in the war and sway their sympathies towards the plight of the Germans, whom Carlyle “knew ... as no other Briton has ever done,” exhibited the tendency of authors to employ Carlyle and his works as a political tool. Rather than deride the “Prussianism” of Carlyle as Sherman had done, Kelly exalted the Victorian’s knowledge as the only English-speaking author to comprehend the intricacies of the German spirit.

Herbert L. Stewart also sought to vindicate Carlyle during the Great War, yet his approach was far removed from Kelly’s. He noted that one of the “incidental results of the war has been to destroy forever that reputation for moral and social insight which was once enjoyed to a unique degree by Thomas Carlyle.”²⁶⁰ Carlyle, he asserted, was not “a brother to Clausewitz and Treitschke” but a man of completely different morals. He was an optimist that did not assume that might was right but the reverse—right would eventually triumph because right was might. This, however, did not in anyway excuse Frederick, who remained a “royal brigand,” and Carlyle forced this despotic monarch to fit his own *a priori* “ethical theory.”²⁶¹ “For he was writing with a thesis in his mind. We can never trust him when he deals with a triumphant despotism.”²⁶² Stewart absolved Carlyle who had altered history to suit his own historical theories of the triumph of right. Yet even in his defense of Carlyle, he demonstrated the political underpinnings that

²⁵⁹ Ibid., v.

²⁶⁰ Herbert L. Stewart, “The Alleged Prussianism of Thomas Carlyle,” *International Journal of Ethics* 28, no. 2 (January 1918), 159.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 175.

²⁶² Ibid., 175.

appear in most critiques of Carlyle's work before and after the Great War. He directed his moral judgment upon German despotism rather than its nineteenth-century advocate, Thomas Carlyle.

Lord Acton, whose fame as a historian grew in the latter half of the nineteenth century, represented the school of English historical thought that, although accepting the doctrine of a source-based empirical approach to history, avowed the necessity to make moral judgments upon men and women of the past.²⁶³ Lord Acton, in his inaugural address as Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge in 1895, announced that "the moral law is written on the tablets of eternity" and quoted Edmond Burke, who had proclaimed: "my principles enable me to form my judgment upon men and actions in history, just as they do in common life."²⁶⁴ Such principles harmonize with moral judgments leveled at Carlyle's *Frederick* throughout the Great War. The critique of Carlyle during the First World War in many ways resembles and presages the work's further denigration when it reached the hands of the Nazis.

The Victorians had accepted his affection for Frederick upon its publication with little apprehension. England later found itself at war with the successors of Frederick and could hardly accept Carlyle's hero-worship of the enemy, whose autocratic government differed so drastically from England's parliamentary system. In the Whiggish conception of history, from its liberal and positivist perspective on world events, Carlyle's work represented pernicious propaganda for despotism. The distinct views of history and the

²⁶³ Richard J. Evans, *In Defense of History* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), 42-43, 150.

²⁶⁴ John Edward Emerich, First Baron Acton, *Lectures on Modern History* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1906), 28.

constrained relations between Germany and England surface most vividly in the respective receptions of the work. The German view of Carlyle's *Frederick* and the monarch himself emphasize their disparity from their counterparts across the channel.

When Joseph Neuberg, Carlyle's German-Jewish assistant who would eventually translate *Frederick* into German, encouraged his Victorian employer to select the Prussian king as his subject, he mentioned nothing of the latter's exploits on the battlefield. He assured Carlyle that Frederick was a subject not

unworthy of your pen. The whole 18th Century groups itself round Frederick; he is the Hero of it, the greatest it could produce. You have frequently treated, with great insight and pitying impartiality, of that same 18th Century with its sins and sorrows and tragic existence. Yet also our modern life with its new-birth, is all rooted in it: German literature, English miraculous Industry, European Democracy: the thought and the work that are in us, about us and before us, all date from then. ... The voices of Leibnitz, of Lessing, Kant, Goethe were in the air—far off as yet ... Frederick worked his work in the midst of all this ...; This surely is a theme worth treating of, and one which might occupy you not unpleasantly for some time; staying at all events the craving appetite for work.²⁶⁵

Neuberg's plea for Carlyle to take up his pen not only displays the location of Frederick in the German mentality. Frederick was a figure of the enlightenment and the beloved king of the Prussians. He had permitted freedom of press within his nation and, in addition to his expertise on the battlefield, was also a musician, poet, and political philosopher. Much can be said of Carlyle's preoccupation with the battles in the final work, yet Josef Neuberg's descriptions of the monarch display Frederick's multifaceted character and appeal to his countrymen. Neuberg mentions nothing of the military exploits of the king, but rather emphasizes the cultural appeal of the great king.

²⁶⁵ Clyde L. Ryals and Kenneth J. Fielding, ed., *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*, vol. 27 (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999), xvi-xvii.

Frederick's impressive military victories may have won him the title "Frederick the Great," yet his reputation as a monarch of the enlightenment would win him the praise of Goethe, Schiller, and Kant.

