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*‘Men are grown mechanical in head and in heart’:
Mythologizing the Industrial Revolution*

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**‘Men are grown mechanical in head and in heart’:
Mythologizing the Industrial Revolution**

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Thesis submitted for the qualification of Doctor of Philosophy

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2014

Abstract

This thesis will explore the evolution of the narrative of the Industrial Revolution, from the association of the Prometheus myth with ideas of science and revolution in the late eighteenth century to the development of a myth of the Industrial Revolution during the nineteenth century. It will address works by Goethe, Mary Shelley, Thomas Carlyle, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels with an aim to explore how they participated in using and creating myths to understand the social and economic changes affected by industrialisation in Britain.

Chapter One will establish current problems within the historiography of the Industrial Revolution in order to introduce the concept of 'mythistory', before discussing Promethean narratives during the late eighteenth century, and the etymology of the term 'Industrial Revolution'. Chapter Two will discuss Goethe's *Faust*, and the ways in which Promethean ideas, as well as Goethe's own worldview, transformed the old legend into a useful narrative with which to consider industrialisation. Chapter Three will explore the ways in which Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* undermined and questioned her contemporaries' assumptions about the heroism of scientific endeavours. Together, these two chapters will establish the myths Marx and Carlyle used to engage directly with the Industrial Revolution.

Chapter Four will discuss the works of Thomas Carlyle, specifically his early essays and *Past and Present*. It will underscore Carlyle's admiration for Goethe, and his 'great man' approach to history, before analysing his own mythmaking. Chapter Five will follow on by studying the mythmaking of Marx and Engels, particularly in their early works, 'The Communist Manifesto', and *Capital, Vol. 1*. Discussion will concern how these authors contrast ideologically with Carlyle while nevertheless sharing a mythic diagnosis of present industry. Finally, the conclusion will discuss how these myths have since been processed, particularly by Humphrey Jennings in his composite text on the Industrial Revolution, *Pandaemonium: The Coming of the Machine as Seen by Contemporary Observers, 1660-1886*, as well as pointing out avenues for future research.

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List of Abbreviations

CEC refers to *The Correspondence of Emerson and Carlyle*, edited by Joseph Slater (New York: Columbia UP, 1964).

CCH refers to *Thomas Carlyle: The Critical Heritage*, edited by Jules Paul Seigel (London: Routledge & Paul, 1971).

CME refers to Carlyle's *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays in Five Volumes* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1899). Volume will be specified in citations.

CLO refers to *Carlyle Letters Online* (Duke University Press, 2007).

CGES refers to both volumes of *Conversations of Goethe with Eckermann and Soret*, translated by John Oxenford (London: Smith Elder & Co, 1850).

CSG refers to both volumes of *Correspondence between Schiller and Goethe: From 1794 to 1805*, translated by George H. Calvert (New York: Wiley & Putnam, 1845).

JMS refers to both volumes of the *The Journals of Mary Shelley: 1814-1844*, edited by Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987).

LMS refers to *The Letters of Mary Wollestonecraft Shelley*, edited by Betty T. Bennet. Vol. I. (London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1980).

MECW refers to the volumes of *Marx and Engels Collected Works* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975).

TZ refers to *Goethe's Letters to Zelter: With Extracts from Those to Goethe: Selected, Translated and Annotated*, translated by Arthur Duke Coleridge (London: George Bell & Sons, 1892).

'Zillman' refers to *Prometheus Unbound, a Variorum Edition*, edited by Lawrence John Zillman (Seattle: University of Washington, 1959). This includes both the poem and several appendices of primary sources surrounding the work, including perspectives by Mary Shelley and other critics. Titles of the various sources will be cited along with page numbers.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Department of English Studies at Durham University for their support of my research. In particular, I owe a great debt of gratitude to Dr Simon Grimble for his guidance and patience with both this project (which bears only passing resemblance to the one which he agreed to supervise) and my inability to estimate reasonable deadlines. Thanks also to Dr Sarah Wootton for her support.

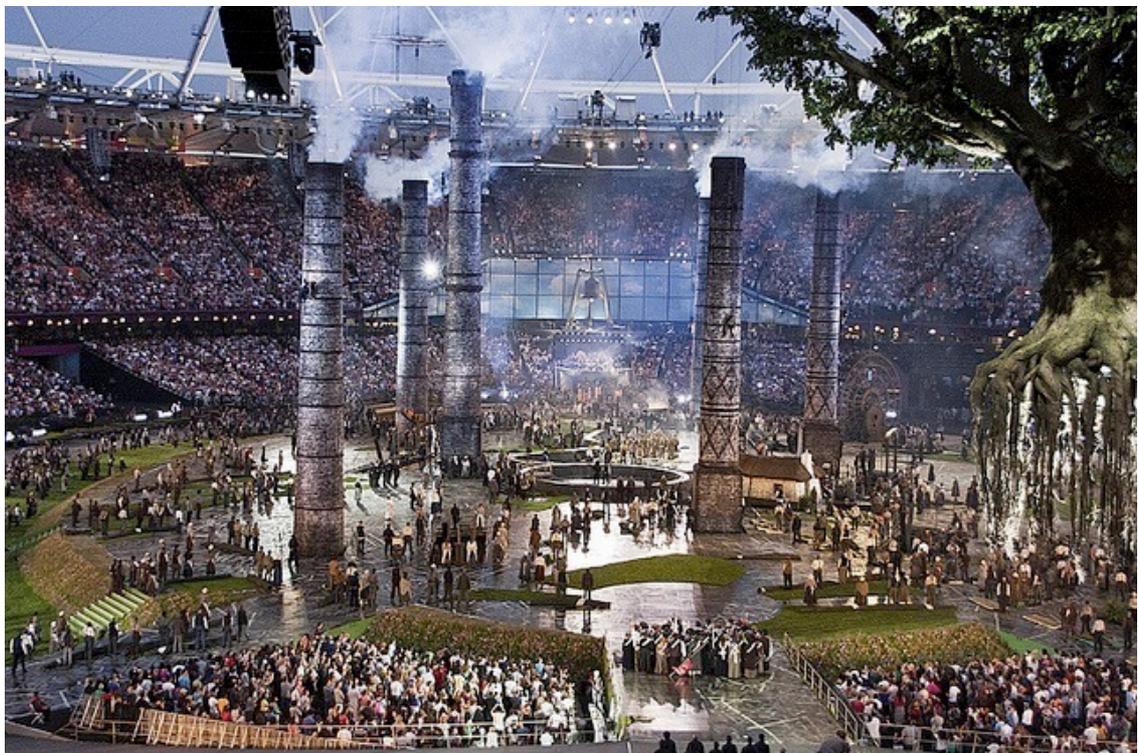
This project would not have been possible without the support of my family, who have gone far above and beyond the call of familial duty in their engagement with my work: Steve and Sallie, you are the best possible parents I could ever hope to have in all ways, and this time especially, your persistence in exploring, questioning, and supporting my research has had a tremendous positive impact upon this project. I must also thank my esteemed grandmother, Adelaida, for being an inspirational academic role model at home and abroad, who will no doubt laugh at me for calling her 'esteemed'. To Mia, Bill and Matthew, Diana and Eric: thank you for providing books, insights, and a supportive ear every holiday. To Martha and Joe, who ensured that I got here: thank you.

Finally, many grovelling thanks are owed to my colleagues in Durham and Newcastle for their friendship, constant support, and editorial aid: to Nicole and Bea, the best collaborators and very best company to keep whether at work or in the pub (or both at once); and to Leanne and Helen, tremendously helpful friends and critics.

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Introduction

At the opening ceremony of the London 2012 Olympics, Danny Boyle's attempt to capture and distil the identity of modern Britain resulted in a compelling drama of five hundred years of history that was most distinctive for its omissions. It seemed that only three central components were necessary in order to define the character of Britain: the pastoral idyll of pre-industrial England, the chaotic and vibrant dance party of twentieth-century strife and twenty-first century social media and multiculturalism, and the dark militaristic catalyst that transformed the former into the latter—the Industrial Revolution.



Matt Lancashire, '2012 Summer Olympics opening ceremony final rehearsal'

From the stripping away of green pastures, to the raising of towering smokestacks to the thunder of drums under the paternal gaze of Isambard Kingdom Brunel, it would appear that to Danny Boyle, the process of industrialisation was one of the keys to understanding Britishness. Yet this claim to an acquired unity of British identity uncomfortably neglects, among other things, the English Civil War, the Glorious Revolution, and the British Empire. The Industrial Revolution appears to have superseded these other events, at least in current collective memory, to become the symbol of Britain's first steps in the march towards modernity and its current kaleidoscopic identity as a technologically advanced, heterogeneous society. It is an event that even now defines the national identity of Britain,

and has become an iconic reference point when describing our attitudes towards technology.

But why is this the case? Why did Boyle gravitate towards this reading of history, this set of visual and narrative cues? I will argue that the favouring of the Industrial Revolution in the construction of contemporary British national identity is in part because it is already an established national myth. The purpose of this thesis is to trace the Industrial Revolution's development into a mythic narrative, through a network of literary figures and their influences. These begin with the use of Prometheus in eighteenth-century rhetoric, and culminate in the collective enshrining of awe and fear in western industrialisation: awe at what human ingenuity can create, and fear for what losses we might incur at the hands of our creations. Raymond Williams has commented that the mood of the Industrial Revolution in England is a 'mood of contrasts', and this shows in the way in which the narrative of industrialisation plays out in Boyle's ceremony and other media in popular culture (3). The carving away of the countryside with railways and factories conveys both amazement and hope at the grand achievement of industry, and dismay at the disruption of rural life.

Within the field of English literature studies, the 'industrial novels' have recently been examined at length for their portrayals of the new technological environment of England. Additionally, more philosophical nonfiction writers such as Matthew Arnold and Thomas Carlyle have been studied for their considerations of the spiritual impact industry has had on British society. Put together, a larger picture forms of how industry was being received and read in such a way that the Industrial Revolution has become preserved in our memories as something large and almost timeless. The giving way of the pastoral to the industrial, and the question of what losses are incurred by technological gain, were widespread themes in art and literature far beyond Blake's 'Satanic Mills'. These themes anticipate the way in which Boyle's opening ceremony comes across as an ambivalent study in contrasts between industrial darkness and modern triumph. In drawing out the feeling of overturn in industrial terms, Carlyle frames his historical contrast of *Past and Present* by setting the scene of the past as, 'Side by side sleep the coal-strata and the iron-strata for so many ages; no Steam-Demon has yet risen smoking into being' (66). The rise of industry, he implies, is more than a paradigm shift in the way the western world produced and worked, but a historical moment of mythic significance that cannot be contained by mere factual account. Many other writers reflected a similar feeling of overturn and of Promethean gifts turning out to be the result, instead, of Faustian bargaining. Working

class poetry of the Chartist movement, most notably Edward P. Mead's piece 'The Steam King', which Engels included in its entirety in *Condition of the Working Class in England* (1844), reflected the rise of industry in relation to the rise of tyranny in the new guise of factory work.¹ Steam personified is cobbled together from demonic forces, factory metal and human greed, such that: 'His bowels are of living fire, / And children are his food' (11-12). Dickens also characterised industry in similar ways across many of his works, with *Hard Times* (1854) standing out as a particularly good example. The factory system in fictional Coketown, 'a town of machinery and tall chimneys', evidences the failure of *laissez-faire* economics and the perceived heartlessness of Utilitarianism (1). It runs relentlessly, spinning away, while its overseers renounce all responsibility for the conditions of the featureless workers that tend to it. Smoke trails show up multiple times within the novel, almost always as serpents (lending additional Biblical implications of corruption), and Dickens continually describes them consuming and shrouding the workers using a 'vocabulary of contamination' (Goldberg 68). The men who work at the factories are nominally reduced to the only useful part of them, 'Hands', while the factories and machinery are given magical status that animate their employees: 'the old sensation [was] upon him which the stoppage of the machinery always produced—the sensation of its having worked and stopped in his own head' (Dickens 84-5).

Marked within these new portrayals of industry is a physical narrative of darkening spaces, and of forcible exchange of one extreme for another, wherein the gifts of technology are not so much enlightening Promethean fire as they are sources of physical and social disruption. Frances Trollope outlined this exchange clearly in *Town and Country* (1848):

And then this steam, which brings all the world together so easily, knocks off as many corners of character as of road, and thereby makes one people so very like another people...that our old comedians...would be terribly at a loss for a type whereby to sketch a striking character which should at once be true to nature, yet sufficiently marked among his fellow men to be recognised as a good specimen of a class (3).

Trollope articulates that homogenisation is one of the costs of steam power, a point which would also be central to Marx's diagnosis of industry. Others were more closely in line with Dickens' gothic flair in while portraying contrast and transition. In Robert Bell's *The Ladder of Gold* (1850), 'physical obstacles and private rights were straws under the chariot wheels of

¹ Useful examples of other relevant poetry (as well as Mead's poem) can be found in Brian Maidment's anthology, *The Poorhouse Fugitives: Self-taught Poets and Poetry in Victorian Britain* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1987). While not all are as colourful in imagery as 'The Steam King', the vivid portrayals of working class suffering

the Fire-King...the shrieking engine was to carry the riot of the town into the sylvan retreats of pastoral life' (274). Catherine Grace F. Gore observed in her novel *Progress and Prejudice* (1854) that the opening of more pastoral districts to the influence of urban life left society 'more locomotive, more enlightened, more grand, and more selfish' (13). This observation, like Trollope's, would continue to be relevant towards all aspects of modern progress—for all of the leaps forward man made in terms of knowledge and invention, it appeared to many that society was taking moral steps backward. This captures the general ambivalence felt by many in the literary community; while the railways and other innovations were hoped to be 'A noble achievement of science...[in which] the miraculous element of steam would draw along the road of iron a whole host of travellers, carrying the beneficent influences of civilisation to the remotest nooks', equally, 'the very labour which, under proper direction, might have been made a means of elevation, bec[ame] an additional cause of debasement, being pursued without intermission night and day' (Fullom 247). Sir Richard Phillips, whose comments would later be pointedly included in Jennings' collection of testimony, *Pandaemonium*, summarised that:

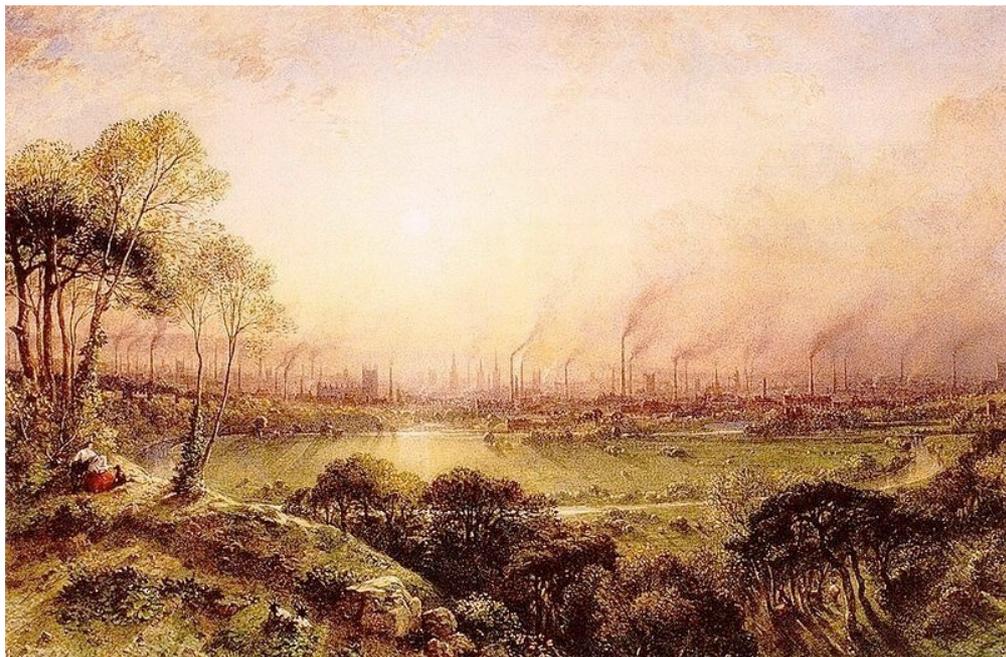
While, however, we admire these triumphs of mechanics, and congratulate society on the prospect of enjoying more luxuries at less cost of human labour, it ought not to be forgotten, that the general good in such cases is productive of great partial evils, against which a paternal government ought to provide (138).

Such literary readings of industrialisation in themselves do not constitute myth, but they do begin to create contrasts between what was past and what is present, resulting in warring images of awe-inspiring physical achievements and spiritual degeneration that are consistent between images of the railways, and images of factory life. Furthermore, the demonic image of industry is further reflected in visual art, such as this example by Philip James de Loutherbourg in which cities are obscured in gloom and distant mines throw up fire from their depths:



Philip James de Loutherbourg, 'Coalbrookdale by Night' (1801)

The contrast between human work, landscape, and industry, as thrown into relief by coal fire became increasingly subject to artistic scrutiny, particularly when landscape painting itself became popular through the Romantic school, where previously it had only occupied the lower echelons of the genres of western art. Industry both interfered with and became the subject of depictions of the landscape, resulting in movements both towards idyllic pastoral scenes and depictions of industrial wonders, such as in a later example by William Wylde:



William Wylde, 'Manchester from Kersal Moor' (1857)

The pastoral landscape and the Romantic wilderness stand out increasingly against the encroachment of industry, which physically manifests feelings of transition, of overturning, and of a revolutionary new system of life. This was further enforced by a certain measure of tourism to industrial towns. Manchester became a place of journalistic curiosity and casual sightseeing, in which the wonder of machinery was given precedence in an effort to put a positive image on factory work (Gray 136). The seeing and recounting of the spectacle of industrialisation became an essential part of the formation of a coherent narrative that characterised the process as not only revolutionary, but also costly.

These narratives in Dickens, Bell, and Trollope, of technological gifts being misused and disfiguring the national landscape, would become the guiding narrative deployed by influential historians like the Hammonds during the second half of the nineteenth century, and thus destined to be digested by subsequent generations. Robert Q. Gray observes, on the topic of industrial novels, that ‘The problems of industrialism provided a literary *topos*, often functioning as a complex metaphor for other concerns, rather than any unified genre’ (143), suggesting that amassing a solid canon of industrial works is a difficult and often problematic task. I would argue, however, that the appearance of industry as a cipher for larger issues makes the argument for an industrial *myth* that much stronger. As a recitation of a historical event, it is an isolated collection of facts. But as a myth, it becomes a useful story to which we refer in order to understand the present.

For this reason, I will be addressing two different but related sorts of literature that combine to create what I will call the myth of the Industrial Revolution. In order to address myth, I will seek to explore the reworking of the Prometheus myth around the turn of the nineteenth century, specifically in Goethe’s *Faust* (1808-1831) and Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein: or, the Modern Prometheus* (1818). These works will demonstrate how old myths were repurposed in order to understand the modern world, and to interrogate whether industrial development is destined to improve society. This will then be followed by direct discussions of industrialisation by Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) and Karl Marx (1818-1883), who employ elements of the Faust and Frankenstein myths in order to illustrate their ideological stances. It is my hope that through exploring the shared influences that impacted these authors’ writings, we might gain a greater understanding of how the western world, particularly Britain, has creatively processed technology culture over time to make it such an essential part of human and national identity.

One could speculate that the Industrial Revolution was a confluence of events with

which we have come to most readily connect because of our current relationship with, and understanding, of technology. In following the celebrations of the National Health Service and various pop cultural icons with a tribute to Tim Berners-Lee, much of the Olympics opening ceremony was derived from British technological, as well as cultural, history. In this sense, the Industrial Revolution, defined centrally by the rise of manufacturing technology, fits well within that narrative of increased access to technology across classes: the spirit of ‘This is for everyone’ (Berners-Lee n.p.). Industry in the nineteenth century impacted on large numbers of the population, from the aristocracy to the working classes, who were exposed to machinery of increasing sophistication and were expected to evolve their own working habits and lives with it. We can imagine and relate to some of the excitement and trepidation people must have felt, of being swept up by the power and scope of technology’s reach, because it is now a common feeling in what we self-identify as the information age. It is now common practice for us to question the repercussions of having our lives move faster, and be increasingly interconnected, dense with stimuli, and publicly accessible. As is apparent from the legal and moral debates on artificial intelligence, privacy violations, and social networking, we are filled with excitement about what we can build, but are also often afraid of it. The Industrial Revolution was, to these concerns, a corresponding time in history when technology visibly became a driving force behind changes in the human condition.

The narrative of the industrialisation process has had a lasting impact upon our perception of technology as a whole. One can find similar portraits of de-individualisation and mechanisation in Charlie Chaplin’s satirical portrait of factory life in the film *Modern Times* (1936), nearly eight decades before the masses of identical workers streamed through the Olympic stadium. Even when displaced from their original time and setting, the feelings of the modern condition, its dehumanisation and alienation even in the face of amazing advance, starts with industry and man’s relationship with technology, if not in historical truth, then in our collective memory of it. For this reason, we read the Industrial Revolution not only as a historical event, but as a close informant upon our own age (and our speculations of the future, as dystopian science fiction would indicate).

This reading relies heavily upon the conceit of technological determinism which, broadly defined, assumes that technology at its various stages shapes the society which creates it.² Danny Boyle’s opening ceremony reflects our preoccupation with this specific

² For a brief discussion of the origins of technological determinism, see the closing paragraphs of Chapter 6. The idea has since undergone various transformations and schisms between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ deterministic models. For a somewhat more recent discussion of the concept, see *Does Technology Drive History? The*

historical and technological moment, and more importantly, it reflects a zeitgeist in how narrowly we often read that historical moment—it has become defined by the defiling of the countryside, the building of smoke stacks, the forging of innovation, and the inexorable march of bourgeois men in top hats, the capitalist Captains of Industry. Lenard R. Berlanstein has observed that: “The Industrial Revolution is not a self-evident fact which helps us to know the past. It is a mental construct with inherent presuppositions and limits” (xv). In this observation, he means to warn historians of the constructed nature of what we call the Industrial Revolution; it is more than simply ‘the process of change from an agrarian, handicraft economy to one dominated by industry and machine manufacture’ (‘Industrial Revolution’, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*). In its full socio-economic, cultural and historical implications, it is not *what happened* so much as *what we have created and named in order to understand what happened*. But in stating this, Berlanstein is also indicating that the Industrial Revolution has passed out of the realm of any ‘pure’ Rankean history, and has become a part of the fabric of cultural myth that we now claim as our past. More than any other time period we have used it as an example in arguments for whether free market capitalism works, for the importance of unions, and for man’s relationship with his own work and creativity. We study the Industrial Revolution not just because we want to understand what went on during the time, but also because we want to understand what it *means* to us, and what it can tell us about our own time. We project ourselves onto it in the hopes of learning more about ourselves, and the modern world in which we live.

In light of this, we can further consider Boyle’s purpose and message in constructing the opening ceremony. Pervading many critics’ evaluations of the event was the question of what it managed to say (if anything) about what exactly Britain is now. To some, it was ‘a quixotic exercise in self-branding’ that resulted in a ‘sometimes slightly insane portrait’ (Lyall n.p.), and to others it was ‘surprisingly parochial’ and ‘a national self-delusion’ (Gilligan n.p.). Consistent between the varying positive and negative sentiments was the assertion that Boyle was engaging, rightly, in an act of national self-mythologizing. As Trevor Phillips, recently of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, summarised: ‘This was not the Britain that the world knows. But Britishness isn’t about pedestrian reality; it’s about myth – what we tell ourselves we have been, and what we hope to be’ (*The Observer* n.p.). Of all the various approaches Boyle could have taken in seeking to capture an elusive national identity, this triptych of past unity followed by the trauma and fragmentation of Blake’s ‘dark Satanic Mills’ lent itself best to the establishment of a

national myth. Perhaps this is not so surprising when one considers that the Industrial Revolution has already become its own myth. In her study of the Industrial Revolution, Maxine Berg remarks that:

As Linda Colley has put it, the British ‘came to define themselves as a single people not because of any political or cultural consensus at home, but rather in reaction to the Other beyond their shores’. One part of this reaction was in defining themselves as the first industrial nation. That identity as ‘first’ has long disappeared, now so too has that of ‘industrial’ nation. The industry has, indeed, become part of the iconography of past glories—long-abandoned industrial sites have been made a part of the national heritage, a new picturesque landscape, a postmodern comment on the pastoral picturesque scenes of the eighteenth century (2).

In her description, Berg touches on the strange closeness with which industrialism and pastoralism have now become tied together within British history, and the deep-seated ambivalence which drives the narrative of the transition from one to the other (though the process could never precisely be called a complete one). Industry as a past glory of Britain is based in global economic success and imperial enterprise, but is also founded upon what is often viewed as profound loss, of both the natural aesthetic of the landscape and traditional class structures. A modern, industrial Britishness, that set Britain apart from less advanced European nations, has been fundamental to maintaining a sense of national identity, especially since it came about through the loss of traditional, pastoral Britishness. Both the loss and the gain have become integral to the ‘iconography’ of Britain in the present. This in turn can be traced further back to the beginning of the twentieth century, and the end of the historical process of industrialisation.

The inspiration for Boyle’s selective reading of British history derived from the works of Humphrey Jennings, particularly his collection of historical documents, *Pandaemonium: 1660-1886: The Coming of the Machine as Seen by Contemporary Observers* (1985), which was edited and completed by his daughter. Jennings was best known during his lifetime for his war propaganda films, which share many of the stylistic features that his book demonstrates. In juxtaposing word and image, and the pastoral and the technological throughout his films, Jennings cultivated a sense of national unity through montages in which industrial machinery uneasily coexists with the idyll from which it sprung. In ‘Words for Battle’ (1941), Laurence Olivier narrates the same long evolution from the ‘most temperate and wholesome’ land of William Camden’s *Britannia* (1586) to the battle cries of liberty and justice delivered by Churchill and Lincoln, which are paired with alternating images of countryside and the machines of war. Milton’s description of England as ‘an eagle mewing her mighty youth’ is placed against a spitfire readying for flight, and as

Browning's 'Home thoughts, from the Sea' (1838) is read, dolphins and warships cut through the water, one after the other. Similarly, in *Pandaemonium*, Jennings selected passages from the writing of inventors, poets, and politicians, which concentrated on the character of industrialisation, and the mixed awe and fear with which it was greeted. Jennings demonstrated a great instinct for finding poetic and iconic passages even in largely practical texts; he cited Andrew Ure when he lauded machines as the products of Minerva and Vulcan, and contrasted his enthusiasm with equally vivid but far more ambivalent commentary by Sir James Kay Shuttleworth (Ure 367). The latter passage would also be invoked by John and Barbara Hammond in their damning commentary on industrialisation, *The Town Labourer* (1917):

Whilst the engine runs the people must work—men, women, and children are yoked together with iron and steam. The animal machine—breakable in the best case, subject to a thousand sources of suffering,—is chained fast to the iron machine, which knows no suffering and no weariness... (Jennings 185; Hammond 15).

The positive and negative perceptions of technological advance—on the one hand, easing man's lifestyle, creating jobs and supporting England's economy, and on the other, engendering suffering and exploitation—was at the centre of Jennings' effort to understand the growing place of machines in the British landscape. This in turn is a key aspect of the mythology, which this study will explore and trace across authors.

With this in mind, the purpose of this thesis is twofold: to offer a perspective on how myth-narratives were borrowed and manipulated by four significant authors of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and to study how the new iterations of those myths served to construct a mythistory of the Industrial Revolution that has managed to pervade popular culture. In reconstructing these relationships between myth-narratives and their purveyors, I will also be illustrating a network of influences between the various authors that link them inwardly with each other, and outward to both their contemporary public, and the more recent publics which Jennings would come to address and inspire. Mainly, however, I will be concentrating on the inward networks, of stories being adapted to modern technology before being put to use in social criticism.

It would require a work far more extensive than this one to cover the entire span of what is considered the Industrial Revolution and the literature that accompanied it. For this reason, I am limiting my choices of works to those whose themes of the ramifications of industrialisation and use of mythology are most significant and create a clear continuum of mythological-historical development over time. Nevertheless, I have tried to cover a

chronologically and ideologically broad spectrum of works, not only to pick the best examples for study, but also to illustrate the extent to which mythology has affected both scholarly and public engagement with industrialisation and the Industrial Revolution. This purposefully neglects the industrial novel because they are narratives that are subsumed by the larger myth of industrialisation, and that myth is created through the symbolic place of industry in history rather than overt efforts at realism. While the novels of Gaskell and others have had an undeniable impact on how we now imagine the process of industrialisation, the emphasis of the industrial novel upon capturing the stories of individuals without necessarily employing a larger symbolic narrative leaves them outside the purview of this study. By contrast, I will focus on a balanced selection of fiction and nonfiction sources in service to, and recognition of, the dynamic relationship between the two in the forming of a historiographical continuum. I believe that this approach to the works I address can be extended across the canon of the nineteenth century, and it is my sincere hope that this work might invite such application.

This study will begin with a broad assessment of current and past studies of industrialisation, with a particular aim towards highlighting points of contention between various reconstructions of industrialisation. These conflicting images, I will posit, are partially due to contributions of myth to our understanding of the past, which forms what I will refer to as ‘mythistory’. Across the chapters following this first one, each author addressed contemplates the connections between myth and history to varying degrees. Mythistory will remind us how their texts helped to contribute a mythic rendering of the Industrial Revolution. I will also quickly address more modern historiography of the period to emphasise the shifting terrain of the writing and rewriting of the industrialisation process in relation to current social and economic circumstances, in order to establish the continued importance of a ‘mythical’ Industrial Revolution to our views on technology and humanity’s relationship to it. I will first attempt to interweave Industrial Revolution historiography with the emergence of the myth of Prometheus in late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century discussions of industry. The tale of Prometheus stealing fire from the gods became a symbol of both rebellion and technological progress, which I will argue begins to bring together the ideas of revolution and industry under the banner of ‘Industrial Revolution’. I hope that this will maintain the broad chronological scope of the study which I have made gestures towards without sacrificing depth of literary analysis. From there, I will concentrate more fully on literary contributions to the myth, and each

chapter will address both the influences worked upon the authors, and the influence they consequently had. By reaching out at the end of each chapter towards the afterlives of the ideas and myths at work in the twentieth century, if not our current time period, I hope that the accumulation of mythic narrative and their effect on our ways of thinking about technology become increasingly clear.

I begin with two iconic works with equally iconic mythical figures at their centres: Goethe's *Faust I and II*, and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. In studying these pervasive and well-trodden works, I hope to place them more deeply in the context of industrialisation, where they become interrogations of the simultaneous greatness and cost of human ambition. This ambivalence will serve as introduction to the warring feelings of awe and fear that technology evokes. Goethe's *Faust* has not been fully considered as a work about industry, and *Frankenstein* is often seen as being entirely anti-technology—I seek to counter these positions. While not being directly about the Industrial Revolution, these works had a profound influence on the translation of anxieties about modern technology into mythical narrative and form. They are also myths that we continue to reference in regards to material/capitalist culture (*Faust*) and the creation of systems and technology that could overtake or otherwise take control over humanity (*Frankenstein*).

It must, at this point, be acknowledged that despite this study culminating in a myth of the Industrial Revolution that participates most strongly in the cultural identity of Britain, there is a strong German presence in the choices of texts and the philosophies presented throughout the study. This is a result of both deliberate choice and the fact that this research focuses on a *network* of influences. In the broadest perspective, intellectual exchange between German and British thinkers was common and sustained during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As Fania Oz-Salzberger states, David Hume and Adam Smith (among others) were: 'subtle disciples of European intellectual traditions', including those of the German states (157). More pertinently to this study, this dialogue continued between Romantic thinkers as well, with Coleridge, Byron, and the Shelleys reading Goethe and Schiller, and finding further inspiration in the *Sturm und Drang* movement.³ The interchange between German and British thinkers, while obviously not the only cultural exchange taking place during that period, was nevertheless made significant by the articulation of epochal change lent by Hegel's dominion over the German schools in the early nineteenth century and the renewed interest in folk tales and myths cultivated by Herder. In this way, the formulation of a myth generally restricted to British

³ See later chapters, particularly Shelley and Carlyle, for discussions of Romantic uses of *Faust* and the influence of Goethe upon English writers.

borders in its retelling is nonetheless one aided by German intellectual influence. As will be demonstrated in the following chapters, this exchange continued in regards to considerations of industrialisation and modernity despite the differing paces at which Britain and various European countries were undergoing industrialisation.

The authors chosen for this study did in fact participate, either directly or obliquely, in British mythmaking. Marx's presence is perhaps the most easily explained this way—he is a thinker of considerable contemporary influence, and was an observer of Britain from inside its borders. A study that concentrated on industry and myth together would be incomplete without considering his reading not only of the economic impact of industrialisation, but also of social and cultural change. Engels is even more directly suited to the topic, given that the research he carried out for *Conditions of the Working Class in England* was inspired by his own experiences with British industry and city life in Manchester. Marx used much of Engels' research in *Capital*, and his analysis engages heavily with British political economists—as such, it is fairly clear that he is participating in the myth of a British industrial revolution, as well as industry in the western world at large. Goethe's place in this study, by contrast, is more difficult to justify, but is the result of tracing his influence upon his literary successors. Carlyle, in particular, was profoundly influenced by Goethe's character and thought, which will be addressed at length in this study, particularly in relation to Carlyle's approach to literature, and the value he placed upon the great men in history. Additionally, we must also acknowledge that the legend of Faust continues to influence how we think about technology and industry—for every Frankenstein's monster we release upon the world, we also tend to consider whether or not we have made a deal with the devil. Goethe's adaptation of *Faust*, in particular, is important to bridging that connection in our cultural understanding between devil's bargains and specifically, industrialisation, because of his incorporation of Promethean ideas into its titular character, which carry over from discussion in Chapter One. Thus, while he never set foot on British soil, Goethe's participation in British mythmaking is both historically and presently relevant because of his contribution to our overall understanding of modernity. Therefore, the presence of German literature in British mythmaking is not so incidental; rather, it is evidence that German literature hit upon key ideas which were profoundly useful to Britain's understanding of its own industrial development.

Goethe's *Faust* is of great importance to the balance of this study, and is the subject of Chapter Two for several reasons. Firstly, it was written in several periods over the course of Goethe's lifetime, during which time German duchies transitioned from pre-

industrial subjects of the Holy Roman Empire to independent capitalist states. Secondly, Goethe was aware of the significance of this transition, and identified in the old legend of Faust an analogous sense of transition between the medieval and Renaissance periods. Thirdly, and most significantly, his endeavour to retell the Faust myth from a modern perspective was a visible and lasting effort to read modernity as a condition just as beholden to myth as any pre-Enlightenment historical moment, and was heavily influenced by his equally strong lifelong preoccupation with the myth of Prometheus. For these reasons, Goethe's work is not only a product of his life's experiences watching his world drastically change, but also of his own understanding of the purpose of myth in literature.

More importantly than any of these circumstantial details of *Faust's* creation, however, is Goethe's own perception of the problems of modernity. Throughout his life, Goethe struggled with a profound ambivalence about the modern condition, socially, artistically, and spiritually. His consideration of change, that 'Alles voleziferische' ('all is velociferous'), combines the dynamism of 'velocity' with the name of Lucifer, suggesting, as Manfred Osten argues, that the modern age was engaged in a devil's bargain for the speed at which life and innovation now moved (29). Thus, Goethe's *Faust*, both *Part I* and *Part II*, serves as the starting point for the mythologizing of the Industrial Revolution not because it creates an industrial myth directly, but because it endeavours to adapt the framework of the original, medieval Faust myth to a modern sensibility by incorporating Promethean heroism into its titular character. In doing so, Goethe captured the combined awe and trepidation that characterised his attitude towards modernity, and has come to characterise modernity at large. I will therefore discuss *Faust* as an indirect interpretation of industrialisation and capitalism, which poses all of the questions to be echoed and debated within successive works. Furthermore, it provides the narrative foundation of a new sort of devil's bargain that would be employed by those successive authors in order to express their own ideas.

Goethe's presence in this study serves to bridge several gaps in the chronology of this study by addressing the transformation of the idea of Prometheus as a symbol of scientific and political revolution, addressed in Chapter One, into the foundation upon which new myths could be built. Faust, reimagined as a Promethean character, embodies both the hope and ambition felt by the scientific community (of which Goethe was a part) and the potential tragedy of such ambitions, which followed him from his origins as a didactic folk legend. Goethe's personal dislike of revolutionary and/or violent change establishes his unease with Faust's ambitions in a way distinctly different from Shelley's

more radical perspective. *Faust* therefore contributes an understanding of revolutionary change that identifies a lack of balance and gradation as the source of industrialisation's growing pains. Additionally, Goethe's optimism in the face of Faust's flaws contrasts the self-destructive end that Shelley envisions for Victor Frankenstein, and accounts for the hope and optimism that appear in the works of Marx and Carlyle.

Frankenstein, by contrast, picks up on themes from Prometheus in a more directed and less metaphysical fashion, and bridges the geographical gap between Goethe's work and that of British authors.⁴ *Frankenstein* offers a counterpoint to Goethe's *Faust* that relates closely to Goethe's thinking on Prometheus, but also destabilises its central tenets regarding the progressive and ultimately transcendent destiny of man, resulting in an even more strongly ambivalent narrative. Rather than focussing on spiritual imbalance and speed as problems within the Promethean ambition of Man, Mary Shelley questions the veracity of even envisioning such heroic, Promethean capabilities. Both she and Goethe offer critical adaptations of Prometheus that resulted from intrinsic changes to Western society, which encompassed economic output and industrialisation. However, Shelley's adaptation more directly incorporates not only the original, positive connotations that Promethean myth had gained in its associations with Enlightenment innovations, but also the backlash against the violence of the French Revolution, which will be discussed in Chapter One. Goethe's optimism even in the face of the problems and sacrifices he foresaw as the price of human innovation gives way in Shelley's narrative, not to pessimism, but rather to a more limited conception of what mankind is capable of creating. As a result, *Frankenstein* acts as a complement to Goethe's myth, while further complicating the essential premise for a modern myth that hinges on human ambition and technological progress.

I will argue in Chapters Four and Five that from out of these constructions of *Faust* and *Frankenstein* as adaptations of Prometheus, the Industrial Revolution becomes an independent tale representative of its own set of human struggles, a new narrative to cope with the fear and awe surrounding technological innovation. We still use the vocabulary of *Faust* and *Frankenstein*, certainly, just as we use the vocabulary of the classical myths of Prometheus and his fire; in no way has a mythic construction of the Industrial Revolution replaced the myths that preceded it. But as the new frame of reference for discussions of modern work habits and attitudes towards money and labour, it is a present-day myth that also has connotations of older tales woven into its fabric. I will explore this idea by

⁴ The comparison and contrast of *Faust* and *Frankenstein* also serve to represent the rapport that existed between German and English Romanticism.

addressing the ways in which these tales influence the critical works of Carlyle (Chapter Four) and Marx (Chapter Five). I have chosen these authors not only for their early diagnoses of the Industrial Revolution, but also because my argument is strengthened by their divergent philosophies. Despite envisioning ideologically opposing ideal worlds, they drew on a similar set of mythological and prophetic themes and images to interpret the present state of society. Their critiques hinged on the same mythology of technological advance, human selfishness, and the increasing ubiquity of mechanism in both the material and spiritual realms.

Out of Carlyle's extensive works, I will concentrate particularly on *Past and Present*, as well as Carlyle's early article "The Signs of the Times" (1829), which both combine his philosophical ideas and practical social criticism. His work particularly captures the ambivalence of the industrial narrative that had been approached by Goethe and Shelley because it manifested in his own warring impulses, politically conservative and socially radical, spiritual and blasphemous. By addressing machinery as both a physical, monstrous presence in society and as a metaphor for its moral philosophy, he gave the time period a character that possessed an internal logic while drawing together the awe of technological innovation and its damaging fallout. This picture of industrialisation and all of its trappings are then addressed in greater detail in his full work *Past and Present* (1843), which expanded the historical context of his analysis. Carlyle's approach to portraying the process of industrialisation was far more Romantic than factual, but his strength was not in establishing historical fact, but in synthesising it and producing a metaphorical structure to support a portrait of industrialisation. I hope to highlight Carlyle's elevation of history and present conditions into a struggle for balance between the physical and spiritual worlds, and the terrible danger man courts by allowing the pull of materialism to overwhelm their sensitivity to the spiritual. Carlyle's use of myth to describe how all aspects of society were becoming mechanical formed a comprehensive narrative about the 'true' nature of the Industrial Revolution. Through the interconnectedness of Romantic sentiment with Carlyle's diagnosis of the Machine Age, I hope to illustrate the development of a coherent set of feelings towards industrialisation that derived from both spiritual and social concerns and impacted the attitudes of the general public.

Finally, I will move from Carlyle's more diagnostic analysis to Marx and Engels' prescriptive mythmaking, which makes use of both Faustian and Frankensteinian narratives in order to justify a Communist revolution. As an economist and social theorist, Marx's work has had a profound lasting impact on our understanding of capitalism; as a

mythmaker, he has had an equally profound impact on how we reconstruct the process of industrialisation within its historical context. The inquiries into Promethean heroism and technological innovation that were carried out in *Faust* and deconstructed in *Frankenstein* are essential components of Marx's economic thought. They enabled him to clarify and narrate his materialist conception of history and human development such that it was elevated into myth. Chris Baldick and Gail Turley Houston have already engaged with the unusually macabre elements in Marx's works that appear out of place in contemporary economic writing, 'because he insists on describing capitalism's effects on the body and the psyche, as well as on the economy' (Baldick 25). It is not unreasonable to read that Gothic component as part of a larger, Faustian aesthetic that specifically interprets the culture of a modern capitalist society. The monstrousness that Marx conjured by using spectres, vampires, and sorcerers echoed how the insecurities of the past century had also been expressed through Gothic supernatural drama. On a broader scale, however, they also reflect specific developments of the story of industry beyond *Faust* and *Frankenstein*, such that industrialisation is captured in the theatricality and macabre aesthetic of German Romanticism while also attempting to maintain an entirely materialist interpretation of history. By comparing the development of his work to the formulation and resistance to the idealising of human progress as conceived by Goethe and Shelley, we can see how Marx and Engels created a myth that spanned far beyond economic or philosophical history, and as a result had a far more profound impact upon our own perception of industrial history.

Finally, the conclusion will briefly explore the afterlife of the themes and ideas explored in previous chapters by addressing their presence in Jennings's *Pandaemonium*. His composite narrative will confirm the ways in which the accumulated imagery and narrative presented in this study have taken on a new life as an industrial myth.

What is inherent in these texts is not an anti-technology sentiment. Rather, it is profound ambivalence, built upon a questioning of the Whiggish presumption that man is forever improving himself and his condition. None of these iconic, deeply influential writers denied the truly exciting and positive impacts industrialisation wrought upon England, and to varying degrees, all of them experienced those changes first-hand. As Herbert Sussman has pointed out, none of the great authors we now read about when studying the Industrial Revolution and the rise of nineteenth-century technology are Luddites (7). The mythologizing of industrialisation is not about condemning the process

outright, but instead using the new shape and form of modern society to warn against the potentialities of technology if not used well. It has been argued recently, by Tamara Katabgian most notably, that the anti-technological attitude of Victorians was a myth cultivated by such figures as Marx and Carlyle, but that does both them and the historians they influenced a disservice. Certainly, more attention must be paid to the fact that Victorians were not as anti-technology as is often imagined, but equally, it is important that we understand the source of our misconceptions, and how even those sources are not as unambiguous as they might seem at first glance. None of the authors addressed in this study actively longed for a return to agrarian medieval life—they knew that any opportunity to do so was long past. The goal of their mythmaking was one-half reform, and one-half resignation; it was the product of an effort to come to grips with the conditions of the modern world, and all of its technological trappings.

In assessing the contribution of canonical works to a collective mythology of the Industrial Revolution, it is my hope that my analysis will offer new insights into the works addressed. I will focus on how these works consider the on-going relationship between myth and history, as well as the changes brought about by industrialisation. In this way, I will provide new readings of them as individual and as interconnected works, which together synthesized a cultural myth. The assemblage of authors presented is not a conventional one, and by placing them together as a set of works which feed into and build upon each other, I have presented the works as they have not previously been seen. This is particularly true of *Faust*, which is only rarely mentioned as a work that addresses industrialisation; therefore, its portrayal of revolutionary change has not been connected thoroughly to industry before. In turn, *Frankenstein* has been studied often in relation to nineteenth-century science and industry, but it has never been presented as a counterpoint to Goethe's reading of industry, and as such my reading of it will hopefully place it in a refreshing new context. The works of Carlyle and Marx will likewise benefit from being scrutinized in relation to each other, which has not often been considered, particularly in relation to Promethean ideas and industrial historical context.⁵ Additionally, their works will be put into a new perspective when they are considered as evidence of their authors struggling with the different possible outcomes of industrialisation. This study of interrelatedness, in addition to one of thematic content in individual works, will offer useful new perspectives on both the creation and dissemination of ideas surrounding industry in

⁵ One notable exception is Albert J. LaValley's work, *Carlyle and the Idea of the Modern* (1968), but this deals mainly with Carlyle's influence on Marx, and not the larger portrait of Promethean ideas within both authors.

during the long nineteenth century.

Likewise, it is arguable that our use of the Industrial Revolution as a narrative in western identity has a similar functionality. It must interrogate not just the changes machines wrought upon man, but what man wrought upon himself, and whether those changes were in fact for the better. Secondly, what arises from this inquiry is whether man *can* change, or whether the cosmetic changes that machines may have enacted merely are expressions of man's inherent nature—the capacity for good and evil, writ larger and larger in the form of bourgeois capitalism, and its output. This is partially why a myth of the Industrial Revolution should be so resonant to us: it touches upon universal experience, despite it being restricted to a relatively brief period. The way it is written by Marx and Carlyle is both compelling and questions how we shape our society and how that society shapes us; but more importantly, it questions whether these apparent changes are profound or merely cosmetic, affecting only the terms through which we express our humanity, and not the nature of it inherently.

Our perception of history is not always the *fact* of history, and we must give credit for this inconsistency to the pervasiveness of myth. This is not a condemnation of such warping of our collective memories—rather, this is a recognition that we respond to history in this non-factual way for a reason; we are driven, as Danny Boyle was, by our need to understand our past by filtering it through the mythological frameworks that will give the facts meaning. The writers to be addressed here provided those frameworks, provided that meaning. This study will be an exploration of that myth through the reading of texts that explored the Industrial Revolution in England in such a way that their interpretations of events shaped them into a cohesive, resonant image.

I. Mythistory: Foundational ideas in the retelling of industrialisation

The scope of this study is wide-ranging, both chronologically and geographically. Therefore it is essential to establish how the formation of an industrial myth might be studied, and after that, why the myth of Prometheus specifically might be an effective place to start. This being the case, this chapter is largely contextual, and covers two main components of my argument that I will draw upon in later chapters. The first section will deal mainly with contemporary historiography, to identify key points of contention in our perception of nineteenth-century industrialisation. I will then begin to address these points of contention by tracing them through depictions of industry during the nineteenth century, and then further back into the eighteenth century to excavate the origins of the phrase ‘The Industrial Revolution’ itself, in culture and in language. I will also discuss how the word ‘revolution’ itself was undergoing a shift in meaning during this time period. Its subsequent attachment to the process of industrialisation is, I will argue, the reason why industrialisation was associated at an early stage with the story of Prometheus, a myth revolving around rebellion and the harnessing of godly powers for man’s use. This will serve to place the specific literature to be addressed in context, and illustrate how German and British Romantic writers came to foster adaptations of the Prometheus myth in order to work through their own feelings about modernity.

Reading the Industrial Revolution now

Over the last century, the Industrial Revolution has been characterised by historians as alternately a dramatic and sudden, or natural and gradual development of technological and socio-economic infrastructure. The swings between these interpretations of industrialisation as gradual or revolutionary have been significant. Rondo Cameron has pointed out the slow and continuous innovation of machinery and fuel over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, while also noting that many of the conditions that allowed Britain to surge ahead in industry, including intellectual and cultural development, were not unique, and certainly did not result in leaving the rest of Europe in the dust (382-3). He contends that it did not always evolve smoothly, but it nonetheless built up slowly, rather than in revolutionary leaps. British studies in industrialisation have in more recent

years necessarily expanded to include recognition of the whole of Western Europe because of the issues Cameron raises, as exemplified by such diverse viewpoints as those of Eric Hobsbawm, David Landes, Pat Hudson, and Maxine Berg. Berg and Hudson have argued against recent scholarship's tendency to underplay the revolutionary speed or scale of industrialisation, calling for a reassessment of the 'elements of radical change and historical discontinuity' of earlier historians that have been 'increasingly ignored' (Hudson 1). All of these historians address the process of industrialisation with different priorities, but they understand the necessity of recognising not only the broader European context of industrialisation, but also the heterogeneity of the process of industrialisation across regions and economic sectors. Berg describes the Industrial Revolution as 'tremendously varied and fraught' (7), while earlier in the twentieth century T.S. Ashton had stressed the variation in societal structures across the nation, even as industry played an increasing part in them (17). Cameron goes as far as to say that to call any sort of economic progression a revolution is 'grossly misleading' (377), implying that transformations of the kind that were occurring around industrialisation are inherently non-revolutionary. This is, in some ways, a reactionary statement that is meant to stand in opposition to a prevailing historical model, and to resist the simplification of industrialisation in England into a unified general narrative.

In this light, the Industrial Revolution presented by the likes of Danny Boyle appears as an overly simplistic reading of history but also a very sturdy one, resistant to the efforts of Cameron and others to pull apart and examine the initial conceit of industrialisation being 'revolutionary'. David Landes, in a more heroic interpretation of technological change, hints at why this more epochal model might be so resistant: in outlining the various processes that he describes as leading to a larger, more complex process of 'modernisation', he observes that, 'In all of this diversity of technological improvement, the unity of the movement is apparent: *change beget change*' (2, my emphasis). This touches usefully upon a sense of momentum, a feeling that despite the heterogeneity of change and the inconsistency of its pace nationally, industrialisation appeared in some ways unified and not entirely unlike a Kuhnian paradigm shift, which Kuhn himself defines as 'new or more stringent conditions', or better yet, 'an accepted model' under which change and articulation of those changes occur (23). In the notion of 'change beget change' there is reflected the sense that industry enabled a new set of circumstances and rules (namely, Marxists would argue, capitalism) that in turn beget further developments under the new cultural and financial rules of invention and technological enthusiasm.

Which model of the Industrial Revolution is correct (or at least more correct), gradual or paradigmatic, can only continue to be explored with further analysis of the data at our disposal. However, of greater concern here is why there continues to be these two different opposing configurations of industrialisation. What might have caused such a paradigmatic character of the event to persist in the face of an increasingly heterogeneous body of evidence from the time period, turning ‘change beget change’ into a ‘Revolution’? To begin to explore this question and its relationship to myth, let us go further into the history of these divergent models, and what motivated their authors beyond the simple aggregation of evidence. I will argue, in light of how the historiography of the Industrial Revolution has split into divergent models, that the more revolutionary, paradigmatic model’s greatest strength is its usability when we try to understand our relationship to technology in the present day.

