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D. J. Trela

Carlyle and the Periodical Press: Unused Manuscripts for
the Revision of *Shooting Niagara: And After?*

In general, Carlyle's close connections with the periodical press throughout his life have been ignored or diminished by critics. This neglect has extended, as G. B. Tennyson noted in 1973, to Carlyle's own contributions to periodicals, which scholars have for the most part not studied individually, but only in relation to his "major" works.¹ While reasons for this cannot be entered into here, it is worth noting that Carlyle frequently wrote for periodicals, had editors and publishers as close friends, supported, when his influence was worth something, younger writers for the periodical press, and in general valued periodicals as a swift means of reaching large audiences although he at times felt the power of the press could easily be abused. Carlyle also used initial publication of an article in a periodical as a trial balloon preceding separate book or pamphlet publication of a work. For example, Carlyle considered publishing *Chartism* in the *Quarterly Review* although J. G. Lockhart turned it down. It was enthusiastically received by

¹See Tennyson's "The Carlyles" in *Victorian Prose: A Guide to Research*, ed. David J. DeLaura (New York, 1973), p. 89, where he notes that some works have gained no individual attention while for many the most significant appears in "general biographical and critical studies." As of Tennyson's writing there was "no separate study" of *Shooting Niagara* (p. 100). This neglect had not been remedied by 1980, as R. W. Dillon notes in *A Centenary Bibliography of Carlylean Studies, Supplement 1: 1975-80, Carlyle Pamphlets, 4* (Edinburgh, 1980) while the *Victorian Bibliography* shows equally bare cupboards. Fred Kaplan's *Thomas Carlyle: A Critical Biography* (Ithaca, NY, 1983) does not offer constructive commentary.

John Stuart Mill who wanted it for his final number as editor of *London and Westminster Review* in 1839, but now it was Carlyle's turn to demur. He bargained his way into immediate publication of the work as a book.²

Later, the 1849 publication of the "Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question" was expanded for the 1853 pamphlet retitled *Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question*, which includes 23 additional paragraphs.³ Carlyle repeated this same tactic fourteen years later when he wrote *Shooting Niagara: And After?* The work first appeared in *Macmillan's* in August of 1867, but was quickly expanded and republished as a pamphlet. During this revision, which led to scores of alterations ranging from addition or deletion of a comma, minor changes to phrasing and the addition of an entirely new section of eight pages, Carlyle produced two manuscripts on parliamentary government which he did not use. In publishing these manuscripts here, complete for the first time, I wish to draw attention to them for their own sake, and also for what they show of Carlyle's care in crafting his writing.

Carlyle likely chose *Macmillan's* for initial publication because of his friendship with its editor David Masson and because Masson had earlier that same year assisted Carlyle substantially in setting up the bequest of his late wife Jane's Craigenputtoch property to the University of Edinburgh. Friendship aside, however, Carlyle apparently had bigger plans for his article from the start, as a letter from Alexander Macmillan enclosing payment (1 August) suggests. Macmillan first thanked Carlyle for his contribution, saying that it was "a very great pleasure to me to have your excellent article in our magazine." Macmillan significantly added that "Of course the copyright remains entirely yours, and within a reasonable time you are free to reprint it in any form you please." He closed hoping Masson could coax further contributions to the magazine out of Carlyle, a wish never gratified.⁴

Late in August Carlyle began revising his article. He wrote his brother Dr. John Carlyle (31 August) he would soon finish some additions to *Fredrick the Great* "before starting on the *Macmillan* revisi, whh will be due in

²See Charles Richard Sanders, K. J. Fielding & Clyde de L. Ryals, *et al.* ed., *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle* (Durham, NC, 1970 -) 11, 218, 221-2.

³See Aileen Christiansen, "On the Writing of the 'Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question,'" *Carlyle Newsletter*, 2 (March 1980), 13-9; Rodger L. Tarr, *Thomas Carlyle: A Descriptive Bibliography* (Pittsburgh, 1989), pp. 127-31; and Tarr, "Emendation as Challenge: Carlyle's Negro Question from Journal to Pamphlet," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 75 (1981), 341-5.

⁴NLS 1768.282.

a fortnight or less."⁵ Although most of the changes he made are relatively minor, he did take considerable pains over a new concluding section to the pamphlet. The manuscripts here transcribed, both of which are lodged in the National Library of Scotland, are probably rejected attempts to craft this new conclusion.

The first is dated 7 August 1867 and confirms that Carlyle was expanding the piece for a pamphlet version even before the initial periodical appearance. This manuscript is written on four small sheets of paper in his difficult later hand. It is heavily revised and makes use of numerous abbreviations and specific notations about its arrangement. The second manuscript has apparently been copied by Carlyle's niece Mary Aitken, then corrected by Carlyle. It is divided into three sections to which printing instructions in Carlyle's hand are appended. These suggest this manuscript may have been closer to inclusion in the revision of *Shooting Niagara* although in the end it was withheld.