Carlyle's own reputation in Germany arose from his connection to its most celebrated authors of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Goethe, more than any other, quickly established Carlyle as an author of prominence in his native land when, after reading some of his first works, he remarked, "Carlyle is a great moral power. There exists a great future in him, and it cannot be foreseen, what he will reach and accomplish."²⁶⁶ The venerated German author then applauded Carlyle's knowledge of German literature and exclaimed that Carlyle was "almost better at home with our literature than we ourselves."²⁶⁷ Carlyle's translation of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* and his numerous works on German literary figures, among others *Life of Schiller*, maintained his image in Germany as a conduit of German spirit and literature to their neighbors across the channel.²⁶⁸

His reputation as a sympathizer with the German cause was further supported in the years following the Franco-Prussian war. Five years after the publication of his final volumes of *Frederick*, Prussia was embroiled in what would be later considered as its last war of unification, and Carlyle took the opportunity to write the editors of the *Times*. His letter of November 18, 1870, was quickly translated into German and published in a book

²⁶⁶ Johann Peter Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens* (Heidelberg: F. A. Brockhays Wiesbaden, 1959), 485.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 485.

²⁶⁸ Wilhelm Streuli, *Thomas Carlyle als Vermittler Deutscher Litteratur und Deuschen Geistes* (Zurich: Friedrich Schulthess Verlag, 1895), 1-2.

entitled *Krieg und Friede: 1870* (War and Peace: 1870).²⁶⁹ Carlyle defended not only German claims to the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, but he also exhorted France to cede to Germany the hegemony and spiritual leadership of the continent. Carlyle ridiculed the “cheap pity and newspaper lamentation over fallen and afflicted France,” for which a *Times* correspondent derided his “dogmatism” and insisted that the former’s ideas were “foolish.”²⁷⁰ The German Empress, ostensibly impressed with Carlyle’s public defense of the German nation, later granted him an audience during her visit to London.²⁷¹ Three years later, von Bismarck, the Prussian Chancellor of a united Germany, awarded Carlyle the *Pour le Mérite*, Imperial Germany’s most prestigious Medal of Honor, established by Frederick the Great himself. On his eightieth birthday in December of 1875, Thomas Carlyle received a personal congratulatory note from Bismarck with the inscription: “You have given the German people our great Prussian king in his complete figure like a living statue (*Sie haben den Deutschen unseren großen Preußenkönig in seiner vollen Gestalt, wie eine lebendige Bildsäule hingestellt.*)”²⁷² Peter Zenzinger singled out the fifty years following unification in 1870 as marking the peak of Carlyle’s reputation in Germany.²⁷³ This period, in which Carlyle was

²⁶⁹ David Friedrich Strauss, Ernst Renan, and Thomas Carlyle, *Krieg und Friede: 1870* (Leipzig: Im Insel Verlag, 1870).

²⁷⁰ *Times* (London), 18 November, 1870.

²⁷¹ Peter Zenzinger, “Thomas Carlyle’s Reputation in Germany,” *Scottish Studies* vol. 1 (Frankfurt: Verlag Peter Lang, 1981), 336.

²⁷² Thomas Carlyle, *Friedrich der Große*, ed. Karl Linnebach (Berlin: Verlag Martin Warneck, 1911), xxi. Karl Linnebach quotes Bismarck in his introduction to this publication of *Frederick*.

²⁷³ Zenzinger, 332.

considered the “faithful friend of Germany,” witnessed the largest number of translations and critical material published in the German language.²⁷⁴

The publication of *Frederick* in the German language appears to match Zenzinger’s analysis: German presses continually printed Carlyle’s work from 1858, when it was first translated, until 1943. Josef Neuburg’s near simultaneous translation of the first volume of the *History of Friedrich II* stocked the bookshelves of Germany with Carlyle’s work in the same year as its publication in Great Britain. From 1858 to 1869, the first six volumes remained in publication at the Decker Press in Berlin. Following its publication run, the work was not republished until 1905 when it was issued in an abridged version—the 4,500 original pages were condensed to a mere 535.²⁷⁵ By 1911, three different presses had begun to print the work in abridged form, one with only 215 pages.²⁷⁶ The abridged versions indicate a wide public appeal for the work, rather than purely a remote interest from scholars.

In the final years of the First World War, a full-length edition of *Frederick* was again in print, an odd diversion of resources considering the dismal and constrained circumstances of German industry in 1918. Similar to the reprint in 1917-1918 was the *Frederick* publication of 1943. In this year, *Organisation Todt*, a government subsidized slave labor corporation bearing the name of its creator, published an abridged 280-page version of the work for the benefit “of the workers on the front (*Frontarbeiter*)” and the

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 332.

²⁷⁵ Thomas Carlyle, *Friedrich der Große*, ed. Karl Linnebach (Berlin: Verlag B. Behr, 1905).

²⁷⁶ Thomas Carlyle, *Friedrich der Große* (Berlin: Verlag Neues Leben, 1911).