In 1959, R.M. Hartwell took stock of the historiography of the Industrial Revolution, beginning with the first main wave of historians recording the Industrial Revolution after the fact. He reported that above all, they gave the impression that the suffering of the working class was the predominant effect of industrialisation. As Hartwell described it, in the estimation of Arnold Toynbee and the Webbs in the 1880s and 90s, followed by the Hammonds in the first half of the twentieth century, the rising level of pauperism during the nineteenth century overwhelmingly outweighed the advantages offered by improvements of production by technology. ‘The Industrial Revolution had delivered society from its primitive dependence on the forces of nature, but in return it had taken society prisoner’, the Hammonds wrote, invoking the image of a devil’s bargain (*The Town Labourer* 20). Despite statistics published between 1895 and 1909 by A. L. Bowley and G. H. Wood, which offered seemingly definitive proof that the standards of living had actually risen between 1800 and 1850 (Hartwell 233), the portrait of the Industrial Revolution towards the end of the nineteenth century was in favour of Toynbee’s reading of the event. The Webbs went so far as to compare it to ‘civil war’, concluding that there had never been a worse time in British history for the working class (Hartwell 230).

E.P. Thompson has rightly observed of the Hammonds that their great strength as historians was the political awareness with which they approached their subject, rather than their empirical research. Thompson specifically notes how the work’s focus was not only on what actually happened, but what *should* have happened (196). The result often became a

heavy reliance on testimony rather than economic analysis, framed by dramatic sweeping generalisations rich in mythic meaning: 'But to all the evils from which the domestic worker had suffered,' the Hammonds argued, 'the Industrial Revolution added discipline, and the discipline of a power driven by a competition that seemed as inhuman as the machines that thundered in the factory and shed' (13). In addition to the influence of Marxism in their analyses, they pose the Industrial Revolution as a Promethean event, 'deliver[ing] society' from primitivism by way of machines, rather than fire. However, instead of this being an altruistic intervention, what resulted was a prototypical Foucaultian reprogramming and 'conquering' of the workforce, the construction of sinister social control. In *The Bleak Age* (1934), the Hammonds built their understanding of the nineteenth century on philosophical ideas in order to contextualise the reasons for social unrest in England during the first half of the nineteenth century, despite statisticians claiming an overall improvement in the quality of life. They addressed the attitudes about economic status among classical philosophers versus nineteenth-century ones, in order to critique the latter: 'whereas the modern economist put it that the poor man is indebted to the rich for his livelihood, the ancient moralist said he was indebted to the rich for his luxuries' (26). The poor were not only at a financial disadvantage, they argued, but disenfranchised at the foundations—they owed the rich their entire lives, not just their employment. This was not a factual discussion, obviously, but rather a study of the psychology behind the unrest of the poor. *The Bleak Age* thus presented a study of the cycles of wealth, public temperament, and decline, which they present as a parallel to the rise and fall of the Roman Empire. This gave the Industrial Revolution a cohesive character comparable to the classical ages of gold and iron, as Thomas Carlyle had done nearly a century before with his article 'The Signs of the Times' (1829), in which he designated his present age as 'The Machine Age', turning the world mechanical both physically and spiritually. The aim of Carlyle's work, as well as that of Toynbee and the Hammonds, was that of reform—these writers understood their roles as historians to be inherently political, and the role of history to be inherently useful. The presentation of industrialisation as a sudden, epochal, and negative change supported their arguments for legislative and social improvement.

This was not, however, the dominant view of either the Industrial Revolution or the discipline of history towards the mid-twentieth century. In the spirit of striving for a form of objectivity, J.H. Clapham refuted the work of the Hammonds, who offered a far more optimistic reading. He analysed reasons why the standard of living might have failed to rise,

rather than the severity with which it fell. Hartwell went so far as to say that Clapham's preface to his first volume of *The Economic History of Modern Britain* (1926) was an attack on the 'legend' of the Industrial Revolution, which sparked a wave of highly critical economic analyses of the views of Toynbee and those who agreed with him. Clapham rejected the 'Social Philosopher' lens employed by Toynbee and the Hammonds—that is, a reading of socio-historical events that presented ideological values as well as factual analysis (Hartwell 234). Notable in his work is his refusal to invoke the term 'Industrial Revolution', or to take time with details that might invoke a reading of events in the revolutionary vein. The debate between his work and that of the Hammonds can be delineated by the use of 'Industrial Revolution' as a definitive event or process, and indeed the distinction of the time scale with which the various authors worked. Clapham favoured the longer span of economic history, beginning his study in the early modern period before moving towards the nineteenth century; by contrast, the Hammonds concentrated specifically on labour changes during the period we now delineate as the Industrial Revolution. The subjects upon which Clapham focused are also very different—while the Hammonds favoured the testimony of miners suffering in new and different ways as a result of technology, such that 'even the alleviations of science were turned to the miner's disadvantage' (*Town Labourer* 17), Clapham's *The Concise Economic History of Britain* (1949) glosses very quickly over the invention of Newcomen's provocatively named 'fire machine' in 1712, but then carefully breaks up various innovations in technology carefully by trade and region, such that none of the changes documented telegraph anything but natural development, all sweeping gestures towards upheaval carefully excised. These were not unreasonable choices to make, and Clapham's documentation is thorough, but he was certainly making a pointed criticism of previous efforts to make industrialisation a political construct, or paint it as a traumatic epochal change.

This was not the end of the debate. The emergence of the Communist Party Historians Group at the end of the Second World War made a cohesive and critically acclaimed impact, notably with Thompson and Hobsbawm's histories. The approaches of these authors are notable to this study because they combine the features of modern academic history—accuracy, thorough documentation, a certain amount of subjectivity—with the recognition that history should be *useful*, vivid enough for current audiences to connect with its content and comprehend it as a whole and directed narrative. While both authors were approaching their histories as radicals, what is most distinct about their works is the importance of cohesive narrative in their presentation of events. They return, though

with far greater academic rigour, to emphasising the ‘cataclysmic’ consequences of economic and technological progress. The purpose of that more unified approach was two-fold: it was politically motivated in some ways, but it also made for greater comprehensibility for the reader. Hobsbawm tacitly acknowledges this concern for his audience in his introduction to *The Age of Capital, 1848-1875*, wherein his portrait of the mid-nineteenth century revolves vividly around the ‘drama’ of progress. As such, he ties together the widely variable revolutions that took place across Europe in 1848 with the observation that ‘they all possessed a common mood and style, a curious romantic-utopian atmosphere and a similar rhetoric’ (26). Hobsbawm is undeniably rigorous in his explication of the historical period to which he dedicates his study; however, in addition to its rigour, *The Age of Capital* does not neglect the narrative element to creating a history, which is reflected in how he presented the Marxist framework with which he illustrated the struggle of industrial life amongst the labouring poor. The class struggle set out by Marx and Engels is one of the most dramatic narratives offered to modern historiography, and this is reflected in the engaging narrative aspect of Hobsbawm’s history. In regards to the personality and growth of industrial cities, he wrote:

The major, striking and henceforth continuous improvement in these conditions only began to occur after the end of our period. Cities still devoured their populations, though the British, being the oldest of the industrial era, were coming close to reproducing themselves, i.e. to grow without the constant and massive blood transfusion of immigration (249).

With the backing of statistical analysis of population growth and the architecture and city planning of the slums, Hobsbawm infused the environment of the industrial landscape with predatory character, and indeed, brings the importance of narrative to creating a history back into the foreground of academic research. The large-scale motions of ‘devouring’ and ‘reproducing’ are familiar to modern audiences, particularly in regards to immigration and endemic problems of homelessness in major cities. As a result, Hobsbawm’s description of Victorian cities becomes a part of our present, despite being locked in the past. The success of Hobsbawm’s works therefore makes an argument for the value of cohesive, and indeed *artful*, narrative in the study of history, and the role of such narratives in the usefulness of history.

David Cannadine has since provided insight into the interrelatedness of interpretation, politics, and the use of history in his expansion upon Hartwell’s historiographical summation. In his essay ‘The Present and the Past in the English Industrial Revolution, 1880-1980’, he explored the development of perspectives on the

Industrial Revolution over time by not only acknowledging the political affiliations of the historians in question, but also their own historical contexts. He notes that the self-conscious, early observations by the likes of Toynbee and the Hammonds were emerging at a time when the British economy was struggling—the 1880s being a time of low prospects and the 1910s and 30s both periods of serious political strife and economic downturn. This could, he argued, further have exacerbated the idea of the working class's exploitation having not been worth what economic gains had previously been made. Whether or not this was the motivation for such social concern, 'Together, this great outpouring constituted a guilt-ridden, fearful recognition that poverty and squalor were not the product of individual shortcomings, but were endemic in a system which created so much want in the midst of so much plenty' (5). Cannadine puts greater focus on the weight of the past and its relationship to the present in his assessment of Toynbee, the Hammonds, and the Webbs. Additionally, he provides a deeper analysis of their historical accuracy and worth, noting that *The Village Labourer* had, at the time, assessed their work as 'sound historically, though written from a radical point of view' (6). This mixture of observations accounting for political affiliation, historical context, and accuracy demonstrates Cannadine's sensitivity to the growing concerns in the later part of the twentieth century to try and parse the value of relative and objective historical reconstruction. He also is attentive to the weight of recorded data from the earlier half of the nineteenth century in relation to the middle-class guilt felt by those formulating their historical pictures of the time in the 1880s, when it seemed to many that the Industrial Revolution had 'failed'. He characterises the overall bent of the Hammonds and Webbs' work as 'prescriptive', in which the historical content was mainly the foundation for arguments for current reform, a characterisation that can be extended to their literary and political predecessors, Marx and Carlyle. History, in this context, takes the form of an argument based on how the story of it is told, rather than a pure reconstruction of what happened. Beyond being true, this sort of history must also be *convincing*.

From this development and on-going controversy between the positive and negative portrayals of the Industrial Revolution, and from what evidence this judgement should be made, there emerges a struggle not only over 'what actually happened' but how it was being processed during, and continually after, the event in question. Cannadine's assessment of the Industrial Revolution's historiography is illuminating because it remains tied to the economic context of the time at which the period was being studied. The economic downturns of the early twentieth century led to much speculation as to the

cyclical nature of economic growth and decline, and whether these cycles began during the Industrial Revolution (10). Accordingly, when western economies experienced unprecedentedly stable growth, and cyclical models for the economy were abandoned for growth models in the 1950s and 60s, those models were then retroactively applied to analysis of the preceding century. This in turn led the way towards creating strategies and approaches for the development of the third world, as exemplified by Rostow's *The Stages of Economic Growth* (1960), which bears the telling subtitle, *A Non-Communist Manifesto*, which he prefaces with the telling caveat that the stages he presents, 'are designed, in fact, to *dramatize* not merely the uniformities in the sequence of modernisation but also—and equally—the uniqueness of each nation's experience' (1, my emphasis). Increasingly, it was being recognised that these models were being imposed upon reality, to a certain purpose.

This can be traced back even further to the fracturing of the study of history itself; in Walter McDougall's estimation, historiography shattered into factions not long after the First World War when it and the Great Depression made it difficult to continue the belief in the Whig assertion of steady human progress over the entire course of history. This spawned new schools of Marxism, new social historiography, and the study of various marginalised gender and ethnicity-based history (19). He summed the situation up nicely in 1986 when he followed every development in the fracturing of historical study with the inevitable reaction thrown out by anyone not within the spotlighted group: '*Mais ce n'est pas l'histoire!*' Anything that swung too much towards politicised history, or dramatized history, or stuck too stubbornly to documentation, or to any particularly divisive stance, was attacked for not being 'real' history. In this way, we see how the *intent* behind historians' efforts comes to the forefront when considering the schism between models of gradual or sudden industrial change.

But while a more empirical historian might attack others for writing 'with more feeling than science', complete reliance on documented facts can only reveal so much about the past (Hartwell 237). Hartwell recognised this difficulty when offering the example of T.S. Ashton's efforts to assess the psychological effect of a worker's spare diet of 'oatmeal, milk, cheese and beer', which is too little data upon which to base a judgement of the workers' mental state, let alone overall quality of life. Similarly, even when the reading of the data itself was sound, the emotional response of the historian himself comes into question, when Hartwell acknowledges that, 'the historian has too often been attracted by the sad spectacle of man's inhumanity to man' (244). The attraction of 'spectacle', as much as 'drama', is both the burden of the historian and, as Hobsbawm no doubt knew,

the source of public interest and remembrance.

This debate about history through feeling and through fact is the product of its slow emergence as a discipline in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The debate is therefore, through its contemporaneous development, deeply entrenched in the making of history and the mythologizing of the Industrial Revolution. As Ashton pointed out, this interest in statistical data, in documentation of history, began in the eighteenth century, and this had a profound effect upon how history was recorded and constructed. This interest manifested in forms of literature far beyond the purely historical. For example, Ina Ferris has pointed out that the vogue of the ‘found’ document within the mid-eighteenth century English Gothic, which would linger on in the framed narrative of *Frankenstein* and others, engaged with,

...the question of how to read the “remains” of the past [which] had become at once more prominent (under history’s own increasingly archival turn) and more problematic (under an emergent historicism that defined the past as at once alien to the present and accessible through its records) (268).

Equally, Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France* could be said to echo these tensions in working both with archival historical rigour and imagined drama in the service of political theory. He reported:

History will record, that, on the morning of the sixth of October, 1789, the king and queen of France, after a day of confusion, alarm, dismay, and slaughter, lay down, under the pledged security of public faith, to indulge nature in a few hours of respite, and troubled, melancholy repose (325).

History was carving itself out as a discipline based on Ranke’s principles of accountability and factual investigation, despite originating from the mythology-laden works of Herodotus, and as a result, it carried with it the tensions between ‘fact’ and ‘feeling’ that we have already seen continue to be played out. For example, in the 1880s, Toynbee’s scrutiny of the period reflected this changing approach to analysis that was occurring among historians and economists during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. With the increasing specialisation of disciplines in the decades leading up to the twentieth century, the problems and variations of approach between eminent earlier theorists became an obvious sticking point in using their work to analyse the past contemporarily. Toynbee carefully navigated what he termed the ‘pure’ science of ‘abstract Political Economy’ and the practical science of legislation. The accuracy and empirical intent of Political Economy through ‘deductive reasoning’, Toynbee argued, was obviously important for its ability to assess how economics worked concretely; however, the way Political Economy functioned

within its historical context could not be fully accounted for through deduction alone. This, Toynbee concluded, necessitated a greater understanding of human frailty and heterogeneity across both space and time, therefore allowing for a combination of deductive and inductive reasoning when applying the ‘pure science’ of economics to the ‘practical science’ of legislation (3). The work of twentieth century historians like Ashton, by contrast, could be understood in line with Ferris’s observation of the eighteenth century vogue for archives. The documentation of material happenings was becoming a central part of the discourse of the past, with statistics eventually having won out as more ‘truthful’.

We can see, therefore, that the tension to be found in the documentation of the nineteenth century appears to originate in the debate over what type of documentation was the most reliable and provided the most ‘truth’. By favouring testimony of the working class, not only were the Hammonds making a statement as to what representations of truth were most valuable, but also that it was observation driven by human feeling and comprehension that best portrayed the time period. By contrast, the statistical analysis of Ashton and Clapham characterised the age through an effort to understand, but not necessarily pass moral judgement. Their priorities as historians, on the whole, are differing blends of empiricism, social concern, and narrative value, which is why, when considering the Industrial Revolution as a piece of cultural memory, neither divorced from empirical fact nor entirely beholden to it, it is most useful to invoke the term ‘mythistory’, which is what I will argue the authors in this study were creating.

Myth, history, and mythistory

The most salient consideration to be gleaned from this very short selection of historiography is that the histories of the Industrial Revolution tend to fluctuate in popularity and focus in accordance to their present *usefulness*. This is obviously true of other historical periods as well; no one sets out to write a history that has no academic or popular appeal. Nevertheless, the Industrial Revolution’s usefulness is especially dear to us because of how we feel its resonance in all of the technological trappings of our contemporary lives. Moreover, this usefulness is also the consideration from which the mythic component of Industrial Revolution history becomes clear. To think about this interrelationship between history and myth within historiography, I will employ the term

‘mythistory’, which was coined by William McNeill in 1986.⁶ He introduced it in order to negotiate the boundaries between ‘Truth, truths, and myths’, such that a historian might become more ‘ecumenical’ in his or her approach to study (19). There are many kinds of truths and myths, and none of them are without purpose or meaning, he argues, and thus to capture a time or culture, one must consider all of these components carefully, and acknowledge their interconnectedness.

In this light, it is especially useful to think of the Industrial Revolution and its historiography as a piece of ‘mythistory’. It contains truths, the readings of documented facts and balanced speculation by historians. It also contains myths, in that it has transcended its temporal place to become a national symbol of greatness and British identity. It also, finally, contains ‘Truth—commentary upon ‘universal...human behaviour’, which McNeill places outside the purview of the historian, but which I will argue is fully within the purview of the mythmakers to be addressed (19). After all, myth often contains Truth of this kind, and all of the authors within this study make judgements about what Truth they believe in when attempting to grasp the truths of industrialisation. A major theme within the texts discussed will be the idea of history as an attempt to capture ‘fundamental truths’ through one’s ‘imaginative faculty’, which is far from our current conception of the historian’s task, but certainly encompasses the intent and focus of mythistory (TZ 388). A ‘mythistory’ of the Industrial Revolution is therefore what we collectively remember, because it is the binding of Truth, truths and myth that makes it important to us, what makes it useful. For this reason, I will briefly discuss the history of the interactions between myth and history in order to establish how the ensuing chapters will approach literary interpretations of industrialisation. While *Faust* and *Frankenstein* are myths that are born out of a historical moment, the works of Marx and Carlyle offer histories that employ those myths in order to make their histories meaningful. Collectively, they are all participants in the creation of mythistory, and thus it is important that we establish the precedence for these interactions, and then introduce how some of that participation manifests.

Myth has been interwoven with history from its conception, and by observing how recent events such as the Industrial Revolution are now portrayed in popular media like Boyle’s opening ceremony, we can see its continued hold on cultural memory, which exists separately from purely empirical study. ‘History’ derives from Herodotus’s use of *historia*, meaning ‘inquiry’, wherein the first major history of the western world took the form

⁶ The term has since gained some limited traction, most visibly through Joseph Mali, who was able to use the term throughout the study of several different time periods.

'historical myths', belonging to nations, who, Joseph Mali has pointed out, 'would not ask whether they were true or false, but rather what they meant' (2). From this definition, we might begin to understand that myth can be a key component in making history culturally *useful*. In the classical tradition of retelling history, battles, the creation of nations, and the heroes who built them existed in a timeless, mythic past space that had no need for factual specificity because their purpose was not to tell a specific truth, but rather a universal one, a Truth. Rationalists such as Thucydides would be the ones to shape the discipline of history as we now know it, as a pursuit of facts verifiable by inquiry and documentation. Implicit in newer definitions of 'history' is a certain amount of rejection, or at least compartmentalising, of the more fluid and interpretive genre of 'myth', which has, much like the term 'industrial revolution' to be discussed, had a variety of definitions and uses that have only become more complex with their use over time. Percy Cohen offers this definition of myth:

The chief characteristics of myth are as follows: a myth is a narrative of events; the narrative has a sacred quality; the sacred communication is made in symbolic form; at least some of the events and objects which occur in the myth neither occur nor exist in the world other than that of myth itself; and the narrative refers in dramatic form to origins or transformations (337).

This presentation of myth implicitly rejects the colloquial definition of myth as falsity by making it a symbolic and sacred narration of the events in question. Between the idea of myth as narrative and as symbol, it takes the form of a truth that is both timely and timeless, historical and useful. Cohen acknowledges both the classical origins of the term and the now broader, more psychological components argued by modern scholars of myth like Malinowski. Since the eighteenth century, myth has been tackled from a variety of disciplines, resulting in a fragmentation of its definition, but throughout the resurgence of interest in it as an area of study, its essential usefulness remains consistent. Northrop Frye offered an alternate definition from that given by Cohen, which places the most emphasis on the narrative element of myth. As a literary critic, he highlighted the importance of metaphor as a means of heightening the importance of one particular event over another, and moreover preserve it as a present entity: 'It is only as a myth that it has the power to confront us in the present tense, and tell us that what was done then is what we are doing now' (8). In this way, myth becomes a path to immediacy, bridging the past and the present in such a way as to make the past vital and relevant to us.

This complicated origin of our reconstructions of *what has happened* and *what is happening* is, as we have seen, the basis for the conflicts in industrialisation's historiography,

both presently and by the historians and critics contemporary to the Industrial Revolution. It is now a given that no matter how much one can reconstruct the past, it will always be viewed through layers of contemporary and preceding cultural contexts, along with the individual historian's own views and own goals in choosing what events and facts to highlight. As a result, there is a more visible value in studying 'mythistory'. William McNeill noted of the Enlightenment that:

...the limits of scientific history were far more constricting than its devotees believed. Facts that could be established beyond all reasonable doubt remained trivial in the sense that they did not, in and of themselves, give meaning or intelligibility to the record of the past (5).

In this observation, and his term 'mythistory', we can find an explanation for the continued tension between dramatized history and factual history, and more importantly, the uneasy reliance they have on each other. Myth must connect with reality enough to be meaningful to its audience, and history is made useful and accessible to a wide audience by the imposition of meaning upon it. For this reason, an exploration of the mythologizing of the Industrial Revolution is, in fact, an exploration of 'mythistory': the binding of mythic narratives to the process of industrialisation, in order to create a continually useful history.

I must clarify that, while mythistory was not a term in existence until the twentieth century, its validity as a way of understanding the present can be traced back to Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803) and his work on myth. Like the conflict between scientific and felt history, the re-emergence of the usefulness of myth in western society gained ground in the eighteenth century. Herder in particular connected myth inextricably with religion, history, literature and culture, which helped pull the study of mythology away from studies purely of antiquity, towards the modern use of folk tales and fables:

Since our higher level of culture has gained intellectually what it has lost in sensuous awareness, we seek to inspire the fables with a new spirit, so that gods and heroes no longer act as strong, savage men of their times, but let us perceive a meaning that suits our taste (230).

Herder's observation highlights the usefulness of history specifically through how myth forms alongside of it. Myth allows us, he contends, to make sense of history in a way that is appropriate to our feelings and circumstances. This demonstrates the understanding that this usefulness is dependent upon shifting 'taste and culture', touching therefore upon Cannadine's assessment that histories of the Industrial Revolution are dependent partially upon present economic and cultural conditions. As such, myths appear as infinitely variable in their details and the execution of their retelling while retaining a basic structure that is able to accommodate these changes in culture and time period.

Herder's consideration had a profound influence on Goethe, whose own influence will in turn fall heavily on several of the authors addressed in this study, particularly for his emphasis on modernity being capable of creating and finding its own myths (Herder 225). The role of myth in understanding present history is therefore clearly in the consciousness of the authors to be addressed. *Faust* is the most direct result, a medieval legend transformed into a study of modernity that departs significantly from its original text, making *Doctor Faustus* the tale of a tragic hero rather than a moralistic warning against too much knowledge. Herder anticipated, as Goethe would come to express, a modern sensibility towards myths and their importance in reconnecting modern audiences with 'sensuous awareness' in an age that is dominated by material and intellectual pursuits. It is a theme that would be echoed by both German and English Romanticists in the coming century, not the least in reaction to industrialisation. Furthermore, in Herder we also find a more useful definition of myth than what is offered by Cohen; in trying to pull myth into contemporary use, he defined it as 'the history of his fatherland, the history of his city-state, the family tree and ancestral pride of his heroes, the origin of each even he celebrates' (231). In short, he defined myth by binding it inextricably with the current usability of history, as would all of the authors attempting to understand industrialisation herein.

With this consideration of myth in mind, Cannadine's summation reflects an old scholarly struggle between the uses of myth, history, and a blend of the two. His analysis of the changing economic climates and their corresponding portrayals of the Industrial Revolution illustrate the on-going process of interpretation and editing and preservation that continues into the present day for every aspect of historical study. In this regard, the Industrial Revolution is just one example of the struggles of historiography among many. What makes the Industrial Revolution particularly interesting for this study, however, is the prevalence and scale of mythology that now surrounds it, and what in particular we now 'remember' about it. While academically our understanding of it has grown more nuanced, and many of the original presuppositions about the degradation of the working class as presented by Toynbee and his ilk have since been examined and found wanting (and Clapham's more optimistic assessment found equally so), there remains an emotional attachment to a dramatic portrait of the era that statistics alone did not present to us. We collectively remember the plight of *Oliver Twist* over any bourgeois or otherwise more pro-industrial literature until the 1890s. Is this preference for drama just another swing

back towards the Toynbee-Hammond thesis, resulting from our own contemporary frame of reference? We can look at our own troubling economic prospects, and perhaps argue that yes, the time is right for us to feel the way Toynbee did. However, whether this is the case or not, our present cultural memory is where the historiography of the Industrial Revolution and the modern mythology, both as a study and as a practice, intersect. Where hard evidence denies us a cohesive ‘truth’ about the past that can educate us about the present, we have filled in the gaps in such a way as to *create* an educational history. This is not just the realm of empirical history, but of mythistory.

Early Industry and Myth: *Le Grand Révolution Industriell* and Prometheus

As we have seen, even the name ‘Industrial Revolution’ is presently contentious, arguably a part of the mythic component of industrialisation’s mythistory. Clapham and Ashton specifically argued that it was a myth perpetuated by the Hammonds, which they in turn had cultivated from Toynbee’s writings as well as their own political readings of industrialisation. How, then, did the Industrial Revolution, label and all, get passed to the twentieth century as a mythic history to begin with? This is the driving question of this study, and in order to pose it specifically in regards to the central authors of the study, I will use this section to lead into their works through briefly exploring the use of the Prometheus myth as a source of revolutionary and scientific expression in the eighteenth century. Prometheus, a myth that included both fire from the gods and rebellion against authority, was entwined from an early stage with the development of the term ‘industrial revolution’ to describe the technological and social changes that were gaining momentum during the time. Exploring the relationship between the myth of Prometheus and the history of ‘Industrial Revolution’, therefore, will form a foundation upon which discussions of Goethe, Shelley, Marx, and Carlyle will then stand.

To begin considering the etymology of ‘Industrial Revolution’, it is useful to consider I. Bernard Cohen’s summary of the evolving definition of ‘revolution’:

Revolution means to return again, to go through a cyclical succession, as in the seasons of the year, or to ebb and flow, as in the motion of the tides. In the sciences, revolution thus implies a constancy within all change, an endless repetition, an end that is a beginning all over again...The expression “scientific revolution” or “revolution in science”, however, conveys no such sense of continuity and permanence; rather, it implies a break in continuity, the establishment of a new order that has severed its links with the past, a sharply defined plane of cleavage between what is old and familiar and what is new and different...This set of transformations embodies more than a mere shift in terminology. It suggests that there has been a profound conceptual change in our

analysis of human and social action and in our image of the scientist and scientific activity (5-6).

In breaking down these various associations and definitions, Cohen touches on several important issues that arise when addressing the Industrial Revolution by its given title. In transforming from a cyclical process to one of ‘profound change’, the eighteenth century etymology of ‘revolution’ implies an important philosophical reconsideration of the importance of progress that can be traced to the Enlightenment, which was so influential to nineteenth-century Whiggish conceptions of liberal history.⁷ Rather than history repeating itself in cycles, ‘revolution’ became representative of discontinuity and change from which there is no return. In this way, it was redefined to encompass Kuhnian, epochal change. It also, more controversially, implied that the only possible result of this discontinuity was progress. In purely scientific terms, this is not an unreasonable definition, which continues to be used; for example, Imre Lakatos defines scientific revolutions as ‘unmasking (irrational) errors which then are exiled from the history of science into the history of pseudoscience’ (qtd. in Hacking 109). As a part of building an empirical knowledge-base, revolution is necessary, and teaches us at least what is wrong about our understanding of the universe, if not what is right. However, this progressive meaning of revolution becomes murkier when applied to economic and political upheaval, as the French Revolution would soon demonstrate. What Cohen presents is therefore not only the basis for why ‘industrial revolution’ means sudden technological change, but also one of the central concerns that would drive future mythmakers to interrogate this change. Is industrialisation really progress? What begins in the etymology of ‘revolution’ becomes the central question of the Industrial Revolution’s myth.

In addition to broad Enlightenment movements across Europe which were in part driven by ‘scientific revolutions’, the mid-eighteenth century was also the period in which industrialisation became tied associatively to revolution, and is therefore a major feature of the historiographical debate over the label ‘Industrial Revolution’. There are differing theories concerning the phrase’s origin, with more careful attention first being paid by Anna Bezanson in the early twentieth century, dating it most thoroughly through French

⁷ Notable among these interactions was the dialogue between British empiricism and various different schools of German thought exemplified by Hume’s wide readership in Germany during the mid-eighteenth century, and Kant’s acknowledgement of Hume’s impact in *Prolegomena to all Future Metaphysics*. Kant’s engagement with empiricism would also become part of Hegel’s engagement with Kantians, in defining the nature of progression as ‘destined to evolve completely to their natural end’ (*Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View* (1784)) or as epochal and less idealist (Malherbe 310-11). This idea of the perfectibility of mankind will also appear further along in this study in the works of Percy Shelley and Godwin.

sources. The ‘*Grande Révolution Industrielle*’ was used to describe technological change in France, particularly in relation to local industry as a headline in *Le Moniteur Universel* in 1827 (Bezanson 344). Cohen cites this example from Bezanson, but also adds that the first hints of ‘revolution’ being associated with industry may have appeared much further back. Arthur Young in 1788 called the industrialisation of woollens manufacture ‘a revolution is in the making’, of which Cohen briefly notes that, ‘in 1789, the events in France gave currency to the concept and name of revolution in its present most common usage, and before long there were many references in France to “revolutions” in technology and the Industrial Revolution’ (264). Both historians suggest that through shared usage, the term equated the changes in French industry with political and social change in the context of the French Revolution, making even its early use both politically and emotionally charged.

The settling of ‘revolution’ in its new meanings, as well as industrialisation having been set spiritually alongside the French Revolution, is also apparent in the work of French historian Charles Picard, who paced his discussion of economic revolution in relation to the political one as if the two were related by more than chronological circumstances (Bezanson 345). Anna Bezanson was adamant that, during the 1820-40s, it was common in France to create this association between revolutions, to the point where she observes that Napoleon’s adoption of the title ‘Member of the Institute’ was recognition of a continued tie between the politics of France and its industrial innovations (346). Raymond Williams agrees with the explicit connection between the two events, and furthermore has pointed out that ‘industry’ was itself a term undergoing transformation during the late eighteenth century (xiii). In addition to the original meaning of industry as a human attribute, he notes the addition of institutional manufacturing, a set of social and technical associations outside of the basic human condition. These transformations of meaning are more complex than simply science and politics being united under a single terminological banner, or the emergence of innovative means of production. They are also not limited, as Bezanson’s study was, to French sources. When the two terms were united as a new entity, they were reflecting a larger cultural sea change, to which the myth of Prometheus, as we will see, was becoming increasingly relevant.

The newfound engagement with the Prometheus myth, particularly in England, can in part be explained by the publication of the first English translation of Aeschylus’s *Prometheus Bound* in 1773. Aeschylus’s drama was a particularly useful iteration of the myth for eighteenth-century audiences because of its political overtones, which broke away from

Hesiod's previous characterisation of Prometheus as a trickster. Aeschylus added gravity to the symbolic meaning of the narrative by crediting Prometheus not only with giving mankind fire, but also all of the arts, including handicrafts and architecture: 'And verily I discover for them Numbers, the surpassing all inventions, the combinations too of letters, and Memory, effective mother-nurse of all arts' (29-30). The fire-stealer was transformed into not only a saviour for primitive man, but an ongoing cultivator of civilisation particularly in the realms of art and industry. Furthermore, he is moved to gift mankind with these skills and knowledge out of pity and mercy, because not only had humans been without crafting skills, they had also been doomed to die by Zeus's hand:

I ransomed mortals from being utterly destroyed, and going down to Hades. 'Tis for this, in truth, that I am bent by sufferings such as these, agonising to endure, and piteous to look upon. I that had compassion for mortals, have myself been deemed unworthy to obtain this, but mercilessly am thus coerced to order, a spectacle inglorious to Jupiter (21).

This reinterpretation of the myth made it particularly usable for western political and scientific thinkers in the eighteenth century. By changing the character of Prometheus from trickster to creative force, it reframed the giving of fire to mankind as a noble sacrifice. Despite Zeus's ensuing wrath, the knowledge obtained for the sake of civilisation was no longer part of a downward trajectory reflected in the progression from Golden Age to Iron that Hesiod implies in his *Theogony*. The result of Prometheus's gift might still be a mixed one, accompanied by the troubles brought by Pandora, but it was no longer the sully of a purer, past state of being—rather, it became a study of the tension between the value of divine authority and human achievement. This movement towards progression and away from the trajectory of the Five Ages of Man could also be seen to anticipate the parallel movement of the meaning of 'revolution', away from the cyclical processes of astronomy towards the connotations of upheaval and overturning, as well as upward progression towards greater knowledge and wisdom. This shift is especially noticeable when compared to traditional visual art—the predominant image of Prometheus captured by painters of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as well as earlier, was of Prometheus bound, the eagle descending upon him as a lesson to those who would defy the gods:



Theodor-Rombouts, 'Prometheus' (1597-1637)

While this remained the iconic moment of the myth, some portrayals shifted the mood and focus of the tale during the early nineteenth century, such that his gift of fire became heroic, as reflected in Heinrich Fueger's choice of composition, while his torture was transformed into martyrdom, complete with allusions to crucifixion by Lair:



Heinrich Fueger, 'Prometheus Brings Fire to Mankind' (1817)



Jean Louis Cesar Lair, 'The Torture of Prometheus' (1819)

The purpose of Promethean narrative, therefore, was well suited to the narratives of both scientific and political revolution, and this became increasingly apparent during the height of the worldwide fame of Benjamin Franklin during the American Revolution. Franklin's work for the revolution, alongside his research on the literal stolen fire from the gods, became a symbol of revolutionary ideals and energies. During this period, Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot, a French economist and statesman, famously praised him for having 'snatched the lightning from the sky and the sceptre from tyrants', in a gesture comparing Franklin with Prometheus (Fulford et al. 182). Similarly, Erasmus Darwin praised Franklin,

in a letter to him in 1787, for having ‘spread the happy contagion of Liberty among his countrymen; and...delivered them from the house of bondage, and the scourge of oppression’ (166-7). Darwin would go on to tell James Watt that, ‘I feel myself becoming all French both in chemistry & politics’ (19 Jan 1790), recognising their shared revolutionary character. The support for Franklin and the American Revolution by Darwin and others from the Lunar Society in particular displays how ‘revolution’ came to mean radical political movement. Furthermore, the spirit of invention and revolution as encompassed by the twin movements of industry and rebellion were demonstrated to be explicable through the Prometheus myth narrative.

This confluence of symbolic meaning between Prometheus and revolution of both the scientific and political kind was also enforced by others like the polymath Dissenting clergyman Joseph Priestley (also a member of the Lunar Society), who took controversial stands for religious reforms, liberal economics, and the defence of science as opening a door towards a greater and more ennobled man. In addition to writing extensively on theology and natural philosophy, including treatises on electricity, he wrote on classical thought, and commented on the subject of Prometheus: ‘It appears to me [Plato] says that God sent gifts to men by Prometheus together with fire. It is not by art he says but by nature and the favour of the gods that we cultivate the earth’ (*Theological and Misc. Essays* XVII: 445). Innovation, he argued, is an inherent characteristic of mankind, and by using the example of Prometheus to discuss this, he places that spirit of invention alongside Prometheus’s act of rebellion, regarding them as two aspects of a whole and natural state. Thus not only is Prometheus a symbol of rejection of a higher power, but scientific innovation is also portrayed as a central part of Prometheus’—and by proxy, mankind’s— independence from the gods.

In this way, like Turgot, Priestley used the myth to express the spirit of modern technological innovation and modern political ideology. Across Europe and America, Prometheus came to symbolise liberty in both political and scientific discourse, and was a popular subject among Romantic writers and musicians in both England and Germany. The most well-known examples of these are the poems of outrage and rebellion by Goethe, Byron, and Shelley, and further examples particularly dominate the German Romantic composers; Beethoven caused controversy through his unconventional opening of his overture to *Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus*, *Op. 43*, and Schubert and Wolf both offered their own musical adaptations of the myth.⁸ Particularly in the early decades of the

⁸ A particularly useful and wide-ranging study of the significance of Prometheus across the nineteenth

nineteenth century, the output of Prometheus-related art was significant and clearly engaging with the myth through a modern lens. Goethe's fascination with Prometheus developed alongside his interest in the Faust legend, demonstrated by a short poem written between 1772-4 that was meant to be part of a larger drama. In his short lyrical adaptation, Goethe's emphasis falls on the creative impulse of Prometheus, his self-reliance and his defiance of the gods:

Who help'd me
Against the Titans' insolence?
Who rescued me from certain death,
From slavery?
Didst *thou* not do all this thyself,
My sacred glowing heart? (28-33, my emphasis)

Goethe identified Prometheus as a creator of mankind, identifying the titan's creative impulse with the same impulse in humans:

A race resembling me,
To suffer, to weep,
To enjoy, to be glad,
And thee to scorn,
As I! (53-57)

The mixed blessing of innovation and creativity is framed as inherently defiant, the 'suffering' and 'gladness' resulting from creation equal to the 'scorn' of the tyrannical authority of the gods. Goethe's adaptation illustrates the trend which the Romantic poets in England would also move towards in their adaptations of Prometheus—what began in Hesiod as a prank against the gods becomes a defiant expression of freedom and creation in the face of political oppression. Goethe was at the heart of the early renaissance of Prometheus's popularity in Romantic culture—his ode is the earliest significant work to appear on the subject of the myth in 1772, and the myth would continue to inform his work, including his magnum opus, *Faust*, which will be explored in Chapter Two.

From all of this early excitement, the answer to the central question, 'Is an industrial revolution progress?' would seem to be a resounding yes. However, as is clear from the negative histories we have already seen, this defiant vision of science and revolution did not go unquestioned. After the French Revolution, the connotations of

century is Paul Bertagnolli's *Prometheus in Music: Representations of the Myth in the Romantic Era* (London: Ashgate, 2007), which addresses in particular the Romantic composers, but also addresses literary texts, with an awareness of the broader reaches of the myth's applicability to the general spirit of the age. Carol Dougherty also offers a useful, though less detailed overview of the most significant authors' contributions in *Prometheus* (London: Routledge, 2006).

‘revolution’ changed once again to include the pessimism engendered by the Reign of Terror. The conceit of inevitable progress was undermined. Shortly after the events in France, Priestley recognised that the connotations of ‘revolution’ had again transformed, this time for the worse; in a letter to Robert Livingston, congratulating him on an innovative method of paper manufacture, he uses ‘revolution’ in relation to its probable impact, but then observes that it should not ‘be called a *revolution* in these times. That alone would discredit it, tho ever so useful’ (qtd. in Cohen 7). When Priestley had earlier attempted to hold a banquet in 1791 in celebration of the storming of the Bastille, he and other Dissenters were met with rioting in Birmingham, which extended to the destruction of Priestley’s house and laboratory. The riot had mainly been based in religious strife rather than technological; however, in addition to the destruction of the homes and businesses of Dissenters, rioters also focused their attention on those associated with the Dissenters, including members of the Lunar Society. Priestley attacked these actions as demonstrating the ‘bigotry’ of the town of Birmingham, where he claimed his presence was merely the spark of an already volatile environment (*An Appeal to the Public* 6). Just as revolution encompassed the processes of scientific and social upheaval, the reaction against that upheaval was focused on scientific and political revolutionaries.

The souring attitude of the public had its effect on those revolutionaries as well; by the turn of the century it was clear even to the most radical republicans that the French Revolution was not the triumph of liberty they had hoped for, in France or abroad. The success of the Promethean mission—of human invention and increased freedom—was no longer a certainty, and ‘revolution’ was now a suspect term even in regards to invention because of its political connotations, which had arguably been further reinforced by associations with Prometheanism. Yet the Prometheus myth continued to be an apt narrative through which both the hopes and the disappointment surrounding revolution could be processed. Throughout the nineteenth century, there would continue to be an interest in Prometheus as a mythological figure, now with a considerably larger number of political and social connotations built into the consideration of his narrative. Through this further transformation, the connection between scientific and political revolution remained strong, and the pessimism acquired on both the scientific and political fronts was again processed creatively through the narrative of Prometheus. Thus, in Byron’s ‘Prometheus’ (1816), Prometheus’s gift is still his knowledge and craft, still manifested through mankind’s creativity, but his ‘Godlike crime’ of kindness is not so reliably replicable by mankind (35). Byron focuses on the human inclination towards self-destructiveness,

beginning with the lack of recognition Prometheus receives for his kindness, to the glimpse we can receive of our own 'funereal destiny' (50). Byron's Prometheus, though he pitied Man and sought to 'strengthen Man with his own mind', does not understand us; he is a 'symbol and a sign,' not of our ability to progress and achieve his level of altruism, but rather of our continued selfishness, echoed in Prometheus's 'wretched gift Eternity' (38; 45; 24). The narrative of Prometheus served to express for Byron how it was a worthwhile endeavour, but one whose descent into violence was almost inevitable. Byron's general despair, enforced also by the failed insurrections in England during the 1810s, can be seen in his fragments of work years later, in which he stated, 'There is no freedom, even for Masters, in the midst of slaves: it makes my blood boil to see the thing. As to the political slavery ...it is man's own fault; if they will be slaves, let them! Yet this is but a word and a blow' ('Detached Thoughts' 269). In 'Prometheus', his frustration over man's selfishness and complacency in their current political disenfranchisement becomes that of the titan's, illustrating his on-going struggle to support rebellion even in its most destructive forms.

Byron's reading of Prometheus exemplified a central trend in the engagement with revolution the Shelleys would undertake in their own adaptations of the myth and which would become particularly relevant to the critical works later in the nineteenth century that more specifically addressed industrialisation. Ultimately, what the failure of the French Revolution created was doubt in the transformative power of rebellion, such that when Mary Shelley published *Frankenstein* in 1818, she managed to create a confluence of the various connotations of 'revolution', both political and scientific, within the narrative of Prometheus, while also articulating the central point of doubt which the French Revolution had seeded. The creative spirit and desire for liberty, in the form of Frankenstein's scientific and technological endeavour, and likewise in his monster's rebellion against him, lies not in the hands of an altruistic god, but rather in the flawed hands of short-sighted human beings.

The building of the industrial myth did not stop at the recitation of the Prometheus myth, of course, and the chapters following this one will be an exploration of the new models of Promethean narratives that evolved and became tools for examining the industrial present. The construction and the reconstruction of the process from the mid-nineteenth century onwards clearly began a reconsideration of the degree to which the earlier decades were traumatic and 'revolutionary', leading to the various models of industrialisation presented over the twentieth century. The answer most often fell along

ideological lines, and in this way, as we have seen, the on-going need for an industrial myth becomes clear, acting as a fulcrum upon which current political and social views are weighed.

When this is combined with how history has now been reconsidered by the likes of Mali and other ‘mythhistorians’, we can begin to grasp how the study of the Industrial Revolution can greatly benefit from the study of its mythology. Myth as it will be used in this study is history with a secondary function, not to simply inform but to guide our understanding of events from within a specific cultural framework. By this definition, the Industrial Revolution, as an umbrella term encompassing technological and economic change during a specific period of time, is a mythic idea. It is mythic because it has never been etymologically apolitical, and instead has always been a construction bound up in Promethean ideas, and therefore achieves both timeliness and timelessness. Engels’ mainly scientific account of the state of England in 1843-44 was followed by readings of the Industrial Revolution with varying degrees of historical accuracy, from the meticulously documented (Marx and Engels) to the introspective and abstract (Carlyle). In tracing the departure from pure historical fact while maintaining the themes of alienation, machination and capitalistic greed, we can begin to see the development of a mythistory that is grounded in physical evidence but also exploded into the spiritual and supernatural realms.

The significance of myth to literature and to history is not simply the use of old stories to tell new ones, or the use of mythical creatures in the telling, but the filtering of history through cultural lenses in order to understand them. Furthermore, it is the acknowledgement that with each new cultural lens through which we study that same literature and history, that history and literature will inevitably itself be changed. As T.S. Eliot echoed in his essay, ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’, ‘The past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past’ (41). Cannadine has emphasised that we see history through the lens of our own time, but it goes farther than that—we see history through our contemporary lens, and through the various lenses that each previous generation’s documentation and speculation placed in front of it before us. When the Hammonds observed, a more than a century after ‘revolution’ came to be associated with both scientific inquiry and political upheaval, that ‘the Industrial Revolution separated England from her past as completely as the political Revolution separated France from her past’ (*The Town Labourer* 2), they were not simply making a comparison for the sake of drama, but rather reflecting the accumulation of meaning that in turn affects how

the past is portrayed in their writing. Discontinuity, trauma, and inescapable change were written into the language of their subject before they had begun to address it. What is presented here is one of those lenses, so that we may better understand perhaps not the history itself, but our view of it. It is one fragment of a historiography, but one that remains particularly significant in our current age of technology, our attitudes towards which have remained both enthusiastic and ambivalent. Furthermore, there is an intrinsic value in the notion that literary forms are responsible for the shaping of our historical understanding, which is exemplified by the Industrial Revolution. We are swayed most powerfully by narrative rather than fact, for better or worse, and it is therefore paramount to our understanding of human memory and culture that we examine the literary, mythological contributions to history the writers of the nineteenth century made.

The phrase 'myth of the Industrial Revolution' does not therefore, in the context of this study, seek to challenge the notion of the 'Industrial Revolution' as a complete falsity, as Cameron would perhaps wish to imply, but rather indicates that the historical term's cultural and etymological development as a meaningful phrase can be tied not only to the bare facts of industrial development, as addressed by the more modern empirical approach to history attempted by Ashton and Clapham, but also the literary reactions of intellectuals and workers alike. Furthermore, it is not a translation of fact into fiction done in hindsight, but an on-going process of interpretation that feeds off of contemporary observation and narrative conceits and biases established and then reiterated and reshaped over time. The beginning of that process could arguably be found in the shift in the etymology of 'revolution' and in the adoption of Prometheus as a reference narrative for industrial history, and the ensuing chapters will pick up the threads of those beginnings to trace them forward through the progression of the Industrial Revolution and those who were recording and mythologizing it.

II. 'Not safe, but free and active': Faust and the cost of development

The rhetoric of Karl Marx has most visibly demonstrated how the Faust myth can be used to describe the influx of industry into society during the nineteenth century. His comparison of capitalism to the 'sorcerer who has lost control of his spells' vividly illustrates the trajectory of his reading of the rise of capitalism. The story of Faust, however, was part of the rhetoric of modern history well before his time, through its rediscovery as a folk tale during the eighteenth century, and then its epic adaptation by Goethe. What makes it part of the mythistory of the Industrial Revolution, however, is Goethe's incorporation of Promethean heroism into the character of Faust, such that instead of a selfish rogue, he becomes a civilising force in his society. By altering Faust's journey in this way, Goethe explores the nature of risk in the context of industrial development, such that Faust may be heroic in his Promethean endeavour, but still beholden to a devil's bargain. This establishes the main points of contention that make up the myth of the Industrial Revolution: Goethe, as I will argue, valorises the essential project of human improvement through both spiritual and technological development, but he also explores the costs of such development. Moreover, he questions the goodness of revolutionary change in light of the French Revolution. As a gradualist and an optimist, I will argue that Goethe captures, in Faust's Promethean quest for spiritual knowledge and social progression, the central ambivalence that would come to drive the myth of the Industrial Revolution.

To address the various aspects of this broad process of myth adaptation, I will first explore the major interactions Goethe had with both the Faust myth specifically and with myths and history at large, before scrutinising key parts of the drama itself, which will become the core features of an evolving industrial myth. In doing so, I will touch upon how Goethe's secondary preoccupation with the Prometheus myth informed his interpretation of the character of Faust. This will demonstrate continuity between his creation and his feelings towards industrial and political change, which we have seen become entwined during the eighteenth century. I will also address how Goethe's notions of history and myth impacted on his writing of *Faust* and also how those intentions reached audiences in Britain as well as Germany, providing a bridge between earlier uses of Prometheus in eighteenth century literature and rhetoric, and a more appropriate use of *Faust* as a primary narrative for describing industrialisation. Throughout these analyses, I

hope to emphasise the central tension between the optimism of the spirit of progress and the ambivalence Goethe felt towards *revolutionary*, rather than gradual, change—change which would come to characterise industrialisation in Jennings' *Pandaemonium* and Boyle's opening ceremony.

Origins and transformations

It cannot be understated how thoroughly Goethe transformed the legend of Faust for the purpose of his drama, and thus it will be helpful to give a brief history of the original Faust myth to establish its evolution alongside the culture that perpetuated it, as well as the liberties Goethe took with it. The Faust myth was many degrees removed from its origins in medieval Germany by the time Goethe was exposed to and inspired by it, but the reasons for its resonance and longevity up until that time remain significant to Goethe's iteration, because the period from which it originated, when the Renaissance was giving way to the Reformation, was in some ways analogous in its feelings of anxious cultural transition to the turn of the nineteenth century. By establishing the origins of the legend, Goethe's introspective, heroic Faust more clearly appears as a reflection not only of his conception of the nature of social and technological development, but of how he was able to utilise the framework of an already-useful myth for another historical time period.

The first written account of Faust's life was published in 1587 by Johann Spies, entitled *Historia von D. Johann Fausten, dem weitbeschreyten Zauberer und Schwarzkünstler* ("The history of Dr. Johann Faust, the renowned sorcerer and black magician"), and it became one of the most well-known tales of its time, succeeding in establishing Faust as an icon of western literature. The Faust narrative in its earliest form had little similarity to the Prometheus myth beyond the punishment of one who would reject God. It was a Lutheran chapbook, and introduced Faust as the scholar who traded the devil his soul for knowledge and for power, and it enjoyed instant popularity for its careful balancing of religious teaching with sensational presentation of Faust's terrible and thrilling crimes. More recent studies have suggested that it was based on a real Georg Faust, who was born at some point in the 1480s and died violently and mysteriously in the 1540s. The details of his life are not well-documented, but he was likely from a poor family and possibly educated in Heidelberg, after which he became notorious across Europe by traveling as a quasi-scholar, getting accused of blasphemy, pederasty, and a number of other offences along the way (*Goethe's Faust* 4). The *Historia* chapbook mainly sticks to this general character of Faust, and its warning message against such behaviour is clearly indicated by the subtitle of the

chapbook, 'How he did oblige himself for a certain time unto the Devil...And how he at last got his well-deserved reward'. Arguably, part of its success in its time was due to the same reasons Goethe's interpretation would stand out among the various adaptations of his peers. As John Williams observes, Faust in the *Historia* was 'already an ambivalent and composite figure who represented emblematically the contradictions and tensions of the age' (*Goethe's Faust* 5). The complexity of Faust's motivations as a Renaissance scholar who presumed to gain knowledge far beyond his natural reckoning meant that, as E.M. Butler points out, Spies' tale was set apart from previous sorcerer fables because it dealt particularly with the psychology behind Faust's decision to deal with the devil (*The Fortunes of Faust* 4). Spies sympathised enough with Faust's dilemma that he captured the ambivalence of his age by humanising Faust's decision. By presenting Lutheran credentials that appealed to religious doctrine while also providing a vicarious romp through Faust's sins, the chapbook itself was also a document that straddled the worlds of the Renaissance and the Reformation. In this way, its popularity within the borders of Germany and far beyond was assured, and the focus of the myth as a portrait of the tensions between positive ambition and lustful hubris was established.

The Spies *Historia* spawned sequels and multiple retellings, as well as new editions that, at least on one major occasion, completely missed or distorted the original function of the tale as juggling between human ambition and spiritual risk. While it was undergoing these iterations in Germany, however, it was also translated in England by a P.F. in 1592, a version which went on to become the inspiration for Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* in 1604 (Butler 38). Goethe would not read Marlowe's rendition of the myth until after he had finished *Part I* of his own version in 1818, but it would be Marlowe's vision, and not that of the German writers who adapted Spies, that would cement the structure of the Faust myth, and more of Marlowe's voice and ideas can be traced in *Part II*.⁹ P.F. took significant liberties with Spies' text, but in a few key cases they were liberties that anticipated Marlowe's adaptation of the work. He emphasised Faust's thirst for knowledge over his other, more carnal and material desires, and when recounting Faust's request that Wagner chronicle his life, he prioritised Faust's wish for fame after his death over his impulse to warn others of his fate (Butler 38).