Carlyle has given the first manuscript the provisional title of "The questn What Parltz can do."⁶ It opens with a discussion of the legislatures of several European countries, demonstrating that most had outlived their usefulness while the English Parliament was in similar danger. Carlyle's abbreviations are retained, while his indications regarding the ordering of the manuscript are omitted.

"And you dare to think there is no good in Parltz at all then?" Not so reader; much the contrary. *Times* change, that is, *men* change; and Parltz with them. Parltz are of all kinds from that of being Collective-Wisdom of the Natn down almost (if you rigorously judge them) to that of being Collective Folly!

The questn, what Parltz can do, especially in a Country like England, is very complicated. In all European countries, there used to be Parltz, *Parliamenta*, 'Talkings', free consultatns betn the King and his leading men;—oftenest abt Xmastime; interspersed with hospitalities, social jovialities and generous dining together, *whh* are still found to be promotive of free discernnt (unbiased by ill-nature at least), of generously candid ways of thinking among men assembled to consult, and of conclusions having a maximum of unanimity upon disputed points. Under graver forms, and with their 'customs of Parlt', 'Privileges of Parlt', and more and more solemn functions and observances, they continued, one way or other, a long while everywhere; and in Engl^d came to a great height of developr: standing much always by their old 'Customs of Parlt;' *whh* is a thrifty habit of England. The 'three readings,' for instance: the oldest Germans, Tacitus tells us, had as good as *two*; one, while *drunk*, or while triumphantly, and all in hope &

⁵NLS 522.26.

⁶The two MSS are NLS 1798.13-18 and 1798.19-21 respectively. In the first transcription concluding letters in italics were actually written in superscript form by Carlyle.

glory, getting drunk; another, while dolefully, and all in the dimals, getting *sober* out of drink. To *whh* the practical English added a third, as if *withr* regard to strong drink for or *agr*, but by way of clear final average and stable equilibrium *betn* the other two:—still an excellt 'Custom of Parl't'. That of moving "the previous *questn*", too (i. e. 'putting the *questn* whether this *questn* shall be put') —But I will not go into antiquarianisms.

Parlts got into many forms, latterly of *mis*growth for most part; and were generally suppressed or reduced to 2d childhood,—in France they took to *regist*ing laws, instead of helping to make them, or *altogr* making them as in Engl'd ultimately. The German *Reichstag* (Reich's Day, 'Diet') was a kind of enormous Parl't, most unwieldy, cyclopean in structure; but good for something, nay for a great deal, while it was in earnest, as in the Hohenstauffen time and earlier. Sweden, Denmark have oft hand and still have their *Thing*, *Storthing* (Great-Thing = 'Great-Think,' [Thing and Think underscored twice] as Latin '*rear*' too is from '*res*', and to human creatures every thing is first of all a *think*, and till you have *thinged* a phenomn it is mere *vapr* and haze to you): these Scandinavn *Things* & *Storthings*, have now fallen mainly into pleasing their Penny Newspr's, I am afraid, tho' they once used to be equal to better work! —

All these European Parlts were very useful creations,—so long, 1°, as they were sincere and in hearty[?] earnest *abt* their work; and 2°, as their work continued to be giving counsel, inquiry, *thot*, and deliberate control of some kind, to an administering *King* who was master of them. So soon as any Parl't or Entity becomes *insincere*, and takes up its work as *amuset*, or still worse for 'bye ends' of its own (*whh* is dishonesty as well), said Parl't or Entity has taken the road towards *finis*, and *annihatn* more or less ignominious; and is not worth speaking of farther. It is in that way most Parlts have died, and deservedly disappeared from this earnest universe. The only one of them that still survives with work-tools still in its hand (tho' long since *incompett* to use them) is the English Parl't,—*whh* also, so far as I can cast its horoscope, does n't seem to be long for this world.

The English Parl't, incomparably the wisest and also the luckiest of these Entities rose higher and higher, from the times of King Rufus onward; and *abt* 300 years ago, had grown to be such a 'controller' as its Kings were getting somewhat astonished to see! Profoundly respectful, kissing the dust before their Kings; but obstinately 'counselling,' groaning, petitioning, *remonstrating*, and in effect 'controlling', more and ever more! Poor King James, dropping in from Scotland, and with none of the strongest bridle-hands, got the first large draught of these Parly troubles; no end to his *amazet* at them. "What, what? You meddle with matters of state; the like of you teach kings their policy, & how to govern? Why, why, it is a"—In fact it is a gradual way of reducing Kings to zero, *yr* My, and putting Parlts in their stead! *Whh* took effect, how we know[.]