“transport groups” within the organization.²⁷⁷ Between 1918 and 1943 there were numerous reprints and republications of work, but the 1918 reprint was the last publication of the full length work, and the 1943 *Organisation Todt* reprint was the final publication of *Frederick* in the German language. Just as Goebbles had found the work of distinct worth in the disastrous final months of the war, so too did the German presses in the First World War.

Prior to the Nazi seizure of power, German authors’ critical interpretations predominantly displayed a skepticism vis-à-vis Carlyle’s historical interpretation of the monarch and a pronounced interest in the Germanic roots of his worldview. Paul Hensel, noted for his full length biography of Carlyle, perceived in the author’s language a definite Germanic undertone; his “vocabulary” and “articulation” seemed to “lean far more towards German than to English,” which “preserved in him the singular quality of the Nieder-German tribe.”²⁷⁸ Referring to Carlyle’s work, *Sartor Resartus*, Hensel opined that “to the German reader the voice from Fichte’s *Bestimmung des Menschen* is very recognizable.” Hensel maintained that Goethe and Fichte worked as the two influential agents in the formation of Carlyle’s world view. In Carlyle’s final works, he evinced that “just like in Fichte . . . , we see in Carlyle more and more the concept of a pan-Germanic patriotism conquering a place in his historical philosophy.”²⁷⁹ Carlyle’s historical philosophy, flattering as it may have been to the German people, could not purvey an ultimate objective history. Yet Hensel, under no illusion that Carlyle’s

²⁷⁷ Thomas Carlyle, *Friedrich der Große* (Berlin, Amsterdam, Prague, and Vienna: Verlag Volk und Reich, 1943), 4.

²⁷⁸ Paul Hensel, *Thomas Carlyle* (Stuttgart: Verlag Fr. Frommanns, 1902), 9.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 159.

portrayal of Friedrich Wilhelm I in *Frederick* was the definitive truth, delighted in his depiction of the *Soldatenkönig* which “approaches his description of Thor with his raucous humor” from his lectures on hero-worship.²⁸⁰

The observation that Carlyle wrote a manifestly biased work represents one of the salient features of the critical conception of *Frederick* before 1933. Carlyle’s historical interpretation is by no means a balanced account of his and their beloved hero, but, nonetheless, his pronouncedly partisan historical account, especially coming from a Briton, excited and enthralled Carlylean scholars in Germany. Karl Linnebach, who wrote the introduction for most German abridgments of *Frederick* and who was a noted scholar of Prussian military theorists, admitted that “much of what is written in Carlyle’s book has proved itself to be false,” yet “nonetheless one cannot call Carlyle’s *History of Frederick the Great* an aged work” because his portrayal of the king “was not only the first” but also its “lively” quality generated much of its appeal.²⁸¹ U. Pfannkuche singled *Frederick* out as an example of Carlyle’s “often one-sided and partisan method of inquiry” and “contempt for all detailed historical work” which “all makes his estimation as a first-class historian impossible.”²⁸² Wilhelm Streuli, a noted literary critic in early twentieth-century Germany, likewise asserted that *Frederick* “displayed all the preferences and errors of the Carlylean Manner.”²⁸³ Yet what Carlyle achieved with this

²⁸⁰Ibid., 164.

²⁸¹ Karl Linnebach, ed., Thomas Carlyle’s *Friedrich der Große* (Berlin: Verlag Martin Warnek, 1911), xxi.

²⁸² Thomas Carlyle, *Über Helden, Heldenverehrung und das Heldentümliche in der Geschichte*, U. Pfannkuche ed., (Leipzig: Verlag von Philipp Reclam jun., 1894), 6.

²⁸³ Streuli, 80.

work, in his estimation, was “dramatic effect and art.”²⁸⁴ Carlyle’s history retained an ability “to clarify to the reader the historical motives” of his characters.²⁸⁵ “This was not a pure glorification of a man [Frederick] but also of the state which he embodied.”²⁸⁶ Yet despite the clarity of the history, *Frederick* remained for Streuli a flawed work, but not on account of its partisan nature: “The value of the many-volume work is decreased due to the poor composition of its content.”²⁸⁷ To varying degrees, German scholars of Carlyle valued his history of *Frederick*. The consensus in their interpretation seems to coalesce at Carlyle’s prominent bias—a bias that, to a certain degree, delighted the German scholars.

This evaluation of Carlyle’s history manifests the continuity of the German response to *Frederick* with its positive reception and reprints throughout the Imperial and Weimar periods. The appraisal of Carlylean scholars in Germany corresponded with the contemporary Prussian, or *kleindeutsch*, School of history. The Prussian School, in the tradition of Leopold von Ranke, applied a scientific method, *Quellenkritik*—a critical analysis of the sources, with a positivist ideology that asserted the superiority of Prussian values as evidenced by the eventual German unification under the Hohenzollern monarchy.²⁸⁸ Among the most prominent of these nationalist German historians was Heinrich von Treitschke, who not surprisingly asserted that “outside of Germany only

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 80.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 80.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 80.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 81.