Marlowe took these changes along with the original premise of the Spies *Historia*

⁹ The German adaptations included many that were specifically written as reactionary religious pamphlets, including one which has lasted to this day and which Butler excoriates for its bloating of the tale with philosophical and religious teaching, as well as its virulently anti-Catholic sentiment. Adaptations such as these were eventually overshadowed by Marlowe's text, and then later by Goethe's.

and created from them a tragi-heroic Renaissance Faust, godless not by renunciation but through lifelong atheism, and thus while he remains damned, Faust dies a true scholar more than he does a rogue. Marlowe also established particular aspects of the tale which would become consistent throughout all of the stage adaptations of his work that would follow, thereby further systematising the Faust myth's arc. He introduced the Prologue in Hell (which Goethe would mirror with his Prologue in Heaven), as well as the initial scene of Faust venting his frustrations in his study, followed by his conversation with Mephistopheles and their pact. He also was the first writer to incorporate the tolling of the bells that precede Faust's grisly death. Through establishing these scenes as the essential beats of the drama, as opposed to the previous format of the *Historia*, which relied mainly on an almost improvisational listing of exploits as the main arc of Faust's journey, we can see the focus of the myth shifting from the didacticism of its original form into a vehicle for addressing changing cultural conditions. If the *Historia* was a reflection of religious didacticism meeting entertaining, but ultimately illicit and punishable resistance, then *Doctor Faustus* marked a deeper consideration of the intrinsic value of that resistance as it is found in the character and motivations of Faust.

When *Doctor Faustus* grew popular and was incorporated into the repertoire of traveling theatre troupes, it made its way back to Germany, where there is record of a Shakespeare troupe taking the play to Graz in 1608 to perform (Mason 3). From there, it was again widely adapted and distorted, but as stated before, several of Marlowe's elaborations stuck and appear to have been retained in most of the various productions that his play spawned, including the adaptation to puppet shows that became immensely popular. It is this last variation which is the most likely form to which Goethe was exposed in his youth (Williams 20). This suggests that while Marlowe's drama did not fall into Goethe's hands until much later in his life, elements of *Doctor Faustus* reached him long before through the reproductions and variations on its central idea. Beyond that, Goethe's first encounter with the written tale was in the form of Nicolas Pfitzer's editing of the much-reviled Widmann version of the Spies *Historia*, which is widely regarded to have missed the point of the Faust myth entirely and turned the chapbook into anti-Catholic diatribe.¹⁰ It is therefore reasonable to assume that Goethe's primary interest in the myth was derived from the dramatic adaptations, particularly since his own interpretation, while deeply spiritual, remains in the vein of Marlowe—focused on the psychology of Faust, rather than any specific religious affiliation.

¹⁰ See previous note on the early German adaptations. For a thorough grounding in late medieval variations, Butler's account provides a solid summary.

Goethe was not the only person during his time to rediscover interest in the Faust myth. By 1750, the Spies *Historia* had passed out of general knowledge and Faust was believed to have no grounding in truth at all (Mason 7). During the 1770s, however, there was a resurgence of interest in the myth, and furthermore, several writers began contemplating the notion that perhaps Faust, for all of his sinfulness, deserved to be saved (Williams 15). As before, a variety of interpretations were crafted, some entirely eschewing the supernatural elements of the story (H.L. Wagner's *Die Kindermörderin*, 1776) and others entirely farcical, building on the clowning that Marlowe had incorporated into *Doctor Faustus* (J.M.R. Lenz's unfinished drama). The first to attempt to 'save' Faust was Paul Weidmann in 1775 with his production of *Johann Faust*. However, out of all of them, Goethe was uniquely suited in his life experiences and education, which will be explored in the following section, to modernise the Faust tale with all of its psychological trappings and what John R. Williams called its 'ambivalent and composite' titular character, while still retaining its status as a myth (*Goethe's Faust* 6).

Thus, Goethe's ambition to adapt the Faust myth was part of a literary zeitgeist, akin to that of Prometheus which we have already observed was occurring in England and America during a concurrent period, driven by the sense that the period from which it originated embodied feelings of transition that were in some ways analogous to the present. Furthermore, Goethe was not alone in taking the new approaches to the myth, which was clearly a product of the Enlightenment and its consequences. The thirst for truth was no longer demonised as it was in the religiously-centred Spies tale and its offshoots, and thus the central conflict that the myth poses was not the thin line between scholar and sinner, witchcraft and God's hand, but rather whether truly visionary ambition is worthy cause for redemption. However, Goethe's long fascination with myth, and his understanding of the world, which will be presented in greater detail shortly, put him at an advantage when he sought to use Faust as a lens through which he would view the tumultuous age that he lived through. In a letter to H. Meyer in 1831, Goethe wrote that 'The work is like the history of the world and men in which the solution of every problem gives rise to a new problem which needs to be solved' (qtd. in Rose 98). This describes the conflicting and expanding impulses that Goethe attempted to capture in his adaptation of Faust, in addition to the model of history that Goethe gravitated towards. In this light, *Faust* would become an attempt to peel back the layers of those problems nested within problems, which Goethe believed would eventually reveal a unity of structure and purpose that gave the universe its shape. Faust's journey in such a light does become far more

heroic (and more Promethean) than it was at his character's conception.

Goethe as the poet of the age

Goethe's *Faust* stands out from the efforts of some of his contemporaries to adapt the legend of Faust for a number of personal reasons, as well as historical ones. For one, *Faust* was his magnum opus, written in several stages over the course of several decades of his life, beginning in his twenties and finishing just a year before his death in 1832. The changes wrought upon his homeland and the western world at large from his birth in 1749 to his death were massive and affecting, and Goethe's processing of those life experiences would in part be reflected in *Faust* as it was written and developed. In this way, while it has been argued that the point of his *Faust* was to transcend a single time or experience, it nonetheless remains what Goethe called 'Bruchstücke einer großen Konfession' (fragments of a great confession), revealing not only the disjointed form that it would take due to the vastly different stages of his life during which he crafted it, but also the personal relevance of the work to him (*Truth and Poetry* 240). With this in mind, to study *Faust* is to study both Goethe's early and late work, and Goethe's most prevalent challenge, particularly in his later years, was how best to unify the drama out of such disparate pieces, both in terms of his growing maturity as a writer, and the different literary movements he participated in over the course of his life. 'It is no trifle, in the eighty-second year of one's age, to represent objectively, that which was conceived at the age of twenty, and to furnish a living skeleton, like this, with sinews, flesh, and skin,' he wrote to Zelter in 1831 (*TZ* 447). For this reason, this section will address Goethe's stylistic development in tandem with his historical circumstances, highlighting his increasing dislike for revolutionary change and capitalism, even as he maintained optimism and support for social liberty and scientific development.

Goethe's success in his endeavour to unify his drama is debatable: *Part I* is clearly the work of a young man, its focus mainly devoted to a drama of seduction, and its presentation is accessible and moves quickly despite Faust's extended soliloquies. *Part II*, by contrast, is sprawling and occasionally ungainly, given to long metaphysical flights in which Goethe's interests in science, philosophy, and politics spill over into the text. While Faust still pursues a lover, Helen of Troy, over the course of the second *Part*, his purpose is not romantic, but rather symbolises a larger allegorical ambition to unite the classical and modern worlds. This fundamental difference also determines the focus of this study—while the initial premise of *Part I* is important for establishing Goethe's early intent to

diverge from the original legend's Christian didacticism, the broad allegory of *Part II* gives us far greater access to Goethe's thoughts on modernisation and his appropriation of the legend in order to best express those thoughts. It is therefore important to establish the literary and political context from which Goethe formed his vision of the Faust legend in contrast to the development of the Faust legend itself. The result will be that while the heroic, innovative side of Prometheus would remain appealing to Goethe throughout his life, his political conservatism, fostered by his friendship with the aristocracy of Weimar and his own dislike of violence, would establish his resistance to revolutionary change. Over the course of his life and his work on *Faust*, these positions would be highlighted by his movement from youthful egoist to wise observer, and his approach to writing about the past in the light of present experience.

It is first important to establish Goethe's own awareness of his life's history and its relationship to his work on *Faust*. Goethe was deeply conscious of the dynamism inherent in the reconstructing of history and the role of narrative and personal circumstances of the historian within that process, and thus it is not a stretch of the imagination to tie that awareness to his construction of *Faust*. He expressed this understanding most clearly in his comments to his friend and correspondent, composer, Carl Friedrich Zelter, with whom he discussed his autobiographical work *Wahrheit und Dichtung*:

For it was my most earnest endeavour, as far as possible, to represent and express the genuine, fundamental truths, which as far as I could see into it, had prevailed throughout my life. But if such a thing is not possible in later years, without the co-operation of memory, and therefore of the imaginative faculty...that we shall present, and bring into relief the *results*, and the past as it seems to us *now*, rather than the individual events, as they happened *then*. For does not the most ordinary chronicle necessarily embody something of the spirit of the time in which it was written? ...

...In every History, even if it be written diplomatically, we always see the nation, the party, to which the writer belonged, peering through (*TZ* 388-9).

Goethe's understanding of history in the broadest terms is that of a Romantic thinker, rather than an Enlightenment one. His concern is not explicitly with usable history, but it certainly places emphasis on the processing of history that takes place in the subjective historian's mind, in order to make sense of *what happened*. Moreover, this process is understood to be imaginative, even 'poetic', motivated by an effort to express 'fundamental truths'. The closeness in meaning he associates between memory and the 'imaginative faculty' appears to relate to the understanding of recollection that was employed by English Romantics. For example, Wordsworth presents the poetic memory of his narrator by stating, 'I cannot say what portion is in truth / The naked recollection of that time, / And

what may rather have been called to life / By after-meditation' (*The Prelude* I.613-616). Goethe saw the myth as an ever-evolving entity, made valuable for its ability to adapt to modern forms and ideas. The difficulties that he foresaw in representing the 'fundamental truths' which had 'prevailed throughout [his] life' became a reality for him, particularly in the course of writing *Part II*.

In order to approach histories outside of his own life experiences, Goethe used what research he undertook to reconstruct underlying truths more than physical, documented events. It also follows that Goethe's reconstruction of Faust's time, however well researched his knowledge of the Renaissance was, was necessarily also a portrait of his own experiences.¹¹ Goethe argued to a history professor, Heinrich Luden, that the interest in Faust lies not in its individual scenes, but in its idea, cementing that he remained adamant that even in his sprawling incarnation, it should remain a mythical construct. The universality of Goethe's intent, therefore, is also bound to what Bohm calls 'the historicity of epic', such that the 'form' of his universalism is necessarily still reflective of his personal context as well as the context of the original tale (15). To Goethe, myth was not in any way divorced from history—on this matter, he could be considered to have anticipated Mali's conception of classical mythistory, even as he also maintained that they were highly different forms. In a letter to Friedrich Müller in March of 1831, Goethe discussed his agreement with B.G. Nieburh's *Roman History*, about whose historiographical philosophy he states, 'The separation of myth and history is invaluable and neither one is destroyed by it; to the contrary, value and dignity are restored to each of them, and it is infinitely interesting to realise how they flow into one again and influence the other' (qtd. in Bergstrasser 208). He expresses his classical inclination to maintain purity in narrative forms—an impulse which, as we will see, troubled him a great deal as he developed *Faust*, due to its necessarily heterogeneous content and form. Goethe, Bergstrasser affirms, 'saw history as essentially cultural history...In history [he] sought and relived the creative function of the indestructible spirit', which encompasses the mythmaking inherent in the process of remembering and understanding history, as well as Goethe's own personal humanist philosophy, as expressed by the 'indestructible spirit' (205-6). It was certainly his intention to continue in this vein when tackling his own version of the Faust myth.

It would therefore be reductive, by Goethe's own admission, to claim that any of

11 Jantz argues strongly for the Renaissance grounding of Goethe's text and his personal affinity to that time over his own. Certainly Goethe's research into the time period was extensive, evidenced especially in his use of alchemy within *Faust* to both drive Faust's studies and aid Wagner's construction of Homunculus, but as will be addressed further on, the onset of capitalism portrayed in *Part II* appears as a beacon of modernism even within the heavily historical text.

his work is separable from the nineteenth century even as its setting in the Renaissance or as a myth might distance it from that period, just as it would be equally so to tie the character of Faust completely, as Jantz has taken issue with, to Goethe's identification with him. Goethe's purpose, in writing *Faust*, serves as a 'confession' insofar as it is deeply personal, but it was also representative of what he considered to be the universal human impulse to move and create. In this regard, Goethe's development and the changes in his approach to the Faust myth become doubly important, because such developments became essential parts of the cultural fabric of Weimar and the German Confederation, which formed after the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806. It has been expressed more than once by critics that Goethe singlehandedly embodied a period in German literature; David Luke has gone so far as to say: 'German literary history lends itself to personalisation, and so centrally pre-eminent in it is Goethe that in his time its stages were not so much reflected in and by his personal evolution, as rather vice versa: they reflected him, he virtually constituted them' (*Part I* xiii). With Goethe's rise to fame as a *Sturm und Dranger* and then continued reputation as a national poet when the Confederation was in its infancy, his portrayal of Faust was positioned to become a part of German national feeling, essential to processing the changes being wrought upon the nation state.

What changes in Goethe's life, both political and literary, therefore had the most salient influences on his work? Goethe's literary interests underwent radical transformations, which *Faust* also reflects. His early life was impacted by the classical epics, having been taught Latin with the expectation that he would go into law (Bohm 87). He was also, however, deeply influenced by Herder's work on the value of folklore and the creative force of myth, and found himself particularly taken with the 'titanism' of the mythical figure, which would heavily inform his interpretation of Faust (Williams 28). His early dabbling in the *Sturm und Drang* movement was in part shaped by his interactions with Herder, who had drawn myth back into Germany's cultural consciousness after its dismissal by the Enlightenment, hailing it as 'primal, creatively striving, and dynamic' (qtd. in Feldman and Richardson 261). Goethe's earliest draft of *Faust*, which was written in 1772-1775 and known as the *Urfaust*, for example, demonstrated young Goethe's initial interest in Faust as a German folktale. It also strongly carried the spirit of the *Sturm und Drang* movement, by establishing the tragic love story of Gretchen that would become the focus of *Part I*, and which might easily have been inspired by the many folktales with

similar themes that Herder had encouraged him to study (*Selected Letters* 9).¹² Having been written partially in tandem with *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, the *Urfaust* functions well as a Gothic drama, moving ‘from night to night and from dungeon to dungeon,’ as R. M. Browning has colourfully described (460). The Faust of this early draft, as well as *Part I*, is driven by lust more than by curiosity—while he begins the drama lamenting his ignorance of the true nature of the world, Mephistopheles does not have to try very hard to steer him towards pursuing and seducing Gretchen instead of seeking such truth. Even when interacting with the Earth Spirit, which he conjures before Mephistopheles appears, Faust proclaims that ‘in the deep of sensuality / I’ll quench my passions’ heat’ (1750-1). Mephistopheles, who remains a lustful figure throughout both parts of the drama, has a far easier time serving as accomplice to Faust in *Part I*, serving up riches and Gretchen to Faust, than he does in *Part II*, when Faust’s ambition begins to concern the wider world. *Part II* of *Faust* disconnects from *Sturm und Drang* and exists rather as a metaphysical exploration of the consequences of Faust wielding the power and knowledge that he is granted. It reflects not only the maturation of Goethe’s philosophical views, but also a shift in his focus from the personal drama of individual romance to the dynamic motion of human society in progress, whether by revolution or gradual change. Goethe’s process of artistic maturation from the *Sturm und Drang* spirit of his youth towards the detached humanism of his later years was also intrinsically linked with his observations of his countrymen and their place within larger international affairs. The empire which Faust lives in and offers aid to is shown to owe debts to other nations, and Faust defends his territories under threat when he deems it necessary. The scale and allegorical meaning of the drama expands hugely in response to Goethe’s increasingly broad perspective on his own world and the changes it was undergoing.

This broader perspective was gained both from Goethe’s later life in Weimar and his position as an observer of international affairs mainly from afar. Once he settled in Weimar for good at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the only encroachment of foreign affairs was through his correspondence with others (with the famous exception of Napoleon’s march through the state, which Goethe welcomed with open arms). The Weimar experience of the rise of the bourgeois class and industrialisation was dissimilar from that experienced by either England or France, mainly because those upheavals, particularly industrialisation, did not occur in Germany until much later in the nineteenth

¹² Barker Fairley observes of the letter in question that Goethe had been urged by Herder to collect folk poems in the Alsatian villages, and many of these works were tragic ballads on the theme of seduction (*Selected Letters* 150).

century. Its productivity in industry did not expand massively until the 1850s, lagging significantly behind during England's largest boom just after the turn of the century, and while movements of German consolidation and imperial annexation by Napoleon and others had a direct impact upon Weimar, democratic revolution did not seriously threaten there and elsewhere in the German Confederation until the unrest of 1848.¹³ Goethe's early life in Weimar, marked by the *The Sorrows of Young Werther* and the *Urfaust*, was therefore spent mostly peaceably. He began his writing career while with the *Sturm und Drangers*, as well as Karl August, the young Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar. August's friendship, in addition to being a long-lasting and formative one for Goethe, earned him a position in government, and in 1779 he was elected to the Privy Council, and there he endeavoured to organise Weimar's finances and reform the agricultural industry and poor relief, with partial success (Williams 23). As a result, Goethe came to possess both practical and theoretical knowledge of economics, and was enthusiastic about the work of Adam Smith as well as that of his own brother-in-law, Schlosser (Bishop 170).

This is not to say that Goethe also only remained a detached observer of his immediate society, or that Weimar society was entirely a bastion of conservative aristocracy. Goethe's working relationship with Schiller while they were the pioneers of Weimar Classicism was partially in reaction to social changes occurring in Weimar. Friedrich Schiller, an innovative playwright and philosopher of aesthetics who was ten years Goethe's junior, had settled in Weimar in 1799 after having worked as a doctor and then a professor of History and Philosophy in Jena. His friendship with Goethe between roughly 1788 and 1805 (the year Schiller died) was fruitful for both of them, first through their frequent correspondence and then, when Schiller was in Weimar, through the production of classical plays. Their correspondence reflected their struggles to reconcile their artistic endeavours with the shifting conditions of their environment. The bourgeois character of their emerging age, as well as its political upheavals, had a profound impact on their writing, which Lukács summarises with the useful observation that 'Behind this contradictory position of theirs is concealed the great central problem of modern art in the nineteenth century: the attempt to surmount artistically the ugliness and inartistic character of bourgeois life' (88). Weimar Classicism was indeed a deeply contradictory movement, backwards-looking in its search for a holistic system of art which still also tried to

¹³ Hobsbawm cites iron production and use of steam power as crude indicators of international distribution of the industrialising process, and what must be emphasised is the unevenness of this process across borders. It is very clear that German productivity on this stage did not truly rise to the foreground until the 1870s (*The Age of Capital*, 55-57).

optimistically embrace Enlightenment principles of reason and human perfectibility. As a movement carried on by the court of Weimar, it was politically conservative in regards to the aristocracy (which Goethe would continue to be, even after moving away from the movement) yet was stridently Romantic in its assertion that the *aesthetics* of the movement would be a solution to ‘troubled times’ (Richter 5). The contradictory character of Goethe’s devotion to classical art in the face of his instinctive leanings towards bourgeois harmony was demonstrated in *Hermann und Dorothea* (1797), for example, and must also be contrasted by his dislike of the materialism that he saw particularly in the British bourgeoisie. Both he and Schiller were deeply concerned with the fate of culture in a modern world:

Unhappily we moderns are also occasionally born poets, and we fret ourselves round through the Genus of Poetry, without rightly knowing what we should be at; for the specific indications, if I mistake not, should come from without, and the occasion give direction to the talent. Why do we so seldom make an epigram in the Grecian sense? Because we see so few things that deserve one. Why are we so [seldom] successful with the epic? Because we have no listeners (I: 389).¹⁴

Both Goethe and Schiller were keenly aware of the problems of artistic expression when it became commodified—their friendship was concurrent with the opening of savings banks and the issuing of paper money in England, America, and Germany (Davies 286, 566-70), and on the whole they felt that the conditions of ‘without’ were not as conducive to poetry as they once were. Schiller contended that ‘The poet and artist has two things to do; to lift himself above the real, and to keep within the circle of the sensuous’ (*CSG* I: 329). For Schiller, this was particularly difficult in the modern age, and oftentimes, the modern poet could not find the aesthetic from empirical knowledge, and the resulting poetry became a fancy, resisting reality rather than capturing it. In this observation, he picks up on the drive towards empiricism already established during the Enlightenment, and traces it forward towards the cultural consequences of that movement, at least in the abstract. On the ground, the consequences of bourgeois taste were also considerable:

The public no longer has the unity of taste of childhood, and still less the unity of a finished culture. It is in the middle between the two, and that is a glorious time for bad writers, but therefore the worse for such as do not wish merely to make money (65).

The conflict between what they envisioned as the future of art, and the environment they saw themselves producing art for, would define their cultivation of Weimar Classicism. It would also define much of what Goethe would struggle with in *Faust*, wherein creativity

¹⁴ In the Calvert translation of the correspondence, ‘rarely’ is omitted, presumably by typo. The original text runs as follows: ‘Warum gelingt uns das Epische so *seltten* [seldom]?’

and ambition alone were not necessarily the certain salvation that 'progress' during the Enlightenment, was touted to be.

In these ways, we can see how Goethe's life was impacted by a broad spectrum of cultural and literary changes, which he would go on to process in *Faust*. In addition to the abstract tension Goethe and Schiller struggled with between their interest in a classical aesthetic and Romantic progression, Goethe also had conflicting feelings about authority and liberty in his politics. Goethe's association with August had a profound effect upon his personal politics, despite his vaunted detachment from political affairs. August, having inherited his dukedom at a very young age but given guidance and support by his mother, nonetheless became a successful and magnetic leader of Weimar whom Goethe greatly admired. During the French Revolution, Goethe denied being a royalist; however, his aversion to 'arbitrary rule' and his admiration for August's intellectually rich court and charismatic guidance left him inclined to distrust radical republicanism as well as corrupt or ineffective government (*CGES I*: 122). Goethe's philosophy towards government was ostensibly not anti-democratic, but he doubtless found it a problematic system that he was mostly only willing to support in his hope that it would lead to the overall progress of society. He did not trust the people to know what was best for a nation, as he remarked to Eckermann later in life: 'It is an absurd world which does not know what it wants and which one must allow to have its own way' (*CGES II*: 257). The chaos of the French Revolution, and the violence that Goethe saw when he accompanied August during the Revolutionary Wars that followed, did not disabuse him of those feelings, particularly given that, as Nicholas Boyle points out, by the time the shock-waves of the revolution reached him, they had been filtered through German interpretations and counter-movements (Boyle II: 3). Thus while Goethe kept himself closely informed of events occurring in Germany and elsewhere, his perspective was one characterised by ideological liberalism tempered by a dislike of revolutionary upheaval of any kind. He presented himself as a 'true liberal', who 'endeavours to effect as much good as he can, with the means which he has at command; but he would not extirpate evils, which are often inevitable, with fire and sword' (*CGES II*: 226). In this spirit, he was moved by individualism, the liberty and creativity that he brought out in his poem, 'Prometheus', but he opposed material greed and revolutionary radicalism of any kind, in both political and academic spheres.

Goethe's imagining of the universe and its components in *Faust* would also reflect

his anti-radical feelings, in which material and spiritual elements were inextricable from each other and functioned by the same fundamental principles as embodied by what he called the Earth Spirit (*Erdgeist*), which he introduces in *Part I*. The Earth Spirit, called up by Faust, presents itself by proclaiming, ‘In life like a flood, in deeds like a storm / I surge to and fro, / ... At Time’s whirring loom I work and play / God’s living garment I weave and display’ (501-509). Through this entity, Goethe asserted the unity of the spiritual and material worlds, one manifesting as the other. Scientific and political endeavours that separated these elements, or neglected one in favour of the other, were not favourable to him. This meant that he distrusted methods of observation and study that were too narrow, causing him to doubt the accuracy of ‘mechanische Vorrichtung’ (‘mechanical devices’) built by other scientists which employed magnifying lenses and other components which interfered with natural eyesight (Nisbet 50). To narrow one’s view was to automatically reduce one’s awareness of the interconnectedness of the world’s smaller parts. As a result, there are multiple examples of Goethe displaying his own Faustian restlessness in an effort to linguistically express himself in as interconnected a manner as possible. His ideal mode of observation combined the inquisitiveness of scientific endeavour, and the vision of the poet—one needed both components to grasp the full nature of what was being studied. He therefore often employed literary metaphor to analyse philosophy, and more unusually, scientific examples to illustrate political or philosophical points. For example, in a letter to Zelter, he remarked:

The study of meteorological science, like so many other things, only issues in despair. The first lines of Faust are perfectly applicable here too. However, for the protection of truth, I must add, that he who does not ask for more than what is granted to man, will herein also be well rewarded for the pains he has taken. But it is not every man's way to be content (*TZ* 139).

Goethe approaches his wide variety of interests by assuming their interrelatedness—Faust becomes an analogy for meteorological study, which in turn becomes a consideration of the natural restlessness of men. The underlying stability and unity of all various modes of life and art is implicitly acknowledged through the authority of the poetic voice negotiating and utilising science. ‘There are relations everywhere and relations constitute life,’ Goethe asserted (*TZ* 386-7). Through this, we can understand his approach to one discipline or issue through the exploration of his analogous views within another. He acknowledges this strategy in an earlier letter, stating:

I have again looked into Linnaeus’ writings lately, in which he finds the science of botany, and I now see very clearly, that I too have used them only symbolically, that is, I attempted to transfer the same method and style of treatment to other

subjects, thereby acquiring an organ, with which a great deal may be done (*TZ* 139).

In this, he was participating in the tradition of eighteenth century scientists like Erasmus Darwin, of whose poem, *The Botanic Garden* (1791), Goethe had written to Schiller more than ten years previously. He observed with interest that ‘this botanical work is found to speak of everything except vegetation’ and then lists the various social and technological issues Darwin brought forth, before exclaiming, ‘Here, therefore, you have the plan of a poem! Such must be the appearance presented by a didactic poem which is not only to teach but to instruct’ (*CSG* II: 27). It is therefore significant to both his politics and his scientific views that Goethe preferred electric and chemical theories of physical change for their natural, organic feel and decried geologists and vulcanists who reduced the movement of the earth to pressure and force. He summarised that: ‘my method of explanation inclines more to the chemical than to the mechanical side’ (Nisbet 56fn). He demonstrated the political side of this affinity when he wrote *Hermann und Dorothea* in response to the French Revolution, wherein the strength and goodness of individuals within their bourgeois communities, symbolised by Hermann, is contrasted with the confusion and fear of revolution embodied in the refugee, Dorothea. Connecting these disparate preferences is Goethe’s conviction that gradual change and balance is the key to peaceful progress. ‘Extremes are never to be avoided in any revolution,’ he asserted to Eckermann, ‘In a political one, nothing is generally desired in the beginning but the abolition of abuses; but before people are aware, they are deep in bloodshed and horrors’ (*CGES* 251). While he held to the importance of the ‘quarrel’ between form and formlessness, that internal debate must, in the material world, manifest only as slow change. In geologic terms, the heat and pressure of tectonic movements should manifest in the gradual rising and falling of mountains, not volcanoes. In this way, Goethe refused to participate in the dual narrative of science and revolution embodied by Prometheus. His hopes for unity and harmony in all things, as part of a larger progression towards a more healthy and enlightened humanity, would drive him away from political and scientific radicalism throughout his life, and towards models of the universe which hinged upon the continued connectedness of the mechanical and spiritual world. In this way, his life experiences, and consequent literary and political affinities, shaped and anticipated many of the ways in which he would use *Faust* to explore and process modernity.

After Schiller’s death and the fall of Napoleon in 1814, followed by the

establishment of the German Confederacy, Goethe settled mostly out of the public eye after having spent several years in Italy and many more in Weimar running the theatre. He devoted himself to writing alone but continued to welcome guests into his home and wrote many volumes of letters to friends, locally and abroad. It was at this point that he struck up correspondence with Thomas Carlyle and Sir Walter Scott, as well as becoming interested in the work of Byron. From this place of remove, he continued to watch with avid attention the tide of bourgeois society and industrialisation in the latter half of his life, corresponding with contacts in England as well as elsewhere, asking after the designs of steam engines and their use on the new Manchester railways, the action at Coalbrookdale, and the canals in Panama and Suez (Williams 47). By the time he finished *Faust Part II*, which would not be published until after his death in 1832, he had witnessed the transformation of his homeland and Europe at large, and likewise, the development of *Faust* had transformed, in stops and starts, from a domestic drama into a global undertaking in which Faust and Mephistopheles reshaped a corner of their medieval German empire into an early industrialised society—one that Faust would proclaim triumphantly was ‘not safe, but free and active’ (11564).

We have established that Goethe lived a rich life in a rich, eventful time, and that he absorbed this richness with a simultaneous engagement and detachment that allowed him to see large scale movement around him and moreover attempt to describe it through interconnected discussions of natural history, politics, and art that hinge upon a singular approach to how the universe worked. When one considers the trajectory of Faust’s development as a character from Spies’ lustful rogue scholar, it is apparent that Goethe’s primary connection with the character of Faust was through the tumultuous times during which he lived. As will be addressed presently, the resulting intellectual interests and conception of human nature and modern society drove the incorporation of Promethean heroism into his adaptation.

***Faust* as a modern myth**

I have briefly discussed through Goethe’s artistic development over time the differences between *Part I* and *Part II*, and the ways in which modern problems made their way into the text. I will now go into greater depth examining the drama, with an aim to indicate how Goethe conceives Faust’s heroism despite dealing with the devil, and how his attempts to develop himself and his society are ultimately portrayed ambivalently, not because of their content, but rather the speed at which they occur. In this way, it will be demonstrated how

Goethe processed industrialisation and, more broadly, modernisation, through his belief in gradualism, while maintaining a fair but optimistic perspective on the future.

Two central features emerge when identifying the ways in which Goethe diverged from Medieval and Renaissance influences and instead picked up some of the themes presented by the Prometheus myth, whose significance to early nineteenth-century culture as an expression of social and scientific ‘revolution’ we have already identified. The first major feature is apparent in *Part I*, wherein the terms of agreement which Mephistopheles and Faust reach departs from that of the original legend, such that Faust and Mephistopheles become collaborators, sharing in Promethean power, and representing both the noble ambition, and the temptation to misuse power, to which humans are prone. The second feature is the acts of creation which Faust and Mephistopheles undertake in *Part II*—particularly the materialisation of Homunculus, an alchemically-created being, Faust’s social projects, involving the introduction of paper money into the national economy, and raising a spit of land from the sea in order to colonise it. Bennett observes that Goethe’s conception of Faust rests upon ‘Man’s tragic dilemma,’ wherein ‘he is in truth a kind of god yet can achieve in experience no direct contact with his own divinity’ (22). Homunculus and the excavation of land from the sea are attempts at understanding and making contact with that divinity, but while the former being is transcendent and triumphal in birth, the latter project is filled with cost and is left unfinished by the end of the drama.

The reason for the differing fates of Faust’s endeavours are explained by the ways in which Faust acts outside of Goethe’s conception of gradual progress and unity of all things. While the Promethean urge to create man from clay succeeds with the help of the gods, particularly Thales and Proteus, only Faust’s human effort and hope drive the raising of the land, and as such the project might be godly in intention, but its execution, vast and sudden, engenders huge losses. In Goethe’s early poem, ‘Prometheus’ (1773), addressed briefly in Chapter One, Prometheus asserted his independence from Zeus’s tyranny through the cultivation of mankind in his own image: ‘To suffer...to be glad / And thee to scorn’ (54-6). That spirit of liberty and creation, regardless (or perhaps because) of the source of its inspiration, became central to this adaptation of *Faust*. In separating *Faust* from religious didacticism, the resounding motivation of Faust’s character is not sinfulness driven by selfishness or curiosity, but rather a profound restlessness and the Promethean desire to create and shape society and its arts—impulses with which Goethe was personally

familiar.¹⁵ In this way, *Faust* becomes a drama about successes and failures of social and technological progress.

The initial Promethean elements to Goethe's *Faust* centre on Faust's ambition and Mephistopheles's power becoming two sides of humanity's character, which had been anticipated in 'Prometheus' when the god observes, 'Was I not forged as man / By almighty Time...?' (42-3). Prometheus's rebellion, in this light, is not so much a support of social revolution, as other poets might have imagined it, but an affirmation of the godly capability and independence of men, as flawed as they might be. Prometheus, therefore, does not simply create man, but also counts himself as one of them. In *Faust*, this relationship between humanity and godliness is more complicated, particularly given that Faust's collaboration is with Mephisto rather than anyone as benevolent as Prometheus, but the reclamation of divinity within man nevertheless expresses itself in their partnership. Faust, in all of his previous iterations, embodies the knife-edge of transition: in Spies, he was what Butler called the 'darkly questioning mind' that fell over the line between doubting faith and losing it; in Marlowe, he was the scholar who crossed from scholarly ambition to hubris (4). Goethe's scholarly Faust, by contrast, embodies change by instigating it and absorbing its consequences, the godlike power of Prometheus bound to a human mind and tempted by its basest instincts via Mephistopheles. David Hawkes interprets this to be Goethe reading transition as a dialectic, wherein Faust's wavering between damnation and redemption becomes not so much a process of dithering as a conversation between reason and superstition, *logos* and *eidolon*, leading towards progress (143). Superstition, however, appeared less as the religious or magical component that most appears in Spies; rather, it had morphed alongside the rest of the myth to embody the conflicts of the post-Enlightenment period. Schiller, in his correspondence with Goethe during one of Goethe's working periods on *Faust*, observed:

Understanding and Reason seem to me in this subject to wrestle together for life...The Devil, through his materialism, pleads for understanding, and Faust for the heart. Occasionally, however, they seem to change parts, and the Devil takes Reason under his protection against Faust (*CSG* I: 271).

Schiller acknowledges the dialectic strain at work in Goethe's conception of Faust and Mephistopheles, but he names Reason and Understanding as the two poles that they exchange between them, with materialism at the centre of their conflict. Two major points

15 On multiple occasions, Goethe was known to qualify his happiness when he was inactive—Barker Fairley noted that he was 'in love with unrest' (*Selected Letters* 147).

can be drawn from this observation: one, that Goethe's humanism in the form of Understanding has replaced superstition, which should make sinful temptation no longer a viable source of conflict for the drama; and two, that the material world, as the plane of existence upon which Faust's creativity manifests (much like how the Earth Spirit works God's will upon the earth), has become the axis which determines Faust's own worthiness for salvation. The relationship between Faust and Mephistopheles not only appears dialectic, but plays out as a negotiation, rather than a struggle, between forces. Mephistopheles may lend his magic to all of Faust's endeavours over the course of the drama, but he is not so much biding his time as Faust's servant as being his collaborator. In response to a letter asking about the origins of Goethe's Mephisto, Goethe clearly states that Mephisto was not a Satan-figure, but rather inspired by a specific demon that arose out of the demonology of the sixteenth century:

Your question as to the origin of the name of Mephistopheles, I cannot answer directly; but the accompanying pages may confirm your friend's surmise, which refers it to the same fantastic source and time, as the legend of Faust; probably, however, we must not assign it to the Middle Ages. It seems to have arisen in the sixteenth, and to have developed itself in the seventeenth century. The Protestant necromancers had no immediate need to fear ecclesiastical excommunication, and so there were all the more Coptas, who knew how to profit by the stupidity, the helplessness, the passionate desires of mankind; for it was certainly easier to grow rich by means of a few cramped characters and senseless mutterings, than to eat one's daily bread in the sweat of one's brow. Have we not recently, among the Neustadt circle, unearthed a similar nest of treasure-diggers, and with them a dozen of the same sort of treatises on magic, none of which, however, is equal in value to the Codex, from which the accompanying extract has been made? (TZ 374-5).

In addition to further confirming the heavy influence of the Renaissance on the drama, heavier perhaps than that of classical culture, Goethe's explanation offers further illumination of the role of Mephistopheles within *Faust*. Mephisto originates from the profiteering of necromancers, playing upon the weaknesses of mankind and thereby betraying his own cynical convictions. His mention of the Copts, in addition to simply referencing the religious group also seems, by his broad generalisation of occultism and profiteering, to imply reference to his previous drama, *Der Groß Copta* (1791), a comedy which he had written in critique of the corruption of the *ancien regime*, inspired by the Affair of the Diamond Necklace. Within the play, 'The Great Copt' was based on the occultist Alessandro Cagliostro, who had been heavily involved in the necklace affair, whose papers Goethe had studied while in Italy. Mephistopheles, in this context, is an ancient and universal force, exploiting greed and narrow-mindedness, and he is puzzled by Faust's boundless curiosity and thirst for experience. In this way, he is almost less supernatural

than Faust himself, at ease with the banality of human sin. It is almost inaccurate to call him a Devil at all, let alone The Devil. But even in such a traditional role, Alt asserts that ‘Goethe’s Mephisto is a modern Devil without a body, a principle rather than a personification, evil as an intellectual perspective’ (153). His position as enabler and uncaring commentator is perhaps more human than we would like, and as a result, his position as counterpart to Faust becomes increasingly a portrait of Man’s negative impulses towards inaction and cynicism. The extract which Goethe references and enclosed in his letter to Zelter came from *Faust’s Höllenzwang*, one of many seventeenth century texts said to contain spells devised by Faust, and a ‘very remarkable work of closely reasoned nonsense’ that laid out a detailed structure of the demonic hierarchy from which Faust could summon various powers. Mephistophiel, within the document, is listed as the first among the seven Wise Spirits’ who make up ‘the head of the army of Hell, and they may be made use of for any Arts, whenever they are desired’ (TZ 378). Mephistopheles thus originates in name from the Renaissance demonological occult, but finds an analogous identity in Goethe’s imagining as a Cagliostro-like conman.

Mephistopheles plays his part as conman well— he tricks his way into Faust’s study, and manages to make a wager with Faust that he believes he is sure to win. Faust and Mephistopheles become complements, first established in the terms of the bargain they strike. In both Spies and Marlowe, Faust gets twenty-four years of servitude from the devil, and after that is carried away to Hell. It is a pact and a bargain that is signed for in blood. Goethe’s Faust, in contrast, is offered a wager by Mephistopheles. Faust contends that, despite all that Mephistopheles can provide him, he will never cease striving, never stop and want to live in a single moment with complete satisfaction. He tells Mephistopheles,

If ever I settle on a bed of ease
 Let me be done for there and then.
 If you, by lying flattery, can please
 Me with myself and can impose,
 By means of pleasure, upon my mind—
 There and then let my days end.
 I offer you this wager (1692-8).

Within this initial contract we can see the beginning stages of Goethe’s approach to modernising the Faust myth by changing several key aspects of the devil’s bargain: first, Mephistopheles himself initially offers ‘to serve [Faust] here / And non-stop do your bidding tirelessly. / If...over there / You will do the same for me’ (1656-9). This is again fairly similar to the original bargain outlined in the version of the Spies *Historia* with which

Goethe was familiar. In Goethe's version, however, Mephistopheles's service comes with its own difficulty—to merely serve is not enough; only service that results in a moment wherein Faust 'shall tell the moment: / Bide here, you are so beautiful!' will give Faust's soul over to perdition (1699-1700). Faust's confidence that he will never be entirely satisfied with his achievements or stop striving further, even with supernatural help, is framed as heroic, demonstrative of Goethe's original conviction that Faust's yearning for knowledge was never a damnable offence. In the 'Prologue in Heaven', wherein Mephisto makes his own wager with the Lord that he can lead Faust astray, the Lord presents Faust as 'A good man, though impelled in darkness, yet / Is well aware of what the right way is' (328-9). The Prologue reads as an allusion to the Book of Job, but strangely inverted—the challenge which Mephisto offers is one based in satiating desires, rather than inflicting suffering. It is a more insidious challenge, and one which turns the Job story on its head—Faust is initially valued by God for his curiosity and his 'foolish deeply agitated heart' rather than his piety (307). Moreover, God is confident that though Faust serves him 'in confusion', he will eventually find 'clarity' (308-9).

In this light, while Mephisto is tasked with turning Faust away from virtue, Goethe's definition of virtue is very different from the didactic retention of faith demanded by earlier iterations. Faust's ambition and dedication to dragging his whole society out of its medieval existence and into an industrial age is part of what God values in him. Faust looks upon the townspeople he lives among and observes:

...See, from the town,
 Out of the gate's dark hole,
 The bright crowds.
 All wish to be in the sun's warm regard.
 They celebrate the risen Lord
 For they are risen too: from homes
 Low down, from close rooms,
 From trade and labour's bonds...(918-25)

Faust's ambition for transcendence is not only a personal wish—he yearns to pull the entirety of his society out of the darkness with him. He therefore possesses both the inquisitiveness and the vision of the heroic, Promethean poet. Marshall Berman offers the observation that, 'The vital force that animates Goethe's Faust, that marks it off from its predecessors...is an impulse that I will call the desire for *development*' (39). Development encompasses change, but of a more palatable sort for Goethe. It is not sudden or revolutionary, but rather has connotations of organic growth and ageing through time and experience.

This desire for development is in fact affirmed and encouraged by God *through* the pointed (mis)guidance of Mephisto. ‘I like to make the devil his companion,’ the Lord says of humankind, ‘To prick and work and be a mover willy-nilly’ (342-3). As such, it is the devilish impulse cultivating ambition that is framed as inspiring change in human society, perhaps enabled by a devil, but still in the spirit of how the Lord intended. God accepts this as the natural way of the world, when he maintains that Faust is, ‘A good man, though impelled in darkness, yet / Is well aware of what the right way is’ (328-9). The emphasis is not on Mephisto as the source of Faust’s inspiration, but rather on Faust’s noble intentions, which God believes will remain noble. Moreover, given that God agrees to the terms that Mephisto then uses to bargain with Faust, it is *ambition* and *intent* which seems to hold as the definition of the ‘right way’. Faust is only lost to God through Mephisto if he becomes fully content, such that Faust’s impact upon the world, and his continued work for it, is the source of God’s redemption:



Julius Nisle, ‘Faust’s pact with Mephisto’ (~1840). Notably, Faust and Mephisto appear to meet here as equals, rather than the looming shadow of Mephisto directing Faust’s actions or otherwise manipulating him, as implied by other illustrations of the legend. Mephisto’s almost-invisible horns and appropriate dress make him unremarkable as a companion to Faust, more easily mistaken for human in both appearance and behaviour. This is not representative of all nineteenth-century renditions of Faust—as Peter W. Guenther has recently pointed out, *Faust* was one of the most popular texts to illustrate in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (105). However, this interpretation does highlight the collaborative aspect of Faust’s relationship with Mephistopheles, which is so important to both characters’ conception in the drama.

Yet with all of this set-up for a highly idealistic Faust, who would prove God right in his intent to continue on the ‘right way’ even if his helper was infernal, *Part I* is distinctly

carnal. The plot is concerned with Faust's desire for Gretchen, whom he seduces with riches despite his godlessness and her virtue. However, Mephisto's role in acquiring her leads to the death of her brother, the death of her child, and her martyrdom. It is a straightforward tragedy insofar as Faust's good intentions do nothing in the face of his lustful desires, his ambition for society displaced only for it to lead to ruin. Despite Goethe's far more humanist interpretation of the deal with the devil, the narrative of *Part I* as it unfolds appears, in some ways, more conventional and more Christian than might be expected. Faust's tragedy remains that of the young lover, and not the visionary in which God seems to have placed faith.

It seems also that Goethe realised this: in *Part II* he chooses to wipe the slate clean, and start from a newly forgetful and ambitious, idealised Faust. Of the second part's opening, he wrote to Eckermann,

I had no other recourse than to paralyse my hero utterly, consider him annihilated, in order then to kindle a new life out of this apparent death...It is all compassion and deepest pity. There is no sitting in judgement and no asking whether he deserves it or not, as might be the case if they were human judges.

At the end of *Part I*, Faust is forced to abandon Gretchen when she faces execution, falsely accused of infanticide. Gretchen's role is conventionally Christian, defined by her piety in contrast to Faust's perceived atheism, which is suggested by his willingness to leave 'In faith and feeling all men free' (3420). Goethe steps away from this more conventional narrative of sinner and martyr and wipes Faust clean in order for him to fulfil his role as a heroic and redeemable striver, as set out in the Prologue. While he justifies this decision by framing it as a 'compassionate' erasure of *Part I*, it must be remembered that Faust's worthiness for the Lord's wager with Mephisto was never based on 'human' judgement either, but rather Faust's unfailing willingness to continue his work. Thus, *Part II* is ushered in by spirits who 'Quieten the savage trouble he is in, / Extract the scalding barbs of blame, delete / The sum of horror of his life to date' (4624-4626). It is a very literal process of reducing Faust to his symbolic value, and sets some of the tone for the sprawling second half of the drama.

Part II is a far more literal contemplation of Goethe's contemporary history through what Williams calls 'an allegorical resume...of the historical and cultural experiences and preoccupations of Goethe and his age' (*Life of Goethe* 199). As a result, not only do flights into the classical world take place, but they are also shaped by Goethe's scientific knowledge and interests, forming together a series of explorations of creation and ambition that both support and critique the heroism of Faust's actions. Goethe's mature

life experiences, away from *Sturm und Drang* and his involvement in Weimar Classicism, becomes far more apparent here. The result is difficult to categorise, in the literary sense: Harold Bloom has called *Part II* ‘strange’ and ‘inaccessible’ to the modern sensibility, and on the whole serves as an ending to the classical mythical epic that had begun with Homer (204), while Franco Moretti offers a place to *Faust* that is at a beginning, rather than an end. He argues for an altogether new category of texts, which begins with *Faust* and follows through *Ulysses* and *The Wasteland* to construct a category that stands both together and apart from the Western canon, which he labels the ‘Modern Epic’. He argues that such works, which are complex and sprawling contributors to our understanding of the modern condition, belong to a group apart from the usual literary canon on the strength that they defy ordinary definition on multiple levels. Emphasising this are the analogous narrative elements that Goethe draws between the technological and social transitions of the Renaissance and the nineteenth century, as well as the pointed insertion of more recent changes into Faust’s time.

Both sides of this criticism bring us back to Goethe’s preoccupation with *development* that is so central to his reading of the Faust myth. By Act V, the drama has departed entirely from the medieval origins of the myth, and Faust’s ambition has been realised by his having brought the German empire victory and claimed land and an estate for his own. In the process, however, it is revealed that Faust had become willing to resort to piracy to accumulate wealth in order to move his program of modernity forward, funding colonisation and industrialisation is a fully self-fulfilling mission. The result of this modern adaptation of the Faust myth highlights the complicated results of ambition through the collateral damage caused by investment of capital in prospective wealth, and the callous construction and reconstruction of living space on artificially raised land. The central premise thus explodes into contemplation of the consequences of human progress, reaching far into the past and future in order to illustrate it. Faust offers, in a moment of reflection upon his works towards the end of the drama, a soliloquy that encapsulates his and Goethe’s ambivalence:

I open room for many millions to live
Lives—it is true—not safe, but free and active...
This is the highest pitch of wisdom:
He alone deserves his life and liberty
Who every day must fight for them.
So here, in danger, human life will have
Zest through all its ages till the grave (11563-78).

The legacy that Faust leaves is essentially the process of modernisation, but modernisation

is just as much a devil's bargain as Faust's own wager; Goethe maintains, however, that both also remain heroic, given Faust's ascension to Heaven and out of Mephisto's grasp. The raising of Faust's land therefore becomes the definitive moment of both the drama and Goethe's articulation of the continued heroism of Faust despite the risks and costs his development entailed. It is also the most problematic articulation of those points however, as summarised by Alfred Hoelzel:

Part I enacts indisputably a moral descent; *Part II* shows a promising climb which relapses at a crucial moment, however, into a disastrous fall into a moral abyss. Out of this abyss, Faust emerges with a sublime *vision*, i.e., a purely *potential* rather than an actual condition, and the conclusion shows Faust's immortal part rising to the heavens (4).

Of this strange up-and-down movement of the drama as a whole, Hoelzel points out that Goethe appeared most preoccupied with the ending remaining as ambiguous as possible, resisting 'human judgement' as he had with Faust's cleansing in the beginning of *Part II*, but also not fully accepting that Faust had succumbed to Mephisto's temptation. It has succeeded in its ambivalence, most importantly—scholarship has swung to both extremes of condemning and valorising Faust.¹⁶ His analysis, however, also resists the continued notion of Faust's heroism, placing great emphasis on the tawdry murder of elderly residents of the land, Baucis and Philemon, to make room for construction. Indeed, as open-ended as the work appears, Goethe places us in a difficult position by the end of the drama, by both seemingly condoning Faust's decisions through offering him mercy, and holding Homunculus up in comparison as a paragon of natural, moral and progressive goodness.

In order to reach this point, however, Goethe explores many different approaches to creation, fulfilling in part God's own assurance that 'As human beings strive, they will go wrong' (317). Likewise, in Faust's material endeavours, things often go wrong—introducing paper money to the empire at the beginning of *Part II* causes economic collapse, and the excavation of land from the sea costs many lives. To these creations, Goethe holds up the materialisation of Homunculus, an alchemical project by Wagner that gets helped along by Mephistopheles. Homunculus is the closest Goethe gets to an ideal process of creation and progression, which captures his belief in the essential unity of the universe, both spiritual and material. By contrast, Faust's creations are shown to be cause for ambivalence in one way or another. By portraying both types of creation, Goethe both endorses modernity for its dedication to development while also taking a critical stance on

¹⁶ Hoelzel gives a good though now out-dated account of the debate; more recent scholarship has since moved away from the moral judgement of Faust, towards Goethe's interaction with his age, as Boyle's seminal works reflect.

the quick pace at which it comes about. Furthermore, this is not solely the result of ‘going wrong’ on Goethe’s part, but rather a philosophical decision—in an early manuscript, he wrote,

Ideal striving to enter by deed and feeling into all of Nature.
 Spirit manifesting itself in the world and in deeds.
 Quarrel of form and formlessness.
 Formless content preferable to empty form.
 Content entails form; and where there is form, there must be content.
 To *widen*, rather than *reconcile*, these contradictions (II.lii, my emphases).

In this abstract musing, Goethe’s intent is nonetheless clarified through his identification of the major points of tension at work within the drama, and the importance of that tension remaining unresolved. In *Part II*, his task is to explode the initial premise of the Faustian bargain into an exploration of the worldwide ramifications of making revolutionary changes to society. By necessity, the result cannot be as unified in narrative and form as *Part I* was, and as perhaps Goethe might have wished *Part II* to be. However, arguing that the heterogeneous nature of *Part II* is a ‘manifestation’ of a unified spirit does go far towards making sense of Goethe’s spatially and temporally far-ranging drama. A.S. Byatt offers the convincing assessment that because of Goethe’s open-ended approach of ‘striving to enter by deed and feeling’, both Bloom and Moretti were right about *Faust’s* difficult position in the western canon—despite their diverging conclusions, both critics acknowledge ‘something dynamic and unachieved and excessive in the text’ (*Faust* I: xvii). I would argue further, however, that not only the diagnoses of *Faust’s* difficulties, but also the different literary umbrellas they place over *Faust* do not create conflicts of interest either; rather, they actually illustrate, when taken together, the ‘quarrel of form and formlessness’ that makes his text modern. Faust marks the beginning of modern myth in this study’s context because it marks the beginning of a creative, modern use of mythological—or as Moretti would say, ‘epic’—form specifically to describe the dichotomous, often contradictory state of the modern age in terms that could last not as a reiteration of classical drama, but as an entirely new, and yet still mythical form. In dissecting Faust’s ambition through industrial development, Goethe expresses a turning point in mythical narratives that has one foot in the Homeric traditions of the past and the other placed in the beginnings of an entirely new, ‘modern’ expression of myth in which contradiction and loss is necessary to create forward movement. Goethe’s own impulses and conflicts are therefore channelled into a larger portrait of ambivalence about the potential costs of progress, and the bravery inherent in continuing to strive despite them.