Kings *cd* not end *withr* a stroke for themselves; under poor James's successor it came to furious universal duel; duel to the death;— and it was the King that died, and the Parl't that chanced to live. The English Long Parl't I take to be the consummate flower of Parlts; no other such, for wisdom, earnestness, devoutness, valour, faculty, integrity and noble human worth ever met together in this world, or will *agn* meet. And, having at last warred down the King, it had itself to begin administering and governing; and all its successors at the same trade,

more and more, ever since,—with more and more evidence (*whh* is now *abt* complete) of their total and perpetual incompetency to perform that *functn* in any not intolerable manner! —

The Long Parl^t itself, so high, so wise and faithful, *cd* administer nothing; but for the *accidr* of Cromwell, it *wd* have misadministered its own war of Self-Preservatⁿ, and had its own head cut off instead of the King's. The Rump of it had at last, after endless patient trials of it, to be flung into the River. Oliver's 3 succeeding Parl^{ts}—we know what help towards administering his great and vitally necessary affairs these gave him; and how, in 18 months after Oliver's victorious exit, *they* doing their Parly best, had administered away their own *heads*, and left them stuck on Temple-Bar, *ineloquent* now, or with hideous *mutely* grinning eloquence was much to the *reverse* effect of their living and vocal *do!* And *whh* I don't think the survivors have yet taken in, as they might and ought.

The French Conventⁿ was a very earnest Parl^t too; and tried administering as for life and death; but found it impossible totally; had to elect its 'Committee of Public Safety[?]' (Three or so ruling them, each in his *depart*) for that object; and have itself guillotined into silence, if it offered the least remark in the way of criticism. There is not in the History of Mankind, nor do I expect there will be, one instance of a Parl^t that *cd* 'administer', except towards ruin & rottonness slow or fast;— that is the everlasting rule of Nature; and I doubt not men, at the long last, in spite of their swarmeries and superstit^{ns} will get to attend to it. *Whh* makes me auger ill of English Parl^t too, and of Reformed Parl^t itself, if its fate were much to concern me!

Witty Pope says (and is much believed,

'For forms of gov^t let fools contest;

What e'er is best administered is best:⁷

Engd will reflect with itself by & bye: Well; and so I suppose, 'What e'er is worst administered is worst?'" Alas, yes, poor *Engd*; I *shd* say so! —

Parl^{ts} fallen into idol jargon^g and *witht* sincerity of purpose are in a fatal way; but if to this they add the second fatality, of engaging to administer great Empires in a state of crisis,— the *positn* is *witht* remedy: &, Like the Rump of the Long Parl^t, and the sewages of London, they have their road marked.

Parl^{ts}, even the insincerest, and those that talk most to Buncombe, have one use, That of bringing on & executing anarchy & *revolutn*: I hardly know another use they essentially have. And will say no more of them here.

(7 Augt 1867) —

The second manuscript, as noted, pleased Carlyle more. He notes on it '[*d, e, f* print as Patches, with white space between.' Carlyle did in fact label the three sections to the manuscript with these initials while the 'white space' refers to a double space or gap between the paragraphs instead of the usual single space. This was Carlyle's normal means of indicating a division in the manuscript that was minor enough not to warrant a new chapter. Car-

⁷*Essay on Man*, 3:303.

lyle's has labeled this manuscript "'Parlts'", adding '(was part of "Niagara" Pamphlet, concluding Part; but wisely *withdrawn*) [Sept 1867]'

(d)

For Englishmen Parliaments have long been a kind of second nature; no conceivable mode of government except by that implement. Were it fallen never so ruinous they will have no recourse but that, for a long time to come. Persist in it they will and must, try it to all lengths and breadths; no other way of discovering [how] universally incompetent, ruinous, hopeless and impossible said method of governing now is. For it is at least universally agreed upon; speaks with a voice recognised as National, if not the Collective Wisdom of the Nation, it is at least and lowest the Collective Folly of the Nation. You there ascertain what fooleries this Nation has decided on, and will see done,—to which you and I, whatever our station or opinion be, will quietly conform, and save our penalties. Nay if there were a King again, wouldn't he himself wish generally to know what the Collective Folly thought withal? Perhaps the noblest Kings of the Future will consent, or wish, always to keep up some kind of Penny-Newspaper Parliament, or Universal-Suffrage Talking Apparatus, directed upon Buncombe or whithersoever: kind of Nilometer, *Follyo-meter*, or index for oneself how deep the flood runs[.]