²⁸⁸ Richard J. Evans, *In Defense of History* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), 23.

one single man lived, who clearly understood German history: Thomas Carlyle.”²⁸⁹

Although Karl Linnebach’s introduction to the work in 1905, which remained in print well into the Weimar period, contained a caveat that warned that German historians had proven much of Carlyle’s history to be false, it retained the assertion that *Frederick* was valued as the first considerable biography of the great Prussian king and inspired further studies on the Prussian king.²⁹⁰

Prussian historians such as Johann Gustav Droysen and Heinrich von Sybel had subsumed Frederick the Great into their progressive interpretation of Brandenburg-Prussia’s history and approached Frederick the Great in an entirely different manner than Carlyle.²⁹¹ Droysen himself was not fond of Carlyle. He lamented the popularity of *Frederick* in 1858 and considered Carlyle a “harlequin” and a “historical chatterbox,” who, along with Macaulay, would wind up “dissolving” the “great and serious discipline of history” into a “mischievous laughter of giggling prostitutes.”²⁹² Droysen, whose democratic views distinguished him from von Treitschke, repudiated Carlyle’s history of Frederick for its erroneous approach to history. Carlyle’s more literary approach to history endangered the German source-based approach to history, which Droysen

²⁸⁹ Heinrich von Treitschke, *Deutsche Geschichte im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, vol. 4 (Leipzig: F. W. Hendel Verlag, 1927), 456.

²⁹⁰ Linnebach, xxi.

²⁹¹ Robert Southard, *Droysen and the Prussian School of History* (Lexington, Kentucky: Kentucky University Press, 1995), 45-47. Southard explains that Droysen employed Frederick to justify his progressive interpretation of history, which culminated in the unification of Germany under Prussian domination. For Droysen the battles and the man were not as significant, as they were for Carlyle; instead, he assigned particular importance to the system that Frederick helped to create. Among other accomplishments in the period of Frederick was a more prominent step towards “state-citizenship” (*Staatsbürgertum*).

²⁹² *Johann Gustav Droysen, Briefwechsel*, (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1967), 574, 576.

personified. Droysen's diatribe against *Frederick* delineates the dichotomy of the German interpretation of the work: the history was fallacious, but the pro-German approach had a definite appeal.

Nonetheless, Carlyle's pro-German interpretation of the Hohenzollern monarchy, whether considered historically accurate or not, seemed to resonate with the less democratic historians such as von Treitschke, who, Richard J. Evans argues, converted the middle-class opinion from a liberal to an authoritarian form of nationalism in the decades prior to the Great War.²⁹³ The German nationalist approach to history welcomed their British adherent, who had not only written his most lengthy work on their celebrated king, but had defended its claims to Alsace and Lorraine and even hegemony in Europe. A sentiment that did not disappear once the Hohenzollerns abdicated at the close of the First World War and continued into the Nazi era.

Thus, with the advent of the Great War two antagonistic powers began to toss about Thomas Carlyle and his work on Frederick the Great. Germany had perceived England as its greatest opponent in world politics since the beginning of the reign of Wilhelm II, a view that had become an aspect of popular culture in the First World War.²⁹⁴ As the Germans struggled with their European neighbors, Carlyle's perceived pan-Germanic nationalist stance and approval for Wilhelm II's predecessors became a valuable political tool to affirm their rightful position in Europe. British and Americans

²⁹³ Evans, 23.

²⁹⁴ See: Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Der Erste Weltkrieg: Anfang vom Ende des bürgerlichen Zeitalters* (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2004), 155-167. In this chapter, "*Deutsche und englische Dichter im Ersten Weltkrieg*", Mommsen asserts that the populations of both England and Germany considered the real struggle of the First World War to be the fight between the British Empire and the German Reich for hegemony in Europe and the world. He supports his argument with an analysis of anti-English and anti-German literature in the two countries.

were also quick to politicize *Frederick*. In the English speaking world this politicization of German history denigrated Carlyle's reputation and served to establish a precedent for Prussian barbarity.

Yet the supposed "Prussianism" of Thomas Carlyle vanishes when the initial Victorian reception is examined. The Victorians' estimation of *Frederick*'s contribution to the field of history and literature emerges as rather positive. Authors and critics distinguished the work as a valuable addition to the annals of history. Yet long before *Frederick* arrived in Hitler's bunker, its repute was questioned. National antagonisms and bitterly fought wars of propaganda shaped the opinion of Carlyle's work. The German reception of the work underscored the divergent views and differing approaches of England and Germany regarding the history of Prussia. British scholars did not desist in their disdain for the German monarchs, and so Carlyle became tainted by association. German scholars were eager to accept Carlyle's Prussian bias despite its historical inaccuracies as it attested to their nationalistic interpretation of history. These nationalistic approaches, a prelude to the Nazi's use and abuse of the work, tend to affect the modern conception of Carlyle and *Frederick*.

IV.