If *Part I* retained some of its Christian roots through the figure of Gretchen, the

most 'holy' sequences within *Part II* can be found in the journey towards birth undertaken by Homunculus in the classical world explored by Faust and Mephistopheles during Walpurgis Night. The revelry directly contrasts with the Walpurgis Night that took place in *Part I*, which was a German folk celebration, filled with medieval trappings. Walpurgis Night of *Part II*, however, is thoroughly classical, reflecting Goethe's mature literary interests. Homunculus, Faust, and Mephisto set off on separate journeys through the night, but of greatest importance is the quest of Homunculus, a creation originally of Faust's colleague Wagner, to become fully human. Dan Latimer argues that Homunculus is an inverse of Faust, in that he wishes to be a material creation, while Faust had wished to divest himself of his bodily form. They are, Latimer argues, mirrors of each other because of their opposing journeys, and their reflected existences as strivers: 'One can see Homunculus as an embodiment, among other things too, of course, of Goethe's doctrine of *Stirb und Werde*,' Latimer argues, 'One dies and passes out of one phase of existence into another; in the ideal life, there is constant striving, constant movement' (818). Most important in this analysis is Goethe's emphasis on the importance of the material world as the peak of complete existence, wherein form and formlessness are both necessary parts of both characters' full engagement with the world.

In this way, however, Homunculus is held up to Faust as an ideal he does not quite reach. Faust's preoccupation with spirit alone neglects the value of his material body initially, which he must learn to value and utilise by acting on the material world in order to reach his moment of complete satisfaction. In both this matter, and the way in which he achieves human form, Homunculus becomes a manifestation of Nature's creativity, rather than Man's, and in some ways, it appears that his slower, harmonious mode of change and development would be preferable to Goethe. Homunculus's tutelage and materialisation also makes use of Goethe's scientific interests to state his resistance to revolutionary change. As he journeys through Walpurgis Night, Homunculus encounters Seismos, who raises up the land in a great earthquake, anticipating the project Faust would eventually undertake at the end of his life. The earthquake is followed by an invasion of the land by pygmies, who build weapons in order to kill the resident herons for their feathers. Thales, who takes the position of Homunculus's guide, damns this violence, both geological and social:

The living flux of Nature was never bound
To days and nights and the hourly round.
She shapes all things after her ordinance
And even in large there is no violence (7861-4).

By combining the mythic drama of the classical world with the drama of the natural world, Goethe once again unites his vision of the universe and how it should develop, with geological and social progress mirroring each other in either violence or gradual change. Karl J. Fink has made the observation that ‘Goethe’s science was a narration of the acts of nature as he had found them in the transformation of rocks, in the linkages of bones, in the transitions of the leaf, and in the generation of colours’ (50). As before, this is consistent with his approach of interconnectedness and analogy within the various forms of the universe. In turn, science in the form of technology, as the latest manifestation of human creativity, must also be linked to these transformational, natural narratives. By deciding to be mentored by Thales, Homunculus is able to achieve his materialisation by the non-violent, ‘natural’ means of the sea. With divine intervention, he passes through a multitude of forms, ‘evolving’ through many different forms before at last becoming a human. His ‘becoming’ is sanctified more than almost any other moment in *Part II*—it is undertaken by a host of mythic figures, who herald his material birth with the announcement of the four elements meeting to create him: ‘Higher, higher, let all four / Elements be worshipped here!’ (8486-7). He is thus the embodiment of both the divine and the organic, and reasserts the strength of Thales’ assertion that Nature’s course of gradual change is the most divine and ideal of all developmental processes. Seismos celebrates his accomplishments by calling them ‘monstrous’ striving, such that ‘I / Have burst on daylight from the abyss / And shout for people fit to try / A new life here in cheerfulness’ (7570-3). Homunculus, by contrast, breaks through the glass he was encased in and is embraced joyfully by the sea, harmonious and at peace with the material world. His striving is ‘imperious’ instead of ‘monstrous’, and ‘All I illuminate / With beauty works on me’ (8458-60).

The contrast between the changes induced by Seismos and Homunculus in turn defines the problematic vision which Faust has for his work. Throughout *Part II*, Faust and Mephisto strive to create, but it is not always clear whether their work is positive or ‘monstrous’ in its speed and violence. Even in his moment of bliss, Faust’s declaration that his new land would be ‘not safe, but free and active’ is an echo of Seismos’s offer for people ‘fit to try’ to come and live. But even before Seismos’s inducement of violent change, we already know the impatience of Faust’s character through his soliloquy in *Part I*, and his sudden lustful affection for Gretchen, and then Helen of Troy. Similarly, his effect on his society is marked by impatience and sudden bursts of activity: Faust’s entrance back into the material world after being wiped spiritually clean finds the empire he resides in at a

stage not unlike France just before the Revolution—it is bloated and weighed down with debt and excess, cannibalising its people and resources: ‘So the world hacks itself to pieces,’ Mephisto observes, ‘Annihilates all ought and should’ (4799-4800). Amidst this chaos, Faust and Mephistopheles offer their service to the emperor with the solution of paper money as a way of jump-starting the economy while prospecting for hidden gold within the empire. The exchange not only points out the inherent risk of prospect-capitalism, but also signals Faust’s intent to harness nature, rather than find balance with it.

Mephistopheles eschews any balance of the four elements that it took to birth

Homunculus in favour of gold when he tempts the Emperor:

In wall footings and mountain veins
 There’s nugget gold and gold coins.
 And who’ll deliver it? He will who bends
 Mind and Nature under his commands (4893-4896).

As a result, capitalism is birthed suddenly, and quickly takes on a life of its own, such that, ‘It can’t be reined in now’ (6086). Upon his and Faust’s return to the Empire after Walpurgis Night, Mephistopheles observes its descent into anarchy after the treasure promised to fulfil the value of the printed money never surfaced, with civil war that matched ‘Burgh against burgh, city against city’ (10263). Such is the power of prospective wealth over actual wealth that it transcends all social boundaries and inserts itself into the empire even while the treasure the printed money has been made to represent remains unfound. Moreover, however, this fast spread of capitalism and the resulting wave of industrial innovation and landscaping that follows in *Part II* seems to imply that man is made to live this way—this risk is, according to Faust, inherent in the modern condition. Printed money was a development of Goethe’s time, rather than Faust’s, and his concerns for his own time rather than the past are reflected in the economic troubles of the fictional empire. We can also see in their differing opinions of economic progress Goethe’s own struggles with his world view; on the one hand, he maintains that Faust’s visionary work, enacted on an individual scale, is heroic, and on the other, Mephistopheles’ cynicism echoes his own dislike of violent change, and its tendency to beget further violence. Erictho’s observations of Classical Walpurgis Night express this best when he opens the scene, describing, ‘How violence sets itself against a greater violence / And shreds sweet liberty’s garland of a thousand flowers / And bends the stiff laurel round a ruler’s brow’ (7019-21). The connection between political, natural, and technological violence drives the sequence of events across the Walpurgis Night, expressing Erictho’s soliloquy through Seismos and the pygmies. Back in Faust’s present world, it is equally expressed through the

hastiness of the emperor to take Mephisto's advice, and Faust's final building project.

The increasingly problematic activity enacted by Faust comes to a head in Act V. As stated previously, the building of Faust's land offers the pinnacle of his efforts, and also the pinnacle of his moral dubiousness. That this final project should be an industrial one seems particularly significant, given how its visual cues of fire and construction seem to set the stage for Mephistopheles' impending claim on Faust's soul. In the beginning of Act V, the industrialisation of Faust's land is described by Baucis, who directly addresses the cost of progress:

Days in vain the navvies battered,
Pick and shovel, thud, thud.
Nights the little flames fluttered:
There next day a damn stood.
It cost human blood. At night
We heard the killing being done...
...He is godless. He desires
Our little house and grove of trees... (11123-8).

The excavation of Faust's land is more reminiscent of mining than of upraising of land, with fires reminiscent of Loutherboung's *Coalbrookdale at Night*, and Faust's actions appear from this perspective like an impenetrable tide, unseen except at the beginning and the end of construction. Faust's ambition, coloured this way, becomes highly suspect, particularly when Mephistopheles and his co-conspirators murder Baucis and Philemon, who had feared Faust's desire for their home. We see both sides of the dialectic in the Faust's developing world, and though Faust is ultimately saved, only a cheap distraction carried out by the angels on Mephistopheles allows it.

In addition, Faust's own recognition of the costs of his innovation is ambiguous. Jantz argues that, 'There is genuine guilt, for a genius is not and should not be above the moral law...But there is also genuine achievement, a noble transcendence of the care and despair of human shortcomings, an ultimate clarity on the problem of human purpose and destiny' (48). Yet this summary of Faust's skills and flaws relies heavily on the Faust's position not as a man, but as an abstract construct whose clarity is unsullied. It is a very Promethean position in which to imagine him, and must be imagined despite the many shortcomings Faust has displayed, in being distracted by Gretchen, and being careless of human cost as described by Baucis. Faust is clearly meant to be abstract in *Part II*, as has been established, but his abstractness does not separate him from his essential humanity or from the community he impacts; even when he has just begun to restart his life in the opening of *Part II*, he proclaimed, 'We desired to light the torch of life—and meet / An

overwhelming sea of fire... / In pain and joy we writhe in the hot glare, / Monstrous... We look / Through childish fingers at the hard to bear' (4719-4713). In addition to counting himself among the 'we', recipients of Prometheus's fire, he includes himself also in the fearful half-covered gaze mankind uses to look upon its failings. His use of 'monstrous' also anticipates Seismos's speech, again placing him far from the idealised acts of creation and engagement with Nature that we have seen Homunculus demonstrate.

This conflict of value judgements, however, is what brings Goethe's assessment of human progress to bear. By *widening* the contradictions between Faust's deeds and his ambitions, we are forced to confront once more the original point Goethe had expressed in both the terms of Faust's deal, and his own decision to raise Faust 'above human judgement'. As Faust announces this final project and describes its impact, which he foresees lasting generations beyond him, he asks that this last moment, 'Bide here... I enjoy the highest moment now in this, / My forefeeling of such a happiness' (11582-6). It is not even the accomplishment of building which heightens this moment for him, but the anticipation of it, such that even at this turning point, his striving has not ceased, and as such, he maintains the momentum that God had wagered on, and thereby earns his redemption. It is important at this point to remember that there was a difference between the moment that Faust wanted to pause and the moment that was part of the terms of agreement that he had made with Mephisto in *Part I*. It was decided between them that the moment when Faust lies 'on a bed of ease' is the point at which his wager was lost. Faust's momentary wish for time to pause, however, is nothing like that static state—Faust wants this moment to pause, because it is still full of action and potential. In this way, Goethe maintains Faust's heroism not only through the intervention of God, but also by Faust's own word, which stands in defiance of Mephisto's cynical entropic worldview. Faust's moment of ease occurs when he knows that man must now strive to survive in a new world wherein their struggle is not so much against nature, but against the difficulties they have created as a result of technological innovation. It is a simultaneous return to nature and an alienation from it, given that man must continue to strive to survive, a far more 'natural' dynamic than what Enlightenment notions of progress would suggest man's position in the world was, even when he had shaped nature to do at least a portion of his bidding.

Moreover, this state of 'not safe' speaks to an ambition that transcends the material; throughout the drama, Mephistopheles continually suggested that Faust rest on his laurels, providing material wealth and power with the intent to win the bet. Yet Faust's

ambition was ambition in and of itself. By understanding development to be his ultimate spiritual purpose, he stayed true to God's intentions for him. When this point is taken in tandem with Williams' observation that 'The Faust of the second part...is no longer an individual in a dramatic context but an emblematic figure whose epic experiences are not those of any single person but rather those of modern Western man...', *Part II*, in its drastic broadening of Faust's world and shift in both focus and outcome, becomes a broadly-reaching statement on modernity, in which Faust is not simply the instigator of widespread change, but part of the populace upon which he inflicts this change (*Goethe's Faust* 39). Moreover, that populace are not wholly under his control, and as such, are 'not safe'. Such is the nature of a Promethean myth arc, where men might be formed in his image, but are left to build and live freely, for better or worse, at the mercies of their own failings.

Within the transition to dialectic from sermon or tragedy, the issue of hubris that created the tragic drama in Marlowe's play gives way to the idea that the final vision, the reach of Faust's striving, is the cause of his redemption, rather than the cause of his damning. Goethe remained convinced that Faust should not be punished for striving, and shaped Faust's actions and decisions, particularly in regards to Mephistopheles, through a dialectic that strives to mediate and explore the value of each. However, his exploration of ambition changing the world reveals problems and ambiguities that result in development which perhaps indeed 'flies apart...pulls apart...starts too many flights, and does not end them, or cohere' (II: xi). Nonetheless, or perhaps as a result, Goethe captures the tumult and the sacrifice inherent in change, and moreover removes it from its religious setting, and in so doing begins to obliquely address the matter of industrialisation as a more complicated process than simply Man conquering Nature, but rather more Man choosing to strive at the risk of his own survival. While living through a period in history that is marked several times through by the dissolution of unity and the reorganisation of society around new means of production and economy, *Faust* emerges as a key narrative that provides a unified structure through which it is possible to better understand a fracturing modern state.

Contributing to an industrial myth

We have thus far seen Goethe's purpose and direction in writing *Faust* as both binding contemporary issues to the past and also altering a past myth to create a more suitable one for the present. His decisions regarding what to straightforwardly adapt and

what to change were motivated not only by his personal philosophical feelings about the modern condition, but also his understanding of cultural historiography and how history is processed often through mythic narratives. This is part of the reason, certainly, why his *Faust* remains such a significant contribution to world literature, when other adaptations from his time have fallen by the wayside. While Jantz was right to note Goethe's version reached well beyond it towards a larger contemplation of the human condition, his specific choices particularly in *Part II* could not have been written at an earlier period, and are more valuable because of that. Nevertheless, Goethe's historical perspective established that the myth of Faust remained necessary in modern society and culture, developing alongside history and informing our understanding of it. More importantly, he also distinguished his time period from previous epochs by asserting the place of Mephistopheles as a counterpoint to Faust, and the purpose of the Faust myth specifically as a Promethean creation myth. In doing so, he secularised the myth that would become a template for discussion of industrial development for Carlyle and Marx, and reasserted the continued importance of myth in the post-Enlightenment understanding of history and historical change. This final section will outline some of the most salient impacts Goethe's *Faust* had on writers in this study, as well as some of the Western use of the Faust myth in the following century.

Part of what makes Goethe's *Faust* significant is not just his contribution to world literature, but specifically to British literature, because he brought up the fundamental issues that would be reflected in greater detail and sooner in England than they would be in Germany. His distillation of the Faustian narrative as a myth template upon which to discuss problems that Britain would feel more quickly and radically during his writing of it would reach the right people to make its impact upon the British literary stage. Madame de Staël managed to raise his profile among French and British audiences when she published her own novel, *De l'Allemagne* in 1813. However, while she did summarize the contours of *Faust* within the novel, thereby bringing it to the public's awareness, her overall success was in introducing England and France to German Romanticism more than anything else. *Faust*, beyond De Stael's description, did not immediately gain much attention in Britain particularly except the translation of the *Fragment*, which was certainly met with some admiration, but not any wide circulation. However, it reached the Romantic poets in several stages and had a profound effect on a choice few of them. Shelley was particularly taken with it, and he and Coleridge attempted partial translations, while Byron shared a mutual admiration with Goethe, dedicating three of his poems to him, and Goethe himself

memorialized Byron after his death in the character of Euphorion in *Part II*, the son of Faust and Helen.¹⁷ Walter Scott and Carlyle were both great admirers of, as well as correspondents with Goethe, who discussed and exchanged books and tokens of appreciation. Scott pointed out that Germany had been a significant contributor to literature since the 1780s, while Matthew Lewis absorbed the German macabre sensibility and appreciation of folk tales during his travels there, resulting in his novel, *The Monk* (1796), which would make him infamous. Even while Byron was not hugely aware of Goethe as a figure, he was familiar with his works, including *Faust*, and clearly influenced by it in *Childe Harold* and *Manfred*. More importantly, he likely caught this enthusiasm from Shelley, who spoke very highly of Goethe's work, and encouraged his reading of it by sending him a translation in 1822 (*Letters from Percy Bysshe Shelley to Jane Clairmont* 85). It is notable also that Byron's work gained considerable popularity in Germany during this time as well, which spoke to a larger affinity between his brand of Romanticism and Goethe's.

Of great importance in the late decades of Goethe's life was Carlyle's correspondence with him, which was extensive and coloured on the whole by mutual warm regard that lasted until Goethe's death, and included tokens and literature exchanged regularly between them. Carlyle had initiated the correspondence with admiration for *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* and *Faust*, writing that, 'Four years ago when I read your Faust among the mountains of my native Scotland, I could not but fancy I might one day see you, and pour out before you, as before a father, the woes and wanderings of a heart whose mysteries you seemed so thoroughly to comprehend and could so beautifully represent' (*CLO* 24 June 1824). As will be discussed in Chapter Four, Carlyle felt a close kinship with Goethe's vision of Faust, particularly his frustration with his known disciplines and his desire to create. What followed was many years of generosity and paternal regard from Goethe, including Carlyle's gifting of his *The Life of Friedrich Schiller* and other works, and Goethe bestowing medals to be distributed to Carlyle and five of his friends, even going so far as to write a recommendation letter for Carlyle's application for a professorship at St. Andrews (Mahoney 200). As a result, Carlyle remained a stalwart supporter and endorser of Goethe, writing extensively on the potential value of German literature to the British in his early essays. Carlyle's association with Goethe occurred when Goethe was at the end of his life, and Carlyle's career was just beginning. As a result, he never thought of Goethe as anything but a calm, poetic thinker. This would have a

17 E.M. Butler outlined the relationship between the two authors as one of affinity and ambivalence, with Goethe identifying with, but disliking what he called Byron's 'hypochondria' (*Byron and Goethe* 52).

profound impact on Goethe's image in Britain after his death—as William Bruford observed, '[Carlyle's] conception of Goethe as an ethical and spiritual guide is to be found in one writer after another right down to the end of the century' (qtd. in Rose 188). Where early nineteenth-century Britain had found his spirituality blasphemous and immoral, mid- to late nineteenth-century writers who had left orthodox Christianity behind, or who believed in more radical forms of it, began to find solace in his works, as Carlyle had.

Regenia Gagnier has asserted that, towards the end of the nineteenth century, economic and aesthetic thought had moved from one of 'progress' to one of 'development' as part of the onset of consumer culture (226). As we have seen, however, that movement had been anticipated by Goethe in his conception of Faust's ambitions, and that the narrative of the Faustian bargain, as well as its antecedent in the form of Marxist ideology, was ready to gain ground. Goethe's legacy in this context is in the usefulness of his conception of Faust as modernity manifested increasingly in new and intrusive forms. In this way, we can begin to look forward to the most prominent presence of Faust in the early twentieth century, which Humphrey Jennings would have come across when thinking about western civilisation and industry. The most obvious revival of Faust appeared in 1918, when Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West* (1923) was released to scholarly distaste and popular success. After the vogue for German literature in the early nineteenth century had passed, Goethe's work had experienced mild but consistent attention from British audiences through various translations, including a widely recognised one by Bayard Taylor in 1870. The early twentieth century, however, saw it again come into vogue outside the borders of Germany. Numerous adaptations, musical settings and studies had been dedicated to the work in Germany throughout the late nineteenth- and early twentieth century. However, the legend of Faust itself became particularly relevant to Europe at large during the interwar years, driven in particular by Spengler's description of the West in his seminal work. There, western civilisation could be embodied in the form of a Faustian figure, at the end of his life, striving for further progress, but inevitably facing mortality. Revived interest in the legend was also specifically directed towards Goethe through his influence on Spengler's philosophy, and in England, new translations of the full two parts of *Faust*, were published by John Auster, accompanied by illustrations by Harry Clarke in 1925, and then by George Madison Priest in 1932.



Harry Clarke, 'Faust' (1925). The looming figure of Mephistopheles is far more traditional in Clarke's conception, perhaps indicating the more negative light the Faustian bargain was seen in during the early twentieth century. That negative reading of Faust's deal would be even more heavily underlined by Thomas Mann's 1943 novel, where the bargain made by the composer Leverkühn's soul for twenty-four years of genius represented the selling of Germany's soul to Hitler. Indeed, in the wake of the Nazi regime's rise and fall, the purely heroic reading of Faust would suffer heavily.

Spengler's use of the Faust myth was specifically Goethean and explicitly directed towards a modern, technological age that was now experiencing its twilight years. Spengler argued that the western world, designated Faustian in contrast to the Apollonian and Magian cultures of the classical world and early Judeo-Christian and Muslim civilisations, respectively, was at the end of its creative power, as evidenced by its shift from creating to consuming. He justifies this through Goethe's assertion of the Faustian need to strive, or as Spengler puts it, as the spirit of 'Becoming', which he ascribes also to Plato, and is encompassed by a statement by Goethe to Eckerman: 'The Godhead is effective in the living and not in the dead, in the becoming and the changing, not in the become and set-fast' (49fn). This is Spengler's justification of the diagnosis of the decline of the western world. Beyond being a direct diagnosis of consumer culture at large, it also concentrates on that more elusive character of Faust at the end of his life, during Goethe's *Part II*, when development became his central focus.

Goethe's contribution to the mythologizing of the modern condition can be expressed most simply as *risk*. Faust, when first adapted from quasi-historical figure into the form we know from the Spies *Historia*, made a pact with the devil for knowledge and material enjoyment, and the result of that pact was a venture into risky behaviour. The tension and appeal of the legend came from the temptation Faust faced, and the vicarious thrill the audience could feel at his deeds while remaining safely within the confines of their faith. Marlowe transformed that temptation into a genuine tragedy, making its reward of intellectual fulfilment a noble endeavour even when the cost was, again, inevitable damnation. Goethe, however, by making Faust's damnation potentially avoidable, turned that inevitability into a calculated risk taken on by Faust. In doing so he exploded the potential of the myth into a contemplation of the inherent risk of modern innovation. Goethe's belief in the strength and perfection of classical forms could not hold up to the increasing fragmentation of art and society, and *Faust* reflects this transition by recalling that classicism and then bidding it fade back to its underworld; Faust's wish for the unification the dichotomous world from which he originated, the impulse to negotiate the space between opposing poles through the dialectic between the two, transforms instead into not so much a unity as the clamouring many-faceted cycle of progress wherein Faust's ambition as a means to an end is his salvation, but very little that he leaves is morally resolved. If anything, it is in greater chaos than before, but the light that shines on it is a shade brighter with the hope that it is headed towards a better future. Faust's purpose is served by the destruction and creation of a land that is 'free and active', but the risk of 'not safe' will always accompany the nature of his ambition.

This philosophical specificity arguably does not possess the flexibility that one might ordinarily expect from a myth. However, Goethe's rendition remains one on the strength of how he re-characterised Faust's struggle with ambition and chose to have Faust make bets with the devil, rather than pacts. They shouldn't change as a result of anything other than human nature. In fairness, we do not retain the entirety of Goethe's *Faust* the way we can folktales and creation myths, or even the Prometheus myth—as a work of literature, it is too complex and too ambiguous to be boiled down to its essentials in the same way. However, it captures the modern sensibility that, instead of bargaining with the devil, wagers with him in the belief that he can be beaten. Does this mean that sanctity has somehow been devalued, reduced to the material? Again, Goethe's optimism seems to win out; however, in reframing *Faust* to pose such a question, he opened the floor to interpreters of modernity, and more specifically, industrialisation, through establishing the

vocabulary of a mythic wager.

It would take several decades before England at large would be exposed to this side of Goethe's work, but from his viewpoint, they were in part living this myth perhaps more than Germany was. His earlier influence on contemporary British Romantic poets, moreover, cannot be discounted, because it would be from that earlier interest that collectively, perspectives on Prometheus would emerge, and Promethean themes that would make their way not only into *Faust*, as we have seen, but also into Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Moreover, the more indelible marks that he made upon individual British writers would have a profound impact on how they began to formulate their own myths. Through his early dalliances with German Romanticism, he helped bring the raw power of myth into the British literary consciousness through the Romantic poets of the nineteenth century, and his philosophical perspective would come to shape Thomas Carlyle's own efforts towards interpreting what he saw in the modern condition. Goethe's reading of Prometheus into the process of socio-political development and physical building of national infrastructure chronologically and thematically fits as a bridge between earlier uses of the classical myth to describe scientific and political revolutions and its role within British industrialisation, which would be further corroborated—and further problematized—by *Frankenstein*.

III. 'Godlike in ruin': The limitations of man and the modern Prometheus

Goethe's reading of a folk myth in *Faust I* and *II* connected the myth of Faust to the large-scale socio-political changes taking place across Western Europe, shifting the legend's source of anxiety from religious instability to political and technological upheaval. Nevertheless, Faust remains a medieval tale, and Goethe's resurrection was only the most visible and well-assembled effort in a more widespread rediscovery of the legend and recognition of its resonance in a changing world. His effect in this study particularly will be clearest when addressing Carlyle, who took on and adapted many of Goethe's ideas about history and development. More immediately, his incorporation of Promethean ideas is more significant, because British authors, particularly the Shelleys and Byron, all wrote versions of the myth themselves. Of these adaptations of the Prometheus myth, however, this chapter will centre around Mary Shelley's modernisation of the story, because it questions the assumption that Goethe and many of her peers had made about the eventual triumph and justification of a human Promethean hero. By exploring the ways in which *Frankenstein* (1818) undermines and critiques the Promethean hero, I will pose the novel as a counterpoint to Goethe's *Faust*, so that when we move on to directly considering the creation of an industrial myth, both narratives become useful as alternately optimistic and pessimistic ways of interpreting the industrial development that Marx and Carlyle observed in the nineteenth century.

Frankenstein, particularly in the guise of its subtitle, *The Modern Prometheus*, offers a counterpoint to Goethe's fundamental political conservatism and heroic optimism. It gestures back, as Goethe did, to the Renaissance past and the more recent past of the mid-eighteenth century, and also projects further into the modern period by envisioning the future consequences of Frankenstein's innovation as a persisting, and indeed developing, situation. George Levine has argued that '[*Frankenstein*]'s modernity lies in its transformation of fantasy and traditional Christian and pagan myths into unremitting secularity, into the myth of mankind as it must work within the limits of the visible, physical world', but I will argue that secularity in itself explains only one part of the usefulness of the Frankenstein myth to reading the Industrial Revolution (6-7). Shelley does not criticise the industrial ambition of her generation, but rather the Enlightenment conceit that mankind, even as a whole, has control over the results of such ambition, or the wisdom to cope well with the unexpected. She gestures towards the proliferation of

technology through the Monster's demand for a wife, and further destabilises the Christian roles the Monster envisions himself and his creator as occupying. This expands and complicates the Faustian premise of the cost of innovation by giving autonomy to the 'machines', both social and technological, that are produced by human development. In this way, *Faust* and *Frankenstein* operate on much the same central premises of freedom and cost as determined by their Promethean origins. However, while Goethe analyses the metaphysical strengths and weaknesses of the modern condition and ultimately leans towards the belief that striving and development are worth their costs, Shelley tackles, as Levine asserts, the physicality of it in both its current effects and its reading of human nature. In doing so, she radically changes the outcome of the myth, and offers a narrative that would prove more directly applicable to contemporary industrial conditions than Goethe's distant idealism.

Sourcing and deconstructing Prometheus

As we have already seen, Goethe's brief poem 'Prometheus' touched on the central themes that he would address in the crafting of Faust:

Here sit I, forming Men
 After my image;
 A race, to be equal to me,
 To suffer, to weep,
 To glory and to delight themselves,
 And you to scorn,
 As I! (51-57)

Even in this early hymn, Goethe gestures towards Faust's final confident statement that man's best condition is to live not safely, but freely and actively. The poem also implies the role of human innovation in this ambition for freedom and exploration—earlier in the poem, Prometheus emphasises that he has become self-sufficient, and has no need for the worship that Zeus relies upon. Goethe uses Aeschylus's reading of Prometheus as a craftsman to explain how he is able to sustain his freedom, thereby proving his (and mankind's) independence from the gods through material development. He makes the same connection between technology and liberty that Prometheus as a figurehead of revolution had come to embody, as explored in Chapter One. Furthermore, as we have seen, Prometheus is a transcendental force insofar as he is divine, but he chooses to align with his creations, which arguably anticipates the collaborative efforts of Faust with Mephistopheles, albeit in a far more altruistic context. Prometheus's defiance is not against

his maker, but rather against a friend who has betrayed him, and so it is this very sense of the equality of men, or rather the ability of men to rise towards the powers of the gods, which Goethe valorises in both this short poem and in *Faust*, and which is central to the wider eighteenth-century use of Promethean references. Goethe confirms this by choosing that the deciding factor for Faust's salvation was his continued restlessness and ambition, rather than the actions he took as a result of such restlessness. Prometheus' vision and defiance, as a model for how he shaped man 'After my image', therefore encompasses both the boundlessness of possibility in mankind and the sanctity of continually striving to reach higher for those possibilities.

In *Frankenstein*, by contrast, we see the association of the old Promethean myth with unaided human endeavour. There is nothing of the divine in Frankenstein, though he presumes as such when he sets out to create life. Inspired by occult texts and modern science, he employs modern technological means through Shelley's use of the electrical discoveries being made by Franklin and the Italian scientist, Galvani, the latter having become well known for animating dead tissue by running electricity through it. Shelley's engagement with these discoveries demonstrates her knowledge and interest in the scientific work of her time, and arguably creates a narrative that is more suited to reading the Industrial Revolution as well as the French Revolution. But first, in exploring how *Frankenstein* begins to interrogate the Romantic figure of Prometheus, we must first look at Shelley's experience with that figure in the works of her predecessors and contemporaries, and establish the central points of resonance and contention between them.

Mary Shelley's biography has been the subject of scrutiny for the purposes of elevating and denigrating her work in equal measure, but I will argue that her letters and journals inform us most relevantly of her outlying position among a host of contemporaries who held more Goethean views on science and technology. It is worth appreciating the wealth of aesthetic experience, both through literature and travel, which she gained during her younger years, particularly over the course of her writing of *Frankenstein*. These would inform the way in which the novel grew from both the ideologies she was exposed to and the natural and political environments she would encounter outside her family. Mary Godwin was born in 1797 to well-known radicals William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, who married, despite their opposition to the institution of marriage, for the sake of their child's legitimacy (Reiger xii). Though Mary would only know her father, both parents and their ideologies would have a profound

impact on their daughter's approach to philosophy and to literature, spurred on by her intensive reading of their works throughout her life. Godwin's most influential work, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), offered an inspiring and powerful argument for libertarian anarchy, while Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) gained her an enduring fame and reputation very quickly after its publishing. Mary, along with her half-sisters, Fanny and Claire, were brought up by Godwin, and Godwin's second wife, and she grew up exposed not only to her mother's legacy and Godwin's work, but a very large number of the day's intellectuals who came to the house to pay homage to Godwin and to discuss science unencumbered by conventional morality (Knellwolf 10). She was, in this way, primed from an early age to participate in dialogue on philosophy and science with her peers, which would manifest in her extensive and meticulous reading lists. Some of these sources particularly illuminate how *Frankenstein* subverted or otherwise altered the Prometheus story noticeably enough to form a new and distinct mythic narrative.

The circumstances of the conceiving of the Frankenstein tale itself are equally filled with both significant reading and significant environmental events of which the novel would bear traces, particularly in the contrasts between social and physical conditions. The summer of 1816 would become famous and infamous for the recollection of it Mary would recount in the second edition of *Frankenstein*, wherein she related (somewhat inaccurately) the ghost story contest held between her companions. Through the early tempestuous years of development and short-lived but intensive collaboration with Percy Shelley, what is most materially apparent is Mary Shelley's absorption of the Romantic aesthetic and ideologies of her husband and father. What becomes clear when comparing Mary Shelley's work to those of her family members and her contemporaries is that she was intent upon questioning the individual culpability and frailty of human beings, and how that incurred consequences in the present, rather than looking towards a utopian future. Her engagement with her husband's work, as well as that of her father and peers, was from a stance of active participation in many of the larger Romantic considerations of the power of nature and the perfectibility of mankind, but questioned much of the idealism that characterised Romantic work by pulling it back down towards the observable world. In this way, we can see how her vision might align with what Marx and Carlyle would see around them, rather than what they would foresee. I will therefore address works of Godwin, Percy Shelley, and, briefly, Milton, in recognition of *Paradise Lost's* importance within *Frankenstein*, as an introduction to Mary Shelley's contrasting approach to human

nature and idealism.

William Godwin is a useful place to start when piecing together the inspiration for *Frankenstein*, both in terms of the plots of his novels, and his use of electricity in his rhetoric. As has been pointed out by previous critics, *Frankenstein* shares many similarities in storylines with some of his novels, which will be addressed further; in addition, however, some of her interest in electricity can also be traced to him.¹⁸ Beyond describing the body as a machine, as many Enlightenment philosophers had done, Godwin used electricity to illustrate the transmission of revolutionary ideas and politics.¹⁹ He also made the general connection between technological and political revolutions at this time, as Erasmus Darwin and Priestley had done:

We touch each other...when they wait the stroke of an electrical machine, and the spark spreads along man to man. It is this that we have our feelings in common at a theatrical representative and at a public dinner, that indignation is communicated, and patriotism become irresistible (6).

This portrayal of transmission through electricity in *Thoughts of Man* (1831) echoes the occult writings of Agrippa, who had written on the ‘Soothsayings of Flashes and Lightnings’ in *The Philosophy of Natural Magic* (1533). Godwin makes use of the alchemical text by evoking the fervour of belief rallied at a ‘theatrical representative’ or ‘public dinner’, which speaks of lightning as a means of communication from the heavens, presaging ‘monstrous, prodigious and wondrous things’ (179). Agrippa, clearly a familiar name in Godwin’s household, would come to have an even greater influence upon Mary, whose protagonist, Victor Frankenstein, discovers his passion for science in the alchemist’s assertion of the ability of certain herbs to ‘recover life’ (Agrippa 127). While Percy Shelley would devote his focus purely to the Promethean heroism of bringing fire and hope, Godwin’s influence can be felt in both Shelley’s scientific interests and in key components of the narrative premise of *Frankenstein*, particularly through his novels *Things as They Are; or The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794) and *St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century* (1799). While it is commonly known that the creation of the Monster was in part inspired by the work of Galvani, the Promethean narrative surrounding that technological innovation can

18 A. D. Harvey has specifically discussed *Caleb Williams*’ similarity, while Burton R. Pollin points out that aryl appeared so indebted to Godwin that the Victorian critic George Gilfillan ‘enrolled her in the “Godwin school”’ (99).

19 Yolton discusses the use of the ‘clockwork man’ in Cartesian debates at length in his chapter ‘The Automatic Man’ in *Thinking Matter: Materialism in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (1983). Even earlier discussions on this same subject are also explored in Otto Mayr’s *Authority, Liberty, and Automatic Machinery in Early Modern Culture* (Johns Hopkins UP: 1989).

in part be traced to Godwin as well.

St. Leon, a sixteenth century tale used alchemical science as the foundation of a philosophical deconstruction of technology's role in society. Set during the Reformation, St. Leon is a knight transformed into alchemist after having been gifted the philosopher's stone. Though he sets out to do good with his power and gains immortality through the elixir the stone creates, the superstitious society around him ostracises rather than welcomes him, and he is rejected by his family. The novel's setting displays strong Gothic roots which *Frankenstein* would emulate, as well as offering a similar well-meaning protagonist who wields extraordinary power and hopes to do good with it, but instead sows his own ruin. *Caleb Williams* also can be seen to have an impact on *Frankenstein's* narrative arc, as it spins out a story of pursuit between a victim and perpetrator of a crime that creates confusion as to who is actually pursued and pursuer. In it, the apparently well-meaning and reserved aristocrat Falkland is revealed to have secretly been guilty of murder. He chases Caleb Williams, his former employee and accuser, across the country, and Caleb suffers persecution in multiple circumstances and settings as a result, while Falkland's motivations become increasingly unclear. The unending persecution experienced by Caleb, which opens the narrative, appear to have inspired Victor Frankenstein's lament of his sufferings:

I have been a mark for the vigilance of tyranny, and I could not escape. My fairest prospects have been blasted. My enemy has shown himself inaccessible to intreaties and untired in persecution. My fame, as well as my happiness, has become his victim (1).

A.D. Harvey has pointed it out that the two novels are similar both in regards to this structure and to the 'crucial symbiotic relationship' between the pursuer and pursued, which is founded on a father-son relationship, but then gets tangled by rejection and persecution (24). In building this relationship, *Caleb Williams* elaborated upon and dramatized the treatise Godwin had set forth in his *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and its Influence on Morals and Happiness* (1793). *Political Justice* had a strong strain of Prometheanism in it, best exemplified by Godwin's belief in the 'perfectibility of Man' (43). It also placed the burden upon society to instil future generations with the knowledge and morals that would move them towards this greater perfection. In this way, Godwin's philosophy appears to be dependent upon the revolutionary and progressive power embodied by the divinity of Prometheus present in mankind. Without such reform, we instead, 'instil into the [children] the vices of a tyrant', which we see in *Caleb Williams* being inflicted upon Caleb by the father figure, Falkland (17). By presenting the destruction of his prospects

and reputation as a result specifically of ‘the vigilance of tyranny’, Godwin accuses not the characters involved for their misdeeds, but rather the system which perpetuates tyrannical behaviour in both innocent and guilty parties. Therefore, Godwin’s own description of the novel in Bentley’s 1832 reprint, as ‘a series of adventures of flight and pursuit; the fugitive in perpetual apprehension of being overwhelmed with the worst calamities, and the pursuer, by his ingenuity and resources’ (1), seems to be a perfect narrative template for the pursuit between man and Monster in *Frankenstein*.

The responsibility of society in shaping morality and personal choices, as opposed to individual predisposition or nature, would become a central point of contention between his works and Mary’s. Frankenstein’s recounting of his story to the explorer, Walton, is certainly similar as a narrative of pursuit, once the Monster is created and Frankenstein abandons him in horror, but Frankenstein’s experiences leading up to the Monster’s creation are very different. After a peaceful childhood, Frankenstein becomes obsessed with creating life against the advice of one of his educators and in opposition to what his upbringing—a rational and civil Godwinian one—should have led him towards. The purpose of *Caleb Williams* as a primarily social critique within the model presented by *Political Justice* is diverted in *Frankenstein* into a broader consideration of human nature within its natural environment, as well as within society. Victor Frankenstein, while arguably ‘a latter-day Godwinian’ for his efforts to create a new and improved mankind unburdened by the systematised mistakes of his society, is also a man morally crippled by his own obsession and self-absorption (Sterrenburg 148). It is this, more than society’s expectations or constraints, which leads to his downfall. *Frankenstein* departs from both of Godwin’s novels by addressing Frankenstein’s responsibility for his actions, which Godwin did not consider for his characters. Where Caleb Williams is and remains blameless at the end of his novel, and St. Leon is held back by society rather than his own personal limitations, Shelley creates a situation wherein both society and the man are not without blame, and each create and perpetuate the other’s suffering. Godwin hints at this when Caleb laments that he has, in bringing accusations down upon Falkland in order to exonerate himself, become part of the system of tyranny he opposed, such that ‘the same tyranny and wanton oppression become the inheritance of his successor’ (251). However, Godwin’s critique, as it was in *Political Justice*, remains focused on social institutions ‘by which the mind is advanced towards a state of perfection’ (19). The Rousseauian ‘hitherto unprejudiced mind’ with which Godwin believed human life began allowed him to place all responsibility for personal moral health upon the social structures surrounding the

individual (19). As a result, Caleb Williams retains a form of innocence throughout the novel, such that when his pursuer, the murderer Mr Falkland of whose deeds Williams has been accused, offers clemency in exchange for taking the blame for his crimes, Williams refuses to 'be driven to an act repugnant to all reason, integrity, and justice' (393).

Where Godwin has confidence in the limitless ability of man to improve himself and move society towards a utopian existence, Shelley questions the very source of that progress. For example, a similar exchange to the one between Caleb Williams and Mr Falkland takes place between Frankenstein and the Monster, when they parlay in the Alps. The Monster offers to leave Frankenstein alone in exchange for a wife—yet this exchange, in contrast with that in Caleb Williams, results in a very different feeling towards the supposed protagonist. Williams' monologue is stalwart; an act of bravery in the face of an oppressor, and his refusal is posed with generosity: 'You are determined to be for ever my enemy. I have in no degree deserved this eternal abhorrence. I have always esteemed and pitied you...Even at present I cherish no vengeance against you.' (392-3). Frankenstein, by contrast, delivers his refusal to capitulate with savagery/rage:

Your threats cannot move me to do act of wickedness; but they confirm me in a resolution of not creating you companion in vice. Shall I, in cool blood, set loose upon the earth a daemon whose delight is in death and wretchedness. Begone! I am firm, and words will only exasperate my rage (165).

Ultimately, it is self-interest and anger, not a sense of justice or morality, that motivates Frankenstein, and as such his refusal is part of the larger destabilisation of the expected roles of hero and villain, creator and created. In this way, Mary's work distinguishes itself from those of her predecessors and contemporaries by rejecting the safety of the endless metaphysical potential of mankind. She presented a story that complemented Goethe's ambivalence by offering different, yet still related concerns about technological innovation, and in doing so created a myth narrative that was perhaps more suited to what would become commonly diagnosed as an increasingly materialistic age.

By contrast, Percy Bysshe Shelley's influence on *Frankenstein* is identifiable through Mary's humanising of the Prometheus myth where Percy's *Prometheus Unbound* had, if anything, dehumanised it even further. Much more aligned with Godwin and Goethe's work than his wife's, Percy's influence on Mary's work is best traced to his heavy-handed approach to editing her novel. He was involved in the writing of *Frankenstein* to the point where some critics have discounted Mary's work entirely in favour of the weight of Percy's

hand upon the manuscript.²⁰ Mary claimed in her preface to the second edition in 1835 to have owed little to Percy for the *Frankenstein* manuscript, but surviving manuscripts show constant marginalia that was mostly accepted by Mary, pointing to him having a profound effect on it (*Frankenstein* xvii). On the other hand, Harriet Hustis argues that while Mary has been accused of overly florid language, Percy can be traced to some of it. As a result, however, Mary has been blamed for not refusing Percy's editing. This seems to display some blindness on the part of her critics, however, rather than any substantial critique of Mary's work. Either way, Percy's influence cannot be discounted, but it is also helpful to note that while his and Mary's reading lists and interests overlapped heavily, their two interpretations of the Prometheus myth could not be more different. As we can already begin to see, even had his editing been intrusive, Mary's own take on the Romantic idealism expressed by Godwin and developed by Percy in the form of *Prometheus Unbound* vastly departs from his belief in it.

Shared between them was clear interest in the modernisation of the Prometheus myth, and in particular part of the means by which Percy envisioned it:

He followed certain classical authorities in figuring Saturn as the good principle, Jupiter the usurper evil one, and Prometheus as the regenerator, who, unable to bring mankind back to primitive innocence, used knowledge as a weapon to defeat evil, by leading mankind beyond the state wherein they are sinless through ignorance, so that in which they are virtuous through wisdom ('Mrs. Shelley's Note on Prometheus Unbound', Zillman 684-5).

Even if the ideology Percy presents did not ring true to Mary's conception of Prometheus, or of specifically mankind, her understanding of myth as an essential part of expressing these ideas was certainly a part of their shared development as writers. They worked from the same basic character, using the characterisation of Prometheus developed by Aeschylus, who took care to make pity for the human race and acceptance of their flaws a motivation for Prometheus's defiance, rather than characterising the action as an ego-driven trick, as Hesiod's telling had presented it.

As was noted by some of Percy's contemporary critics, *Prometheus Unbound* follows more directly in the footsteps of Goethe; stylistically, he was creating a metaphysical and profoundly epic expression of myth very much in line with the abstraction and internalised movement and drama of *Faust, Part II*. The similarities did not go unnoticed—Zillman marks Julian Schmidt as the first to make the comparison in 1852, with several more to

²⁰ Most famously, Harold Bloom regarded the novel as an inferior and simplified Romantic text ("Afterword" to Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (New York: Signet, 1972)); while David Ketterer has commented upon Shelley's notebooks as indication that Percy contributed roughly six percent of the 1818 draft's material and a significant portion of the scientific knowledge (568).

follow in the coming decades, with J.M. Brown remarking in 1905 on, ‘the relations of the supernatural to the natural, the divine and demonic to the human’ (67). The basis for comparison is not surprising, given both the aesthetic and thematic similarities between the two; however, Percy’s interpretation of the Prometheus myth feels even more at home with Goethe’s earlier hymn rather than his magnum opus, given its far less ambiguous treatment of its titular character. Where *Faust* is heavy with the burden of his purpose and the consequences of that purpose, Percy’s depiction of the heroic conquering of tyranny doesn’t question Prometheus’s own morality or his purity of purpose, making his ascension a smooth and fully supported endeavour when Zeus is unseated by prophecy and by an even higher power. Percy’s central goal was to portray, as Carl Grabo has eloquently stated, ‘the rebel and heretic defying tyranny, whether secular or divine and, though suffering torments, remaining master of his soul and in his steadfastness giving assurance of the tyrant’s ultimate overthrow’ (28).

Prometheus Unbound as a portrait of the idealised poet elevates the aspirations of mankind towards the gods, a sentiment that had been shared by Byron in his own take on Prometheus, in which Prometheus tells Zeus, ‘Like thee, Man is in part divine’ (264). Though the journey of Prometheus in Percy’s rendition is individual, the larger direction of the god’s path is collective. As he states in the Preface, ‘My purpose has hitherto been simply to familiarise the highly refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence’ (124). This introduction is consistent with his poetic and political intent as articulated in *Defence of Poetry* (1821), in which poets:

...measure the circumference and sound the depths of human nature with a comprehensive and all-penetrating spirit, and they are themselves perhaps the most sincerely astonished at its manifestations; for it is less their spirit than the spirit of the age (90).

As the arbiters of their society’s history and understanding of the world, he argues that poets are the ‘unacknowledged legislators of the world’ (90). We can relate this to Godwin in his description of the ‘idealisms’ of morals, wherein the social ideology that he seeks to teach in *Prometheus Unbound* leads to the betterment of humanity as a whole. Despite not intending *Prometheus Unbound* for a particularly wide audience, as evidenced by the ‘select classes’ he mentions, Percy, as a poet, imagined himself and his poem as reaching out to other poets to disseminate betterment into society. Furthermore, he envisioned Prometheus’s ascendancy as an achievable goal, an allegory for mankind choosing to throw off the trappings of a society that has moulded them to perpetuate tyranny. This is a far more Godwinian reading of Prometheus, stripping him of any Faustian darkness, such that

his suffering is only the suffering of the people under tyranny, and remains ‘as ever firm, not proud’ (I.i.337). There is no room for hubris to get involved, nor is there any doubt as to Prometheus’s motive or ability to carry through his vision of a free world. The poem is a deeply political transformative work, envisioning a level of freedom well beyond the sympathies of his critics, to the point where Percy created a political and religious doctrine in a bid for complete liberty: ‘And behold, thrones were kingless, and men walked / One with the other even as spirits do...Nor more inscribed, as o’er the gates of hell / “All hope abandon, ye who enter here”’ (III.iv.131-36). By invoking Dante, Percy treats the act of Prometheus’s ascension as the dissolution of evil and the emancipation of humanity in a paradoxical loss of the structures that bred inequality and fear, so as to better cultivate an eternal existence ruled by ‘Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom and Endurance’ (IV.562). He closes the poem not actually through closure, but by opening the world Prometheus has freed into a truer and more united beginning.

On the lyric drama, Mary remarked, ‘The prominent feature of Shelley’s theory of the destiny of the human species was, that evil is not inherent in the system of the creation, but an accident that might be expelled...Shelley believed that mankind had only to will that there would be no evil, and there would be none’ (‘Mrs. Shelley’s Note’, Zillman 684). It is clear, just as Percy had only offered lukewarm endorsement in his preface to *Frankenstein*, that this was not a conviction that they shared. Mary’s assessment was also somewhat unfair; Percy’s acknowledgement of the difficulty of the poet’s journey is part of what made his conception of Prometheus such a heroic one. However, Percy not only incorporated the setbacks and despair engendered by the French Revolution, but also pressed forward with the Enlightenment assertion that wisdom is still the key to progression. It is far clearer in his work than in Mary’s that the revolutionary spirit, particularly in the form of human inventiveness and ingenuity, is not an enemy of mankind’s spiritual life. Rather it is the temptation to abuse power when it has been gained that is the downfall—an ambition that Prometheus explicitly lacks. In this way, Percy retains the essential divinity that the transcendent man can eventually achieve through poetic vision; likewise, Mary (who was biologically unable to access such exclusively masculine heroic power) expressed sincere doubts about the possibility of such achievement.²¹

21 This touches upon the larger movement of feminist readings of Mary Shelley (including Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s *The Madwoman in the Attic: the woman writer and the nineteenth-century literary imagination* (London : Yale University Press, 2000); Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley and Jane Austen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); and Anne K. Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* (New York and London: Routledge, 1988)) which have been largely responsible for the reconsideration of *Frankenstein* as a serious part of the literary

Even in the first published edition of *Frankenstein*, for which Percy had written the preface, it was clear that he did not wholly agree with his wife's work. Ideologically, she had moved away from him, and in many key ways, away from Romanticism at its most liberated. In the preface he narrates from her point of view the shared task decided upon between Mary and her companions in Geneva in 1816, and comments that the novel provides 'exhibition of the amiableness of domestic affection, and the excellence of universal virtue' (7). It is possible he was trying to defend her and perhaps present the novel as more accessible to a wide audience, given that he also attempts to separate Mary from the beliefs and behaviours of the characters by stating that they 'are by no means to be conceived as existing always in my own conviction' (7). However, this does not outweigh the fact that the description he offers of Mary's goals is inaccurate at best, and bizarrely misleading at worst. The imposition of 'universal virtue' upon mankind seems to be the antithesis of what Mary wished to present.

In this regard, the divinity that Percy ascribes to humanity and which Mary puts aside forms the hinge-point between Percy's idealistic interpretation and Mary's cautionary one. Where Percy could envision a god having both pity for humanity and the capacity to create for them a truly progressive form of freedom, Mary limited herself to a human being who is unable to take responsibility for what he has created, and furthermore creates a Monster who wishes to have pity for humanity, but cannot because of its ill treatment of him. She makes the distinction that while an ancient Prometheus could perhaps create a vision that Percy foresaw, a modern Prometheus, bound by human nature, would prove far less susceptible to positive change than Percy might imagine. Moreover, those same flaws would be passed on to his own creations through their mis-education and neglect. As Allan K. Hunter suggests, "The narrative effect "to curdle the blood" (195) that Shelley hoped to achieve is realised as the result of scientific work that removed man from his religiously exalted position and placed him, squarely within the mechanism of natural laws' (142). Shelley's conception of the Promethean man tied down to a present or otherwise observable, rather than imaginable, moment, created a myth that could be ascribed to the way things were, thus creating an important contrast (as the Hammonds would do in their histories) between *what was* and *what should have been*.

canon. While I will not delve deeply into a specifically feminist critique, I will note that, here and elsewhere, Shelley's great strength rests in her ability to resist the dominant model of the Romantic hero, and instead offer a more 'practical' interpretation of a modern Prometheus. A feminist critique could very persuasively argue that the significance of *Frankenstein* to modern mythology is in part due to Shelley's critical perspective upon the hubris of the heroes conceived by the male Romantic poets.