----- (e)

A considerable and not favourable change takes place in Parliaments so soon as Oratory becomes an established usage or conspicuous feature there. The useful kind of speech, in such places, is sparing in quantity; and of quality not oratorical, but practically deliberative and for business purposes. Oratory, however, is sure to intrude by degrees: you find it has already some prevalence in the Long Parliament (for instance):—always an evil rather than otherwise, my friend Oliver considers it, as do I. Have your *thor*, your insight & conviction "eloquent," too fervidly sincere and heaven-inspired your thought can never be;—but don't run after words and tropes for expressing of it; seldom will that do either it or you any good! Oratory within limits is a thing we must put up with in the most perfect Parliaments, when once they have been established a while.

The next change for Parliament is a vast, almost immeasurable and proportionably unfavourable one,—small as it at first looks, and probably beneficent then and for a good while afterwards.—That of admitting the intrusive Fourth Estate, and setting up a Reporter's Gallery. Huge (inverse) *Dionysius' Ear* where the whole world may sit and listen what the King is saying (when he happens to be a *Parlt*, as here)! No more a sacredly mysterious Parliament, where any Honourable member whispering a word of what passed there, goes to the Tower or farther; but an Astley's Circus, or Robin-Hood Debating Society, where all manner of idle people sit idly listening and foolishly commenting,—(foolishly not wisely, but without even sincerity; *whh* makes Folly ever emptier, *ghastlier*, more abjectly foolish)—till, in the space of about a hundred years or little more, time-honoured Parliament comes to what we now see.

----- (f)

Parliaments that take to speaking to Buncombe—what man is there,—or what thing is there that can reasonably hope any good of them? By hypothesis it is not to the fact on hand, or to any fact, interest or entity in this Universe, but to Buncombe, to the various Buncombes concerned, that such Parliament directs its eloquences, arguments and deliberations: the fact on hand and all other facts but Buncombe, will get no benefit of this Parliament's wisdom—supposing it still to have any. Nor will Buncombe itself get anything but mischief,—wretched Buncombe, fostered and fomented in its brutish[?] blockheadisms; strengthened in the stupid faith that noisy jargon is as good as wisdom, goes as far as wisdom in this world, and that balloting, beery jargonizing, and sufficient emphasis of balderdash is what the gods mainly require of a man or of a Buncombe.

Of a Parliament that abandons veracity & seriousness, that has ceased to be even serious in lying, what benefit can you be mad enough to expect? In this earnest Universe there was no Entity yet heard of that could win victory on those terms. Temporary victory, in the roaring whirlpool of nonsenses, it might gain, or might fail to gain; defeat, everlasting bankruptcy, abolition, it was at last sure to gain. Of all terrestrial Entities that is the law; victory *impossible minus* seriousness and truth: and in the world I know of no Entity so visibly and so preeminently liable in this point as a National Parliament, with Reporters in it, and at length with Penny Newsprs in it, always is. Do you expect good National counsel from an idle club of persons little given to think, and not to thinking of the Nation at all, except as of a Buncombe which will reelect one's poor idle self, or refuse to reelect?—Parliaments jumbling along in that sort, will deserve the name of Anarchic Parliaments, however perfect in their 'readings,' 'puttings of the questn' &c &c:—in Countries used to them they will serve to conduct the blind and sordid Donnybrook of Fighting Parties, by tongue and throat instead of sword and musket;—which seems at first view a great advantage: but, on second thoughts, is perhaps a dear bought one too. Nobody now understands the infinite baseness of this kind of tongue-fencing, and Parliamentary duelling, at once rabid and inane; what it springs from, and whither it is leading,—otherwise his computation might change.

While neither of these manuscripts was used, one can only speculate on reasons why. They are on the whole vigorous, forceful and similar in spirit and tone to published portions of *Shooting Niagara*. Either one could have become the concluding section to the pamphlet, but, as I have suggested elsewhere,⁸ their emphasis on Parliamentary government perhaps seemed misplaced since Carlyle had given up hope of Parliament reinvigorating itself by following a wise ruler. Carlyle had grown weary of advising an entity which would not listen to him that had also outlived its usefulness. This line

⁸See my article "Carlyle's *Shooting Niagara*: The Writing and Revising of an Article and Pamphlet," in *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 25 (Spring 1992), 30-4. Brief portions of the foregoing manuscripts are excerpted there.

of reasoning may explain why the section Carlyle eventually used to conclude the pamphlet concentrated on vocal and silent 'aristoi': a new version of the 'Captains of Industry' he had honored in *Past and Present*. For individuals there was hope; for Parliament there was little or none.

However this may be we have here two excellent pieces of polemical writing Carlyle completed in his old age. They show that on occasion his creative powers were still strong, even if his themes were the same old ones. The manuscripts also show Carlyle's professionalism and care in revising his own work and his skillful use of the literary marketplace to disseminate his political and social views.

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