Frederick, the Third Reich, and Hitler's Final Days

24 March 1924, days before Hitler would be sentenced to a meager five-year sentence for high treason, the young *Führer* of the then outlawed National Socialist party stood before Judge Neithart, president of the court and a known nationalist sympathizer, haranguing as had become customary in these proceedings. The judge's sympathies for Hitler and, most especially, the war hero Erich von Ludendorff, also on trial for high treason for his complicity in the Beer Hall Putsch, caused the courtroom to degenerate into a state-subsidized soapbox for National Socialist discourse.²⁹⁵ In his final lengthy homily, Hitler repudiated the charge that he had sought to undermine the state's authority and reminded his listeners who, in his opinion, had established the tradition of authority in Germany:

“Es ist das Wundervolle, wenn der englische Geschichtsschreiber Carlyle von Friedrich dem Großen betont, daß dieser große König wahrhaftiger Gott nur ein Leben von Arbeit besaß im Dienste seines Volkes! Glauben Sie nun, daß das, was im November 1918 an die Spitze des deutschen Reiches kam, die reine Hände besaß, diese Autorität eines Friedrich, diese Staatsautorität zu bewahren?”²⁹⁶

(It is wonderful, when the English historian Carlyle, speaking of Frederick the Great, emphasized that this great king only possessed a life of work in the service of his people. Do you now believe that that which in November 1918 rose to power in the German Reich possessed the pure hands, the authority of a Frederick, to conserve this state authority?)

Hitler's reference to Carlyle and Frederick makes a dual commentary on the state of affairs in Germany, namely that the ideal state is the one created and perpetuated by the

²⁹⁵ Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889-1936 Hubris*, 216.

²⁹⁶ Lothar Gruchmann and Reinhard Weber, ed., *Der Hitler-Prozess, 1924* (Munich: K. G. Saur, 1999), 4: 1578.

Hohenzollern monarchs, a verity that even an “English historian” appreciated, and that the then current government of the republic could in no way measure up to this standard. Indeed, Hitler seems to be appealing to Germans’ sense of patriotism and their respect and even reverence for the older forms of authority.²⁹⁷ Yet, what most interests us here in Hitler’s sermon is the appearance of Carlyle. That to recall the notion of Frederick as the “*Diener des Staates*,” (servant of the state) Hitler employs the name of Carlyle demonstrates the credence already attached to the Victorian historian’s name. Thus, Carlyle had been established by 1924, at least in Hitler’s mind, as a principal authority on the Prussian king despite his foreign origins. The later National Socialists’ appropriation of Carlyle represents yet another example of Nazism’s adroit capacity to co-opt national myths. Carlyle and his biography of *Frederick* were subsumed into a pantheon of German heroes, one that predated Nazism.

Yet, Hitler’s mention of Carlyle in his 1924 court proceedings elucidates more than his mere competence at recalling an emotionally charged national myth to excite his audience. More compelling is the fact that Hitler’s mention of Carlyle occurred at the very nadir of his political career. Facing charges of high treason and his party banned, the young Adolf Hitler despondently recalled the tragic service the Prussian king had once imparted to his *Volk*. This same despair of an abysmal end to his work reappeared in his infamous reading of *Frederick* in the bunker when, confronting the verifiable destruction of his empire, he again referred to Carlyle’s history. These two instances

²⁹⁷ Hitler’s appeal to a pervasive German respect for strong leadership is one of the elements that Kershaw contended was elemental to the manufacture of the “Hitler Myth.” See: Kershaw, *The ‘Hitler Myth’*, 13-47. Kershaw argues that the roots of this belief in ‘heroic’ leadership extend well into nineteenth century with the emergence of Romanic and *völkisch* ideas which would shape German nationalism. Hitler and the NSDAP were neither the originators nor even the sole perpetrators of these leadership ideas but were able to tap into an existent belief in the need for a *Führer* to guide the German people.

remain the only documented evidence in which Hitler referred to Carlyle. For the *Führer*, Carlyle was neither a significant ideologue nor an instructor of Hero-worship but an authority on the life and import of Frederick. Hitler, in his hours of martyrdom, conceived himself as the “*alte Fritz*” Carlyle had so painstakingly described. The idea of the *Führer* as the scion of men like Bismarck and Frederick transcended its propagandist purposes and was reified in Hitler’s self-perception.

Nazi film represents the most extensive effort by which Joseph Goebbels’s propaganda ministry attempted to fashion an image of Hitler as a heroic figure commensurable to Frederick the Great or Bismarck. In fact, the propaganda ministry specifically prohibited journalists from comparing historical icons such as Frederick with the *Führer* to ensure that audiences of epic films like the 1937 *Fredericus* would internalize the images of heroism and subliminally equate them with Hitler.²⁹⁸ The image of Frederick was of particular interest to Goebbels’s ministry which perpetually interfered in the production of films featuring the Prussian monarch. The monumental film director Walter Harlan’s 1941 Frederick picture *Der große König* once completed came under review by Goebbels who immediately banned it and then overturned its editing and reproduction to another director.²⁹⁹ Shortly after the German invasion of Russia, Goebbels summoned Harlan to his office and explained to him that the forthcoming operations with Russia had compelled him to alter his film because its portrayal of the Russian general Chernichev, a friend of Frederick’s, was far too amicable

²⁹⁸ David Weinberg, “Approaches to the Study of Film in the Third Reich: A Critical Appraisal,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 19 (January 1984): 115.