Failures of education through *Paradise Lost*

Finally, Mary's use of *Paradise Lost* (1667) demonstrates key ways in which Shelley continued to engage with the idealism presented by her family members, this time through a secondary piece of literature that is a myth in its own right. She establishes the way in which Frankenstein and his creation have a far more problematic relationship than that between Prometheus and mankind. This is both represented by the roles from *Paradise Lost* they attempt to play, and also the way in which Frankenstein leaves the Monster to learn from *Paradise Lost* while alone in the wilderness. *Paradise Lost* therefore becomes representative of an imagined reality of clear relationships between creators and progeny that Mary challenges. Simultaneously, it also acts as a learning tool within the narrative which is unable to adequately teach the principles of morality and goodness that Godwin claims in *Political Justice* can be found in literature. In this way, we can begin to see not only how Mary was engaging with the body of literature that preceded and was contemporary to her, but also how those influences more directly interact with the Faust myth. The creation of the Monster is as violent and sudden as Faust's upraising of his land from the sea, and is an antithesis to Homunculus' victorious, pure Becoming. The Monster's creation is an uncontrolled birth of an untested technology, a human that is also a product of industry. As a result, the devilish and human aspects of Faust and Mephistopheles resolve into a messy, flawed example of humanity shared by one too many bodies, each of whom are incapable of fitting into a mythic history like Milton's. The illuminating power of inspired literature, I will argue in this section, cannot, in Mary's mind, negotiate the modern condition if it exists only in expectation of an ideal, which is demonstrated through the engagement with Godwinian ideas via Milton's myth. Moreover, past narratives of supernatural powers no longer describe the technological present, leaving the future unpredictable, and the present in the throes of an epochal change.

Milton was a significant presence in Mary's reading over the course of *Frankenstein's* creation, to the point where she notes in her journal that Percy was reading Milton aloud while she edited her novel.²² Her use of *Paradise Lost*, however, differs from her engagement with *Caleb Williams* or Percy's drafting of *Prometheus Unbound*; rather than utilising it in the structuring or narrative of the novel itself, she places Milton's work within reach of the characters. This meant that Mary's engagement with Milton manifested in how

²² On 17-22 November, 1816, Mary reports that 'S. reads Paradise Lost aloud', among other comments, and on several occasions in that same time period, she is also writing: 'He reads Paradise Lost—aloud in the evening—I work' (*JMS* 146).

the characters read *Paradise Lost* and learned from it. This allowed her to tackle two subjects at once: by letting the Monster cast himself into the roles of Adam and Lucifer, she destabilised the boundaries between conventional good and evil, echoing Milton's own heroic framing of Lucifer. Secondly, however, she also arguably undermined Milton's myth as an acceptable narrative from which to learn. Leslie Tannenbaum argues that Mary invoked Milton in order to:

...emphasize important differences and in order to penetrate the self-delusions that are masked by narrative point of view, thereby reinterpreting the Christian myth of the Fall as a collapse into subjectivity and revealing the world created by her modern Prometheus to be a degenerate version of the universe envisioned by Milton (102).

The delusions of Frankenstein are certainly a massive part of the dissembling of the Romantic hero that Percy envisioned. This also, however, points to the problem of education: learned behaviour, in addition to human nature. The Monster must learn from *Paradise Lost* in order to situate himself in the world, but the world described in *Paradise Lost* is limited, and the Monster can only identify himself in a limited number of roles. *Paradise Lost* is the Monster's first and only source of information on human history and human nature, and as such is his only point of reference in excavating the meaning of his own existence. We learn this from the Monster in the most philosophically rich section of the novel, when Mary gives the Monster his own voice to tell from the beginning what he experienced, having been created and then summarily abandoned by Frankenstein. Created without a personal or natural history, the Monster recounts the agony of having no known point of origin, no sense of place or belonging: 'But where were my friends and relations? No father had watched my infant days... From my earliest remembrance I had been as I then was in height and proportion...What was I?' (117). The prominence of nurture over nature in this formation of the Monster seems also somewhat reminiscent of Godwin's assertion that society's rules were what determined much of its children's moral frailties.

It also suggests more strongly a Lockean figuring of the *tabula rasa*, however, given the Monster's physical learning through the binary of pleasure and pain, distinguishing her figuring of development from Godwin's as far more materialist. After wandering through the Alps, the Monster is able to procure a copy of *Paradise Lost* that a traveller had presumably cast aside, along with Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther* and Plutarch's *Lives*. As a result, we are immediately able to trace the patterns of the Monster's thoughts through these works: most visibly, his expression of this suffering and his experience in life is drawn up in his mind in Miltonian terms, so that he can only understand himself through how he

relates to the roles of Adam or Lucifer, in counterpoint to Frankenstein's role as his creator. Having found comparable and more appealing expressions of Adam and Eve in the young siblings he encounters, however, we can also see his transition towards the part of Satan. Satan's own soliloquy in Book IV of *Paradise Lost* in part is as follows:

O had his powerful Destiny ordain'd
 Me some inferiour Angel, I had stood
 Then happie; no unbounded hope had rais'd
 Ambition. Yet why not? som other Power
 As great might have aspir'd, and me though mean
 Drawn to his part; but other Powers as great
 Fell not, but stand unshak'n, from within
 Or from without, to all temptations arm'd.
 Hadst thou the same free Will and Power to stand?
 Thou hadst: whom hast thou then or what to accuse,
 But Heav'ns free Love dealt equally to all?
 Be then his Love accurst, since love or hate,
 To me alike, it deals eternal woe (58-70).

Satan's reasoning and rejection of God can be seen in the Monster's refusal to take the blame which Frankenstein throws at him, as well as his sense of worth in comparison to humanity. The Monster knows himself to be stronger and more resilient than the parts he was created from, and so his position as an outcast galls him as it did Lucifer, causing him to turn from one who 'was benevolent' to one who asserts: 'but am I not alone, miserably alone?' (95). Moreover, he sees Frankenstein equally able to assert free will, able to do him kindness, and yet choosing not to. It is Frankenstein's personal decision not to take responsibility, not to engage with the Monster as an equal, which turns him towards the role of 'the fallen angel' even though 'I ought to be thy Adam' (95). Shelley, furthermore, poses Frankenstein as complicit in this structured choice: 'I considered the being whom I had cast among mankind, and endowed with the will and power to effect purposes of horror, such as the deed which he had now done, nearly in the light of my own vampire, my own spirit let loose from the grave, and forced to destroy all that was dear to me' (72). As such, Frankenstein appears to play God, as the figure who looks upon his creation and damns it, and yet he is Satanic as well. As Tannenbaum contends, 'Like Satan, who can create only a parody of the divine order, Frankenstein, in his attempt to assume godlike creative powers, becomes a distorted version of Milton's God' (106). Therefore, for both the Monster and his creator, Milton cannot provide a complete narrative that describes the mixed identity that each half experiences, and the parallels that can be drawn are irretrievably corrupt. This biblical history, Mary argues, is no longer viable for the modern Prometheus.

This is not the only way that *Paradise Lost* becomes a springboard for criticism: equally, the Monster and Frankenstein's failure to conform to the roles set out for them further undermine Godwin's conviction that 'Literature has reconciled the whole thinking world respecting the great principles of the system of the universe, and extirpated upon this subject the dreams of romance and the dogmas of superstition' (*Political Justice* 20). When presented with a birth such as the Monster's, Mary argues, literature has no such answers; instead, Frankenstein is so unable to comprehend the nature of his progeny that his body rejects it, he is filled instead with 'breathless horror and disgust' and he endeavours to 'seek a few moments of forgetfulness' to un-imagine the product of his own hands (53). *Paradise Lost*, as representative of Godwin's educational and enlightening literature, fails as a usable myth, because its narrative is not analogous to current circumstances—Frankenstein's belief in his own Promethean abilities, which he might first have credited to God, instead leave him 'godlike in ruin', which Tannenbaum compares to Lucifer's appearance as 'Majestic though in ruin' (II.305; Tannenbaum103). The Monster, likewise, tries at first to cast himself as Adam, but both Frankenstein's neglect and Milton's myth fail him; instead, he and Frankenstein seem to vie for the same devilish role, thus beginning their pursuit of one another. Frankenstein proclaims himself to be a Prometheus, as 'godlike' as Godwin could imagine in creating life without procreation (a detail which Godwin expressed a desire for in the 1798 edition of *Political Justice*), and yet the Monster then becomes his 'master'. Meanwhile, the Monster's moment in front of the transparent pool marks a moment of horror, unknowing, and then identification with a new role of Lucifer. This fragmentation occurs when his concept of self diverges from what his senses tell him about himself, and he 'became fully convinced that I was in reality the monster that I am' (109).

The sharing of Lucifer's role re-emphasises the point Goethe made in *Faust*, which is that Faust and Mephistopheles are two halves of a whole human state. However, Mary destabilises the whole notion that those two halves can be separated either physically or psychologically, or indeed that either half can escape the devilish impulses that plague human nature. In Frankenstein's statement, he not only reinforces the notion of obligation wherein the role in which the Monster has been cast forces him into destruction, but he also acknowledges the doubling that is occurring between himself and the Monster—they are at once in roles dictated by their shared cultural myth, and are also undermining that myth in the same moment because of how the Monster is Frankenstein's 'own vampire, my

own spirit' (72). They are sharing and trading off roles even as they feel destined to conform to them. This explodes the Enlightenment premise of cultivating an entirely rational human race, or always being able to control even the things that we ourselves create. Harriet Hustis argues that Frankenstein and the Monster's inability to meet each other as equals, instead constantly taking power or strength from one another, 'exposes a fundamental shortcoming of objective principles of justice', which criticises Godwin's conviction that rationally meted justice defined by 'fairness' is one of the central components of the progress of man towards perfection (851). Mary uncovers the essential difficulty found in heroic conceptions of ideal society.

In this way, Mary complicates the Monster's own perception of himself and Victor Frankenstein by destabilising his perceived polarities represented by God and Lucifer and using the pursuer/pursued narrative drawn from *Caleb Williams* to create a less rigid boundary between those two roles. By incorporating Frankenstein himself into this fluidity, he is sometimes more Monster than the Monster is himself, and he, rather than society, is culpable for his own monstrosity. John B. Lamb offers a convincing argument that the use of Milton in the Monster's perception alone is directly critical, because it leads in part to the Monster's choice to be destructive:

The Monster's error has not been in his rebellion against the father, but in his mistaken assumption that his "nature" was a thing that he could "willingly" choose. As Frankenstein makes quite clear, the Monster's identity has been shaped by a cultural myth in which the fallen can be only Adam or Lucifer (303).

In the shifting roles played by Frankenstein and the Monster, where each is sometimes Adam, sometimes Lucifer, sometimes God, exchanging monstrousness as they exchange roles, Mary presents a new relationship between creator and created that defies all previous models, or at least slides away from them after a few scenes. This is, in part, because the Monster often seems less a creation of Frankenstein's than an extension of him. This follows into the traits of ghoulishness that seemed to be passed back and forth between Frankenstein and the Monster:

These thoughts supported my spirits, while I pursued my undertaking with unremitting ardour. My cheek had grown pale with study, and my person had become emaciated with confinement... Who shall conceive the horrors of my secret toil, as I dabbled among the unhallowed damps of the grave, or tortured the living animal to animate the lifeless clay? My limbs now tremble, and my eyes swim with the remembrance, but then a resistless, and almost frantic impulse, urged me forward; I seemed to have lost all soul or sensation but for this one pursuit (49-50).

Physically, Frankenstein's body manifests his deeds and he becomes sickly and comatose for long stretches of time while the Monster, we learn later, has been active and struggling

to find his identity and place in the world. This dynamic implies that between the Monster and creator there is only one soul, or one nature between them. Spiritual and physical existence also seems to be spread thinly between them. Of the two, the Monster's emotions are far more spiritual than Frankenstein's, which he expresses eloquently and with great passion. Frankenstein, by contrast, experiences emotion in the most physical of ways: 'knowledge only acted as a stimulant, and added a tingling sensation of fear, while the blood danced along my veins—my eyes sparkled and my limbs even trembled beneath the influence of unaccustomed emotion' (91). An implicit part of the act of human, un-divine creation appears to be that at no point can Frankenstein both create something with a full life force and simultaneously keep some for himself. This is brought home by an acknowledged moment of role reversal when the Monster announces his mastery over his creator:

Slave, I before reasoned with you, but you have proved yourself unworthy of my condescension. Remember that I have power; you believe yourself miserable, but I can make you so wretched that the light of day will be hateful to you. You are my creator, but I am your master;—obey!' (165).

There are other examples of purely physical states that undermine the notion of a solely imposed set of societal behaviours; Frankenstein describes his horror at the Monster as instinctive, such that he is 'seized by remorse' and physically experiences 'intense tortures, such as no language can describe', which his education and breeding are helpless against (85-6). These irrational reactions are part of a larger portrayal of how both internal and external influences affect human behaviour and morality, and cannot necessarily be overcome or controlled by institutional or otherwise external structures, including those passed down by literature. Mary therefore takes Goethe's recognition of the duality of human existence and collapses it down into the material world. In doing so, she refutes the effectiveness of the cultural education provided to the modern world by Milton, and also any belief that nature can be otherwise overridden by even more careful education.

The simultaneous one-ness and monstrousness that is shared between the creator and created within *Frankenstein* signal a break in continuity between Mary's imagined eighteenth century and Milton's imagined past, as well as Godwin and Percy's imagined utopian futures. *Paradise Lost*, as a representative myth of the past, no longer fully sustains the fluid nature of the modern Prometheus. As a result, several new factors now appear in the *Frankenstein* myth's narrative: first, Frankenstein refuses to take responsibility for his creation, thereby leaving it to its limited textual education. Secondly, the Monster's status as a technological product is addressed through the possibility of its reproduction, opening

the possibility for technological proliferation. Where Prometheus could create man in his image and then take on the responsibility of teaching and nurturing them, Frankenstein is capable only of abandoning his creation in horror. In this way, as will be discussed in the following section, Mary's figuring of the Monster, already an 'unnatural' creation, in its context of the wider environment, becomes a specifically industrial creation, in need of a new narrative through which it can be understood, and more importantly, a deeper consideration by those experiencing industrialisation of what the consequences of this epochal change could be.

Proliferation and environment: the monster as industry and revolution

What we have so far seen emerge from Mary's critical engagement with her contemporaries is essentially a systematic reconsideration of how the Enlightenment (and indeed, male-Romantic) valorisation of the sciences implied that scientific endeavours were unsusceptible to human frailty. Christina Knellwolf concludes that 'The novel draws attention to the fact that a precarious lack of responsible foresight characterises our culture's valorisation of progress,' which is tellingly not a condemnation of human nature, but of a cultural hubris that has developed in the absence of superstition. Moreover, this is not a condemnation of progress either, but rather of ambition without informed consideration for its results. Knellwolf continues:

The age of Enlightenment had already defined curiosity as a healthy, or indeed vital, element in the overthrow of a superstitious and narrow-minded worldview. But little attention was devoted to the question of how the age would cope with the experience of seeing the fall of old established myths (64).

It would seem through Mary's departure from Godwinian thought, and indeed, through the subtitle *The Modern Prometheus*, that the central myth that she is aiding in its fall is the story of Prometheus. More broadly, however, her dismantling is not of the myth as a resonant narrative, but our misidentification of ourselves with Prometheus within that myth. But what, then, makes this more problematized narrative a particularly modern myth? Jane Goodall offers the argument that the novel's modernity lies in Mary's 'complex and troubled view of human psychology' which neither confirms nor denies the potential 'godlike' nature of man, insofar as his ability to create, but which certainly questions whether godliness should be pursued by a species 'who falls into the trap of being unable to distinguish the possible from the monstrous' (131). Certainly, we have already seen evidence of Mary's engagement with her forebears and contemporaries that mankind is not

as godlike as Godwin would contend, nor are we defined by one or another polarised role in the biblical interpretations of Milton. Having examined related narratives and myths in order to explore the dynamic between Frankenstein and the Monster, we can now look to how Mary expanded the scope of her narrative to include the broader landscape of modern society. By making a study of Frankenstein's education and his Monster's status as a technological entity, I will present Mary's world as one that is undergoing violent industrial and revolutionary change which she argues has not been fully appreciated by those who would still support the blind valorisation of scientific ambition.

It must be acknowledged that Frankenstein himself, while often painted as the lone mad scientist, was actually part of a community in more direct ways than Faust. The intellectual environment Frankenstein grows up in, wherein ambition is initially encouraged by his family and tutors, is noticeably modern, despite the gothic feeling of Ingolstadt and the gloom of Frankenstein's workshop. While Faust has no family and few friends, appearing in the story as a lone anomaly in medieval society, Frankenstein possesses familial and social ties, and as such seems representative of, rather than an anomaly within, his society. The setting of Geneva in *Frankenstein* is conceived initially as a bastion of civility and rationalism, which is admirable for its tranquillity but also deeply flawed. Mary had herself responded favourably to Geneva, observing, "There is more equality of classes here than in England. This occasions a greater freedom and refinement of manners among the lower orders than we meet with in our own country" (*LMS* 21). In this light, it appears as a fully enlightened state, free from superstition or irrationality. However, Jane Goodall has also pointed out that in addition to being a republic, Geneva was also one of the true bastions of Calvinism, which equally had a profound impact on both Godwin and Mary's writings. Calvinism, Goodall argues, is bound up in predestination and double binds, creating a 'culture impregnated with despair' (Knellwolf 120). The inevitability of Frankenstein's destruction, and his feelings of accursedness, can therefore partially be attributed to his upbringing. As will be explored, Frankenstein's education there did not, like *Paradise Lost*, entirely prepare him for his role as Promethean creator.

When explaining his inexperience before leaving for Ingolstadt, Frankenstein states that since he had not previously attended scientific lectures, 'My dreams were therefore undisturbed by reality', which both appears to evoke a *tabula rasa* innocence in his position, but also demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding of what reality might entail (34). 'He is interested in the principle of "life" only as an abstraction,' Hustis argues of Frankenstein, not unreasonably, particularly in the context of Frankenstein's apparent lack

of awareness of personal consequences implied in Mary's use of 'undisturbed' (848). Growing up in Geneva, Frankenstein's early schooling and experiences with his family, as he portrays it to Walton, are characterised by openness to new modes of thought, particularly of the empirical type which Frankenstein himself would come to reject. He relates how his father had described electricity after the young Frankenstein became fascinated by a tree that had been struck by lightning: his father 'constructed a small electrical machine, and exhibited a few experiments' (35). Mary references Franklin's kite experiment in this same passage as the one that was shown, and for an extended period, it turned Frankenstein from Agrippa. We can also argue, however, that the strike of lightning was, as Agrippa imagined, an omen for the future wherein 'like events may be prognosticated of other like things' (Agrippa 180), and as such, electricity continues to be the technological feature that carries the narrative through its early course. Ingolstadt, by comparison, is a wholly more medieval environment, and Mary likely chose it as locale for Frankenstein's alchemical pursuits due to the university's ties to the Illuminati, which had begun there as a bastion of liberty and science during the mid-eighteenth century, but which also quickly gained a reputation for its theatricality and secretiveness (Knellwolf 4). But at this site, Frankenstein is presented with two models for study. The first is modern science, specifically chemistry and the detail-oriented, rational study borne out of the Enlightenment, which he finds distasteful in comparison to the scale and fame of past alchemy:

I had a contempt for the uses of modern natural philosophy. It was very different, when the masters of the science sought immortality and power; such views, although futile, were grand; but now the scene was changed. The ambition of the inquirer seemed to limit itself to the annihilation of those visions on which my interest in science was chiefly founded. I was required to exchange chimeras of boundless grandeur for realities of little worth (41).

His resistance to modern, modest scientific endeavours when exposed to the broad alchemical claims of Agrippa and others stands largely opposed to his schooling, and cannot be traced back to his upbringing either—he claimed that he was 'impressed with no supernatural horrors' in his youth.

I do not ever remember to have trembled at a tale of superstition, or to have feared the apparition of a spirit. Darkness had no effect upon my fancy; and a church-yard was to me merely the receptacle of bodies deprived of life, which from being the seat of beauty and strength, had become food for the worm (46-7).

If this is the case, then one can only account for Frankenstein's personal proclivities as being just that—having supposedly only been brought up in a culture of liberty and logic,

unsullied by monarchy or by religious superstition, his fascination with the mechanics of life and death in the medieval pseudo-scientific sense cannot be attributed to anything but his internal, individual preferences. It also, however, denotes a gap in his understanding, regardless of his education—his Cartesian separation between ‘life’ and its ‘receptacle’ in combination with no fear of ‘the apparition of a spirit’ makes his mission to create life while emphasising the reconstruction of the body a singularly misguided project. The ‘ruin’ of his ambition is not only a result of overreaching, but reaching in the wrong direction, giving no thought to the ‘life’ encased in the body he has created. This presents a central problem as to what, precisely, Frankenstein’s science is. James Rieger calls the monster entirely alchemical in nature, ‘the electrification of Agrippa and Paracelsus’ (*Frankenstein* xxvii). And indeed, the setting of Ingolstadt seems to reinforce that impression, as a medieval university with a history of association with the Illuminati. Yet the material, industrial processes which Warren Montag sets out in his Marxist reading of the novel in assertion that it is ‘the product of reason’ also presents an important feature of Frankenstein’s creative process (391).

In both cases, Frankenstein has acquired two types of education, the alchemical and the material/empirical, and his negotiation of these teachings becomes a displacement of Promethean ideas of science in a material environment. Moreover, the results of such displacement are not necessarily good; as Fred Botting suggests, ‘science remains shadowed by Faustian spirits...The mechanical and technological means made available by scientific rationality render its aims suspect’ (166). This combination of Romantic ideals and material concerns, we can therefore glean, is particularly toxic—Faustian spirits, in this context, are the darker impulses of humanity, and their ability to express themselves through technological products, suddenly become far more dangerous. Moreover, the continued valorisation of the ‘boundless grandeur’ of science in this pursuit leaves no room for a sense of responsibility or foresight. It is assumed that all scientific innovation will lead to the improvement of mankind, as Godwin suggests when he states ‘It is only by giving a free scope to these excursions, that science, philosophy and morals have arrived at their present degree of perfection, or are capable of going on to that still greater perfection’ (*Political Justice* 118). This ‘free scope’, when actually applied to the material science, has every potential to become monstrous, but this not taught to Frankenstein, either through occult belief or Enlightened science. His environment, as well as his own naiveté, creates a collision of paradigms concerning how science was being thought about during his time period, which Mary thus asserts as a new and present danger in the wake of

industrialisation.

From this meditation upon learning environments, the novel could not have existed previous to the Enlightenment precisely because it is the institutionalisation of intellectual curiosity that ultimately justifies Victor Frankenstein's personal ambition, and opens the narrative arc to adaptation into reading the process of industrialisation. Moreover, the scientific ideas, which Frankenstein engages with, are not only anachronistic in their alchemical elements, but are also clearly meant to engage with Mary's scientific contemporaries. Despite the narrative taking place in relative isolation, the Monster's demand for a wife implies the possibility of the continuation and expansion of his species. This amounts to an invasion of the recent past by the scientific principles of the present, and an opportunity for their proliferation. *Frankenstein* as an industrial myth therefore becomes especially significant, in addition to its purely ideological criticism; the implication of widespread technological and societal change brings the myth into contact with what we know as the Industrial Revolution, which *Faust* at first glance appears to have accomplished more obviously, at least in *Part II. Frankenstein*, while ranging across a reasonable amount of geographical space, seems far more isolated and natural in its sublimity than Goethe's portrayal of the spreading influence of Faust by the means of capitalism and mechanical innovation. However, it is by Mary's own close ties to Romanticism's fascination with science that enables us to make the connection, and furthermore find continuity between her singular galvanic/alchemical Monster and the truly mechanical ubiquity of rising industrialism.

Firstly, Mary's personal interest in the sciences went beyond simply the participation in discussion with her husband and contemporaries, starting early at her father's house and continuing well into her later life. Her biographical works on major European figures in the sciences, written during the 1830s for the *Cabinet Cyclopedias*, evidences this.²³ *Frankenstein* itself clearly sources some of its premise to the works of Galvani, such that while Mary glosses over the particulars of galvanism with the statement, 'But this discovery was so great and overwhelming, that all the steps by which I had been progressively led to it were obliterated, and I beheld only the result' in the 1818 edition, this is not so much a dismissal of the scientific process but rather a comment of

23 Specific examples found in *Lives of the Most Eminent Literary and Scientific Men of Italy, Spain and Portugal*, 3 vols (1835 and 1837), which included an extensive chapter on 'The Starry Galileo with his woes' (a phrase borrowed from *Childe Harold* (IV.liv)); also *Lives of the Most Eminent Literary and Scientific Men of France*, 2 vols (1838 and 1839), which included extended chapters on Pascal's ambitions in mathematics.

Frankenstein's own narrow vision of his end goals, reinforcing the theme of responsibility and foresight that his eventual downfall would dramatize(47). The 1832 edition would go on to offer slightly more detail on the process of the Monster's creation, but the filthy workshop described consistently over both versions of the novel do more than enough to centre the narrative on the act of invention as not one of magic, but of human labour and accomplishment. Furthermore, the application of the science that is employed therein, while still very much part of the school of alchemy, has a mechanical character that accommodates a vision of a certain amount of autonomy in technology that was not previously a natural part of society's expectations. Frankenstein must have a workshop, instead of Faust's study—his work is physical in the most literal sense, where Faust's had so often been imaginative, even when he gathered workers to him to carry out his plans. In this way, as will be explored, the Monster is a 'product', as Warren Montag argues (388), a result of a physical process rather than an alchemical conjuring, and as a result, it defies the convention of Faust's age, in that it can (in theory) be reproduced on a large scale.

Secondly, the novel's relationship to technology, specifically machine technology, is more intimate than it may initially appear within the text. The bond between the sciences and industrial invention was very close at this time, exemplified by how the valorising of the sciences by organisations such as the Lunar Society was partially couched in the expectation of discoveries being used for industry and public consumption, making the harnessing of forces like electricity significant precursors to widespread industrial endeavour. Erasmus Darwin, for example, despite being more interested in biology by our standards of speciality, kept extended correspondence with James Watt, with whom he discussed ideas for the development of steam engines, 'the most ingenious of human inventions' ('Letter to James Watt' 19 January 1790), and also requesting if Watt might pass on his inventions for use in Darwin's medical practice ('Letter to James Watt' 13 July 1794). The immediate connection between Watt's mechanical construction and its benefits to Darwin's medical work, as well as chemistry at large, was at this time unquestionable. In this way, both the abstract and more applied sciences were equally treated as advancement for society as a whole. Thus, Mary's use of galvanism would serve as a reference not only to Galvani's experiments, but to also all of the potential uses and technology implicit in that discovery. The notion of using those boyhood experiments with kite and lightning explicitly foreshadows this relationship between observed phenomenon, confirmed experiment, and immediate move towards application. Likewise, the critical, humanising take on it within the novel reflected not just jadedness towards scientific endeavour, but also some of the

collective backlash that followed the association between the scientific and French revolutions after the violence of the 1790s. In Frankenstein's narrow creative ambition there is a mechanical aspect to Mary's characterisation of his science that is consistent with the deterministic nature of the Monster's pursuit of revenge, such that when Frankenstein gives chase, he relates, 'I pursued my path towards the destruction of the daemon, more as a task enjoined by heaven, as the mechanical impulse of some power of which I was unconscious, than as the ardent desire of my soul' (202). It would seem that Frankenstein has, having lost his larger perspective on the consequences of his actions, allowed a sort of mechanism to fall into motion, such that he and the Monster become caught in a spiral of destruction.

The Monster itself, in addition to this, despite being an organic being, is effectively a technological entity, not just a product of science but of practical science, and therefore within the realm of industrialism, not simply theoretical or natural science, as it has been categorised in the past. As such, he is a Homunculus of a type, and yet just as prone to human frailty as his master, unlike the sanctified and whole Homunculus assembled by Wagner and Mephistopheles. Mark Hansen convincingly posits that:

Understood as a displaced figure for technological exteriority, the Monster is not simply the result of scientific law applied, but rather a technological product in a quite specific, post-industrial sense: a product of a process whose "effects" are neither predetermined nor constrained by theoretical principles of science (582).

In this, he both confirms Montag's reading of the Monster as 'product' outside of a Marxist context, but also diagnoses the lack of control that seems to colour Frankenstein's process. As Montag points out, we are never able to pass beyond the threshold of the workshop: 'The process of production is evoked but never described, effectively presenting us a world of effects without causes' (392). Thus despite Frankenstein's work being purportedly one of process rather than alchemy, that process is no guarantee of controlled results. However, this is less an admittance of being less 'technological', as Harvey implies in comparing Frankenstein to the work of E.T.A. Hoffmann, but rather a pointed critique of applied science as purely driven by reason. The workshop, if it is as Montag states, a place where 'the incompatible worlds of industry (workshop) and theology (creation) collide', does not simply represent Frankenstein's failure to produce a purely technological Monster, but is a commentary on the potential autonomy of our creations, 'neither predetermined nor constrained' (393). Furthermore, it is yet another meeting of revolutions—the collision of theological and technological becomes the flash point in the form of the Monster's own consciousness, much like Faust's call for the Earth Spirit, whose true being turns out to be

far too much for him to bear. The Monster is thus less a product of the natural sciences which characterise the eighteenth century, or even the elemental alchemy involved in Agrippa and implied by Goethe's portrait of Homunculus. It is instead an industrial product, symbolising the entirely man-made autonomous structure that is not made by magic, but is somehow nonetheless unfathomable. He still carries with him the associations carried by electricity, both positive and negative, manifesting in both autonomy and unpredictability. This reinforces Mary's central thesis: Frankenstein is ultimately not able to come to grips with the fact that the Monster does not turn out precisely the way he thought, and therefore abandons him without further notice, making the Monster's unpredictability the breaking point between being an acceptable creation and an unacceptable one.

This complicates the notion of legacy particularly in the case of the Monster, such that wholeness must be achieved before his species can propagate, and it stands in direct critique of Godwin's vision of a male, non-procreative utopian state. As should now be clear, Frankenstein cannot be Prometheus in this essential way—as a figure of clay himself, attempting to bypass biological demands, he only has his own clay with which to shape a disciple. Yet the Monster, when he appears, also wishes to procreate. However, he wishes to do so naturally, through a bride of his own species. When Frankenstein refuses him, the Monster takes his revenge by killing Frankenstein's bride, thereby ending his own chances of procreation. In this way, the Monster is a strange paradox of fragmented being, an incomplete creation made up of too many parts, but more capable than his master, if his request is to be taken seriously, of normal reproduction. Effectively, the Monster appears to surpass Frankenstein's abilities, not only in physical strength and speed but also potentially propagating itself and superseding Elizabeth in promising to be 'with you on your wedding night' (166). This anxiety in regards to the superiority of the Monster resonates with the reception of machinery being invented during the early nineteenth century, with the seemingly limitless uses of industrial machinery to create objects and other machinery with, as Sir Richard Phillips observed in Brunel's factories, greater 'precision, uniformity, and accuracy' than man was capable (qtd in Jennings 138). The Monster, therefore, as 'a product of process', albeit a relatively undefined one, can be seen as an early part of this move towards creating autonomous machines, capable of building themselves. Thus, while Harvey argues that the isolation of Frankenstein and the consequences he faces was actually a weakness of the novel, stating that 'Frankenstein's relationship with his Monster is essentially private...a man hunted down...by a bogey of

his own making', he neglects this theme of reproduction that drives the narrative forward into its self-destructive phase of pursuit (26). The novel, set as it is towards the middle of the eighteenth century, creates continuity between the Monster's singular appearance and the growing ubiquity of machinery that was increasingly complex and capable of complex tasks.

Finally, in addition to Frankenstein's tale taking place in a society complicit with his ambitions (if not his exact work), the frame narrative of Walton's excursion into the Arctic Circle offers a broader context of western exploration culture, which is equally blithe about the risks men take with their bodies and their technology. As Frankenstein is posed as a modern Prometheus, both his upbringing and his own blinkered view of creation give him all of the potential, but none of the heroism, of Faust, who had by contrast sought to understand *all* things and strive continually. In Walton's narrative, this is placed far more obviously in Mary's own historical context. His reaction to Frankenstein, in finding kinship in him and continuing to portray him heroically even after he finishes his tale, seems to demonstrate a clear shift in the nature of society's treatment of scientific ambition. In letters to his sister, Walton paints Frankenstein as a fallen Prometheus: 'What a glorious creature must he have been in the days of his prosperity, when he is thus noble and godlike in ruin' (208). It is hardly consistent with the ghoulish portrait Frankenstein presents of himself at the height of his obsession, reinforcing a discrepancy between the idea of achievement and heroism, and the application of it. Moreover, Walton's view of Frankenstein summarises the central point Mary makes in contrast to the ending of Faust—godliness, even a moment of it, is an imagined quality, because we never see Frankenstein in great prosperity except at the outset. Frankenstein, at the end of his life, remains a portrait of this discrepancy through the inconsistent moral he tries to end his tale with—initially, he prefaces his story with an instruction of caution to Walton:

Learn from me, if not by my precepts, at least by my example how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge, and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow (48).

At once, Mary invokes here both the scientific and political cost of overreaching once more—by considering the borders of human ingenuity and also geography, the land beyond one's 'native town', she incorporates the rise and failure of Napoleon's campaign. Throughout their journey through France, Mary took consistent note of the degrees of damage the various villages they passed through had endured from the onset of Prussian forces, such that most often it was the physical state of the landscape that spoke for

political events. 'We now approached scenes that reminded us of what we had nearly forgotten, that France had lately been the country in which great and extraordinary events had taken place,' she began, and then described one village they passed through as, 'once large and populous, but now the houses were roofless, and the ruins that lay scattered about, the gardens covered with the white dust of the torn cottages, the black burnt beams, and squalid looks of the inhabitants, presented in every direction the melancholy aspect of devastation' (*Six Week's Tour* 18-9; 22-3). The melancholy of the aftermath of the military advance is spoken through architecture and environment, rather than the testament of the people. But more importantly, that damage is now being repaired—Napoleon's godliness ended in exile, and ruin was left for Nature to overtake. In this way, Frankenstein's narrative extends as far as Faust's, while still remaining fully grounded in the material world, encompassing and relating socio-political and technological revolution together.

Moreover, this extends to the natural environment as well as society, again touching upon the major features that Goethe had demarcated during the sequence of Classical Walpurgis Night. The overwhelming difference between the two narratives remains that for all his repentance, when he has finished telling his story and Walton must deal with the mutiny of his men, Frankenstein acts as if he has learned nothing at all from his own story: 'Are you then so easily turned from your design? Did you not call this a glorious expedition? And wherefore was it glorious?...Oh! be men, or be more than men' (212). Through Frankenstein's query, Mary concretely asserts Romanticism's 'fundamental ignorance of the ethical consequences of sublimation' (Hansen 579-80), framing Frankenstein as inextricable from his selective blindness. He is, in this way, simply a bad scientist, and moreover a thoroughly modern one, because despite his interest in the archaic sciences of Agrippa, his flaws as a practitioner are those that Goethe took issue with in his day: that by getting lost in minutiae and mechanical principles rather than what the human senses can perceive, reality is warped out of reliable and ethical understanding, such that study is stripped of some of its most important meanings. Again, we are brought to the collision between theology and technology that his workshop had engendered, but its result, in this instance, is that Frankenstein's faith in his own reason and his own ability to control his creation was thoroughly misplaced. As a result, he was obsessed with the task of creating life, and therefore blinkered to the evidence provided to him by his instincts and his senses, ever more 'insensible to the charms of nature', but also its dangers (50). This is a fitting parallel with Napoleon's defeat in Russia, and indeed the harshness of frozen conditions accompanies not only Frankenstein's pursuit of the Monster through the Alps,

but also Walton's expedition. As such, Frankenstein becomes the antithesis of Faust in his rejection of the bigger picture, entirely occupied with the creation via his 'mechanische Vorrichtung', which prevented him from realising that his endeavour was risky beyond acceptable boundaries of rationality. Despite having Romantic notions of the heroism of science, his empirically trained focus and personal obsession released a monster upon the world.

As a double of Frankenstein, and as an Adam and Satan figure, the Monster has been analysed as the body politic as well as a purely ghoulish figure. But most essential to his role in the myth is this relationship to Frankenstein as the scientist's misused technological creation. The Frankenstein myth, as we have seen, can be identified on multiple levels as one of particular suitability for our modern condition; George Levine states that,

Its modernity lies in its transformation of fantasy and traditional Christian and pagan myths into unremitting secularity, into myth of mankind as it must work within the limits of the visible, physical world... The old myths enter nineteenth-century fiction, but they do so in the mode of realism (6-7).

I would argue that in doing so, at least in the case of Frankenstein, it becomes a distinctly different myth, at least partially independent from its antecedent. The central tenet—that man will be unable to recognise his own limitations if he eschews morality in his pursuit of science, and that there is an inherent risk of blindness in Promethean pursuits, is an entirely new mythical narrative because it is in the mode of realism; that is, it is using human beings as the subject of its narrative, rather than gods (or godlike humans, as was the case in *Faust*), and therefore grants them all of the natural weaknesses to which they are prone.

For this reason, as well as the novel's interactions with the literature and culture of its day, *Frankenstein* has achieved myth status not through slow evolution and studied objectivity on the part of the author, as was the case with *Faust*. Instead, it captured a practical understanding and interpretation of the human condition. Consistent with the gothic tradition from which the tale partially springs, Mary's choice of settings and their ideological associations provide the setup for the returning of past sins, but overlaying that is also the larger implication that this haunting of the past cannot be banished through the debunking of superstition, in the style of Radcliffe, but rather is an on-going testament to how human nature continues to function, and cannot be cast aside even as technologically, mankind moves 'forward'.

The Monster as a modern and industrial icon

As a result of the simultaneous contemporary and universal quality of the Frankenstein myth, *Frankenstein* has, in many ways, overtaken its author in its impact upon Western culture, such that in as early as 1928, *The Saturday Review* made the summary remark that, “Frankenstein” is proverbial, but how many of those who cite it have given any thought to its author except in her capacity as Shelley’s wife?’ (181). It was not until the twentieth century that her position as a woman of letters was widely acknowledged, and even then it took several decades before her work was no longer snubbed in favour of Percy’s work. Nevertheless, *Frankenstein* itself had an instant impact upon its Victorian audience, creating a lasting legacy with which Mary’s own name would in time catch up. The myth of Frankenstein and his Monster, in fact, took much the same route as the Faust myth when it was conceived, well before either Marlowe or Goethe got their hands on it. In its multiple reprints and dramatizations, the myth captured the imagination of its audience and kept it throughout Mary’s lifetime and well beyond. As a result, it became a part of common parlance such that at the very least, if there was not a drama or burlesque bearing the name or plot of ‘Frankenstein’, the observations on revolutionary feelings among the oppressed, cobbled together physical appearances, and other characteristics were regularly likened to ‘Frankenstein’s monster’. Its position as a modern myth, and moreover, as a reference point for a vast number of topics, from the Crimean War to theatre architecture, indicate its position of versatility and relevance to the modern world. Indeed, the topic of the dissemination of Frankenstein culturally is a topic of research in and of itself—for our purposes, therefore, I will briefly touch upon salient features that prevailed in the nineteenth century and reinforced its significance as a point of reference for human endeavours gone awry.

The impact of the mythic use of the narrative was, for obvious reasons, not part of the initial reactions to the novel, but its growing popularity would facilitate the transition towards such consideration. When it was first published in 1818 as a triple-decker it received moderate positive response, most notably from Walter Scott, who published his thoughts on the novel in *Blackwood’s Magazine*:

Upon the whole, the work impresses us with a high idea of the author’s original genius and happy power of expression. We shall be delighted to hear that he has aspired to the paullo majorica; and, in the meantime, congratulate our readers upon a novel which excites new reflections and untried sources of emotion. If Gray’s definition of Paradise, to lie on a couch, namely, and read new novels, come any thing near truth, no small praise is due to him, who, like the author of Frankenstein, has enlarged the sphere of that fascinating enjoyment (613-620).

Scott acknowledges what seemed to be common theme among those who enjoyed the novel—that it felt remarkably different from its contemporaries in emotional and intellectual content. It is also notable, however, that his commentary is markedly vague as to how the novel enlarges that sphere of enjoyment. The extremity of Frankenstein's emotional and physical environment are perhaps notable, but it is also possible that in this context, Scott was damning with faint praise. Other commentators agreed that it was a vibrant work, exciting in the broadest terms, but were also quick to note the novel's relationship to Godwinian thinking, and took issue with its 'impiety', above all else.²⁴ The major themes of the novel did come through, however—though *La Belle Assemblée* was not in favour of the book's heresies, its critic did hope that the moral centred around the 'presumptive works of man [which] must be frightful, vile and horrible; ending only in discomfort and misery to himself' ('Literary Intelligence' 139). Percy's own reading, performed posing as a critic ignorant of the writer's identity, appears equally simplified. He argues that the characters 'are the children, as it were, of Necessity and Human Nature', such that if one 'Treat[s] a person ill, [...] he will become wicked' (*Prose Works* 418). In this way, he not only moralises the narrative, but also maintains a purely Godwinian reading of the text, relying entirely upon 'nurture' to explain the Monster's deeds, while omitting Frankenstein's own upbringing in comparison to his culpability. Thus, Mary's concern with responsibility was not immediately picked up by critics, but this less ambiguous moral reading of the novel, still clearly a negative variation of the Prometheus myth, would become the focus of many stage adaptations.

In total, during Mary's lifetime there would be three melodramas, and three burlesques adapted and staged with success, though with varying quality, and with varying faithfulness to the original narrative.²⁵ In contrast to Percy, who had meant some his work to be for a limited audience, particularly *Prometheus Unbound*, its content too obscure to be widely appealing, Mary took full advantage of the popular audience out of necessity. The second edition's introduction granted the novel further notice by introducing into public knowledge the tale of the ghost story competition held the summer of 1816 in Geneva as a part of the extraordinarily successful annually-released *Standard Novels* series, of which Mary's work would be in the second edition, in which it was published alongside Schiller's *Der Geisterseher*. In advertisements for the edition, the pairing of the two works was justified

24 *La Belle Assemblée's* critic used this term, as did *The Edinburgh Magazine and Literary Miscellany* ('Literary Intelligence' 139; qtd. in Baldick 57).

25 Chris Baldick gives a useful summary of the various adaptations, including efforts by some to moralise or otherwise eliminate the ambivalence of the original work (58-62)

by each work having had ‘such marked effect on society’ (‘Destructive Hurricane’ n.p.). The central tropes, however, remained—that Frankenstein would reach beyond his capabilities to create a being, ‘the anatomical, mechanical, and physiological secrets that were employed to make up the living mockery of humanity’, and that this being would be of surpassing power and horror, and would turn upon its maker (‘Theatres &c.’ 11). The burlesques, in particular, continued after her death in 1851, and the literature that had spawned it would again be released in a popular, accessible edition in *The Parlour Library* in 1856, again as part of a collection of popular works, maintaining a clear position as part of an on-going popular canon.

As the novel circulated and was widely read, the use of ‘Frankenstein’s Monster’ as a turn of phrase developed, and over the course of this development, we can identify both an increased pervasiveness of the novel culturally, and specifically how it would begin to appear important to writers like Marx. Above all, the pervasive function of the monster was to inspire both awe and fear: awe for its power and, by proximity, man’s role in creating such power, and fear that it was now beyond the control of its makers. These mixed feelings would also become characteristic of all events and happenstances that called for the invocation of the phrase ‘Frankenstein’s Monster’. Various instances as a metaphor for mechanisms or social bodies that had grown beyond governmental or otherwise authoritative control began to appear in the second half of the nineteenth century: *The Glasgow Herald* used it in reference to members of the Irish Party who had been imprisoned and whose liberty might be granted due to policy changes 1882, stating that ‘Mr. Parnell himself and his ablest lieutenants are becoming considerably alarmed as to the future career of the Frankenstein Monster they have created, for the Irish agitation has now slipped beyond the control of the Home-Rule party...’ (‘Our London Correspondence’ 7). The way in which the metaphor is used shows the understanding the public had of the dynamic between the scientist and the Monster as distinctly one of the ruling majority and the ruled minority, wherein the latter was protesting, and indeed beginning to overpower the former. Similarly, *The Nottinghamshire Guardian* discussed, on the subject of unrest in Jamaica, the possibility that newspapers in the United States were ‘terrifying the Republican party in the United States at the idea of the Frankenstein Monster they have created, and so weakening the agitation in favour of negro suffrage’ (‘The War in Jamaica’ n.p.). Particularly notable in this example is the double recognition both of the usefulness of the Monster in reading the events occurring, but also the way in which that usefulness can be manipulated towards partisan ends. The significance of the Monster as a scare tactic points

towards a growing understanding of the versatility and meaningfulness of the narrative as a specifically political and revolutionary myth. The filthy workshop stays in the modern imagination as well, as indicated by its image conjured by *The Morning Post's* report on 'Gigantic Electrical Machines', whose monstrous size and its maker's 'laboratory of science' 'remind[s] one of Mrs. Shelley's Frankenstein' (6). Not only was the dynamic between the Monster and his creator shorthand for players in the political scene, but the technological connotations of the Monster also remained at the forefront of its meaning.

The Monster made its way into other literary works as well, as both a political point of reference and a modern technological one. *The Sheffield & Rotherham Independent* published a serialised novel by the popular Glaswegian author William Black entitled *Sunrise: A Story of These Times* (1881) in which the central characters discuss the rise of revolutionary socialist parties as part of a larger plot of international political intrigue. Again, within the reference is implied the German Socialists playing the part of the Monster, having been created by Bismarcke who had 'coquetted' them, and now had reason to fear their power. There were also apolitical uses of the Monster that nonetheless spoke to the modern condition: James MacFarlan, a briefly known poet and contributor to *Household Words* as well as various other publications, used it to discuss the social pressure to abide by 'conventionalities' in *The Lancaster Gazette*:

A man, too, may create for himself what is termed a position; yet this position very often turns out a Frankenstein's Monster. He is the slave and not the master of his position. Conventionality recognises no poor relations, and he must learn to forget his origin, Honesty is the poor man's heroism; but the world accepts no bravery unaccompanied with the blare of trumpets. In this endless submission to form, men lose all individuality. When one aspires to anything, he must be content to leave off himself, and become cast and squared in the mould of some man who has gone before him ('Literary Selections' 6).

MacFarlan recognised the use of the Monster as a way of expressing the modern condition in much the same way as Marx would, albeit for the bourgeoisie rather than the working class. He addresses the loss of individuality specifically in terms of material form, such that it is 'form' that becomes a Monster, even as it is also the key to social elevation. He also uses the language of industry to describe that process of erasure, through the 'casting' and 'squaring' of men, such that they are subsumed into their position of society, rather than occupy it.

In each of these various examples, what stands out is the understanding of Frankenstein's Monster as a metaphor for social and economic expectations, wherein work, rather than being the means of man towards living well, instead becomes the

dominant force in his life, which dictates his position as one of many faceless members of an underclass. This reinforces the notion that the novel is less about the singular, anomalous creation by one lonely creator, but rather a narrative about expansion, propagation, and eventual ubiquity, which is not a characteristic of modernity at large but more specifically about industrialisation and its processes of mass production. Moreover, implied in this understanding is that it is the creator who is ultimately at fault, and that the monstrosity found within the newly expanded group is a product of passing on the problems inherent in human nature, the problems from the ‘mould of some man who has gone before him’.

Chris Baldick has observed that until *Frankenstein* was written in 1818, the so-called Faustian ‘drama’—that is, the central conflict of man gaining knowledge and creating from it the tools of his own destruction—didn’t appear in the English Gothic (17). *Frankenstein* thus marks a critical beginning in the British consideration of the Faustian drama, thus sharing common ancestry with Marx’s *Manifesto*, as well as direct similarities and interests. By reframing the legacy of the Frankenstein myth by tying it to the Faust myth, a clearer frame emerges from which we can draw not simply a myth of the modern condition, but one specifically about industry. Ultimately, both texts are critical of the human condition, but they observe it from very different perspectives. *Frankenstein* is representative of our instinct to step away from things that do not give the desired responses expected from them; his dread is at having to take responsibility for a work that he no longer has control of. If *Frankenstein* is, as Levine states, the myth of realism, then *Faust* remains the myth of the eternal and transcendent. While that might seem increasingly useless to the industrialised world, we must remember also the continued mythical language of the industrialists and the art of industry, the Ures who proclaimed that their creations were manifestations of Minerva’s inspiration. Technology and technology culture still hoped to be, in many ways, triumphantly Faustian, risking all and achieving freedom and success. Goethe’s vision was a prescient portrait of global change and all of the sacrifices and problems that would arise in the name of progress—Mary’s was, in contrast, an intimate portrait of the inherent, ingrained problems that are caused by placing those tools for global change in the hands of those who think that they are heroes just for holding the tools, without thinking of what will arise from them. Both of these portraits, the global and human mythical narratives of modern development, would become the inspiration and narrative lens through which observers would begin to see their changing world through.

This is not to say that *Frankenstein* has remained wholly a myth of industry, or even modernity, moving into the twentieth century; from out of common parlance in the nineteenth century, the adaptation of *Frankenstein* became a visual cipher as well as a literary one, which secured the cliché of the mad scientist as a part of popular culture, echoing those later literary iterations such as the doctors Jekyll and Moreau. From its clear Romantic origins to its persuasively ambiguous and sceptical treatment of that same heritage, *Frankenstein* reveals itself to be compelling in a cumulative fashion that can be traced through its popularity as a sensational novel to its increasing pervasiveness as a cultural myth. Most recently, this has been pointed out by Brian Cox, whose television series ‘Science Britannica’ (BBC 2013) frames the current public attitudes towards scientific endeavour through the reading of Mary’s novel as the origin of our collective fear of the scientific unknown. Consistent with its continued appearance in various tales and news stories from the nineteenth century, Levine observes that, ‘Even in our dictionaries, “Frankenstein” has become a vital metaphor, peculiarly appropriate to a culture dominated by a consumer technology, neurotically obsessed with “getting in touch” with its authentic self and frightened at what it is discovering’ (3). Cox used the myth of Frankenstein explain why we now have ambivalent feelings towards the sciences. However, there is more to read in the myth of Frankenstein when it is used specifically to explain the cultural reception of industrialisation. *Frankenstein*, as a novel which takes place during the Enlightenment, establishes a very specific transition in scientific culture. Cox only hints at this important feature, and instead concentrates on its relevance to current fears about technology, including genetically modified foods and medicine (Lachman n.p.). *Frankenstein*, however, bridges the gap between isolated obsession and national proliferation. It is specifically a narrative of individual choices leading to collective consequences. Moreover, by choosing *Frankenstein* as the touchstone for the beginning of these feelings of ambivalence and doubt, he is reinforcing the idea that Mary’s historical moment marks the beginning of a technological period wherein the possibility of the propagation and distribution of the products of scientific research was couched in reality.

Ultimately, the novel’s historical effect is also a cumulative one, affecting modern and contemporary culture equally, and our view of history more so as we repeatedly look at ourselves and then look back through its ever-changing lens. *Frankenstein* remains a myth, but a completely modern one, because not only does it capture the mythical tropes of *Faust* and *Paradise Lost*, it plays them out through a critical, modern eye, unwilling to place anything heroic in the hands of the protagonist when it does not trust in his ability to

take responsibility for the advances he is capable of making. The critical blow struck not at technology, but at man's ability to use technology responsibly, was one that could easily be glossed over in favour of the more obvious arc of the slave overcoming the master, and moralistic commentary on the terrible consequences of obsession and science we do not yet entirely understand. Yet this same doubt held not about the things that we can build, but rather our own natures, can be read even through the distortions of the tale, and that, I would argue, is what ultimately makes the Frankenstein myth into a lens that has become essential to the reading of industrialism over the course of the nineteenth century. It is both a reinforcement of, and counterargument to *Faust*, in that it asks us to reconsider our 'godlike' aspirations, not because they are inherently evil or hubristic, but because we are not always prepared for the full nature of what such responsibility would entail. Between the two myths, the intersection of development and responsibility form the foundation of how industry was going to be considered by Marx and Carlyle.

IV. 'It is the Age of Machinery, in every outward and inward sense of that word': Carlyle and the Diagnosis of the Machine Age

So far, in addressing *Faust* and *Frankenstein*, I have been exploring mythic narratives in relation to how they might be useful for interpreting and processing the industrialisation process and its effects on social and political systems in Western Europe, particularly Britain. Now, I will shift focus towards how those myths were put to use, specifically in literature critical of industry as a key feature of modernity. By incorporating thematic and structural elements of the myths of Prometheus, Faust, and Frankenstein into direct analysis of industrialisation and its effects, both Carlyle and Marx would prove the relevance of those myths to their present time. Moreover, they would also expand upon and utilise those myths to create a separate narrative for industrialisation that shares characteristics with earlier myths, but functions separately as a myth in itself. In this way, they helped establish many of the terms for how later generations would reimagine the time period.

To this end, Carlyle is a particularly important figure to acknowledge for his prominence as a critic within, and of, nineteenth-century British culture. His appeal was in part the divisiveness of his worldview, in combination with his undeniable skill and perception as a literary and cultural critic. George Eliot noted that 'there is hardly a superior or active mind of this generation that has not been modified by Carlyle's writings,' though complete agreement with him was far more rare (*CCH* 3). His position as a literary attacker—as William Henry Smith of *Blackwood's* put it, 'objecting, denouncing, scoffing, rending all to pieces in his bold, reckless, ironical manner'—allowed him to portray a crisis point in how society was incorporating industrialisation and capitalism into itself, lending apocalyptic drama to his critique of invasive mechanisation of daily processes (*CCH* 210). From the reactions of both his supporters and detractors, Jules Paul Siegel suggests that their reactions 'illuminat[ed] the intellectual and emotional conflicts of the reviewers themselves as well as the character of the age', and in this way we can begin to see how Carlyle's body of work specifically contributed to an industrial myth (*CCH* 24). Across his works, both historical and focussed on the present day, his Goethean belief in a holistic 'thousand-figured, thousand-voiced, harmonious Nature' made up of both the material and spiritual realms fostered his mythic reading of the dawning mechanical age (*Sartor Resartus* 41).

Carlyle identifies the crisis point of the mid-nineteenth century as the unbalancing of natural harmony, in which the treatment of history as merely a collection of facts is one symptom of the larger movement towards Mechanism; that is, ‘man has grown mechanical in head and in heart’ (‘Signs’ *CME* II: 63). Moreover, his work reiterated the profound ambivalence which had characterised *Faust* and *Frankenstein*; even more than Goethe, he was deeply troubled by the conflict between visionary individual power, which he believed in as an expression of how ‘the Divine Idea of the Universe is pleased to manifest itself, and the violence of sudden change that could be enacted by such vision’ (*Sartor* 166). Furthermore, he too was concerned about the ubiquity of technology in a far more straightforward way than Mary Shelley, as indicated by his indictment of mechanism’s proliferation in his early essay ‘Signs of the Times’ (1829). Thus, in Carlyle’s diagnosis of the Machine Age, he presents industrialisation as usable history through his timeless treatment of mankind as a Goethean manifestation of Spirit in a physical vessel that is changing in a single process over a contained period of specific time. In this way, his social criticism takes the form of mythic narrative: it is both the story of a critical period in human history and a universal analysis of human nature. His analysis of workers’ rights, laissez-faire capitalism, and post-Enlightenment disenchantment utilised German and classical works in order to set forth a body of work that expressed his own convictions about specific societal ills while illustrating the more abstract contradictions inherent in modern industrial culture. In this way, he presented modern history not necessarily as a unified narrative, but as an environment wherein the ‘Truth of Things’ must be excavated out from underneath a national preoccupation with money and objects. His efforts to excavate, or even define that truth, was not often successful—the writer Robert Vaughan rather delicately commented that ‘Mr. Carlyle has not explained the principle on which he has endeavoured to separate the thread of truth from fiction’ in his biography of Cromwell, which was a frequent problem that often left his readers mired in his prose (*CCH* 265). However, the spirit and power of his inquiry hit upon an anxiety felt by his contemporaries about the costs of development in British society, which was moving ever further along. This chapter will therefore highlight how Carlyle elevated history and present conditions into a struggle for balance between the physical and spiritual worlds, and the terrible danger man courts by allowing the pull of materialism to overwhelm his sensitivity to Nature.

From his Romantic influences and origins, therefore, I will attempt to highlight the ideas that best gave Carlyle the structure and basis for his presentation of his time,

particularly his belief in the natural balance between the material and spiritual realms that he uses as entrance to his approach to history and myth, as well as his central thesis regarding Mechanism. The former can be found throughout his work, but I will particularly highlight examples in *Sartor Resartus* (1836) and some of his early essays on German literature; the latter is first established in 'The Signs of the Times', and elaborated upon in *Past and Present* (1843). Acting as a preacher and a prophet, Carlyle's myth of how all aspects of society were following the same path as industrialisation towards complete automation and mechanisation became a comprehensive narrative about the 'true' nature of the Industrial Revolution. Through the interconnectedness of Romantic sentiment with Carlyle's diagnosis of the Machine Age and Dickens's dramatization, I will illustrate the development of a coherent set of feelings towards industrialisation that derived from both spiritual and social concerns and impacted the attitudes of the general public.

German Romanticism and Carlyle's conception of the poet

Carlyle's conception of the poet, and mankind overall, can be traced to several features in German and British Romanticism. In particular, I will draw attention to the role of Goethe's conception of the balanced spiritual and physical components of the self, and the heroism of the individual, particularly the poet, found in both he and Percy Shelley's works. This will establish the foundation upon which Carlyle's social criticism rests, wherein he argues that mechanisation has disrupted this ideal form of being and achieving, resulting in political unrest. In this way, the disparity between his philosophical beliefs and what he observes of society makes use of Goethe's conception of man, while his own narrative becomes far more similar to *Frankenstein* in its critical stance on the lack of responsibility he sees among aristocratic 'Dilettantists' and entrepreneurial 'Mammonists', and his warnings about only caring, as Frankenstein had, about physical, rather than spiritual, development.

Much of Carlyle's critical engagement with his time period stemmed from his personal philosophical convictions as developed through his interest in German Romanticism. He was brought up under strong Calvinistic principles by way of his mother and father, the latter of whom Carlyle called 'a true workman in this vineyard of the Highest', and then studied at Edinburgh with an intention to join the church (*Reminiscences* 5). However, after a crisis of faith during his studies, he broke away from Christian tradition in favour of a personal form of transcendentalism that sought to find the

‘mysteries and harmonies’ of which Emerson believed ‘Men live on the brink’ (*CEC* 121). Carlyle’s movement towards transcendentalism did not always align with Emerson’s, however; it originated more from Goethe, for whom Carlyle held a lifelong admiration. He imagined Faust and Homunculus both as ‘workmen’ in both spiritual and material labours. In lieu of orthodox forms of Christianity that Carlyle found inadequate for contemporary society’s needs, Goethe provided the tools to accurately describe his reckoning of the estrangement of man from the spiritual world through the mechanisation of society. As such, his style and approach to social criticism reflect his conception of Victorian society’s increasingly mechanical thinking—that is, his understanding of Benthamite, utilitarian thinking—expanding to take the place of outmoded religious orthodoxies, ushering in what he named ‘The Machine Age’.²⁶

Carlyle’s early life stands him apart from the radicalism and freedom of Mary Shelley or Goethe’s younger years, making it doubly notable that several central strains of his social diagnosis of his age should carry many of the same strands of philosophical and narrative tone as those previous authors. Born in 1795, he was a contemporary of the Shelleys, but would not come into his own as a literary figure until well after most of the English Romantics had made their impact. His family was a warm and close-knit one, impressing upon him the value of self-sufficiency, independence, and disregard for social status as a source of authority. These principles would come to characterise Carlyle’s approach to his work, and the value he placed in work at large as a spiritual vocation. Later in life, he would become known for his plain speech and uncompromising presentation, such that his acquaintance, the novelist Margaret Oliphant, would remember most vividly,

...his intense peasant suspiciousness and distrust of his fellow-men, with his equally intense peasant expectation that here at last might be found...the brilliant talk and lofty thought which he had believed in from the time of earliest musings and eager hopes conceived in his father’s farmyard or among the beasts on the Annandale farm (115).

In this way, Carlyle came by his radicalism through his position as an outsider both ideologically and geographically, as a Scotsman living and observing life in London. This persisted throughout his life and writing; in some ways it could be seen as imitative of Goethe’s detached perspective, but Carlyle’s distrust of authority and ‘suspiciousness’ set him apart from his German colleague’s generosity, contributing to his far more

²⁶ Carlyle’s treatment of Bentham, which was both limited and ungenerous, seemed to rely heavily on Hazlitt’s assessment that he lived mostly in isolation, all the while ‘reducing law to a system and the mind of man to a machine’ (5). As a result, Carlyle’s critique of Bentham, when it appears, demonstrates Carlyle’s thesis on the increasing mechanisation of all aspects of modern life more than any understanding of utilitarianism.

contentious reputation. His ‘distrust’ of his fellow man never abated—if anything, it grew more severe. As Queen Victoria commented, having met him and several other notable writers for an evening, he ‘holds forth, in a drawling melancholy voice... upon Scotland and upon the utter degeneration of everything’ (qtd. in Pritchard 254). As his belief in the Goethean heroism of individuals like Faust increased, his desire for social responsibility and reform was forced to become ever more ambivalent due to its close ties to democratic movements.

Carlyle’s interest in German literature began as a result of attempting to keep up with European work in mathematics, which he studied at Edinburgh during his ‘hateful “Academy” life’ (*Reminiscences* 46). He became well-versed in German, and beyond mathematics he became exposed to German literature at large, and out of this exploration, Goethe emerged as Carlyle’s primary role model. Carlyle’s attachment to Goethe stemmed from both his ‘poetic worth’ and his journey towards eminence, which manifested first in his identification with Goethe’s struggles as a younger man, ‘whose voice came to me from afar, with counsel and help, in my utmost need’ (*CCG* 7). Carlyle’s ‘hateful’ experience at Edinburgh had been in part due to the crisis of faith he experienced, which turned him away from a clerical career and left him adrift as to what to do with his life. After leaving university without completing his degree, he acted as ‘mathematical master’ at Annan Academy, but also found it ‘flatly contradictory to all ideals or wishes of mine’ (*Reminiscences* 47). Fred Kaplan elaborates that during this early period, ‘Carlyle needed a literary father, an articulate embodiment on an international scale of the virtues that he himself was trying to emulate’ (167). This is consistent with how Carlyle initially presented himself in his letters to Goethe, wherein he expressed a desire to ‘one day see you, and pour out before you, as before a father, the woes and wanderings of a heart whose mysteries you seemed so thoroughly to comprehend and could so beautifully represent’ (*CLO* 24 June 1824).

Carlyle saw in Goethe both a guiding father figure and a wiser version of Carlyle himself, the both of them having undergone a journey of self-realization similar to that portrayed in *Wilhelm Meister*. Wilhelm too had rejected a career he had deemed soulless, and had struggled to find a vocation that suited him before committing himself to a philosophical pursuit. As part of his larger, matured conception of the modern hero, Carlyle’s figuring of Goethe as a literary presence hinged on his spiritual leadership as well as his art, the two being inextricably entwined. Moreover, as Elizabeth Vida points out, ‘Carlyle sees in Goethe’s novel the unfolding of a striving mind, a presentation of a moral

struggle for values, not necessarily characterizing its hero, Wilhelm, but rather expressing the experience of Goethe himself (13). When writing *Sartor Resartus*, Carlyle would similarly explore (among other dramatized life experiences) this period of transition and tumult in the telling of Teufelsdröckh's early life, thereby tying his experience to that of Goethe's Werter and Wilhelm. During Book II of *Sartor*, in a chapter appropriately called, 'Sorrows of Teufelsdröckh', Teufelsdröckh wanders extensively, filled both emotionally and spiritually with carefully restrained passion and chaos: 'He glides from country to country, from condition to condition; vanishing and re-appearing, no man can calculate how or where', carrying with him only 'A nameless Unrest' (124-5), which Carlyle had already cited of Goethe in an earlier essay (*CME* I: 188). Carlyle himself did not wander far, at least not geographically—he emerged, however, from Calvinism into a unique mode of transcendental thought which would determine his conception of a spiritual universe at odds with the increasing materialism and utilitarianism which he saw in the world around him. Throughout this transition, German Romanticism was an increasingly important presence in his intellectual life, particularly through its philosophical tenets, insofar as what Carlyle imagined Goethe's own spiritualism to be. The commitment to finding one's true vocation as portrayed in *Wilhelm Meister* not only spoke to Carlyle as a model for his own development as a man of letters, but also to a lifelong belief in the importance of the Romantic conception of the hero to historical work.

Thus, moved by his interest in literary pursuits and his antipathy for teaching, Carlyle began a meagre career writing translations, particularly of Goethe's works and of Schiller's, and introductory essays on German literature. His admiration for these voices give us insight into what he valued both in literature and in its audience. In his article 'The State of German Literature' (1827), he seeks to dispel the impression that the country's output is mainly the lowbrow Gothic horrors that had been so popular in the eighteenth century, but rather is rich with sophisticated and esoteric philosophical perspectives. The German horrors by Veit Weber the Younger and Kotzebue were, he argued, as good a representation of German literature at large as *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and, incidentally, *Frankenstein*, were representations of British literature.²⁷ Furthermore, he focussed on the more artistically open press he saw at work there, in which they 'seem to set less store by wealth than many of ours', and the German audience, which he thought were more welcoming towards esoteric works, while Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, for example, was

27 While this mention does not make clear whether Carlyle actually read *Frankenstein*, it does at least prove his awareness of it. It is not likely, as is fairly apparent here, that any similarities between it and his work were intentional.

‘triumphantly condemned...as clearly unintelligible’ by British critics (*CME* I: 56; II: 3). The freedom which he perceived Germans wrote with, and the subsequent purity of their authorial voices, as well as the compelling nature of their philosophical approaches ([Lessing] thinks with the clearness and piercing sharpness of the most expert logician; but a genial fire pervades him...He is a sceptic in many things, but the noblest of sceptics’), appealed to his own uncompromising authorial voice (60). The influence of these authors, as well as that of his British contemporaries, provide a portrait of the development of his philosophical views and approach to his work, as well as what he most valued in literature universally. Above all, whether or not scepticism and indeed criticism was ‘noble’ to Carlyle was clearly rooted in strength of feeling as well as reason, Romantic in its ‘fire’, incisive and socially relevant.

Similarly, the young Carlyle drew upon Goethe’s writing to begin resolving his crisis of faith into a belief structure both spiritually meaningful and without the potentially corrupt authority of institutional religion. In identifying with Goethe and his struggles as a younger man, Carlyle saw in him a demonstration that one could strive for a Romantic unification of the material and spiritual in a modern world. While many other poets fell by the wayside in Carlyle’s estimation over the course of his lifetime, Goethe remained free from criticism. While Carlyle’s more mature beliefs did not always align with his mentor’s, he maintained that they were in perfect agreement. We find, for example, a strong relationship between his beliefs and American Transcendentalism, best exemplified by his extensive correspondence with Ralph Waldo Emerson, which extended from 1833 to 1872, just following the death of Goethe. The American transcendentalists, particularly Emerson, debated Goethe’s works extensively, and were selective about their support of him. His brand of humanism was often considered troublingly atheistic, but on the whole his belief in the self-improvement of man through harmonious spiritual development was a source of encouragement for them. Both Emerson and Carlyle had grown up in strict religious households, making Goethe’s broad humanism difficult to access yet inspiring to their developing feelings on the inadequacy of institutional Christianity. ‘I fear, that Time, the serene Judge, will not be able to make out so good a verdict for Goethe as did & doth Carlyle,’ Emerson confided to his fiancée, Lydia Jackson, ‘I am afraid that under his faith is no-faith,—that under his love is love-of-ease’ (Rusk 241-2). For Emerson, Goethe’s conception of spirituality may have aligned somewhat with his own, but he found the older writer’s aristocratic lifestyle and somewhat atheistic spiritualism unappealing. Carlyle, by

contrast, turned a blind eye to it, ignoring Goethe's wilder behaviour in favour of emphasising his struggle. Nevertheless, he favoured in his own works the stricter attitude towards work that he and Emerson had been exposed to through Calvinism.

David Masson, a personal friend of Carlyle's, called Carlyle one of the original Transcendentalists, but in more specific terms claimed that while Carlyle had an appreciation and liking for '*Transcendental Idealism*', he fell rather more into the category of '*Transcendental Realist*' (73). This meant that Emerson defined Transcendentalism as 'the spiritual principle should be suffered to demonstrate itself to the end, in all possible applications to the state of man, without the admission of anything unspiritual; that is, anything positive, dogmatic, personal' ('The Transcendentalist' 325). In other words, he believed that the physical world was entirely reducible down to its spiritual reality as 'a mere complex phantasmagory of the present human spirit' (Masson 73). By contrast, in Carlyle's valuing of the material as a part of a larger cosmic balance that must be maintained, he placed far more weight on the physical world than Emerson, and in this way, his approach towards the balance between material concerns and spiritual ones were more similar to Goethe's than Emerson's, while still being distinctly transcendentalist where Goethe had not ascribed to such a label. Carlyle continually returned to Goethe's idea of *Bildung*, the notion of harmonious development of the self in both spirit and body. That illustrated the possibility of guiding society towards a unified knowledge, not through 'human religion', but through a form of higher faith that involved a certain element of *balance*, a consideration of material and immaterial processes as both equally important to the development of mankind. Like Goethe, he fixated on the harmony of the material and the spiritual, the natural and the supernatural, both important as the 'two souls' that 'reside within my breast'.

However, Carlyle's aggressive desire to pierce through the 'Shows and Shams of things' in order to reunite with the 'eternal Substance of things' does appear to echo Emerson far more than it does Goethe's more passive willingness to let the material and immaterial exist in tension, their contradictions to be 'widened' rather than 'reconciled' (*Past and Present* 171; *Faust* II: lii). It must be therefore concluded that, while Carlyle would ever regard Goethe as an eminent and unassailable literary presence, he did not always interpret his work as Goethe intended—oftentimes he read it as he wished to see it, fitting it into his own world view. The commitment to finding one's true vocation as portrayed in Goethe's novel not only spoke to Carlyle as a model for his own development as a man of letters, but also to a lifelong belief in the holiness of work in every walk of life. In a letter to

Goethe, he described the *Wilhelm Meister* as follows:

...the work, as it stands, has the singular character of a *completed fragment*; so lightly yet so cunningly is it joined together; and then the concluding Chapter, with its *Bleibe nicht am Boden heften* [do not stay clinging to the ground], as it were scatters us all into infinite Space; and leaves the Work lying like some fair landscape of an unknown wondrous region, bounded on this side with bright clouds, or melting on that into the vacant azure! (17 Jan 1828 *CLO*).

While the effusiveness of Carlyle's praise is perhaps only an indicator of his youth in comparison to Goethe's experience at the time, the value he finds in its transcendental qualities is most significant—the conclusion of the first part of the tragedy is an echo of Faust's original wish to find the highest kind of spiritual enlightenment. Goethe believed it to be well within our grasp to find such enlightenment, which Carlyle no doubt found comforting during his own struggles with faith. The scattering into 'infinite Space' seems more a fully transcendentalist feeling than what Goethe himself would come to express, however, particularly in his later works, which would become clearer upon the publishing of *Faust, Part II*, some years after this correspondence. At the time of Carlyle's correspondence, Goethe was far past the *Sturm und Drang* period of his life, which had been so prevalent in *Wilhelm Meister*, and while Carlyle first admired him for having emerged out of that period a stronger and more 'enlightened' person, whose vocation was assured and heartfelt, his own approach to writing would be far less relaxed than Goethe's enduring optimism, and far more rigorous in terms of how he formulated his own writing as an expression of prophecy. As was evidenced in the sprawling, questioning expanse of *Faust Part II*, Goethe's narrative style reflected remained an open and reaching inquisitiveness about the nature of the world and its spiritual realm that retained the inwardness of Enlightenment philosophy while reaching outward towards the material world. By contrast, Carlyle's creativity and search for knowledge in his early years may have been voracious, but his self-righteousness steered him away from such openness, towards an inward conviction that his own voice was as unassailable as his imagined ideal of Goethe. In this way, Carlyle's curation of Goethe's works in relation to his own is configured within his own structure of heroism as the keystone of both history and progress.

Having adapted Goethe's philosophy to his own ends, Carlyle's output then became demonstrative of how he applied his beliefs to his goals as a writer, such that literature became the bridge between the material world and the spiritual one, with which the morality of modern existence could be steered rightly. In this regard, his image of the

author—and consequently, himself—more broadly resembled that of the English Romantics, but with a further strain of resistance to socialist ideologies that would prove problematic throughout his works. Moreover, the importance of heroism to his work becomes a central feature in how he illustrated both past and present history. His contribution to the mythistory of industrialisation, therefore, is driven by his transcendental perspective as applied to the study of history and biography, the two of which he somewhat conflates.

Carlyle's conception and valorisation of the hero can be traced not only to his admiration of the larger-than-life figure of Goethe, but also Goethe's philosophical perspective on the nature of man, which held similarities to other German humanists of his time. Elizabeth Vida has specifically identified points of resonance between Schlegel and Carlyle, for example, which include the assertions that 'the transcendental relationship is stressed...as an important overall aspect in the work' and that 'the literary work is an expression of the whole man' (20). The 'whole man', in this case, is similar to Goethe's conception of the Homunculus, a channelling of spirit and divinity into a physical vessel, with both of those components of equal importance to Homunculus's ascension into Being. Carlyle's critical approach to Goethe is clearly conducted with this relationship between the author, the work, and its relationship to the world in mind, when he asks in introducing an essay on the poet, 'What manner of man *is* this? ...What is his spiritual structure...Has he any real poetic worth?' (*CME* I: 195). Carlyle's central concerns and reasons for kinship with German Romanticism lie in its orientation towards the spiritual role of poetry and the poet himself. Through Goethe's reconciliation of metaphysical ideas with material concerns, such that a 'rational unity' could be achieved in poetry, Carlyle was able to articulate the mechanization of both the physical and spiritual world, particularly in his imagining of 'the perennial Indwelling of God in Man and in the Universe' (Harding 277).

On the other hand, however, Vida's observation regarding 'the whole man' also points towards Carlyle's approach towards history, which breaks significantly from German Romantic tradition, but into which Carlyle then folded the work of many German Romantic authors, particularly Goethe. Hayden White has characterized it as 'The conception of history as the story of heroes', which is bound up in his conception of the 'whole man' (68). The 'whole man', in turn, is one who is able to see beyond the material world, and perceive a transcendental Truth. We have already seen a somewhat similar conception of the poet as hero in Percy Shelley's *Defence of Poetry* and *Prometheus Unbound*,

wherein the poet becomes the far-seeing governor of society. Carlyle takes that conceit further by binding the heroic role of the poet with the recording of history. By valuing the poet as much as his poetics, Carlyle's approach to criticism sits within his larger approach to the transcendental world and its progression through time; by this reckoning, the poet, as hero, is in a struggle against the tide of history. This creates, White argues, 'a panorama of happening in which the stress is on the novel and emergent, rather on the achieved and inherited, aspects of cultural life', which reflects Carlyle's engagement with the modern condition through its precedents in past heroes, such as Cromwell and Frederick the Great (149). It also, incidentally, places Carlyle and the contemporaries he respected in the position of poetic hero, such that their personal progress as reflected in their work becomes indivisible from the history that they inhabit. 'History, as it lies at the root of all science, is also the first distinct product of man's spiritual nature; his earliest expression of what can be called Thought,' Carlyle summarised, and thus defined history not only as an act of experiential and imaginative creation, but as deeply individual, and rooted in a select few with the vision to guide others towards heroism (*CME II*: 21).

Carlyle's vision of the hero and the writer therefore was ultimately built upon resistance to convention and authority, even as it touted new figures of authority, selected especially for the purpose of progress: 'Literature too is a quarrel and internecine duel, with the whole World of Darkness that lies without one and within one;—rather a hard fight at times, even with the three-pound secure' (*Past and Present* 104). Literature was, to him, a mission of conversion that one undertook to enlighten others and to combat what was wrong with the world, wherein change had to both be enacted and led by a figure of authority. Such figures of authority, to Carlyle's mind, were very hard to come by in the present day, as his letter to Matthew Allen attests:

There seems at present a general fermentation of minds, an indeterminate longing after something new, and a heartfelt nausea of the ancient nostrums which have so long delighted us...It is doubtless, however, a sign of the times, that so few writers or speakers of eminence have yet appeared to regulate or awaken the current of public thought' (7 June 1820 *CLO*).

In addition to anticipating one of his most important essays by invoking the 'signs of the times', his complaint identifies a deep connection between his conception of literature 'and the actualities of human life', and his definition of 'good' literature as ultimately pedagogic. In addition to explaining his antipathy towards a novel like *Frankenstein*, to which his work would nonetheless display some similarities, this further clarifies Carlyle's mission as one of mythmaking. In approaching both past and present history, Carlyle prioritised both the

physically documented experience of what happened and what he judged to be the most contemporarily relevant meaning of those events. Moreover, this was a vocational role, wherein the work of writing was a product of the Spirit being channelled through the writer. In this regard, his self-image might be consistent with Percy Shelley's imagining of the Man of Letters, who stood at the heart of *Prometheus Unbound*, but his preoccupation was not with that ultimate state, but rather with the struggle of the visionary hero against larger social forces, including those of collective historical memory. Carlyle addresses this concept in his short essay 'On History' (1830), which feels very similar in some ways to *Defence of Poetry* in its assertion of the poet's role in providing 'not melody alone, but harmony' through which we might understand the world (13). Carlyle takes this further however, noting that in regards to recording history, not simply the 'impressions' that an individual absorbs in a lifetime, it is also the poet's role to be selective:

...it is settled, by majority of votes, that such and such...are epochs in the world's history, cardinal points on which grand world-revolutions have hinged. Suppose, however, that the majority of votes was all wrong [*sic*]; that the real cardinal points lay far deeper: and had been passed over unnoticed, because no Seer, but only mere Onlookers, chanced to be there! (*CME* II: 87-88)

Carlyle defined history not only as an act of experiential and imaginative creation, but as deeply individual, and in need of individuals with great vision to even begin to understand the significance and insignificance of events. Moreover, this selectivity was driven, similarly, by the supremacy of certain individuals as embodiments of, or significant resisters to their age. Carlyle's distrust of the people's judgement was significantly more severe than Goethe's, such that the heroic history-maker is essential to his worldview. The key, he contends, is in a 'proper History of Poetry', which 'would depict for us the successive Revelations which man had obtained of the Spirit of Nature' (94). In this way, poetry becomes the ultimate history, not of events but of human progress, and its scribes become heroic. Vanden Bossche observes that 'the Carlylean hero is self-authorizing', and this is applicable in both the authorial and authoritative senses of the word (46). His conception of the writer both nominates his authority through his writing, and creates writing from himself. In this way, even his biographies can arguably be called 'usable history' for their importance to Carlyle's conception of heroes as part of learning from the past and moving society forward productively. Moreover, it is arguable that to create specifically usable history was Carlyle's goal—Lowell T. Frye has suggested that Carlyle's 'work of memory and imagination' is a 'moral imperative', such that, through biography, individuals might be 'ennobled' (Kerry 141). The fusion of transcendence and history through biography thus

becomes a sacred task, wherein the past becomes myth so that we might remember it. To conclude, the richness of Carlyle's international influences as well as his own upbringing contributed not only to his conception of the world he would set out to critique, but also the strategy which he would employ to express that critique, forming the foundations of a unique mythic authorial voice that would diagnose the ills of the industrial era.

Diagnosing 'The Machine Age'

Carlyle's cultivation of myth as an essential component to his interpretation of contemporary history can best be identified in his works directly dealing with the social unrest of the 1830s and 40s, leading to his diagnosis of mechanisation as the central ill of modern society. The outline of this diagnosis would be presented in one of his earliest essays, 'Signs of the Times', and then utilised in a longer essay, *Chartism* (1839). In 'Signs of the Times', Carlyle had not yet taken on his more prophetic, apocalyptic tone that appears in *Sartor Resartus* and then later, in *Past and Present*. However, he presents himself as an authoritative responder to those whom he identifies as the prophets of his time. He therefore engages with industrialisation because it is one of the prevailing topics of discussion among such peers. 'Signs of the Times', which was published in the *Edinburgh Review*, was Carlyle's first major foray into tackling industrialism and beginning the process of mythologizing it. By the time he began writing *Past and Present*, those ideas had solidified into a firm hierarchy not unlike the classical pantheons which, he argued, modern industrialism and capitalism, particularly laissez-faire economics, had disrupted. He first coined the term 'the Machine Age' here, and tackled the character of machinery, its place in society and the danger it poses by 'men grow[ing] mechanical in head and in heart' (*CME* II: 62). He expresses this through the lens of transcendentalism, thereby turning what could have been merely a discussion of the wide dissemination of material technology into a warning of spiritual peril. Moreover, over the course of this diagnosis, and then its more thorough exploration in *Chartism* and *Sartor Resartus*, we encounter the centre of Carlyle's own ambivalence about the industrial project, which comes to resemble *Frankenstein* in its doubts and narrative far more than he likely intended or wished.

'The Signs of the Times' was one of the clearest comprehensive efforts towards gathering the disparate elements of his personal philosophy and his practical social criticism together. It appeared during a period that felt transitional in the literary world, as had been expressed by Hazlitt in his survey, *The Spirit of the Age* (1825), the title of which likely came from Arndt's *Der Geist der Zeit* (1806), an anti-Napoleon call-to-arms for the German

people which he assembled through ‘historical and political sketches’. Hazlitt’s portraiture was, by contrast, composed of people, and the assemblage of cultural figures he chose as embodiments of the age were presented as having now lost their revolutionary voice: as he says of Godwin, ‘now he has sunk below the horizon, and enjoys the serene twilight of a doubtful immortality’ (29). By Hazlitt’s reckoning, the usefulness of the older generation of Romantics and, indeed, rationalists like Bentham, was long gone. Hazlitt’s preoccupation with the rudderless state of the 1820s was not limited to him; as John Stuart Mill would observe, ‘The first of the leading peculiarities of the present age is, that it is an age of transition. Mankind have outgrown old institutions and old doctrines, and have not yet acquired new ones’ (230). It would not be until twenty years later that Richard Henry Horne would feel confident enough to provide a direct and far more positive answer to Hazlitt’s retrospective with *The New Spirit of the Age* (1844). Even so, the lack of literary ‘genius’ during this time has been well-documented, such that it is still often considered a ‘fallow period’ in British literature (Schlicke 831).

Carlyle’s essay in 1829 therefore answers Hazlitt’s elegiac survey not by pointing to the next great voices of the coming age, but rather by observing the current state of things, and arguing that the cause of literary and cultural inertia is the mechanisation of society. The spirit of the age, he argues, is one of Machinery:

It is the Age of Machinery, in every outward and inward sense of that word; the age which, with its whole undivided might, forwards, teaches and practises the great art of adapting means to ends. Nothing is now done directly, or by hand; all is by rule and calculated contrivance...Our old modes of exertion are all discredited, and thrown aside (*CME* II: 59).

The article, while Carlylean in its fiery rhetoric, is also aberrantly straightforward, and thus serves as a useful framework for studying how Mechanism dominates his characterisation of his time period. As Raymond Williams summarised, the piece was ‘a direct response to the England of his times: to Industrialism, which he was the first to name: to the feel, the quality, of men’s general reactions—that structure of contemporary feeling which is only ever apprehended directly’ (85-6). This feel and quality was, importantly, distinctly different from past eras, and by naming the Age, Carlyle signals an epochal change in the nature of man’s interaction with himself and with nature. By doing so, he makes explicit the transitional feeling of *Faust*. Moreover, he unified this new epoch under the banner of ‘Mechanism’, which he claimed ‘has now struck its roots down into man’s most intimate, primary sources of conviction’ (*CME* II: 74). Machinery functioned as a physical, monstrous presence that estranged man from the spiritual world by distancing him from

his work through ‘contrivances’. Additionally, it symbolised society’s moral philosophy, thereby giving the time period a character, both ‘inward’ and ‘outward’, which possessed an internal logic and drew together the awe of technological innovation and the fear of its fallout. Paired with his later work, *Chartism*, Carlyle surveyed the process of industrialisation across the country and diagnosed a movement towards moral collapse driven by the mechanisation of social as well as physical processes. As a result, his interpretation of the Industrial Revolution was one of apocalyptic imagery and comprehensive declamations of greed.

‘Signs’ set the tone for *Chartism* a decade later, wherein he comments specifically on the disenfranchisement of the working classes:

If men had lost belief in a God, their only resource against a blind No-God, of Necessity and Mechanism, that held them like a hideous World-Steamengine, like a hideous Phalaris’ Bull, imprisoned in its own iron belly, would be, with or without hope,—*revolt* (*CME* IV: 146).

In Carlyle’s analysis of the economic and political ‘Condition of England-question’—a phrase coined in his essay and then utilised often by others afterward—he extends the metaphor of the machine to encompass specific examples of unrest and injustice, proving the effectiveness of his own narrative. The ‘World-Steamengine’, a literal expansion of individual men becoming ‘mechanical in head and in heart’, when compared to the Bull of Phalaris, a brass sculpture in which criminals were executed by roasting, becomes a hell on earth, untenable to its residents. Baldick has pointed out how Carlyle was fond of the Bull as an illustrative device, employing it also as the inevitable fate of the king of France during the Reign of Terror as well (94). It is well-chosen not only for the hellish death it inflicts, but also for its use as a manmade prison that also consumes its indwellers—an apt metaphor to pair with the ‘World-Steamengine’. Wendell V. Harris has noted that even more than ‘the spirit of the age’, the phrase ‘the signs of the times’ particularly preoccupied British writers, such that ‘the phrase appears with such frequency in early nineteenth-century essays that it seems to sum up an almost obsessive preoccupation with the state and prospects of the nation’ (444). Taken from the King James translation of Matthew 16:3, its purpose in biblical context is much the same as Carlyle intended.²⁸ By looking not for divine explanation, but rather the symptoms of a social malaise, he seeks to diagnose

²⁸ Matthew 16:1-4 (King James Version): The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. 2 He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. 3 And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? 4 A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed.

the underlying ills of the country.

Thus, while *Chartism* is a more exacting and thoroughly researched text, parsing the political and economic issues at stake in order to understand the plight of the poor, ‘Signs of the Times’ functions as a broader and more abstract diagnosis based in a collective cultural movement towards mechanisation. He argues, furthermore, that these signs have until now been misunderstood as a positive change:

Our worthy friends mistook the slumbering Leviathan for an island; often as they had been assured, that Intolerance was, and could be nothing but a Monster; and so, mooring under the lee, they had anchored comfortably in his scaly rind, thinking to take good cheer; as for some space they did. But now their Leviathan has suddenly dived under... (II: 58).

Carlyle notes, in his historical assessment of society, that there is ‘real magic’ in the spread of panic, and of belief. He maintains that there is a transcendent transference of information that shapes even enlightened society. Thus, the image of the Leviathan functions as a metaphor that not only is a precursor to Marx’s comparison of the bourgeoisie to the Faustian sorcerer unleashing a power that cannot be controlled, but also emphasises the transcendental side of modern reality. The creative products of man in the form of machinery may be cause for celebration, and for this reason Carlyle begins by praising the wealth it has allowed England to accumulate, and the overall improvement in quality of life it has ushered in: ‘We war with rude Nature; and, by our resistless engines, come off always victorious, and loaded with spoils’ (60). The cost of allowing Mechanism to dictate spiritual fulfilment, however, is of Faustian proportions. Just as Mephistopheles accompanies Faust for the rest of his life—at times acting in his place, as when he took over construction of Faust’s land to instead dig his grave—so is machinery following man into every aspect of his life. Thus, these ‘contrivances’ as they have been put to use have entirely ‘discredited’ man’s previous occupations, creating an apocalyptic time of crisis in which the nation has been abandoned by its soul, and as a result, its visionary leaders as well: ‘The King has virtually abdicated; the Church is a widow, without jointure; public principle is gone; private honesty is going; society, in short, is fast falling in pieces; and a time of *unmixed* evil is come on us’ (58, my emphasis). In this context, the mythological significance of the machine is in line with Promethean fire, a gift from the gods, but not a god itself, and worshipping it alone is idolatrous. Machines, therefore, are not simply a by-product of ceaseless striving, but through the ‘discrediting’ of old principles, are able to *proliferate* beyond the intentions of their makers, and have taken supremacy over all other realms of life. As we will see in *Sartor Resartus*, as well as his other works, he argues that

modern society has lost perspective on the world—its myopia in ignoring the higher spirit of Truth that is woven into the universe causes them to see only the ‘island’ of material wealth and surface social progress, and not the consequent instability that brings about the Leviathan’s dive under.

Herbert Sussman has observed that in ‘Signs of the Times’, ‘Carlyle sought to absorb the machine into his transcendental philosophy’, in the hopes that he could direct the use of machines away from total domination of material and spiritual life (15). This absorption is quantifiably thorough—in ‘Signs’, the machine is a symbol of the dissolution of one of Goethe’s ‘two souls’ that reside within Faust and Homunculus, and the embodiment of a new period in British society. Carlyle translates those two souls into the ‘Dynamic’ and ‘Mechanical’ components of nature:

...there is a science of *Dynamics* in man's fortunes and nature, as well as of *Mechanics*. There is a science which treats of, and practically addresses, the primary, unmodified forces and energies of man, the mysterious springs of Love, and Fear, and Wonder, of Enthusiasm, Poetry, Religion, all which have a truly vital and *infinite* character; as well as a science which practically addresses the finite, modified developments of these, when they take the shape of immediate “motives,” as hope of reward, or as fear of punishment (68-9).

In shifting the definitions of the spiritual and material, Carlyle makes use of Schiller’s invocation of dynamism in his works on aesthetics, wherein ‘the dynamic influence of feeling and passion’ must be ‘in harmony with rational ideas’ (‘Letters Upon The Aesthetic Education of Man’ 263). To Carlyle, however, Dynamism is the spirit which moves and inspires Mechanical labour. All scientific inspiration, technological or otherwise, is ‘in the obscure closets of the Roger Bacons, Keplers, Newtons; in the workshops of the Fausts and the Watts; wherever, and in what guise soever Nature, from the first times downwards, had sent a gifted spirit upon the earth’ (*CME* II: 69). In this way, he favours Dynamism in a way which eschews Schiller’s more equal regard for rationalism as a source of aesthetic judgement and creativity. In this way, it makes sense that, as Sussman notes, Carlyle’s discussion of James Watt and his steam engine in *Chartism* is ‘more appropriate to Faust calling up the earth-spirit than a practical Scotsman tinkering with the atmospheric engine’ (27). Watt is in the pantheon of modern heroes Carlyle would come to praise in *Past and Present*, and there is little to distinguish him from Faust—alchemical or technological, Carlyle argues that both men are ‘gifted spirits’ animated by Nature. It seems therefore an important irony that ‘mechanism’, of which Watt produces one form, is both the product of Dynamism, and part of the process of stifling it.

Carlyle’s lack of regard for rational reasoning in favour of intuitive feeling would

become a sticking point for his critics—the ‘principle’ by which Carlyle built his arguments were so based in individual ‘genius’ that it was nearly impossible for him to express a specific, institutional recommendation of reform to address the ills he excoriated. The inspired, Faustian man as an embodiment of Dynamism becomes the crux of Carlyle’s imagined solution to over-mechanisation and the central problem of his works. Yet his inability to articulate a prescription beyond the individual and the lack of such heroes appearing made his perspective more reflective of Mary Shelley’s trepidation than Goethe’s optimism.

Carlyle’s preoccupation with the heroic vision of the writer (and its attendant difficulties) becomes all-important when considering *Sartor Resartus* (serialised in *Fraser’s Magazine* 1833-4, published 1836), the most obviously Faustian of Carlyle’s works. Through Teufelsdröckh and his philosophical meditations, we encounter Carlyle’s imagined Faustian poet-hero and the historical and social conventions which he must resist. This ostensibly illustrated how individual leaders might remedy the problems outlined in ‘Signs’. Like *Frankenstein*, *Sartor Resartus* narrates a ‘demonic confessional story’, wherein the psychological turmoil of the main character is a cipher for a political and social climate (Levine 145). In *Sartor*, we see not only the first coining of the term ‘industrialisation’, but also Carlyle’s effort to combine the portrait of the heroic poet with socially engaged literature. Presented as a meta-fictional novel, Carlyle poses as editor and interviewer of the German scholar Teufelsdröckh, whose magnum opus, *The Philosophy of Clothes*, is explained and explored throughout the text. The ‘editor’ additionally presents a blend of commentary on the work itself and on the life of Teufelsdröckh to the reader, sometimes as told by Teufelsdröckh, and sometimes speculated upon by the editor. From this layered construction of biography, fiction, and philosophy, *Sartor Resartus* emerges as a blend of poetic constructions and more straightforward commentary on the shifting of societies and faiths. It also expresses Carlyle’s own antipathy for mechanism, as demonstrated by Teufelsdröckh’s moment of despair:

To me the Universe was all void of Life, of Purpose, of Volition, even of Hostility: it was one huge, dead, immeasurable Steam-engine, rolling on, in its dead indifference, to grind me limb from limb. Oh, the vast, gloomy, solitary Golgotha, and Mill of Death! Why was the Living banished thither companionless, conscious? Why, if there is no Devil; nay, unless the Devil is your God? (133)

The sentiment is a dramatized existential moment captured as it would be in a Romantic poem. Yet, as this passage is a character’s soliloquy, which is immediately afterwards

analysed by the meta-character, ‘the editor’, in a moment of broader social critique that again hinges upon the spiritual degradation that resulted from the mechanisation of the world. Outside of the novel, we are already familiar with Carlyle’s complaints from ‘Signs of the Times’; elsewhere, he had extended that critique to the modern commercial environment for literature, which had created Hazlitt’s much-mourned dearth of ‘speakers of eminence’. On the increasingly capitalist climate, Carlyle had observed in ‘The State of German Literature’:

...the votary of literature, the relation of entire dependence on the merchants of literature is, at best, and however liberal the terms, a highly questionable one. It tempts him daily and hourly to sink from an artist into a manufacturer...The German authors... have been prudent, quiet men among them, who actually appeared not to want more wealth...’ (*CME* I: 43-44).

Beyond holding an apparent greater regard for the virtue of German authors in their rejection of material greed, Carlyle took issue with the writer’s environment of the day, much as Schiller had complained of having ‘no listeners’. But Carlyle’s criticism is far more pointed—it is specifically the need to live by writing, and the ‘manufacturer’ that this environment creates, that he pinpoints. The difference between artist and manufacturer is distinct in this instance as a product of the latter’s mechanical nature, characterised by a lack of feeling, wherein production is for the sake of material gain, rather than artistic accomplishment. Carlyle thus sees the lag of the German Confederacy behind Britain in its development of capitalism as a boon. Even in this early observation, the demand for production rather than quality, and the greed that both drove and resulted from it, fit within Carlyle’s larger critique of a mechanised age. His critique on the artist versus the manufacturer is, like Dynamism and Mechanism, based in Schiller’s aesthetic theory and Goethe’s sense of human wholeness—the temptation of the British artist to eschew his Spirit in favour of money illustrates an estrangement from, and lack of consideration for, the spiritual component of existence, and indeed his source of ‘true’ inspiration. Carlyle would speak of the ideal ‘whole man’ in *Sartor Resartus*, wherein Teufelsdröckh relates the tale of a shoemaker who clothes himself in the leather he used to make shoes from. It is a very literal illustration of the embodiment of the man’s Spirit, otherwise stifled by the carelessness and material concerns of his community’s clergy, which must instead be expressed through his work. The shoemaker’s spiritual perception is like the ‘Fausts and Watts’ of ‘Signs’, his work a manifestation of the ‘Divine Idea’ which has chosen to manifest in him, and this distinguishes him from the manufacturer more than the specific

nature of his work.²⁹

Teufelsdröckh is shown to be a *Wilhelm*-esque character as well as a Faustian one, caught in the throes of indecision as to his place in the world, but tempted by something far worse than a devil, because ‘in our age of Down-pulling and Disbelief, the very Devil has been pulled down, you cannot so much as believe in a Devil’ (133). This, however, is merely an indication of the new lack of superstition that characterises modern society—the devil, Carlyle argues, is not truly gone, but rather has taken a new, internal guise. The devil is inside Teufelsdröckh, not a counterpart, but an indwelling presence in his own spirit that plagues him with a Mephistophelean cynicism. In this way, Carlyle makes use of Goethe’s version of the devil nearly explicitly; of Mephisto he had earlier written,

Goethe’s Devil is a cultivated personage, and acquainted with the modern sciences; sneers at witchcraft and the black-art, even while employing them, as heartily as any member of the French Institute; for he is a *philosophe*, and doubts most things, nay half disbelieves even his own existence...he is the Devil, not of Superstition, but of Knowledge’ (*CME* I: 135).

Broadly, this description of Mephisto demonstrates Carlyle’s understanding of Goethe to be driven by Carlyle’s own critique of pure rationalism—there is humour in a figure so averse to superstition that he, like Decartes, doubts his own existence. It is also clear that Carlyle does understand just how modern Goethe’s work was, not only in its relevance to present conditions, but its presentation of Mephisto as a reasoning, rather than tempting, being. Carlyle would take this characterisation further in *Sartor* by internalising the devilish impulse in Teufelsdröckh: Mephisto, ‘the very spirit of the age...with which he despises all things, human and divine...the Denier’ is an inextricable part of his Faustian Professor, making their roles as two sides of the same coin even more explicitly an expression of a singular human nature (135). Thus, Teufelsdröckh must resist the urge to ‘destroy Wonder’, and as such, he rails against the purely mechanical bent of the sciences that he sees society favouring. ‘The man who cannot wonder, who does not habitually wonder (and worship)’ he declares, ‘is but a Pair of Spectacles behind which there is no Eye’ (54). In this way, Teufelsdröckh embodies both Faust and Mephistopheles as he struggles with his own work, presenting a far less heroic figure than Faust, but one who is mired in

²⁹ Carlyle did much the same with his vision of his own work—his work ethic was often observed to be obsessive, his wife stating to friend Kate Sterling during his work on *Frederick the Great* that ‘we live here up to the eyes in *Frederick the Great*—and he is become such a horrid bore to me that I *dream* about him in my bad nights!’ (*CLO* 2 April 1855). But Carlyle himself emphasised the workmanlike quality of his labour: To John Carlyle, he had related the difficulties with writing the same work by commenting, ‘Horrors of drossy incoherency;—in fact, the whole story as my chaotic Prussians give it, after never such reading, *is* intrinsically like a mass of mere *slag*, the size of a waggon; which you have to hammer down (if you can) into *metal*, the size of a pint’ (*CLO* 23 Nov 1861). This is further illustration of his general conception of work both artistic and material, the two being indistinguishable except by the source of their inspiration.

present conditions and is nonetheless determined to resist its mechanistic trappings. Mephisto, as a 'Pair of Spectacles', is every bit the modern man driven only by Mechanism—he is an automata, even more than Frankenstein's monster, but he is also one half of a fully human existence, symbolising, in Carlyle's view, the modern condition at its worst and most empty of meaning.

Teufelsdröckh's journey as a scholar, therefore, is one of resistance to the prevailing temptation of Mechanism through the development of his Philosophy of Clothes, in which the metaphor of cloth functions as a form of veiling, wherein one must work to 'look through the Clothes of a Man (the woollen, and fleshly, and official Bank-paper and State-paper Clothes) into the Man himself' (53). Just as the shoemaker clothed himself in the material of his divine work, so must society identify the true material through which they are made, and throw off the garments of an unseeing population. Carlyle summarises that 'The beginning of all Wisdom is to look fixedly on Clothes...till they become *transparent*', such that Teufelsdröckh's ingrained disdain becomes a tool through which his better half perceives Wonder. By looking down upon the material trappings of Mankind, but more importantly also 'look[ing] fixedly' upon them, he sees also Man's high spiritual potential, and values both for their functions.

In this regard, the professor is somewhat Frankensteinian—what Teufelsdröckh must struggle with is himself, the mirrored relationship between Frankenstein and his monster expressed in internal struggle that moreover suggests the struggle of the body politic. He characterises Chartism as a 'chimera', a mythic creature that is only perceived to have been conquered, but in fact still lives to rise again. The metaphor of the chimera, a pieced-together beast that breathes fire, seems particularly apt both in the consolidation of the working 'class' from various previous lower class occupations as Frankenstein's monster would come to be used by Marx, and the fire it wields both in industrial work, and its oppressors whom it threatens.

Yet there is no body politic that can be properly read into Teufelsdröckh, or indeed into Carlyle as an author: Teufelsdröckh remains isolated and individual, in the manner of Faust—his care for the world is at one remove, and his struggle and divine inspiration is only conducted through him and his works. *Sartor* attacked the 'polite' literary establishment, and 'continued to regard personal independence as a prerequisite for a literary mission and as a key feature of an idealised republic of letters', and as such, it cannot be entirely reconciled to the social mission implied in Shelley's work, let alone her own radicalism (Morrow 36). Carlyle's distance, as an outsider in the Edinburgh and then

London literary scene, pervades his perspective and continually problematizes his social critique in *Sartor* and, more clearly, in his more obviously political texts. While *Chartism* presented us with an interesting similarity between Carlyle's conception of the working classes and Shelley's conception of the monster, for example, it is coloured by Carlyle's sense of heroic purpose. Carlyle's role in *Chartism*, however, is not just one of a sympathetic voice for the working classes, but an authority speaking for them. He makes gestures towards a Hobbesian sense of the body politic: 'The condition of the great body of people in a country is the condition of the country itself; however, he equally states a need for, 'a clear interpretation of the thought which at heart torments these wild inarticulate souls' (5; 6). As Justin Prystache has recently observed, 'This obsession with imperceptible roots is not confined to Carlyle: his desire to unearth, organize, and control the subterranean forces of society and the individual marks a larger trend in the first few decades of the Victorian period' (142). However, Carlyle is distinct in his desire to valorise the act of disinterment, as is portrayed through the metaphor of clothes in *Sartor*, and appears as his primary focus in his other works as well. In this way, the essay was an effort to give to Chartism the articulation which Shelley had given the monster through his own soliloquies, displaying not only use of the mechanism narrative at the heart of 'Signs', but also the developed authorial voice he established most strongly in *Sartor*. His chosen roles, however, as historian and voice of those he saw to be voiceless, converged upon mythmaking as an interpretation of the past and its importance to the present through the reading of mechanism as an encroaching force to be resisted. Equally, Teufelsdröckh, of 'unexampled personal character' asks that we, 'Sweep away the Illusion of Time; glance, if thou have eyes, from the near moving cause to its far distant Mover' (6; 210). But he makes no guarantee that any but a select few have such eyes, and he makes no clear account as to how we might emulate such sight, nor does he encourage it; rather, we must trust and follow that 'light' as best it is provided to us.