²⁹⁹ David Stewart Hull, *Film in the Third Reich, A Study of German Cinema 1933-1945* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), 213.

given the current circumstances. Harlan contested that, on the grounds of authenticity, the film required no alteration to which Goebbels is reported to have remarked “Never mind, we’ll change history.”³⁰⁰

History, for National Socialism, was a malleable object, one that could be directed as a potent weapon for propaganda. History was an essential element to Nazi ideology and was thus earmarked for immediate review by the regime when it came to power in early 1933. Reichs Minister of the Interior Wilhelm Frick underscored history’s significance as pedagogical element for Nazism in May 1933 when he stated “*daß die Geschichte unter den Schulfächern in vorderster Linie steht. Daher bedarf der Ausbau des Geschichtsunterrichts und die Auswahl oder Schaffung neuer Geschichtsbücher ganz besonderer Aufmerksamkeit*” (that history stands among the school subjects in the first line. Therefore, the development of historical pedagogy and the selection or creation of new history books requires special attention).³⁰¹ History books became of utmost importance to the new regime which wished to substantiate its lower middle-class Austrian corporal as a leader in the tradition of the great Hohenzollerns.

It should thus come as little surprise that the earlier caveats of the inaccuracies in Carlyle’s *Frederick* were excluded in editions of the work published in the Nazi era. The first work to display this radical shift in interpretation was the reprint of Karl Linnebach’s abridged version of *Frederick*. Since Linnebach’s introduction to the work in 1905, he had maintained its value as a seminal biography of the great Prussian king but never

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 213.

³⁰¹ Agnes Blänsdorf, “Lehrwerke für Geschichtsunterricht an Höheren Schulen 1933-1945,” in *Nationalsozialismus in den Kulturwissenschaften*, ed. Hartmut Lehmann and Otto Gerhard Oexle, volume 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 274.

denied that much of its historical content was false. This caveat regarding the work's historical errors was eliminated in its 1933 guise.³⁰² From the National Socialist perspective, Carlyle's bias was not bias but the accepted dogma of the regime, the verifiable truth of Germany's manifest destiny. Frederick the Great was an example of "historic greatness," and, in an effort to substantiate the new Nazi government, both Frederick and Carlyle were converted into proto-fascists.

Scholars of the Third Reich usurped Carlyle and *Frederick* into the Nazi worldview to substantiate the *Führerprinzip*. Carlyle's theory of the hero already lent itself well to the fascists due to its espousal of authoritarian government. This idea of the hero and Carlyle's own preoccupation with order represent perpetual themes in his works, most especially in *Frederick*.³⁰³ It was this idea of the hero, the great man as the builder of human history, which particularly caught the interest of the National Socialists. Michael Freund emphasized the heroic principle in all Carlyle's works, most especially in his biographies of Cromwell and Frederick the Great. "The heroes in Carlyle's heart are above all Cromwell, Friedrich Wilhelm I, and Friedrich II of Prussia. Cromwell's hero-ideal grew from the Calvinistic mindset. This same Calvinistic ethos shaped the Prussian monarchy."³⁰⁴ Accentuating Carlyle's Calvinist upbringing, Freund reified a bond between the British author and the Prussian monarchy's religion—Friedrich Wilhelm had been a devout Calvinist. And it was this shared Calvinistic worldview that represented,

³⁰² See: Thomas Carlyle, *Friedrich der Große*, Karl Linnebach ed. (Berlin: Verlag Th. Knaur, 1933), 18.

³⁰³ See: B. H. Lehman, *Carlyle's Theory of the Hero: Its Sources, Development, History, and Influence on Carlyle's Work* (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1928), 188-201.

³⁰⁴ Thomas Carlyle, *Heldentum und Macht: Schriften für die Gegenwart*, ed. Michael Freund (Leipzig: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1935), xxxiv.

according to Freund, Carlyle's conception of the "fruitful heroic energy" within Europe.³⁰⁵ For Freund the Calvinistic heritage imbued into the Prussian mentality functioned as the decisive factor in the development of modern National Socialist Germany. Freund portrayed Carlyle's ideas and his history as the prehistory of fascist Germany.