Goethe's perceived distance from his audience, which had been a source of criticism for Germans, had been earlier defended by Carlyle as, on the one hand, a demonstration of the egalitarian nature of the German press; and on the other, his position as 'a great Teacher of men' (*CME* II: 381). It is this same position that Carlyle assigned to Goethe that he sought to take up in his own country, to 'take his stand, even in these trivial, jeering, withered, unbelieving days; and through all their complex, dispiriting, mean, yet tumultuous influences, to "make his light shine before men," that it might beautify even our "rag-gathering age" with some beams of that mild, divine splendour' (198). *Sartor's*

continued use of a Faustian scholar, however, shut up in his house in Weissnichtwo, gave reason for British audiences to find Carlyle far more grating than Goethe had been to his countrymen, even as his foundational diagnoses of his age found purchase.

Through these earlier works, we are presented with the solidifying of both Carlyle's voice and approach to contemporary problems, which would become the guiding structures of his later works, even as his beliefs became more rigidly oriented towards conceptions of the heroic. If we are to accept LaValley's assessment of Carlyle's later, extended work, *Past and Present* as a prophetic work in which 'Carlyle primarily moves outward to survey dimensions of time, political institutions, and social groups that are at war with one another and engaged in the dialectic of contraries', then we can see the foundations of that strategy in 'Signs' through the establishment of the machine at the centre of Carlyle's critique, dictating through what it symbolised—mechanisation, soullessness, inhumanity—how the entirety of the machine age could be understood. In trying to steer his contemporaries towards industrialised golden age with ethical industrialists at its core, Carlyle presents the current state of affairs as a Faustian drama. Even without having ever mentioned the name 'Industrial Revolution', which would not happen in British culture until Arnold Toynbee's lectures during the 1880s, Carlyle managed in 'Signs of the Times' to have built up the foundations for the title through his transcendental historical perspective. However, the resolution of this drama he has explained cannot be found in either divine intervention or annihilation, and there stands the central problem of Carlyle's conception of both industrialisation and human nature. While the conclusion Carlyle reaches regarding the spirit of his own age is (reluctantly) Frankensteinian, his own philosophical position continues to closely resemble the poetic/heroic model of Percy Shelley or Goethe, in increasingly difficult ways. As will become clear in *Past and Present*, this would in part determine what of his mythmaking would continue to resonate past his lifetime.

Industrial heroes and devils in *Past and Present*

Past and Present is often regarded as the best single representation of Carlyle's work, because it presents the intersection of his philosophy and his historical method, which were hinted at in 'Signs' and 'On History' and emerged fully in *The French Revolution: A History* (1837). *The French Revolution* was what fully launched his literary career, impressing his audience by entrenching them in the events of the Reign of Terror. Those who were critical of Sartor

Resartus could at least not fault Carlyle's attention to factual detail in this new work, with which he had taken scrupulous care, and as such he established himself as a formidable intellectual as well as an innovative author with his historical study. *Past and Present* was published during this first upsurge in his popularity, and thus had a widespread and attentive readership. His eminence, at this point, became not just literary, but social—with his move to London, as David Masson has commented, 'he did burst fully upon the public...not only as the polyhistor, not only as the humorist, not only as the splendid prose-artist, but also...as the Chelsea Prophet' (66). His entrance into London intellectual life in 1834, followed by an arduous journey towards financial stability, settled by 1837 into popular acceptance of him as a formidable, if controversial, thinker. James Anthony Froude summarised:

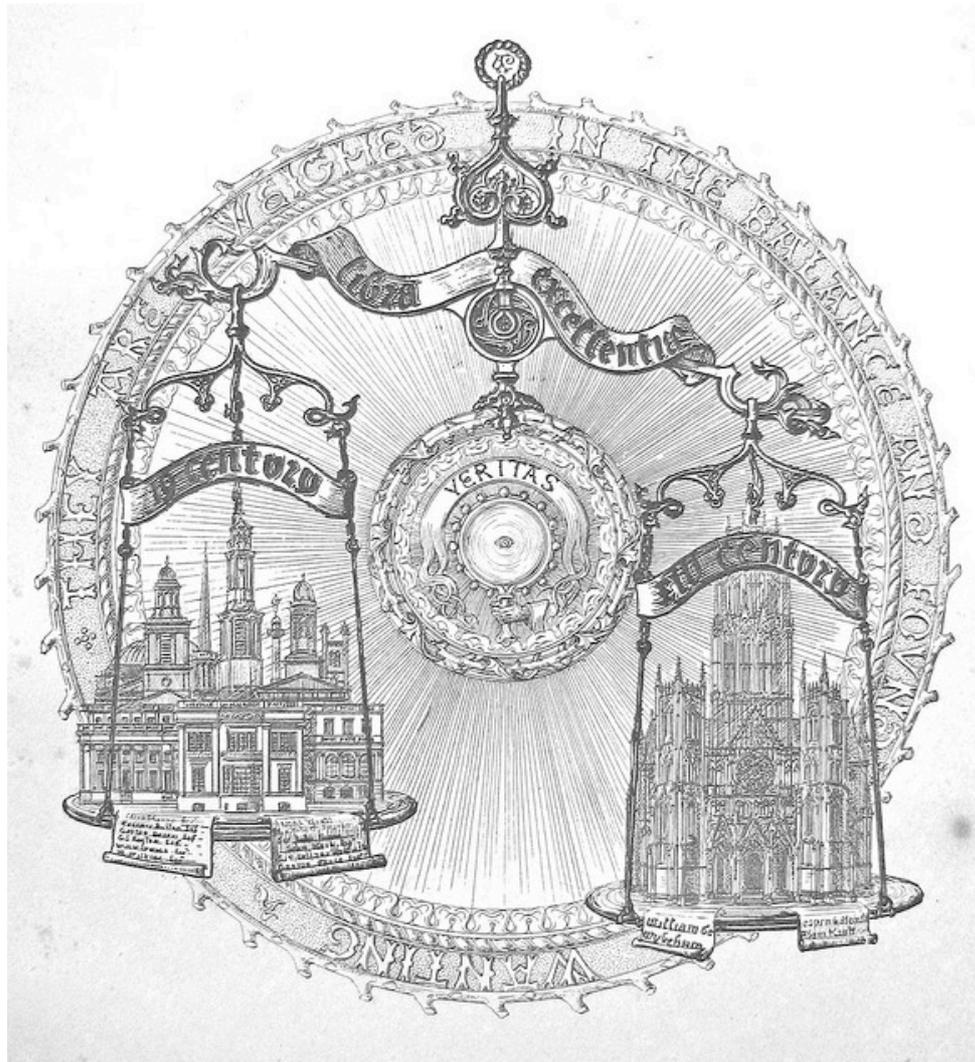
...he had taken his natural place among the great writers of his day. Popular he might not be...but he was acknowledged by all whose judgment carried weight with it to have become actually what Goethe had long ago foretold that he would be—a new moral force in Europe' (98).

Dramatic as such a description is, the company that Carlyle had begun to keep was impressive, his correspondences with Emerson and John Stuart Mill expanding to include Ruskin, Browning, and Froude himself, among others, while public interest in his writing noticeably increased, with the *French Revolution* 'steadfastly making way' (CLO 9 Oct 1837). Therefore, in terms of both dissemination and subject matter, *Past and Present* functions well in the context of this study as a distillation of Carlyle's ideas and their impact on industrial mythmaking.

Past and Present was written hurriedly between Carlyle's larger historical works, driven by his growing dismay at the condition of the working classes. He was attentive to the writing surrounding the conditions of the poor by his peers, having read the reports of Harriet Martineau and others and going to the London library often to conduct extensive research (CLO 24 Dec 1833). His work on Cromwell involved research trips upon which he witnessed examples of the factory system for himself, at one point visiting the St. Ives Workhouse in Cambridgeshire, one of the Poor Law Union sites. The workhouse appeared to him as a powerful symbol of the condition of the poor, of which he stated to John Sterling, 'my heart is sick to look at'. His use of the term 'Poor Law Bastilles' (a term used concurrently by Engels) also connected them symbolically to revolutionary and industrial unrest and injustice (CLO 23 February 1843). Such buildings had been criticised by others during this time, notably by Augustus Pugin, whose pamphlet, 'Contrasts' (1836), anticipated Ruskin's critiques of modernism:

All the mechanical contrivances and inventions of the day, such as plastering composition, papier-maché, and a host of other deceptions, only serve to degrade design, by abolishing the variety of ornament and ideas, as well as the boldness of execution, so admirable and beautiful in ancient carved works (35).

The panoptic prisons of Bentham's devising, and equally the workhouses of the poor which Pugin chose to present in his pamphlet, are transformed not only into examples of uniformity and stifled human creativity, but also moral degeneration. As Pugin summarises, 'They are weighed in the balance and found wanting':



Augustus Pugin, endplate of 'Contrasts' (118)

In *Past and Present*, Carlyle creates his own set of 'contrasts', but to somewhat less conservative effect than that of Ruskin or Pugin. As introduction, he stated, 'Out of old Books, new Writings, and much Meditation out of yesterday, he will endeavour to select a thing or two; and from the Past, in a circuitous way, illustrate the Present and the Future' (38). Thus, while he was nostalgic about the pre-industrial world and its connection to the

transcendental world, he makes no effort to sentimentalise it, or call for a return to it— instead, he selects features (specifically, heroes) of the past to use in order to understand and illustrate the modern world. He elaborates upon the ideas he articulated in ‘Signs of the Times’ by giving greater weight to England’s past and its models of social structure and leadership, while speculating further upon its future by again posing the ‘Condition of England-question’. Through his Romantic/heroic historiographical approach, he melds the philosophical content of *Sartor* with a comparison between the present and a mythic past. If we are to accept Masson’s assessment of Carlyle as a ‘Transcendental Realist’, then *Past and Present* appears to be a manifestation of that philosophy, extended and elaborated in order to address the social issues raised in ‘Signs of the Times’ and *Chartism*. Carlyle intermingles the natural and supernatural worlds in his prose such that the technological shifts and social upheavals in the present day resonate with, and are dramatized by, their effect upon the metaphysical layers of existence. *Past and Present* therefore emerges as partly a theistic socio-political reading of a slice of medieval history, and partly a transcendental interpretation of current affairs that use history as a source of authority and as a model of a healthier social hierarchy. By learning from the example of the past, Carlyle argues that there might still be a way to integrate technology into society without exploiting the working class.

Carlyle frames this argument with a series of contrasts between present day, and the medieval history of Bury St. Edmund’s Abbey, which he draws from the accounts of Jocelyn de Brakelond, an English monk who lived in the abbey and chronicled the years 1173 to 1202. The account had just recently been published at the time of Carlyle’s growing interest in writing on social reform, and in it he found the perfect historical complement to his contemplation of current events. He establishes the historical significance of the land as well as the Abbey itself, recording it as hallowed ground, to accompany the prophecy of other hallowed ground being set down in the present time in the form of monuments to Richard Arkwright and others. In his introduction to this time and place, Carlyle adopts an immersive narrative tone not unlike that which he used in *The French Revolution*, in which the past is just barely visible in the present time, emerging from and fading back into the shroud of time. His approach suggests the imaginative evocation of the past used by the writers of Gothic Romances, placing the reader at the site of the abbey’s ruins in their current state, and asking them to imagine it as it had once been. He emphasises the alien feeling of this past, a time which had not yet experienced the cataclysmic changes technology has since brought: ‘Side by side sleep the coal-strata and the iron-strata for so

many ages; no Steam-Demon has yet risen smoking into being' (66). He accompanies this sentimental portrait with a warning, however:

And yet these grim old walls are not a dilettantism and dubiety; they are an earnest fact. It was a most real and serious purpose they were built for! Yes, another world it was, when these black ruins, white in their new mortar and fresh chiselling, first saw the sun as walls, long ago (62).

There is much of Pugin to be found in this description of purposeful architecture, embodying the meaning of Christianity to its builders. Likewise, we are not meant to admire the ruins for their picturesque quality, but rather the purpose for which they were originally built. The ruins are, like everything else, transcendental objects, imbued with history and spiritual significance, and these things are as much 'facts' as the existence of the stones themselves. As Carlyle presents it, fact encompasses both material and spiritual reality, and his repetitions of 'fact' continually stand out in contrast to the confusion of present reality, in which this ability to read into material things their imbued natures has somehow been squandered.

Regarding the present, much of Carlyle's perspective continues to be diagnostic—he treats its most visible features as the manifestation of an underlying spiritual illness. Much of the present elements used as comparison to the past can be identified thematically with his earlier works on civil unrest—the initial chapters of *Past and Present* establish this again through a survey of the 'condition of England', which now not only appears mechanised and suffering for it, but also under an 'enchantment' which prevents public comprehension of the problem. The victimised working class are suffering are 'hidden from all but the eye of God' and likewise 'are forbidden to obey' the laws of that same God (3). Carlyle's assessment that England is 'dying of inanition' stems from a physical and psychological imprisonment in a systemic suppression of human nature (1). His diagnosis therefore explores the nature of this imprisonment by comparing former social structures to present ones, and engaging in 'seeing' until present trappings become 'transparent', as Teufelsdröckh had sought to do.

Present conditions are in part initially addressed through Carlyle's discussion of the Manchester Insurrection, which follows his more abstract introductory chapters. The event in 1819 was a culmination of unrest in Britain feared to be heading in the same direction as the French Revolution, remarkable for the scale, pageantry, and most importantly, the discipline exercised by those demonstrating. E.P. Thompson notes specifically how this last feature alarmed both the aristocracy and the middle class: 'The gentry, who had decried the reformers as a rabble, were appalled and some were even panic-stricken when they found

that they were *not*' (747). That the crowds were therefore met with such violence on the day of what became pointedly known as the Peterloo Massacre united many groups of reformists while drawing firm lines against loyalists. Carlyle, writing about it in 1843, presents it as simultaneously past history and part of a continuous accumulation of social problems that have not abated. Moreover, he argues, it is a 'mere announcement of the disease' rather than any end to the country's problems, and does nothing to illuminate the source of unrest, which remains obscured:

What other could they do? Their wrongs and griefs were bitter, insupportable, their rage against the same was just: but who are they that cause these wrongs, who that will honestly make effort to redress them?...Oh, if the accursed invisible Nightmare, that is crushing out the life of us and ours, would take a shape; approach us like the Hyrcanian tiger, the Behemoth of Chaos, the Archfiend himself; in any shape that we could see, and fasten on!...Show him the divine face of Justice, then the diabolic monster which is eclipsing that: he will fly at the throat of such monster, never so monstrous, and need no bidding to do it (16; 15).

Despite his sympathy for the working class plight, and a general echoing call for 'A fair day's-wages for a fair day's-work', we see some of the assumptions about the demonstrators that Thompson has found in the gentry (18). Carlyle was perhaps not dismayed by the discipline of the 'mob', but he certainly continues to assert their lack of direction and need for a form of benevolent authority. The mob might be 'noble', the highest of accolades that Carlyle gives, but it is also 'inarticulate', in need of a governing body 'that *can* articulate and utter, in any measure, what the law of Fact and Justice is' (17). In this regard, Carlyle completely misunderstands the demands of the workers—he states that they ask, 'if you declare that you cannot lead us' do you 'expect that we are to remain quietly unled, and in a composed manner perish of starvation?' (18). He assumes the need for leadership, rather than personal agency and political voice. Nevertheless, articulate or inarticulate, what Carlyle emphasises most is that all parties are entrenched in the 'invisible Nightmare' which obscures for each the source of their fear: the mob's rage is directionless because it knows that something is wrong, but does not know who to blame, and society fears that mob because they mistake a cry for justice as a malicious one. *Past and Present* therefore becomes an effort 'to let-in the blessed sunlight' such that its readership is also able to understand these 'most intricate obstructed times!' (265; 18).

This brings us back to Carlyle's original conception of the Machine Age, which would then become further articulated through the framework of hero-worship. He first states much of the same criticism he had levelled at the general mechanisation of society in 'Signs of the Times'; in attacking the principles of utility, he was attacking what appeared to

him to be the root of mechanical thinking. In Book III, which centres on the Modern Worker, he states:

God's Laws are become a Greatest-Happiness Principle, a Parliamentary Expediency: the Heavens overarch us only as an Astronomical Time-keeper; a butt for Herschel-telescopes to shoot science at... This is verily the plague-spot; centre of the universal Social Gangrene, threatening all modern things with frightful death (136-7).

The Greatest Happiness Principle, as Carlyle appears to understand it, embodies the nation's preoccupation with numerical values without regard for their true meaning. He places the root of capitalistic greed and hyper-rationalism unfairly at Bentham's door, attacking the reduction of human nature to a set of desires and impulses. He does so by an act of reductionism himself, in reducing Bentham's ideas to a matter of 'Expediency'. In a way, he and Bentham both encounter the basic problem that was also met by historians in the twentieth century: how does one quantify quality of life, or its improvement over time? Bentham tried to address this directly with elaborate lists of pain and pleasure in *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1781). But Carlyle was dissatisfied with any theory that necessarily comes between man and nature by attempting to quantify and parse emotional or spiritual needs through their physical manifestation. This was, to his mind, very much treating the symptoms rather than the illness. Moreover, 'happiness' as a measure is found entirely wanting; 'nobility' is instead sought, while 'work is alone noble' (153). Relying on Mechanism in this way, in the guise of utility, caused everyone to 'plead and speak, in our Parliaments and elsewhere, not as from the Soul, but from the Stomach', and made it easy for the middle class to reduce the needs of workers to numbers in a ledger (154). Carlyle called, therefore, for a reconnection with the original order of past generations' value system: 'Labour,' Carlyle wrote, 'must become a seeing rational giant, with a *soul* in the body of him, and take his place on the throne of things' (170). Labour, as an idealised notion of work that is both spiritually and physically fulfilling along the lines of vocation, must be rediscovered and placed correctly on within the hierarchy that Carlyle comes to establish, first historically in his commentary on a monastic order at St. Edmundsbury, and then metaphysically in his commentary on the modern worker.

The central tenet of this critique is formed through the repetition of imagery and idea through historical setting and semi-allegorical dialogue. From de Brakelond's account Carlyle paints a portrait of organisation, and virtuous human leadership and work, which he holds up to modern society, which consists of a dissipated aristocracy, opportunistic 'worshippers of Mammon', and working class automatons that function and suffer at their

employers' behest. In *Past and Present*, the heroic people of the past are much like the architecture amidst which they lived: "These old St Edmundsbury walls, I say, were not peopled with fantasms; but with men of flesh and blood, made altogether as we are" (62). Equally, Carlyle implies, we have the same divine potential, but it has become estranged from us. Raymond Williams suggests that "The emphasis on a general common humanity was evidently necessary in a period in which a new kind of society was coming to think of man as merely a specialised instrument of production" (59). In Carlyle's emphasis upon the heroic people of the past, we find this 'common humanity' emphasised chronologically, as well as across classes. The potential to recapture divinity in the present must be reasserted. Here, the intersection of Carlyle's pantheon with reality, and more importantly its effect on his mythological conception of the industrialised world, becomes visible. 'Labour' as a concept that must be placed on the 'throne of things' manifests materially as the Captains of Industry, whose calling to the task likewise must be spiritual as well as physical in order to lead justly.

Abbot Samson is a very different leader than the Captains of Industry which Carlyle would come to call for—religious duties and religious communities had to give way, necessarily, to the duties and structures of industrial work. However, the demand that "To be a noble Master, among noble Workers, will again be the first ambition with some few; to be a rich Master only the second" remains across the past and present (334). In this regard, Carlyle departed significantly from Ruskin and Pugin's evangelical viewpoint, and returned more strongly to his Calvinist conception of the 'Divineness of Labour' (296). Samson's role as a moral leader is of principal importance to Carlyle, and so rather than calling for a return to a medieval order, he adapts Samson's role into that of the Captain of Industry. In doing so, he makes a point of what society's role in the creation of these Captains are to be—he interprets the election of Samson as Abbot a demonstration of heroic people voting heroically, with the rejoinder that "A heroic people chooses heroes, and is happy" (95). Chris Vanden Bossche has recently made a case for a softer reading of Carlyle's ideas of authority in this context; he argues that "Carlyle's concern...is not so much to deny agency to the lower classes as to redefine agency in social, rather than individual, term" ("Chartism, Class Discourse, and the Captain of Industry" 30). This perhaps sheds some light on Carlyle's somewhat murky conception of a heroic people, whose creation seems to fall into place once their governors have taken power and begun guiding them. Vanden Bossche conceives of the relationships between the Captains and their employees as both fraternal and paternal, thereby creating a two-fold hierarchy that

encourages fairness while also keeping order.³⁰ Nevertheless, there remains a final hurdle of transformation in both the past and the present, in that these labouring masses must be ‘noble’ and willing to be led by the correct heroes. It is at odds with contemporary ideas of empowerment, but certainly consistent with Carlyle’s antipathy towards democratic order, as well as his vision of these roles, leader and follower, being intuitive behaviours, dictated by divine force. Indeed, Samson is almost entirely described as being of natural good instinct and leadership: ‘in the man himself there exists a model of governing, something to govern by! ...He has the living ideal of a governor in him...’ (88). In this way, he resembles the hero-poet, or Teufelsdröckh’s shoemaker—his career has not been chosen by him, but is instead a divine calling. Carlyle describes natural, inborn leadership that manifests as an almost instinctive head for business and a strict moral code, traits which he sees nothing of in modern politicians or parliament.

In this light, Carlyle argues that modern Britain has not chosen its leaders heroically. We also see how his diagnosis of the Machine Age returns to the doubt of *Frankenstein*. When we return to the present in Book III, it is to find all of those mists shrouding the past once again, and furthermore, our own current state is also veiled. What everyone must then see is the truth that Carlyle has already seen, and which he illustrates fully when he moves from his portrait of the past back into the present. He was to accuse the current reigning authorities of modern society, which he names ‘Mechanism’, ‘Dilletantism’, and ‘Mammonism’—a ‘Demonic Triad’—which have alienated man from his natural noble impulses and beliefs. Moreover, in explaining the meaning of this triad, Carlyle betrays an implied Frankensteinian narrative amidst his historical analysis, wherein the overvaluing of Mechanism and Mammonism creates the educational blindness in the ruling classes that we have seen in Shelley’s novel. Mechanism, already thoroughly established in ‘Signs’, is followed by Mammonism, the personification of cold-blooded capitalism. It is the primary force that Carlyle’s poetic sight must pierce through, and it represents how wealth has become an illusory replacement for moral rightness, forming the foundation for the obstruction found between man and his sense of justice, and the prison Labour, as the modern worker, finds itself in: ‘Industrial work, still under bondage to Mammon, the rational soul of it not yet awakened, is a tragic spectacle’ (207). It is important to note that industry is not what is under attack here, but rather the motivations that drive it. Carlyle addresses this from a number of different angles, with Mammon

30 These relationships do not always fall smoothly into place, but the idea of collective agency is one that will prove especially important when considering Marx. His conception of the collective class, both free and unified, bears surprisingly more resemblance to Carlyle’s ideas in this light.

appearing both in the present and the past, but while Samson rejected him, present society has come to idolise him.

Money, for Carlyle, becomes the object of fevered obsession in the place of Frankenstein's mission to create life, and Carlyle references this clearly when he states the nature of man functioning under Mammonism: the 'mutual hostility' driving capitalist competition creates 'the total separation, isolation' which only imitates society, mimicking Frankenstein's isolation in his work (146). Meanwhile, the 'unreposing Mammon-worshipper again, driven, as if by Galvanisms...rises early and sits late, chasing the impossible' (218). Frankenstein's Monster, by this reasoning, did not go wrong because of his creator's natural limitations, but because he was animated only by an imitation of divine power, rather than its true spirit. Galvanism, as a false creator of life, becomes a perfect simile for the power of money, which mindlessly animates its seekers. Dilettantism thus becomes the third entity, which again has a Frankensteinian character, and which embodies both the aristocracy and any other leader who has otherwise been unresponsive to the changes happening around him. Carlyle condemns it with the statement, 'Idleness is worst, Idleness alone is without hope' (146). Idleness also, he implies with the forward-looking mention of 'hope', is the result of being unwilling to take responsibility for the current state.

In reaction to this Triad and their roles in the current climate, Carlyle demands: 'we must learn to do our Hero-worship better; that to do it better and better, means the awakening of the Nation's soul from its asphyxia, and the return of blessed life to us,—Heaven's blessed life, not Mammon's galvanic accursed one' (35). This final diagnosis importantly ties Mammon to galvanism, connecting the worship of him to the project that Frankenstein had once undertaken. In this, we see the gap between Carlyle's ideal world and the one he sees, and it is the difference between Faust's salvation and Frankenstein's failure. In some ways, Carlyle remains wedded to the Faustian religious tone—Mammon is 'a very despicable devil' whom men have come to worship falsely; however, there is nothing collaborative between men and this particular devil (67). Rather, with false worship of material gains, we see much of the character of Frankenstein in the eagerness to build industry and reluctance to then take responsibility for its trappings. Despite Carlyle's apparent dismissal of *Frankenstein* as a shallow horror novel, the shape of his imagined history of industry very much resembles its narrative trajectory. He, like Frankenstein, asks that we 'be men, be more than men!' because divine mission has been diverted by the refusal of industrial leaders to pay fair wage to their workers. He wishes that instead, the

Captains would come forward and do as Samson had, which was to have ‘ruled and fought not in a Mammonish but in a Godlike spirit’ (294). The failure of the Promethean spirit in the face of industrial development is what ultimately causes Carlyle to name machines ‘Steam-Demons’, rather than Steam-Gods. Elizabeth Barratt Browning, in a sensitive and thorough exploration of his cumulative works, seems to have picked up on Carlyle’s affinity for Goethe’s holistic worldview in this context. She stated, ‘He proceeds, like a poet, rather by analogy and subtle association than by uses of logic. His illustrations not only illustrate, but bear a part in the reasoning’ (CCH 244). In *Past and Present*, this poetic style and reasoning manifests in his analysis via this pantheon of usurpers, which both exist as an analogical reading of social classes and prevailing ‘mechanical’ views, but also directly analyses their effect upon physical conditions within industrial Britain. Furthermore, his illustrations in the context of a historical ideal of a Faustian, or even Promethean hero, creates crucial associations between epochal change in the form of ‘Mechanism’ and how it can, in turn, change human behaviour and thought, if not necessarily their essential nature.

Yet there is still hopefulness to Carlyle’s writing at this time—he remains convinced not only of an absolute truth, the eternal ‘fact of things’, but also man’s ability to capture it again even in an age of machinery: ‘Yes, here as there, light is coming into the world; men love not darkness, they do love light’, even when it is buried under worship of false gods and materialism. He finds ‘brutish empire of Mammon cracking everywhere’, particularly through his fellow transcendentalists in America. His metaphysical realm is transformed through, appropriately, a process of dethronement of old and new gods: ‘Chronos is dethroned by Jove; Odin by St. Olaf: the Dollar cannot rule in Heaven forever’ (364). This prophecy, however, was to go unfulfilled. The heroic model of social change did not come to fruition. As a result, what Carlyle immortalises most, and what we remember most, is the rise of industrialism not simply as a time of economic or technological change, but a more permanent spiritual change as well, a transformation by mechanism both within and without. Furthermore, the moment of change from one to the other lies in ‘The huge demon of Mechanism’ which ‘smokes and thunders, panting at his great task, in all sections of English land; changing his *shape* like a very Proteus; and infallibly, at every change of shape, *oversetting* whole multitudes of workmen...’ (CME IV: 142). In illustration and in argument, Carlyle makes a case for the Industrial Revolution as a noble endeavour that has been turned off course by Frankenstein’s blinkered obsession, and as such, ushers in a more permanent Machine Age.

Absent heroes and present machines: Carlyle's legacy

Towards the end of his life, despite Carlyle's later writings becoming more radical and less appealing to the wider public, culminating in the highly controversial *Latter-Day Pamphlets* (1850), his body of work and position as a public voice had an unquestionably deep influence upon his audience and peers, such that, 'His ideas coloured the very talk of the street' ('Lecture on Thomas Carlyle' 11). This was not an influence always welcomed; as G.B. Tennyson has pointed out, 'Carlyle succeeded against every odd; he simply imposed himself upon his contemporaries. He would be heard; and he was heard' (qtd. in Fielding 34). What specifically in his work was heard, however, varied widely—amidst resistance to Carlyle and respect for him, his hostility towards traditional Christianity as well as his difficult prose style sometimes stood between critics and their engagement with the root of his ideas. Nonetheless, his central diagnosis of his age, and the way in which he configured history as both documented events and subjective, transcendent experience had a clear impact upon his readers and upon other writers. His rejection of democracy ensured that his legacy would not always be secure, and would indeed suffer significantly in the twentieth century; nonetheless, his social diagnosis continues to resonate in productive, mythistorical ways.

Within Carlyle's lifetime, he experienced increasing eminence as a literary figure which can be further broken down into his initial rise to popularity with *The French Revolution* in 1837, sustained through *Past and Present* (1843) and a series of well-attended lectures in which a portion of *Past and Present*, as well as 'Chartism' and 'Heroes and Hero-Worship' were delivered. He died in 1881 while still eminent and respected, and in his sermon, Arthur Penrhyn Stanley noted:

Who can ever, from this time forward, picture the death of Louis XV, or the flight of the king and queen, without remembering the thrill of emotion with which, through the *History of the French Revolution*, they became acquainted with them for the first time? Who can wander amongst the ruins of St. Edmund's at Bury without feeling that they are haunted in every corner by the life-like figure of the Abbot Samson, as he is drawn from the musty chronicle of Jocelyn? (Seigel 516)

Stanley appears to assert that the 'thrill' of Carlyle's historical works, and indeed even of the hybrid works like *Past and Present*, were most successful for their infusion of Carlyle's vision into the British landscape and memory. The observation resonates with other views upon Carlylean history; J.S. Mill had, in earlier years, praised *The French Revolution* for being, 'not so much a history as an epic poem' and its 'ability to make the abstract facts of the past become realities of the present', which articulates perhaps more accurately the immersive

heroic voice that both presents the documented past and centres it upon that voice's own visionary understanding of the meaning of those events (*CCH* 52). In this way, it is arguable that Carlyle succeeded in his mission to become a heroic figure, his vision of history impressing itself upon the consciousness of his readers. That he brings the past to bear as usable history, to the extent that it becomes a 'reality' once again, seems particularly apt evidence of the effectiveness of Carlyle's historiographical strategy, and his ability to transform history into mythistory for a receptive audience.

This diagnosis had an impact beyond direct critics of Carlyle's work as well; Raymond Williams particularly cites the debt Matthew Arnold owed to 'Signs of the Times' for his analysis of mechanisation in *Culture and Anarchy*, as well as the closeness between Carlyle's call for a responsible aristocracy and Disraeli's in *Sybil*.³¹ Through Emerson, his works were widely read in the United States as well as Britain, and the richness of his intellectual circle in London, including Tennyson, Martineau, and the Brownings, ensured that the preoccupations he displayed in his writing also received a direct audience. Clear traces of Carlyle's diagnosis can be seen also in Ruskin, when he describes the mechanical reductivism of modern political economy as comparable to 'a science of gymnastics which assumed that men had no skeletons' (19).

On the other hand, Carlyle's trust in the leadership of heroes was found by many to be inadequate for the societal ills he identified, and his intractability on the matter as he aged began to wear on both friends and critics. George Meredith wrote that he was 'a heaver of rocks and not a shaper', summarising Carlyle's combativeness and inability to fully articulate his prophetic solutions at once (*CCH* 1). His emphasis upon 'seeing' the

31 Carlyle's effect upon its industrial subset was highly significant beyond the works of Disraeli, most notably through Dickens, who held a lifelong admiration for Carlyle which manifested in the anti-Utilitarian stance he took in several of his novels. *Hard Times* dramatized both the damaging effects of a purely Utilitarian education and the mechanisation of the industrial city of Coketown, and went so far as to borrow the metaphorical structural of the Demonic Triad of Past and Present by grafting it onto individual characters. Elizabeth Gaskell was also an admirer of his work, and Carlyle, in turn, thought highly of *Mary Barton*, a copy of which had been sent anonymously to him, and which clearly owed much to his work: 'I gratefully accept it as a real contribution (almost the first real one) towards developing a huge subject, which has lain dumb too long, and really ought to speak for itself,' he wrote to Gaskell (8 Nov 1848 *CLO*). This 'huge subject', given the nature of Gaskell's work, certainly revolves around the Machine Age aspect of Carlyle's work, rather than his treatise on the great man theory of history. George Eliot wrote enthusiastically of him in her letters, and sent Jane Carlyle a copy of *Adam Bede*, in which she observed that while the steam-engine only pretended to afford the modern person leisure, that modern person could at least be consoled with the pleasure of reading *Sartor Resartus* (462). Charles Kingsley went so far as to include Carlyle in *Alton Locke* (1850), wherein the author appears both as a voice of the age to be discussed by the public, but also an inspiration to Alton Locke as he joins the Chartist movement and aspires to be a poet. The exploration of the poor conditions of the industrialised working class had been gaining momentum throughout Carlyle's rise to fame, most notably through the work of Gaskell's father and Harriet Martineau, and as we will see, through the thorough research of Engels for *The Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844*, but Carlyle's articulation of the 'Condition of England-Question' placed them in a frame of inquiry that stuck in the consciousness of his contemporaries.

fact of things as an almost magical catalyst towards heroism could not hold water with his more practical critics.³² This makes his diagnosis, however, all the more significant in its persistence, particularly in the way it was observed by others, even in his most difficult texts: '[*Sartor Resartus*] is in thorough opposition to the materialism and mechanisms of our grooved and iron-bound times,' Nathaniel L. Frothingham observed for *The Christian Examiner* in 1836 (CCH 43). In his review, he predicted a polarised reaction to the 'freakish form' of the text, yet not only endorsed the unique intellect behind it, but also took up in his review the language of Carlyle's diagnosis, in recognising the age as 'iron-bound'. The machine as the defining feature and symbol of the age found a receptive audience, not only among Romantic poets like Shelley, but the next generation of Victorian novelists, who have formed so many of our impressions of what the Industrial Revolution might have looked and felt like.

The usability, also, of Carlyle's history of the Industrial Revolution beyond its own time frame, must also be recognised. While his phrase 'The Machine Age' would not gain as much immediate traction as 'Frankenstein's monster' as a turn of phrase, it would become particularly relevant in the twentieth century when production across the western world ushered in an entirely new kind of war.³³ It was also a commercial catchphrase: by 1927, the 'Machine Age' became a heroic label for the productive power of American industry. As Alan Trachtenburg has summarised,

The idea of the Machine Age helped the nation understand and negotiate its rush from a predominantly rural, Protestant society to an urban, modern world of automobiles, radios and electric toasters. Itself one of the cardinal inventions of the era, the concept provided a lens through which the society focused its self-image (1).

This reinvention of Carlyle's myth seems particularly ironic in its embrace of capitalism and material consumption, but ultimately its association with epochal change for both the physical and spiritual world remains. Equally, the doubts about the consequences of such change would also remain. In a recently rediscovered manuscript, the mathematician Norbert Wiener, whose perspective on technology, epitomised by his article 'Cybernetics' (1948), has continually been found prescient, warned in 1949 that 'If we combine our machine-potentials of a factory with the valuation of human beings on which our present

³² This would obviously only become more problematic in the twentieth century, when any notion of the benevolent dictator became untenable. Carlyle's legacy in this regard suffered hugely under the pall of Nazism, and while interest in his heroic philosophy has since picked up again, it is with a careful distancing of his views from any usefulness in present conditions.

³³ The 1920s became the most well known Machine Age, when, as *TIME* put it, 'there [came] an apparent peak in the production of new inventions in the field of machines' ('The Machine Age' n.p.).

factory system is based, we are in for an industrial revolution of unmitigated cruelty' (7). Wiener touches both on the immense cost potentially felt by workers whose labour might be automated, and the source of that suffering in their socio-economic worth. While the idea of complete replacement of the workforce with machines seemed far more likely in the twentieth century than in the previous, it remains an extension of the pattern of seeing, Carlyle would argue, through Mammonist eyes. Such calculated cruelty, he might contend, only exists because we have chosen to value people only for their monetary output, and in doing so, 'Their whole efforts, attachments, opinions, turn on mechanism, and are of a mechanical character' (*CME* II: 63). Undeniably, this ambivalent process of technologically-induced revolution began far before the twentieth century, in an earlier industrial revolution, and in the reuse of the Machine Age to process this change, we can see the perpetuation of the mythistory of the Industrial Revolution, as articulated by Carlyle, become distinctly useful.

Though Carlyle's intractability and vitriol, in his later years, became increasingly intolerable to many of his peers, particularly Mill and Arnold, his earlier works infiltrated the writing and sympathies of his contemporaries particularly in the vein of industry and its impact upon the landscape of Britain, both physically and historically. But while he was often criticised for providing only condemnations without reasonable solutions, his diagnoses undoubtedly struck a nerve with Victorians—his own warring impulses between his perceived Faust of ambition and self-improvement and the Mephistopheles of disdain and doubt captured, in varying fragments, the tensions between institutional religion and dissension, between the industrial and the pastoral, between past and present. By the time his own popularity began waning, there were larger movements established and gaining ground that were not only working towards reform, but employing similar strategies of outlining symptoms in unrest and diagnosing social ills through an historical and mythological context. Moreover, that context was now firmly based in the language and feeling of industrialisation, such that the myth that emerged was no longer an echo of Prometheus, but rather a newly minted narrative of the present age. In this regard, even though their politics would be in direct conflict with Carlyle's, the works of Marx and Engels would deepen and further articulate this industrial myth concurrently and after Carlyle's death, ensuring the reiteration of much of its character even after Carlyle fell from favour in towards the turn of the twentieth century.

V. ‘Machinery is put to a wrong use’: Sustaining and developing an industrial myth in Marx

The works of Marx and Engels, particularly *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*, *Capital, Vol. 1* (1867),³⁴ and *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848), represent within this study a culmination of the mythistorical ideas and narratives presented by previous authors in addressing industrialisation. *Faust* and *Frankenstein* provided the narratives and language utilised by Carlyle in his diagnosis of a mechanical age. By comparison, Marx and Engels even more thoroughly grounded that narrative material in meticulous analysis and interpretation of political economy and present physical conditions.

D. C. Coleman has observed that,

Marx...must rank high among historical mythmakers...[his] version of history acquired the power of myth by providing accounts of the past which seemed to carry a special relevance to the present...by energising, dramatising, even sanctifying current attitudes and actions (2).

This summation of Marx’s contribution to our knowledge of the Industrial Revolution touches on all of the central features that we have seen at work in Goethe, Shelley, and Carlyle. It reflects Marx’s ability to promote his reading of industrialisation through the theatrical, Faustian narrative of Goethe, which is similarly motivated by Marx’s Promethean view of humanity. It also, however, more importantly acknowledges the disparity between a Promethean, transcendent state and present conditions, which appear in *Capital* through the machines that are roused, Frankenstein-like, ‘from their death-sleep’ to enslave mankind (183). Marx navigates the present through an analytical lens that imposes a unified, narrative sense of the past onto a definitive diagnosis of the present, such that each struggle for regulation of the working day, each strike carried out by labourers during the mid and late nineteenth century, becomes part of the on-going narrative of an ‘emancipated’ machine industry and its enslaved ‘seller[s] of labour-power’ driven by ‘the automaton, as capital’ (403). In contrast to Carlyle, Marx is entrenched in the material world, dedicated to parsing the details of economics in order to excavate the structure and narrative of Marxism. However, many of the conclusions he reaches about

34 I favour Volume I above II and III for its early completion and therefore dissemination outside of Germany during the nineteenth century, and also for Marx’s repeated chances to amend it to his satisfaction. Fredric Jameson has made the controversial assertion that Volume I can be claimed as a complete work despite Marx’s extended plans for a full six-volume work (*Representing Capital* 2fn.); for the purposes of this study, I merely argue that the completion and polish of Volume I, in comparison to the ‘careless style’ and ‘barely arranged’ research material Engels dealt with in preparing the manuscripts of Volume II, seems a better fit for the holistic intent of Marx’s theory, as well as the importance of language in its relevance to this study as a construction of historical myth.

the current state of industrial society are the same, and equally, his proposed solutions, while politically opposite to Carlyle's, nonetheless point towards a prophetic, spiritual awakening which has not ultimately come to pass. In this way, the myth of the Industrial Revolution is sustained through both of the authors' work, even when their ideologies radically diverge.

To fully explore the origins of Marx's mythmaking and the effect his work had on later perceptions of the Industrial Revolution, I will first touch on Marx's early experiences with Romanticism, both German and British, with an aim towards reiterating the relationship his work had with those previously discussed, as well as establishing some of the relevant foundations of this thought. This will then lead to discussion of his connections to *Faust* and *Frankenstein*, in order to specifically explore how both his work and Engels' further establishes and sustains a mythic narrative of industry. Finally, I will relate this analysis forward to the reception of Marx in England later in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with a view towards beginning to study his impact on Industrial Revolution as a mythic narrative. Like Carlyle, what Marx envisions for the future world is Promethean, but what he *sees* in the present capitalist society is Faustian and Frankensteinian—his definition of the world in its current state, therefore, is the modern myth defined and reinforced by the previous three authors.

Stylistic and ideological development

Lenin observed, in 'The Three Sources,' that Marx's central influences comprised 'the best that man produced in the nineteenth century, as represented by German philosophy, English political economy and French socialism' (n.p.). All three of these components can be traced to Marx's early life and works. His youthful writing has been scrutinised for the evolution of his thought, particularly in relation to Hegel through his dissertation, and his interactions with British political economy via Ricardo.³⁵ The writing also demonstrates an extensive interest in Romantic poetry. Underlying these characteristics are the aesthetic and ideological components that comprise Marx's position as a mythmaker. His theatrical sensibility, which appears in the fraught emotional poetry of his youth and then in the monstrous and spectral presences in the *Manifesto* and *Capital*, can be traced to Goethe and Heine, as well as the English Romantic poets through the character of Prometheus as an

35 See Benedict Schofield's summaries of German studies, which note recent works on Engels and Marx in relation to Feuerbach, as well as Bellefiore and Fineschi's *Re-Reading Marx* collection (Palgrave Macmillan: 2009), which includes a variety of articles on Marx's early manuscripts.

ideal creative hero. Secondly, his philosophical development would continue to hinge upon Prometheism, such that his assertion of the inevitability of a proletarian revolution is based upon the divine character of man.

Marx's intellectual upbringing is somewhat comparable to Mary Shelley's despite differing regional and political environments. His father, to whom Marx remained 'deeply attached' throughout his life, was closely involved in the Rhineland liberal movement through his involvement in the Trier Casino Club, which had been founded during the French occupation and had sympathy with oppressed portions of society well beyond German borders (Eleanor Marx 'Biographical Remarks' n.p.). Under his influence, Karl grew up reading Voltaire and Racine (Eleanor Marx 'Karl Marx I' 288). His later teens, by contrast, were significant for his growing interest in Romantic literature, which can mainly be credited to his lasting friendship with the Baron von Westphalen, whose granddaughter, Jenny, would become Marx's wife some years later. Westphalen was a civil servant married to a Scottish woman, and had a great passion for English Renaissance and classical literature, as well as Romantic poetry. He shared this enthusiasm with Marx, who 'imbibed his first love for the "Romantic" School' (288), and went on to carry a deep appreciation for Homer and Shakespeare for the rest of his life.

At first, Marx's early poetry and letters ranged from love sonnets to Jenny Westphalen to more introspective Romantic works, and they reflected how Romantic poetry was developing beyond Goethe and Hiene. German Romanticism in the 1830s, as had already been the case in England some decades earlier, was engaging with the conflict between Romantic transcendentalism and increased importance of materialist concerns in reaction to the increasingly industrialised world. The later German Romantic authors encompassed far more hostile feelings towards the older aristocratic orders, thereby departing from the early forms of Romanticism for which Goethe was most known. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, Germany had hastened towards industrialisation after the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire allowed for reforms of the rural economy to make way for a market economy. As a result, the *Spätromantik* (late German Romanticism) was all the more relevant in its struggle with material concerns that were more and more pressing as Germany began to transition towards industrial and capitalist social structures. The imagined unity of existence which Goethe had remained convinced of even in his later life was, in the eyes of others, challenged by the chaotic pace industry was setting in urban spaces, caused by the imposition of the market economy upon the German state after it had already developed more organically in England and

France. Poets like August Von Platen lamented: ‘Would I were as free as are my dreams, / Sequestered from the garish crowd’, sharing a yearning for a place of solace that nature had provided for earlier poets, but which felt increasingly inaccessible in the present (‘Would I were as free as are my dreams’ 1-2, in Francke 501).

Marx, having spent most of the 1830s as an adolescent, seems to present traits from both the late and earlier Romantic schools in the style of his work. The resulting salient features, which bear significance to Marx’s later work, are mainly his dramatic presentation and use of Promethean/Faustian themes, which are in turn deeply connected with Marx’s own emotions.³⁶ Most importantly in this context, they are useful for illuminating Marx’s deep ties to Romanticism, as well as establishing that even in his earliest work, he possessed a literary style and interest in the Promethean archetype that anticipated his dramatizing approach to history. His central influences early on were writers like Goethe and Heine, and the overwhelming impulse to experience everything and evolve individually in the mode of Faust is directly depicted in his verse. In his 1836 poem ‘Feelings’, he laments,

I am caught in endless strife,
Endless ferment, endless dream;
[...]
Therefore let us risk our all,
Never resting, never tiring;
not in silence dismal, dull,
without action or desiring; (9-10, 49-52 *MECW* I: 525).

The poem on the whole reflects the overflowing of ambition and struggle that characterised Faust’s assertion, ‘Restless activity proves the man!’, which Goethe asserted as the basis for the character’s heroism. It also seems to anticipate the emphasis on conflict that Marx would in part derive from Hegel, while also retaining Faust’s visionary character. He echoes both the scale and depth of Faustian feeling through his desire to ‘Grasp all knowledge deep within’ while also remaining aware of his human limitations, leaving him therefore caught between ‘strife’ and ‘endless dream’ (19; 9-10). David McLellan points out

³⁶ Very little has been written in English on Marx’s poetry, the most visible output being by Leonard P. Wessell, with some speculation by William M. Johnston as to whether the poems could foreshadow Marx’s political ideology. For Wessell’s work, see *Karl Marx, Romantic Irony, and the Proletariat* (Louisiana UP, 1979) and *Prometheus Bound: Mythic Structure of Karl Marx’s Scientific Thinking* (Louisiana UP, 1984). These are rich and engaging works insofar as they initially address the mythic, Promethean component of Marx’s early thinking; the transference of that analysis towards arguing the status of Marxism as purely faith-based, with Marx at its egoist centre, veers too much towards purely transcendental readings of materialist works. As will be discussed further, Robert C. Tucker has argued more convincingly that Marx’s works are not so much religious in a traditional sense, but rather lend themselves to being read as part of a religious system (Tucker 22). Johnston’s article, ‘Karl Marx’s Verse of 1836-1837 as a Foreshadowing of his Early Philosophy’ (*Journal of the History of Ideas* 28.2, 1967), is more straightforward in its treatment, but leaves much more to be explored.

that the poems of his twenties, in contrast to his more Kantian and idealistic youthful work, ‘reveal a cult of the isolated genius and an introverted concern for the development of his own personality apart from the rest of humanity’ (23). Indeed, in this poem and in others, the inner fire of the protagonist and his heroic participation in the outside world form the basis of Marx’s poetic voice: inner fire is exemplified by ‘Poetry’ (1836), wherein Marx wrote, ‘when inner strife at last was quelled, / Grief and Joy made music I beheld’ (*MECW* I: 535, 11-12). Similar themes also appear in ‘Feelings’ and in his even more Promethean poem from the same year, ‘My World’, in which he proclaimed, ‘Hence! To endless battle, to the striving ... / Towards a goal I cannot near’ (*MECW* 1: 523, 9-12). The attitude of defiance and ceaselessness that appears particularly in these poems as well as others like ‘Transformation’, in which his ‘dark striving’ finally finds relief, draw comparisons especially to Byron’s conception of Prometheus as a frustrated, but unbowed god who ‘mak[es] Death a Victory’ (‘Prometheus’ 59).

The personal meaning of the broad feeling of ‘endless ferment’ can be found earlier still: in ‘Reflections of a Young Man on the Choice of a Profession’ (1835), an examination paper which Marx wrote before he entered university, he explores the emotional and philosophical burden of choosing a profession suited to a young man’s abilities. Throughout his portrayal of ambivalence and good intentions, it is arguable that even in Marx’s prose work, he possessed a poetic and theatrical impulse that derived from Romantic aesthetic modes. Throughout the essay, Marx records the emotional components of striving and dreaming seen in ‘Feelings’ while applying them to the dilemma of choosing a profession. The bulk of the essay discusses the young person’s ‘ambition’ and ‘impetuous instinct’ that might muddle the process of finding his true vocation, and impresses upon the reader the importance of ‘examin[ing]’ one’s passions and talents ‘in cold blood’ (*MECW* I: 4). Achieving such equilibrium in considering one’s future, however, is clearly a difficult task, and Marx impresses upon the reader the hazards of ‘misanthropy and despair’ that the young man may encounter instead. Marx’s model of youthful indecision appears to be not only based upon personal experience, but also extracted from literary conceptions of youth and the Romantic hero (7). In Marx’s assertion of weighing of personal affinity, passion, and moral contribution to society, he carries the impression of an abbreviated analysis of a Goethean *bildungsroman* in how he touches upon the desire to ‘live wholly for himself’ (*Wilhelm Meister* 125-6). However, he then struggles continually to discover how best to do that, and swings between hope and despair over the course of the journey. Both the ‘endless ferment’ in ‘Feelings’ and his identification of the ‘glittering’ temptation of

ambition in 'Reflections' appear reminiscent of Percy Shelley's portrayal of Prometheus's inner strife and control ('I am king over myself, and rule / The torturing and conflicting throngs within' (*Prometheus Unbound* I.i.492-493)). Moreover, this also predicts the Promethean character to which Marx would come to aspire when he embraced the philosophical principles of the Young Hegelians.

Marx concludes the essay with the assertion that, despite what passionate feelings one might have towards a particular path, one must not be 'blinded by fantasy' (4), but even more importantly, one's final choice must serve both 'the welfare of mankind and our own perfection' (8). In this way, his final argument is socially conscious and Protestant in sentiment; he asserts that:

History calls those men the greatest who have ennobled themselves by working for the common good; experience acclaims as happiest the man who has made the greatest number of people happy; religion itself teaches us that the ideal being whom all strive to copy sacrificed himself for the sake of mankind, and who would dare to set at nought such judgments? (8).

Despite much of the essay mainly consisting of youthful dramatization of passionate ambition, his conclusion demonstrates significant social awareness that connects work to both personal and social well-being, much in the way that Protestant or even specifically Calvinist thought was inclined. Marx cites, inadvertently, a 'history' of heroic individuals who display intentions of social good will that would not appear out of place in Carlyle's conception of heroism, albeit with greater emphasis on a great man as an 'idealist' without the assumption of that man being 'intrinsically a poet' (*Misc. Essays* 160). Moreover, there is a hint of Bentham in his citation of 'experience' of the 'greatest number of people happy', which pre-dates Marx's familiarity with political economy, but nonetheless demonstrates an affinity towards its concerns. Above all, in his embrace of work as the dominant force in both the individual's and society's success, it can perhaps be argued that despite having experienced an upbringing more similar in politics and literary interests to Mary Shelley, Marx's early works suggest some of Carlyle's social convictions in the holiness of work as 'the 'Dynamical nature of man' ('Signs' 70). Marx's approach was more secular in his vague reference to a 'Deity' rather than to the specifically Christian God; however, his social conscience appears to resonate with Carlyle's.