Yet when the war turned against Nazi Germany, Carlyle's *Frederick* assumed a different value for the Germans. Eduard Ritter, in his introduction to the *Organisation Todt's* reprint of *Frederick*, derived lessons for the readers of his day. By 1943, any illusion that the war would be of short duration had long since dissipated. The failure of the German troops and the great losses incurred at Stalingrad were openly recognized by the regime. At this point in time, Ritter introduced the final reprint of *Frederick* as especially apropos to the German reader of the day. "Heute, wo es wieder um Sein oder Nichtsein geht, um die Vernichtung des Vaterlandes oder um eine größere Zukunft, wird uns dieser König zum Vorbild" (Today, when the stakes of the battle are existence, the destruction of the fatherland or a greater future, this king [Friedrich II] becomes for us an example).³⁰⁶ *Frederick*, a heroic epic of the German king, became a work of solace and example for the National Socialist leadership. For Ritter, it remained noteworthy that the author was English.³⁰⁷ He explained to his readers that Carlyle was compelled "auf Lehnung gegen den nüchternen, platten, materialistischen Geist dieses Landes" (by his aversion to the sober, dull, and materialistic spirit of his land" to look to Germany for his

³⁰⁵ Ibid., xxxiv.

³⁰⁶ Thomas Carlyle, *Friedrich der Große*, ed. Eduard Ritter (Berlin, Amsterdam, Prague, and Vienna: Verlag Volk und Reich, 1943), 9.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 9. "Es wird immer denkwürdig bleiben, daß es ein Engländer war, der sie verfaßte."

hero).³⁰⁸ Comparable to Nazism, he “empfand den Staat als einen Organismus, dem jeder Mensch zu dienen und sich unterzuordnen habe” (felt that the state was an organism which served to organize every man).³⁰⁹ Carlyle perceived this ideal in Friedrich II. Ritter concluded that “In Friedrich dem Großen sah Carlyle den letzten Helden” (In Frederick the Great Carlyle saw the last hero).³¹⁰ His heroic qualities, which Carlyle stressed, were above all “die Stärke seines Charakters, die ihm ein eisernes Durchhalten befiehlt, und die Hoffnung auf das „*Miracle de la maison de Brandenburg*”” (his strength of character, which endowed him with an iron ability to hold out, and his hope for the ‘*Miracle de la maison de Brandenburg*’); both traits were indispensable to support “eine so lange Kriegzeit” (such a long war).³¹¹ Carlyle’s *Frederick* thus became the historical precedent and justification for German readers to “hold out” and hope for a return of the “Miracle of the House of Brandenburg.”

It is by no means surprising that Germans, faced with their impending destruction by an overwhelming force, would find an analog to his present conditions in the history of Frederick the Great, a man who had led the small kingdom of Prussia against seemingly insuperable foes and won; what is of note, however, is the author to whom Goebbels and other consistently referred. Frederick the Great began to appear in Goebbels’s radiobroadcasts far more often as the tides of war began to turn against Germany. Where he had originally drawn comparisons between Hitler and Bismarck, the

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 10.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 10.

³¹⁰ Ibid., 10.

³¹¹ Ibid., 11.

astute politician of *Real Politik*, in the years after the German defeat at Stalingrad the analogy between Frederick and Hitler became a pervasive motif in Goebbels's propaganda.³¹² Frederick was the "Genie der Standhaftigkeit" (genius of steadfastness) and thus a historical and national symbol upon which Goebbels could draw in his constant efforts to bolster the flagging morale of the German nation.³¹³ Yet it is ironic that Goebbels would depend on Thomas Carlyle, the "Victorian Prophet," a Scott who resided most of his life in London, as the principal biographer of Frederick. Carlyle was a citizen of the very nation with which Germany had been at war for more years than it had with any other single country in the twentieth century. Furthermore, Germany had perceived England as its greatest opponent in world politics since the beginning of the reign of Wilhelm II, a view that had become an aspect of popular culture in the First World War.³¹⁴

Despite the traditional antagonism between the two nations, Goebbels relied solely on Carlyle's interpretation of Frederick the Great, attesting to the singular value that Goebbels and Hitler placed on this work. Carlyle's history remained the seminal biography of the Prussian monarch for the Nazi leadership, and, in the end, became an instrument of practical instruction for Goebbels. In January 1945, when his wife worried for the fate of the children at the hands of a victorious Red Army, he "reminded her of

³¹² *Goebbels-Reden*, ed. Helmut Heiber (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1972).

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 2:445.

³¹⁴ See: Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Der Erste Weltkrieg: Anfang vom Ende des bürgerlichen Zeitalters* (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2004), 155-167. In this chapter, "*Deutsche und englische Dichter im Ersten Weltkrieg*", Mommsen asserts that the populations of both England and Germany considered the real struggle of the First World War to be the fight between the British Empire and the German Reich for hegemony in Europe and the world. He supports his argument with an analysis of anti-English and anti-German literature in the two countries.

Frederick the Great whose life in *Carlyle's* glorified rendition” he had just brought to the *Führer*.³¹⁵ Yet his words of consolation about the late Prussian despot did not appear to have worked the desired effect when his wife complained that “Frederick the Great didn’t have any children.”³¹⁶ A month later, Goebbels employed the story of the Prussian king to console the nation. By this time the noose was all but tied around the neck of the Third Reich: the Allies had pushed into German territory on all fronts, and the great barrier of the Rhine was in danger of being crossed. On February 28, Goebbels reminded his listeners in a radio broadcast that “a Frederick II had to fight for seven long and bitter years for his own life and that of his state’s, usually under the most hopeless of circumstances.”³¹⁷ Just as Frederick had once been an example to his nation and borne the struggle of the Seven Years’ War “not for himself but for his people,” Goebbels assured his compatriots that they “had the *Führer* as a brilliant example before [their] eyes” and that he would become “the great historical figure of this gigantic national struggle.”³¹⁸ Hitler, Goebbels thus concluded, embodied the historical figure of Frederick the Great for his nation.

On the very same day of the broadcast, February 28, Goebbels had discussed Carlyle’s work with Hitler in connection with the weakening determination of some of the Nazi Party’s elite. When Goebbels recounted to the *Führer* that “in the last few days” he had read “Carlyle’s book about Frederick the Great,” Hitler responded that he “knew

³¹⁵ *Joseph Goebbels Tagebücher: 1945*, ed. Rolf Hochhuth (Hamburg: Hoffmann and Campe Verlag, 1977), 17. Italics added to emphasize Carlyle.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

³¹⁷ *Goebbels-Reden*, 2:436.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2:443-444.

the book very well.”³¹⁹ After telling him about “a few of the chapters” that applied to their current circumstances with leadership difficulties, Goebbels reported that the *Führer* “was most deeply moved.”³²⁰

Throughout the final year of the regime, Joseph Goebbels continually consulted Carlyle’s *Frederick the Great*, often employing it as a comfort and didactic resource for his current problems. On March 5, he wrote that he had yet again “occupied [himself] with Carlyle’s work on Frederick the Great. What an example for us, and what a comfort and reassurance in these horrible days.”³²¹ He perpetually made the connection between Carlyle’s descriptions of Frederick’s dire years of struggle and his contemporary afflictions. And from the pages of Carlyle he derived his lesson: “In those days, it was a few great men, who saved the people (*Volk*) and the state; now it must be yet again the same case.”³²² When he lent a copy to Hitler, it “pleased him [Hitler] greatly.”³²³ The *Führer* concurred that these “were the great examples (*Vorbilder*) to which we today must aspire, and from them Frederick the Great remains the most exceptional.”³²⁴ When Goebbels considered Reichsmarschal Hermann Göring a liability due to his recent irrational behavior—he had ordered a train to be stopped to requisition food for his *Luftwaffe* troops—the propaganda minister recounted a story of Frederick the Great to Hitler from “a chapter of Carlyle’s [work]” in which the Prussian king is forced to bring

³¹⁹ *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels*, 15:384.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 15:384.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 15:419

³²² *Ibid.*, 15:419

³²³ *Ibid.*, 15:479.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 15:479.

before a military disciplinary court his beloved brother.³²⁵ He advised Hitler from the pages of *Frederick*: “So should we act in order to do away with failures in the party or the *Wehrmacht* (the German armed forces in World War II),” referring specifically to Göring and his recent insubordination.³²⁶ Goebbels’s reading of Carlyle appears to shape his attitudes and actions in the final months of the regime, even hoping for a replay of the Miracle of Brandenburg.

Yet this miracle would never come. Carlyle’s epic portrayal of Friedrich II, his agony at his impending doom and the “historical justice” of his inevitable triumph, conferred a certain degree of solace and hope to the National Socialist cause in its final hour. Carlyle’s heroic depiction of the Prussian king resonated with the Nazi dogma of the age and it was accepted as truth. The history became so verisimilar that it would direct the actions of Goebbels and bring tears to the eyes of the *Führer*. This contrasts sharply with Carlyle’s reputation before the rise of Hitler. *Frederick*’s pro-German interpretation of the Hohenzollern family and the Prussian nation flattered scholars in Germany but was always accepted with the recognition of its prominent bias. Ultimately, it was this bias that makes the work anathema to many scholars today.

The Nazi use of the work demonstrates the dramatic turn of German political dogma and how it impinged on scholars’ interpretation of *Frederick*. Finally, Carlyle’s reputation has never fully recovered from its arrival in the Hitler bunker. Rosenberg and Trevor-Roper conclude that Hitler’s praise for the work displays a certain degree of

³²⁵ Ibid., 557.

³²⁶ Ibid., 557.

“aptness”—an aptness reliant upon historical events that occurred eighty years after Carlyle’s composition of the work.

In interpreting *Frederick* or Carlyle with an eye to their appropriation by National Socialists or Fascists, we are perpetuating propaganda disseminated in an era of polarity and reckless scholarship. Those scholars, on both sides of the lines, which grasped at these similarities between Carlyle and fascism, bear an astounding resemblance to the despondent Goebbels and Hitler who clutched to *Frederick* in the hope of a miracle. A veritable maelstrom of geo-political catastrophes surrounds Carlyle and impairs our judgment on his works. His praise for Friedrich Wilhelm should not be construed as an advocacy for genocidal regimes of the twentieth century. The fascist affinity for his work may reveal the widely diffused, but radically distinct reputation Carlyle retained in these lands.

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