Overall, these various components of Marx's early poetry and prose appear to corroborate Leonard P. Wessell's summary that young Marx's descriptions of longing and 'risk[ing] all' in his poetry are apt markers of the Romantic lyricist impulse. However, his feelings of disparity between 'what is and what ought to be' (*Zerrissenheit*) pulls him towards

the later generation of Romantics like Shelley and Byron, as well as the prescriptive mode of discussing what 'ought' to have happened, which we have seen in Carlyle and the Hammonds' approach to history (Wessell 'Marx's Romantic Poetry' 512). However, Wessell's implication that the Promethean character of Marx himself overshadowed his critical analysis in order to create an overwhelming authorial identity, arguably in the mode of Carlyle, is a more complex issue. In this instance, what is shared between Marx and Carlyle is a foundational concern for their personal work to be reflected outwards for the good of society, and an expression of that concern through poetic or otherwise mythistorical means, which would connect their diagnoses, if not their treatments, of their time. At this early stage in his life, however, what emerges most clearly from Marx's work is his affinity towards the Promethean/Faustian character and scenic texture that would remain in his work even as his writing became increasingly empirical. In 'Reflections', his theatricality was noticeable enough for his instructor to comment upon, writing on the manuscript, 'he constantly seeks for elaborate picturesque expressions. Therefore many passages...lack the necessary clarity and definiteness and often precision in separate expressions as well as in whole paragraphs' (*MECW* I: 733). Though precision was something Marx came to through research and time, he arguably never grew out of his linguistic habits, as will become evident in the 'Manifesto' and *Capital*. However, they did not remain what his instructor called 'mistakes', either. Rather, it became a feature that would allow Marx to illustrate present conditions even when their inner workings—Marx's interpretation of the processes of capitalism—appeared to exist only in the abstract.

In addition to tracing his aesthetic influences, Marx's development is also important to understanding his approach to writing and processing history. Marx's philosophical development in conjunction with his already distinctive authorial voice served also to establish his approach towards history and historical writing, which would become essential to his construction of his economic theories. As he moved from university to his career as a journalist and economist, we can see his dramatic voice being put to use interpreting, clarifying, and polemicizing current and past events.

The first and most acknowledged step in Marx's development was his conversion to Hegelian thought. The new generation of Hegelians were almost too compatible with Marx's strong, Promethean personality, leading Marx's father to ask whether his son's motivations were 'heavenly or Faustian' (*MECW* I: 670). In this regard, his father perhaps saw more than Marx did, because the ambivalence and possible tragedy of Faust could not

have been nearly as appealing as the full-bodied divinity of Promethean belief. The essential Hegelian assertion picked up by the Young Hegelians, of whom both Marx and Engels became members, was the unity of God within man. Hegel's rejection of dualism inspired the explicit and socially revolutionary, rather than implicit and private, conviction that 'God is man' in the new generation of his followers. The liberating belief in the monism of god and self could not have been more appealing to, and more encouraging of, Marx's Promethean feelings and personal ambitions.

McLellan describes Marx's movement from Fichte to Hegel as renouncing his Romantic philosophy, but more importantly, Marx's use of Hegelian monism allowed him to characterise man as potentially Promethean, much in the way that Mary Shelley had envisioned. He uses Prometheus directly to describe how the concept of 'god' is actually a projection of human nature which must be reconciled and re-incorporated into man's conception of himself, as he expressed in his doctoral thesis: "The proclamation of Prometheus: "In one word—I hate all gods" is her own profession, her own slogan against all gods of heaven and earth who do not recognise man's self-consciousness as the highest divinity' (*Early Texts* 13). Just as Goethe had done in his conception of Prometheus, Marx emphasises the independence of Prometheus in his creative spirit, which defines and justifies his defiance of the gods, putting human accomplishment above any supposed sovereignty of uncaring divinity. The ambition of Prometheus is exalted, but more importantly, it is a product of his own nature, rather than any transcendent and separate force. As Goethe put it, 'Did you not accomplish it all yourself, / Holy glowing Heart?' ('Prometheus' 31-2). In this conception of man-as-god, Marx's already-Promethean personal character established in his early poetry met the outward purpose which his moral conviction displayed in 'Reflections' demarcated: the Promethean pronouncement, 'I hate all the gods', and Shelley's equally affirming, 'I am king over myself' become the starting point for constructing the foundation of Marx's assertion that the proletariat would be able to complete an uprising and bring the next epochal change to modern society.

This revolutionary, Promethean perspective became a point of contention among the New Hegelians, which bifurcated when Marx and a few of his contemporaries moved their critique beyond religion into full political radicalism, thereby giving up any chance of employment within academia and pushing them instead towards journalism. Where Feuerbach and Strauss continued to limit their Hegelian critique of Prussian society to its religious justification, Marx and his young contemporaries fixated upon political machinations and injustice. In Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach*, he makes clear the division

between his thinking and that of the Young Hegelians whom he had parted with. He and some of his colleagues wished to impact politics through revolution, and moreover, through the active application of philosophy to society, rather than limiting themselves to theoretical purity. To him, Feuerbach conflated the theoretical with the practical such that the practical was entirely subsumed by the theoretical, leaving no room for real-world evidence or inquiry. 'Hence he does not grasp the significance of "revolutionary", of "practical-critical", activity,' he summarised (*MECW* V: 6). In this critique, Marx remains Promethean in his intent, in that he specifically takes issue with theoretical philosophy for its inability to seize history and change it. Earlier, he had remarked that, 'like Prometheus who stole fire from heaven and began to build houses and settle on the earth, so philosophy, which has so evolved as to impinge on the world, turns itself against the world that it finds' (*Early Texts* 19). The perceived tension between the present and the ideal echoes Carlyle's, but originates rather in how Marx read Hegel's assertion that such tension was resolvable through self-realisation and *resistance* to what 'is' in favour of cultivating 'what ought to be'. This takes shape in the Promethean character of Marx's own project, a project which resisted the present state and prophesied its downfall.

Marx's political views solidified as a result of this turn towards the material and political application of philosophy, particularly when, after university, he and Engels founded and wrote for the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*. Marx had previously submitted writing to the earlier incarnation of the paper directly after his doctorate was awarded in 1841, and it was through this job that he first met Engels in person, despite having been in the same intellectual circle for some months. They would not begin their close collaboration until some years afterwards, when Marx took his work and his new wife, Jenny, to Paris. There, he and Engels both became involved in the French workers' movements, for whom socialism was a far more established institution than in Germany. Marx wrote the components of *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (1844), and eventually was forced by the Prussian government to leave France as well.

The work produced both by Marx and Engels during this period of the early 1840s has been particularly significant to mid-century and recent criticism of Marxism. The discovery of *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* in the early twentieth century revealed much of the more Romantic and mythological thinking of Marx. This had been previously overshadowed by the 'scientific socialism' to which Marx made a claim in *Capital*. The *Manuscripts* entrance into scholarly discourse caused an influx of mythological and

theological criticism of Marxism in the mid-twentieth century.³⁷ Alienation is a far more significant theme in these early manuscripts, indicating the closeness of Marx to the Hegelians during this time. His interpretation of capital hinges first upon the disenfranchisement of the workers through their separation, and their inability to unite, where in contrast, ‘Combination among the capitalists is customary and effective’ (*Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* 21). In this, he does not see the isolation of competitive behaviour which Carlyle diagnosed, but instead places the ability to unify with the ruling, competing classes rather than the united rabble which Carlyle narrated at Peterloo. It signals a larger pattern consistent with the ideological chasm between them, where both authors might attempt to embody a certain heroic, Promethean ideal. While Carlyle sees a clear delineation between individual leaders and groups of followers united by the leaders’ visionary authority, Marx sees and addresses classes far more than the individual.

Marx’s concern, in embracing a ‘practical-critical’ stance, was for the fate of the worker due to his or her systemic disadvantage and abuse, such that ‘the inevitable result for the worker is overwork and premature death, decline to a mere machine’ (*Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* 25). In this early configuration of his thoughts, what pervades his structured reading of political economy through the lens of social alienation. Alienation is therefore transformed from Hegel’s usage, in which alienation occurs between the material world and the world spirit (*Weltgeist*, the world’s ideal principle, related to Goethe’s *Erdegeist*), to Marx’s usage, in which man becomes estranged from man via social relations, causing the worker internal and external anguish. Marx conceives the human being not as a spiritual creature in any religious or transcendental sense, but rather as a whole being that is meant to act upon the external world. Instead, under industrial labour, he is fragmented through the ‘appropriation’ of his work, such that his labour ‘does not belong to his intrinsic nature’ (71). In this way, he preserves a Promethean reading of mankind through the refiguring of Hegelian philosophy in order to establish a framework upon which to build his social critique.

Tucker has identified the difference between this earlier form of Marxism and the later form which appears in the *Manifesto* and *Capital* as the essential subjectivity and individualism that is involved in the early texts, which entirely disappears in favour of society in the mature texts (165-6). The predominant theme of the alienation of the proletariat from its Promethean potential in the *Manuscripts* speaks to this—by identifying

37 Wessell’s works are obvious examples of this, but more significantly Robert C. Tucker’s *Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx* (1961) sought to absorb, describe, and develop the trend of reinterpretation of Marx prompted by the discovery and publishing of the manuscripts.

the ways in which capitalists ‘combine’ and prevent the workers from doing the same makes a study of the individual placed under stress and without social support. It also explains the behaviour of the individual who is only self-serving and entrenches himself in a society that encourages his greed. Political economy, this early Marx argues, only deals with the latter individual study, and even then it is in the abstract: ‘The only wheels which political economy sets in motion are *greed* and the *war amongst the greedy—competition*’ (67). His focus on alienation, therefore, is a study of the individual worker whose value as a labourer steadily decreases: ‘the more the worker spends himself, the more powerful becomes the alien world of objects which he creates over and against himself, the poorer he himself--his inner world--becomes, the less belongs to him as his own’ (68). This acknowledgement of the labourer’s ‘inner world’ is an intimate psychological reading of the impact of economics on society, driven by the individual’s experience of interacting with the world and transferring his intangible worth, in the form of labour, into objects he produces which then become estranged from him. In this way, it is far more apparent in the *Manuscripts* how close Marx was in his thinking to philosophic, but moreover, *religious* forms of thought. In describing the disruption to man’s inner world when subjected to current capitalist society, Marx likewise conceives an endpoint for man in which that which was fragmented becomes whole again.

Simultaneous to Marx's work on the *Manuscripts* was Engels’ publishing of *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1844), which would have a significant impact upon the research and examples Marx would later employ in *Capital*, and which connects Marx’s work more solidly to the economic and social milieu of England. Engels drew extensively upon British sources for his research including private investigations, most notably the work of Reverend Peter Gaskell (father of Elizabeth Gaskell), as well as multiple inquiries that were made through the census and various panels into the conditions of the poor. As a result, *Condition* is predominantly observational and statistical in its summation of the state of the working poor, and appears as a mature and completed work that displays less of the Romantic sentiment that can be found in Marx at this time. In this way, it anticipates the mature form of Marxism that would become so prevalent to Western thought in the twentieth century. In works concurrent and previous to Engels’ contribution, Marx’s consideration of England was mainly through his research on political economy, which indicate his on-going engagement with Adam Smith and Ricardo among others, but he included far fewer in-depth examples and statistical data from Britain than would appear

in *Capital*. Engels' research, borne out of his experiences in Manchester and his exploration of British enquiries into the state of the working classes, would provide a rich well of data from which Marx would draw in later years.

Engels had begun work on *Condition* just after having parted ways with Marx in Paris, and independently the work now had many of the artistic markings of dramatic *Zerrissenheit* that would appear in the *Manifesto*, along with one of the first explicit connections between industrialism and revolution made outside of France. In his own work, Engels' intention remains politically radical, but *Conditions* is more a reaction to his experience in Manchester rather than his past with the Young Hegelians, like Marx's concurrent work was. It was more directed and conclusive than the national enquiries and evaluations from which he drew much of his information, yet still factual and journalistic enough to be considered a valuable contribution to our understanding of industrial England by many historians.³⁸ Engels opposed the views of Malthus and Ricardo, as well as other classical economists by positing that machinery, rather than the sexual conduct or migration of Irish workers, was the cause of unemployment. *Conditions* therefore, much like Carlyle's diagnosis, functions as an exercise in reading the state of the poor both with accuracy and with an attempt to understand and explain the sources of poverty through industrialisation. In his introductory chapters, he states:

The industrial revolution is of the same importance for England as the political revolution is for France, and the philosophical revolution for Germany; and the difference between England in 1760 and in 1844 is at least as great as that between France, under the *ancien régime* and during the revolution of July. But the mightiest result of this industrial transformation is the English proletariat. We have already seen how the proletariat was called into existence by the introduction of machinery. The rapid extension of manufacture demanded hands, wages rose, and troops of workmen migrated from the agricultural districts to the towns....In the place of the former masters and apprentices, came great capitalists and workingmen who had no prospect of rising above their class...Now, for the first time, therefore, the proletariat was in a position to undertake an independent movement (50-1).

Werner J. Dannhauser has made the observation that *Conditions* is 'the first complete work in the Marxist canon' (97), and it is worth pointing out that its completeness is not simply a product of his finishing and publishing it, but that it is the first work that demonstrates all of the major features that would appear in his and Marx's mature works. Here, Engels is

³⁸ Obvious supporters include E.P. Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm, but Engels' contribution to industrial history outside of Marxist circles cannot be discounted either—Maxine Berg has critically asserted that despite some simplification, Engels' assessment of the decline of small firms and concentration of capital among a minority of owners 'was, perhaps, as rapid as Engels claimed' (234), and Robert C. Allen has recently argued that in many ways, Engels' overall portrait of unequal development was an 'insightful one' ('Engels' Pause' 418).

introducing the central concepts of which he would then go on to provide in-depth coverage, but he is clearly introducing more than the concepts themselves, placing them within a historical context that not only asserts industrialisation's importance to the current social conditions of England, but also its paramount significance in the history of the western world. In this passage, first Engels explores the French and industrial revolutions that have exerted so much impact in defining industrialisation as 'revolutionary'. Within this context, the accumulation of revolutionary activity that Engels identifies appears as a series of symptoms of epochal change, of radical shifts in thinking and physical conditions that are gaining momentum—in Landes's terms, 'change [begetting] change'. Industrialisation, as equated with, but also superseding in social importance, various philosophical and political revolutions, is marking the final stage of unrest that primes western society for complete socialist revolution.

Secondly, he exemplifies the confluence of the Romantic and Hegelian influences of Marx and Engels younger lives. Like Marx, he had his share of interactions with the English Romantics, and expressed admiration and awareness of various translations of Byron, Shelley, and Coleridge, as well as making plans to translate some of Percy Shelley's poetry himself (*MECW* II: 494-6).³⁹ In *Conditions*, Shelley's influence is readily apparent: by framing the proletariat as a rebellious, unified group, imprisoned and oppressed and thus 'forc[ed] to think', Engels' treatment of the awakening and mobilising of the British working class is also reflective of the Promethean spirit of the age (*Conditions* 39). Only then are the working classes able to 'undertake independent movement', leading to casting off of shackles and rebellion against higher power. This echoes Shelley's variety of utopian thinking, wherein through self-knowledge, 'mighty change' became 'Expressed in outward things' (*Prometheus Unbound* III.iv.129-30). Engels also was an admirer of Carlyle—his review of *Past and Present* was mostly favourable, though at points he glossed over Carlyle's political preferences and chose to read his own into the work in question. He concludes that Carlyle's conception of hero-worship is a form of 'pantheism', from which he could be freed if his knowledge of new Hegelian philosophy had been more complete. Nevertheless, Engels found worth and usefulness in Carlyle's diagnosis of the country's 'hollowness and enervation', even as he, like many others, took issue with his lack of

39 Engels had a very firm grasp on the British literary movements of his day and previous—his articles on the Chartist movements as well as other more descriptive news of England draw upon Shakespeare and *Queen Mab*, as well as the current intellectual presences of Mary Shelley and Carlyle (see *Telegraph für Deutschland* Nos. 122-123, July/August 1840; *Schweizerischer Republikaner* No. 39, 16 May 1843). He notes with enthusiasm the distribution of Percy Shelley's pamphlets among the working classes (*Schweizerischer Republikaner* No. 41, 23 May 1843) as well as, 'the genius, the prophet,' Shelley and Byron's high readership generally among the proletariat (*Conditions* 265).

solution, and used the review as an opportunity to present his own opinions:

As I have said, we too are concerned with combating the lack of principle, the inner emptiness, the spiritual deadness, the untruthfulness of the age; we are waging a war to the death against all these things, just as Carlyle is, and there is a much greater probability that we shall succeed than that he will, because we know what we want' ('A review of *Past and Present*, by Thomas Carlyle, London, 1843' n.p.).

The review, above all, demonstrates Engels' deep awareness of the cultural landscape of England in addition to his interest in its economic and political status, such that *Conditions* can be seen as a deliberate contribution to that landscape, as well as to Marxist canon. In Engels' work, additionally, there are also examples of these new industrial narratives informing research. Included in *Conditions* is 'The Steam King', which has already been mentioned in this study's introduction. In his work, Engels prefaced the poem with the statement that 'it is a correct expression of the views prevailing among [the working class]' (213). The poem in its entirety is a distillation of the sentiment behind the belief in destructiveness of industry, and includes many of the themes that continually arose as part of the development of narrative around industrial development:

There is a King, and a ruthless King;
Not a King of the poet's dream;
But a tyrant fell, white slaves know well,
And that ruthless King is Steam (Engels 213).

Engels' choice to highlight this particular work is itself evident of a particular narrative he and Marx would work towards cultivating throughout their reading of history, and he uses it as a catalyst for further illustrating the heartlessness of manufacture capitalists. It also reiterates the visceral illustrations of Steam as a demonic entity, which was favoured by Carlyle, even as his critical aim remained fixed on the employers of the machines rather than the machines themselves. As should be increasingly clear, the machine as visual language for a larger industrial feeling continued to be relevant in all various readings of the time period.

Engels' explicit assertion of causation between industrialism, the emergence of the proletariat, and their dissatisfaction at the injustice of the 'Steam King', mark the confluence of Hegelian historical understanding with the political and economic analysis which now defines historical materialism. Marx most clearly defines historical materialism in *The German Ideology* (1846), wherein he argues that:

The first premise of all human history is, of course, the existence of living human individuals. Thus the first fact to be established is the physical organisation of these individuals and their consequent relation to the rest of nature....By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life

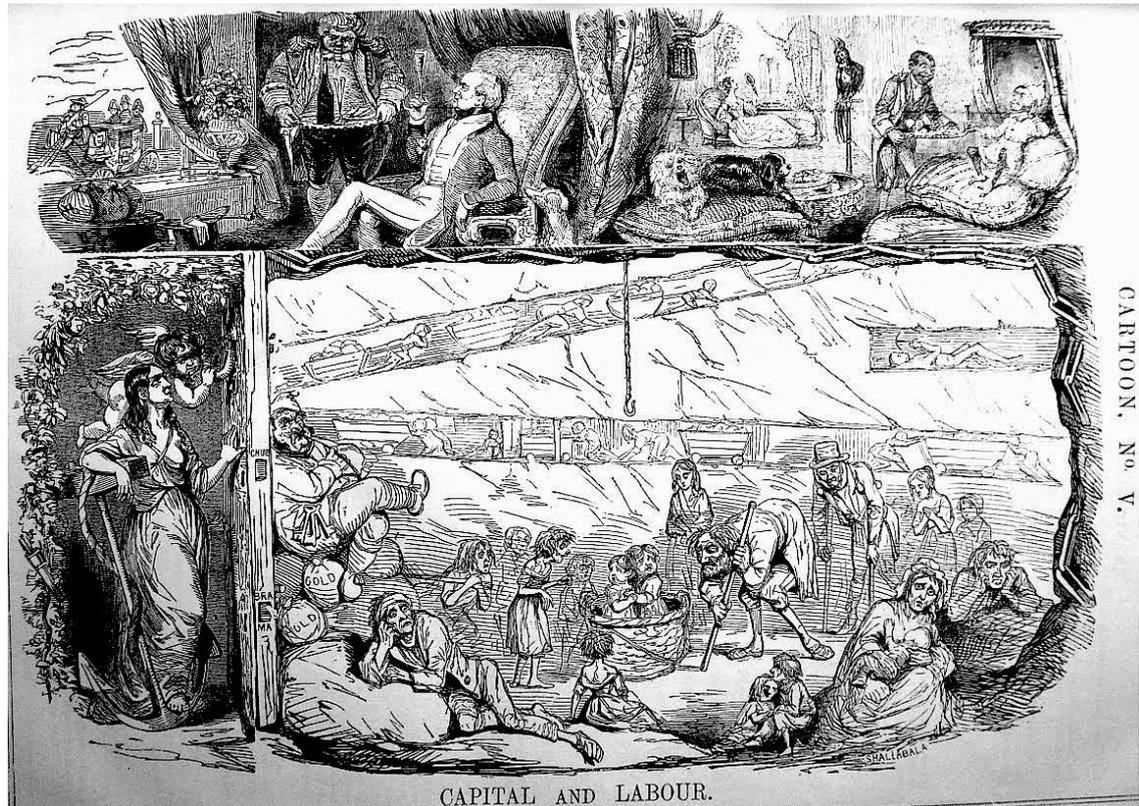
(*MECW* V: I.A.iii).

Before this, however, Engels was able to describe in real terms this process of accumulating economic forces determining the trajectory of social conditions in a both historically clear and prophetic manner. The ‘guiding of history’, he argues, meaning its social and economic movements over time, has been the responsibility of the select few, but that responsibility has shifted over time from the aristocracy to the bourgeoisie as part of an epochal change. This epochal change, taken to its obvious conclusion, makes inevitable the growing self-knowledge of the proletariat and their uprising. In this way, the grounding of that conception of history in statistical and anecdotal evidence forms a systematic reading of history and present conditions that can be perhaps best regarded as mythistorical.

The Promethean ideal and the monstrous reality: The *Manifesto* and *Capital*

The biographical selections covered so far have presented the Romantic influence on Marx’s developing scholarship as well as the beginnings of Engels’ contribution to Marxist thought, which allows us to make specific linguistic and thematic connections between his writing and that of earlier Romantics. By contrast, the language that dominates Marx’s mature works (though certainly, the Promethean conception of self-knowledge and revolution still play a significant role), is one of monsters and vampires. The reason for this, I will argue, is Marx’s increased emphasis on empirical reading of the current capitalist state which Engels had emphasised most in *Conditions*—the present which Marx seeks to resist and revolt against—rather than the beaten down, Promethean potential which will drive that eventual resistance. The reality that he describes in the *Manifesto* and in *Capital* takes on the narrative framework of *Faust*, and the monstrous proliferation of *Frankenstein*, because they describe the current abuse of the proletariat and the pervading greed of their bourgeois masters. In this way, the myth of the Industrial Revolution, as derived from a Faust-Frankenstein model, stands within Marx and Engels’ work as a dark age created by modern society that is the prelude to realising the Promethean potential of man. This will form the central thesis for Marx’s effectiveness as a lasting influence on industrial historiography. By drawing forward the Faustian and Frankensteinian narratives at work in contemporary history, Marx’s work set into relief a set of Romantic treatments of the time period which seem both thematically and narratively consistent. He creates a historical lens that not only seems internally consistent, but also externally so through the similarities in his diagnosis to Carlyle’s.

The diagnosis that Marx and Engels sought to make was, as should already be clear, not a new one. Beyond Carlyle's pronouncement of the Machine Age in 1829, the overall awareness of the condition of the working class was commonly recognised and scrutinised, employing the descriptive language that Marx would employ in his analysis. This illustration from *Punch* clearly represents the popular understanding of the nineteenth century wealth gap and its source:



'Capital and Labour', *Punch Magazine* 29 July 1843, No. 49

The feeling of machinery being to blame for this shift was also not new. As John M. Sherwood has observed, 'because of the novelty and prominence of new machines, critics were inclined, if not driven, to attribute to them all the changes they saw. Marx and Engels were no different from their contemporaries in this regard; they were simply more logical and systematic in their evaluations' (851). Visually, the contrast between those who gained from the machinery of production and those who actually worked with those machines was too powerful in combination with the 'novelty' of technology to not make such an intuitive leap. The unprecedented nature of machinery, like the spinning jenny and the steam engine within manufacturing and without, was naturally visible and dramatic, making the logical path towards technological determinism easy to traverse for both critics and supporters of the new methods of production. The systematic nature of Marx and Engels' analysis, therefore, lies not only in their diagnosis, but the patterns of visual and conceptual cues

that are used to fully illustrate their works. Where Carlyle had employed a pantheon of idols and personifications of social groups and their ills, the monstrous nature of machines becomes the focus of Marx and Engels' ability to bring to life their own narrative of industrialisation. As Chris Baldick has noted, 'Far from killing off myths, modern inventions multiply them, even embody them' (123). In their works, Marx and Engels demonstrate this observation to the fullest by offering a complete portrait of the Industrial Revolution that would prove to be both lasting and useful.

The *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1847) exemplifies Marx and Engels' use of Faustian myth through the characterisation of the bourgeoisie, and Frankensteinian myth in their portrayal of the proletariat in order to illustrate the present wrongness of society's use of their Promethean power. We are introduced to the bourgeois individual who 'is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells' (478). This power, identified as the proletariat, is a Frankenstein's monster, created from a long history of exploitation and the consolidating of various working classes into one sewn-together mass of workers, whose slavery to machinery has reached a critical peak. The myth of the current stage of industrialisation, therefore, is that the Promethean nature of man is 'put to wrong use' by modernity. In the *Manifesto*, Marx and Engels state, 'Machinery is put to a wrong use, with the object of transforming the workman, from his very childhood, into a part of a detail-machine' (408). Simultaneously, the capitalist/creator also transforms into a monster: 'Capital is dead labour, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour' (*Capital* 233). Machinery, for Marx, is part of the larger system of capital, but as such all of it has become a material entity that overwhelms and replaces the true value of human labour and human beings themselves. It is an even more permanent transformation of humanity than the one which Carlyle supposed—Mammon as an idol is something that disrupts mankind's natural state, but did not change 'the Fact of things'. By contrast, capital is more clearly a Frankensteinian creation, which in turn inflicts physical and spiritual change upon its makers.

The world was not always this way, Marx argues. His historical account is one of graded class structures slowly consolidating into the binary of the bourgeois and proletariat. Industrialisation is clearly a central component of this historical narrative that Marx seeks to build. As he asserted in *The German Ideology* and repeatedly elsewhere, man's means of subsistence across time become the whole of this reality: 'By thus acting on the external world and changing it, he at the same time changes his own nature' (*Capital* 177).

As such, the shifts he observes in social structures are products of the current means of production, and the technology that is associated with it. In this way, modern industry is the focus of Marx's critique because he has placed it at the centre of modern social existence, wherein, 'the history of industry and commerce is but the history of the revolt of modern productive forces against modern conditions of production, against the property relations that are the conditions for the existence of the bourgeoisie and of its rule' (*Manifesto* 478). Modern productive forces, in this case, are the abused proletariat, who must act upon the world in resistance because they have been otherwise barred from doing so, their own labour alienated from them by the co-opting of their labour power.

Coral Lansbury calls this approach to historicism 'melodrama', not as an attempt to criticise but instead in recognition of a 'mode of compulsive moral seriousness seeking to restore a fragmented society to a new and harmonious whole' (4). This seems to affirm the narrative quality of the *Manifesto*, and present a case for its effectiveness. In the extended historical passage which makes up the first major section of the *Manifesto*, nearly uninterrupted, Marx and Engels intone eleven paragraphs beginning with 'The bourgeoisie...', listing its long history of conquering and shaping society, before at last concluding that, 'modern bourgeois society...is like the sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world...', as quoted previously. This rewrites the past as an 'historical drama and trauma' in which Faust is the culmination of the history of technological productive development, with Frankenstein's monster as his oppressed by-product (Berman 89). The most recent rise of the bourgeoisie and the consequent consolidation of other classes, leaving a firm binary between them and the proletariat, is directly tied to industrial technology and its effect on the lives of workers and their masters. For this reason, the analysis of machinery and its part in the creation of the proletariat extends not only into causal relationships in the *Manifesto*, but metaphorical ones as well. The proletariat, through capitalism, achieve an unnatural autonomy which Marx implies becomes self-propagating and self-animating; they become Shelley's monster. The narrative of the *Manifesto* exists to establish this creation, and realise its downfall with the authority of a well-told story.

This creation is elaborated upon in far more detail in *Capital*, where despite its more 'scientific' tone and approach, Marx retains the language of mythic transformation and sorcery. He was not the first economist to invoke magical transformation when speaking of the movements of modern markets—Adam Smith, with whom Marx engages often, memorably cites the 'invisible hand' that guides the economy in *The Wealth of Nations*

(1776). The reason for Smith's choice, Stefan Andriopolous contends, is strategic: it is a sound strategy that any 'gap within his economic argumentation...is closed by the figure of the "invisible hand"' (746-7). The invocation of the invisible or supernatural for Marx or Carlyle, by contrast, is more intrinsic to their narratives of industrialisation. Out of this apparent appreciation for the drama of the supernatural if not the letter of it, the narrative of the *Manifesto* comes into sharper relief. We can see evidence for this in the *Manifesto's* extended historical section. However, while Smith's 'invisible hand' strives for equilibrium in the market, Marx narrates the perversion of economic processes that exploits the majority of its participants, which he had already explained as 'appropriation' in *Philosophic and Economic Manuscripts*. The supernatural movement of the economy in the capitalist Western society commodifies objects, which are then fetishized by the bourgeoisie and given social significance that previously was only held by human life. In the *Manifesto*, he concludes that 'It has resolved personal worth into exchange value' (*Manifesto* 475). Once that has occurred, the proletariat is created through the commodification of their worth. From the abuse of productive forces, the demonic and monstrous elements emerge to make the *Manifesto* a work of modern mythmaking where *The Wealth of Nations*, the product of a largely pre-industrial state, is not.

Having established the historical reading that forms the foundation of Marx and Engels' thought, we can now examine precisely how a material conception of history and society remains both mythic and Frankensteinian in its interpretation of industrialisation. Both the *Manifesto* and *Capital* are centred on transformation of people and objects within the sphere of society, and the imbuing of both people and objects not with spiritual value, as was the case in Carlyle's work, but with labour value. This is, in part, Marx's way of stepping beyond the heroic model that tended to be so Promethean: the individualism that could be only selfishly self-actualising had to become communist in order for antagonism and anarchy to be avoided. As Shlomo Avineri argues, 'Marx tries to overcome [the problems of individualism] by seeing all human activity as social and other-oriented' (87). All Promethean and Faustian impulses must therefore be turned outwards towards the community which at once includes and encompasses the individual, such that the dependence of people upon other people ensures a viable and sustainable society. This inversion of the individualism as part of a collective social system would, as we have seen in the twentieth century, prove problematic in the context of Marxism's application, particularly when it resists the natural selfishness of human beings. It is a reductive model

on a number of levels—both Marx and Engels ignore the continued presence of independent artisans and contractors who exist outside of the capitalist superstructure that they focus on, and they also place the greatest emphasis on women and children as an emergent source of labour in the factory system in order to complete the picture of “The bourgeoisie ha[ving] ...reduced the family relation to a mere money relation” (*Manifesto* 476). Marx seems to take the exaggeration of the effects of factory labour to its limit, tracing epochal change through selective vision of it on the ground.⁴⁰ In this way, Marx is creating the proletariat that he observes in reality by performing an act of ideological consolidation himself. This is both consistent with, and a departure from, Marx’s original attraction to Romanticism. The struggle to lyricize industrial society had resolved itself into a quasi-mystical reading of history that offers poetic resolution, but that resolution manifests as collective justice rather than individual self-realisation. This, however, appears more readily in the *Manifesto* rather than *Capital*, but as should already be clear, many of Marx’s foundational ideas, despite being further developed in the latter, nevertheless feed into the more succinct and propagandistic formulation of the former. As it stands, however, Marx’s reliance upon defining human action and existence by its social impact also allows us access to the transformative power of economic exchange, wherein people and products are exchanged and are therefore defined by that social process.

Value, as expressed by money, is itself a sort of alchemical material within *Capital*—Marx describes accurately the general modern principles of micro-economics as an historical development in his opening chapters, but within that explanation, money appears as a ‘crystal’ that becomes necessary when products of labour are compared to one another and need a form of ‘external expression’ for their inherent contrast between exchange-value and use-value (86). Even as a physical object, money is an external expression that is nonetheless ‘conjured’, because its value is determined not by something intrinsic to it, but by social contract. ‘In order, therefore, that a commodity may in practice act effectively as exchange-value,’ Marx states, ‘it must quit its bodily shape, must transform itself from mere imaginary into real gold’ (103). Commodities therefore, as products of labour to be useful to a capitalist economy, must be able to submit themselves to alchemy, which is

40 It should be noted that Marx was not the only participant in such exaggeration—Andrew Zimmerman has pointed out that ‘Babbage and Ure center their representations of the factory on representations of machinery; for both, the machine is a means of disciplining labor, and the factory an assemblage of such machines’ (8). With this in mind, it is worth remembering that while Marx’s portrayal might be exaggerated, it was likely part of a larger, cultural perception that was being submitted to the public in a rather bipartisan way. As we have seen, the myth of the Industrial Revolution was created collectively, and as such, it was and remains useful to many different perspectives on technology. The propaganda of industrialists as part of the Industrial Revolution myth would perhaps be a compelling subject for further research.

formed out of the social contract that states that money is the manifestation of this exchange-value. This becomes even truer, and more mysterious, when gold is replaced with paper money, as Goethe had already obliquely observed in *Faust*: the social contract becomes even more estranged from the reality of material exchange. As a representation of value, money therefore ‘comes and goes with the momentary social acts that called it into life’ (88). Marx’s central thesis relies on the social contract that economics relies on, and therefore social contracts and understandings become quasi-mystical for how they imbue objects with meaning.

In this way, buying and selling in itself is also an alchemical, transformative process, wherein money is a spectral expression of exchange value. The value of commodities money acquires is more magical still. Workers imbue commodities with value by exerting their labour-power upon them, and throughout the work, economic issues masquerade as social issues through this perception of commodities. ‘It is only at a definitive historical epoch in a society’s development that such a product becomes a commodity’, Marx writes in introduction, and then elaborates later that:

What chiefly distinguishes a commodity from its owner is the fact, that it looks upon every other commodity as but the form of appearance of its own value. A born leveller and a cynic, it is always ready to exchange not only soul, but body, with any and every other commodity (61; 85).

The historical development of commodities is therefore a product of social progression, wherein interpersonal agreement about value shifts from inherent or relative value expressed by gold and silver, to the amount of labour-power expended upon it, as expressed in time. What the labourer is then selling is not the product, but rather their ability to make that product. This transformation of labour-power into commodity therefore changes the people involved in an economic and social exchange from equal to unequal—one person is buying the other’s selfhood rather than their material goods, and in doing so they treat that other person as an instrument of production rather than as a human being. As a result, commodities are ‘levellers’ insofar as they are part of the larger pattern of consolidation and dehumanisation that was inflicted upon the working classes who produced them. Moreover, that process of levelling is one of ‘not only soul, but body’: Marx’s description of commodities and how they interact with their producers and their sellers therefore follow a Frankensteinian narrative wherein the line between objects, the machines that make those objects, and their handlers becomes increasingly blurred. The true source of humanity and of life in this exchange becomes increasingly questionable.

Even on the most fundamental levels, such as *Capital’s* introductory chapters on

the nature of commodities, the Commodity-Money-Commodity process of acquiring and selling becomes an act of transformation, which is subject to the labour with which it is imbued: ‘commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it is the social character of men’s labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour’ (72). By defining commodities as products defined by a social construct, they become representations of value that are simultaneously material and immaterial, manifestations of interpersonal contracts. In this way, an artisan, rather than being an individual seller of products, becomes a worker, whose labour-power is what is up for sale, rather than his/her individual crafts. Marx therefore describes the shift from artisanal to factory work by way of their commodification. He imbues his material reading of history with metaphysical meaning: for example, when discussing commodities, he writes that ‘so soon as [a product] steps forth as a commodity, it is changed into something transcendent’ (70). In Marx, however, *labour* is the transcendental element that is expressed by social character, rather than a spiritual abstraction—labour as a non-material thing which imbues the objects it is spent upon, becomes the higher plane which Carlyle might have ascribed to a religious or otherwise spiritual element. Thus Marx’s conception is, like Mary Shelley’s, entirely earthly. Products are imbued with use-value representative of ‘labour...embodied or materialised in it’ in order to make them commodities; in this way, what is abstract in Marx is thus nevertheless embodied: value imbues material objects, products, and therefore takes the place of any transcendental value that would have appeared in Carlyle. A ‘mere congelation of homogenous human labour’ is a residue left on products, and at one front, existed as material effort, exerted by human-embodied (or machine-embodied) hands, transforming objects into commodities (38). This is, generally, a far more articulate approach to the process of dehumanisation via profit-margins which Carlyle described in his critique of the Greatest Happiness Principle, wherein human value is reduced to numbers for the sake of ‘Parliamentary Expediency’ and as a result ‘Their whole efforts, attachments, opinions, turn on mechanism, and are of a mechanical character’ (*PP* 136; *CME* II: 61). The appearance of commodities in Marx, moreover, is steeped in dark magics, ‘abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties’ (71). They are therefore agents of transformation, and their existence has influence beyond the realm of their material form: in contrast to the value of a product, which an individual has made and sells it in order to profit for himself, commodities are valued not by the product itself, but rather distinguish themselves from one another only by the amount of labour-power with which they are imbued.

This does indicate a potentially problematic feature of Marx's mature works. As Tucker points out, the de-individualisation of Marx's primary message undercuts the Promethean, heroic vision of ascension his earlier work had asserted, despite his maintaining of an ultimate vision of individualistic, Romantic uprising. As we have seen in Avineri's estimation, this is in part negotiated through the argument that man is a social being, whose actions are defined by their impact on other beings. Yet the process of quantifying the value of human labour is itself dehumanising for its homogeneity; repeatedly, Marx describes the workers in collective terms: 'the total labour-power of society...counts here as one homogenous mass of human labour-power' (*Capital* 39). This has the opposite effect upon the construction of Marx's myth in comparison to Carlyle, which anticipates the ways in which their solutions to the ills of modernity would conflict. Where myth had before centred on heroes and symbolic representations of greed and inanition, Marx poses a myth wherein people are necessarily reduced to the abstraction of economic terms in order to foster a unified narrative of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The hero of the narrative is not an individual, but rather a class that is heroic because of their numbers and their collective movement towards self-awareness.

In this way, Carlyle's critique certainly focussed on the dehumanisation of society, and is inclusive of broad groups of people, but the process of mechanisation he describes was individual, wherein the singular 'living artisan is driven from his workshop' and 'any man, or any society of men' with 'a piece of spiritual work to do...can nowise proceed at once and with the mere natural organs, but must first call a public meeting, appoint committees, issue prospectuses, eat a public dinner; in a word, construct or borrow machinery, wherewith to speak it and do it' ('Signs' *CME* II: 61). The amalgamating of individuals into mechanised, factory-style collective behaviour is a failing of present society to Carlyle, while Marx's economic approach to analysis necessitates it, and furthermore, functions as a key part of his prophesied revolution. The proletariat is a 'special and essential product' of industrialisation that is formed through the increased conformity of its population, who all equally are reduced to factory workers. Thus, while Ure and others see the blessings of Vulcan in their machines, naming them after Minerva and other heroes of classical myth, their workers, inversely, become profit margins, which form an essential part of the consolidation and eventual uprising of the proletariat.

In Marx's conception of capitalism, transformation is not limited to commodities and money themselves. It acts as the central theme of the *Manifesto*, and leads us to the

Frankensteinian element of his industrial narrative. The transformation of people, in reaction to their economic and social processes, is essential to the process of consolidation and movement towards revolution. Therefore, this transformation is both read into and imposed upon reality by Marx. This in particular is where the Frankensteinian narrative takes the foreground of Marx's analysis within *Capital*, and carries it into Carlyle's diagnosis as well. Carlyle had argued that 'men are grown mechanical, in head and in heart', and Marx extends that metaphor by pointing towards capital as the instigating factor in the transformation of men into machines, while conversely, machines seem to grow increasingly autonomous. Capital, at its most fundamental, is the prospect of creating value, such that the process of C-M-C process of exchange becomes inverted, and the creation of more money, rather than acquisition of needed commodities, becomes the goal of the capitalist. By inverting this basic economic process, Marx explains, capital as embodied by the capitalist becomes the monstrous top of the economic food chain, driven by the 'single life impulse' to propagate itself at the cost of all others. Moreover, by positioning capital as the pervading force at work across both industrial and social structures in Britain, it envelops all of the various components of production, both human and technological, in its monstrousness. The capitalist is therefore 'capital personified' who, by using machines to increase production and decrease the amount of skill necessary for the workers to exercise, they 'consume' the workers and subsume them into the capitalist process 'as the ferment necessary to their own life-process' (310).

Marx summarises this structure and dynamic in *Capital* when he incorporates machines into his outline of how the capitalist strives to prolong the working day as much as possible, so as to get the most labour out of his workers. By this point in the work, he has already established the longer working day as the manifestation of the capitalists' hunger for more capital by tracing legislative struggles between businessmen and reformists, emphasising along the way the insatiable greed that drives the capitalist to inflict longer and longer working hours upon women and children. Technology, in this context, becomes one more tool to use in this ambition, therefore appearing within the larger structure of capital:

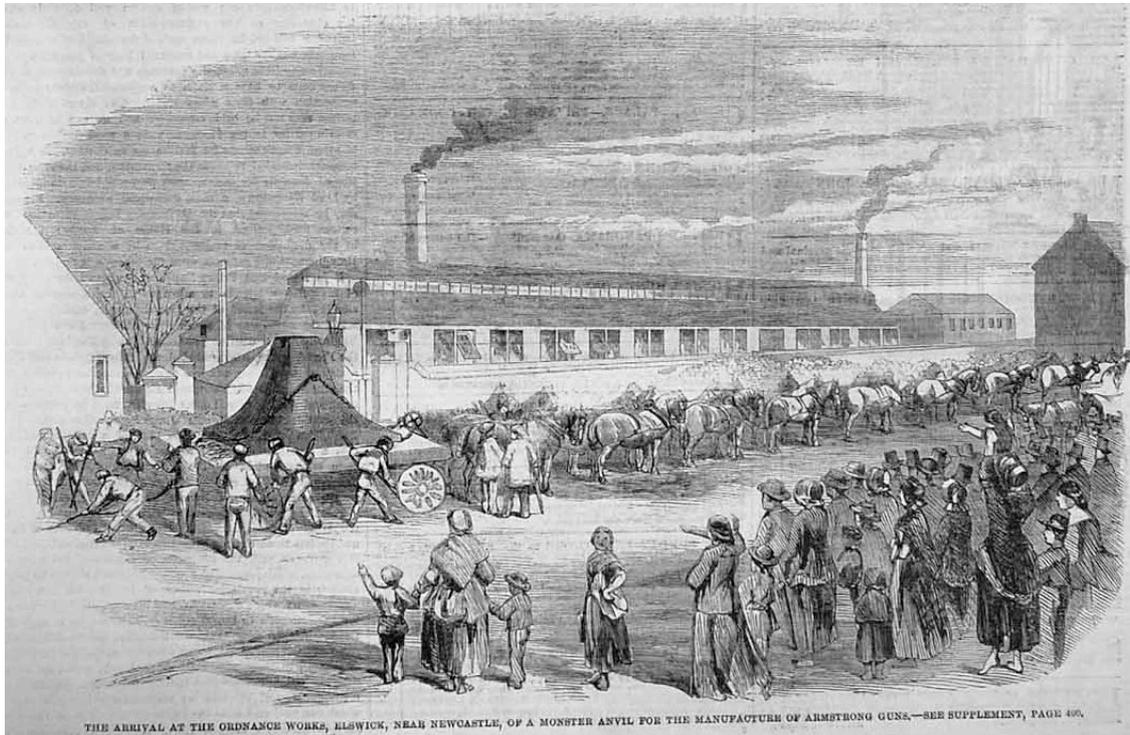
The automaton, as capital, and because it is capital, is endowed, in the person of the capitalist, with the intelligence and will; it is therefore animated by the longing to reduce to a minimum the resistance offered by that repellent yet elastic natural barrier, man (403).

Under the banner of capital, machines and the bourgeoisie are blurred into one entity, and are given mechanical impulse to conquer and exploit the working class in order to get the

most labour-power, and therefore the most profit, out of it. Again, Marx reads economic movements in transcendental language; capital is 'endowed' with the intelligence of the capitalist, but exists outside of individual capitalists as a monstrous superstructure, guiding the behaviour of society's dominant class. Marx includes machinery within this system as the 'automaton', originally an appendage of the capitalist, which is put to use outperforming the workers at their tasks. In doing so, it becomes more autonomous than those who are put to work within it. The automaton takes on the 'intelligence and will' of the capitalist, even as the capitalist himself becomes increasingly less human, his needs and wants being reduced to a singular purpose. In this way, the machine is not the Mephistophelean collaborator that the *Manifesto's* mention of the sorcerer would imply, but rather Frankenstein's monster, an unnatural extension of the capitalist's being, who cannot be separated from him, and shares his life-force. Moreover, that singular purpose becomes the sole foundation for the capitalist's existence, which in turn feeds industrial growth and development as a whole: 'The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society' (*Manifesto* 476). But even more than that, Marx is describing an increasing dependency of society on machines and their specific 'wrong use' as tools for exploitation. The need to propagate more capital is fed by the extended working days and the revolutionising of machinery, but these become a source of dependence for the capitalist, along with the life-blood of the workers who are subsumed by the machines.

This dehumanising process acts doubly upon the proletariat, as the subject of the capitalist's needs and the use of the factory system. Marx establishes how the existence and living status of the worker is entirely handed over to the machine, making the machine the creature, the worker a mere organ: 'the labourer becomes a mere appendage to an already existing material condition of production' (*Capital* 386). The extent to which the Frankenstein narrative seems to appear when addressing the proletariat in particular is remarkable and consistent in Marx's work, and here it is at its most appropriate. The proletariat, a chaotic conglomerate of labourers, is forged together by capitalism and housed in the larger automaton of the factory. By stepping into the capitalist's filthy workshop of the factory, 'the capitalist incorporates labour...with the lifeless constituents of the product' (185), essentially galvanising the machine using people rather than electricity. The 'machine', which Marx uses to refer to as the technology of production, is by this point in history, truly monstrous, as it has been put to use in a monstrous capacity, and as such, 'revolutionises out and out the contract between the labourer and the capitalist' (396).

This is a convincing conception of machinery, already used with effectiveness by Carlyle, and for the broader public, the awe at the scale of production which had come about by this point—its pace, products, and tools—cannot be understated.



Illustrated London News - April 27th 1861. The adjective use of ‘monster’ in the description of new industrial tools was not at all uncommon, as demonstrated here in the caption: ‘The arrival at the ordnance works, Elswick, near Newcastle, of a monster anvil for the manufacture of Armstrong guns.’

With Marx, we get a sense of the scale at which machinery operates much in the same way it was being shared here, in the *Illustrated London News*. Shearing machines become ‘a monster pair of scissors’ (385), and together with its other mechanical brothers and sisters, they form ‘the Juggernaut Car of Capital’ (280). More importantly to him, however, is that the proletariat is the only source of truly ‘living’ labour within these massive housings for equally massive mechanical components, with both machines and capitalism ‘annexing’ that energy in the form of labour-power. In this way, Marx ties the machines to living labour, creating in Frankenstein’s monster the concept of living labour as half-man, half-machine:

A machine...falls prey to the destructive influence of natural forces...Living labour must seize upon these things and rouse them from their death-sleep...Bathed in the fire of labour, appropriated as part and parcel of labour’s organism...they are in truth consumed (183).

That the machines must be ‘roused’ means a sort of resurrection for them, apparently animated from dead parts that are equally technological and capitalist, given their singular purpose to produce. Marx continues to use ‘emancipated’ when referring to these machines that exceed human strength, and thus we see the converse to be true of the proletariat—as

machines gain freedom, man becomes increasingly enslaved. While introducing the incorporation of labour-power into the exchange movements of commodities in *Capital*, Marx states that:

By turning his money into commodities that serve as the material elements of a new product, and as factors with labour-process, by incorporating living labour with their dead substance, the capitalist at the same time converts value, *i.e.* past, materialised, and dead labour into capital, into value big with value, a live monster that is fruitful and multiplies (195).

Leading up to this, Marx is exacting in dissection of the labour process, taking the example of the spinner, whose work with cotton illustrates the injection of labour into commodities. As was the case with the previous quotation as well, however, no sooner does Marx step back to observe the process at large, that his presentation shifts into the propagandistic language of the *Manifesto*, and he returns to the Frankenstein/vampiric analogy. Thus, while industrialist Andrew Ure saw machines which ‘sprung out of the hands of our modern Prometheus at the bidding of Minerva’, Marx argues that while they are Promethean in how they are given life, they are also oppressed in the way Prometheus was oppressed (*The Philosophy of Manufactures* 367). In this way, the instruments they animate become monstrous: they are the electricity that drives not so much a ‘Herculean prodigy’ but a ‘mechanical monster’ and turns sleeping technology into tools imbued with ‘demon power’ (381-2). This positions the proletariat not as a monstrous mob themselves, but rather the source of any pure power that has since been misused—they *are* electricity, and thus they are the inheritors of the cultural association of that power with revolution, alongside the resurrection of Prometheus into the public consciousness. Meanwhile, capital and its instruments of production becomes the monstrous, animated automaton whose consumption drives social and economic conditions.

Baldick has noted Marx’s attempt to shift the identity of the modern Prometheus from the inventors of the machines, onto the workers, emphasising the suffering Prometheus must endure as punishment rather than the fire he originally brought to man (122). By the time Marx wrote *Capital*, Baldick concludes, he has transformed this figure into ‘The modern Prometheus—no longer a critical philosopher, as in Marx’s earlier formula, but a hero of shaping labour and stubborn resistance’ (124). While many were writing about the new ‘Titanic machines being built with many comparisons to Greek mythological figures, such as Vulcan and Jupiter, Marx was devoting his mythical references to monstrous, ambiguous figures such as vampires and sorcerers. Marx’s goal overall, Baldick argues, was the manipulation of the bourgeois, Robinson Crusoe myth into

that of Frankenstein. But as we have already seen, it is not just Crusoe, but a great many other pro-capitalist narratives that Marx seeks, by proxy, to dismantle. His reading of the proletariat as a Promethean force brought low by capitalist oppression resonated with the notion of an industrial revolution. He could temper the awe portrayed by Ure into fear, through the myth-arc of that force turning on its creator. In this way, the rhetoric of Promethean power that had become so familiar since the eighteenth century becomes a threat, a promise that power would once again manifest not in technical power, but in revolution.

When this foundation is portrayed in the *Manifesto*, Marx makes explicit what Carlyle used as the metaphor. The machine, and more widely, industry, becomes the purveyor of social structures, and the ultimate model upon which one must understand how modern society functions, and also predict its downfall. In *Frankenstein*, the tale emerges as a single incidence—the isolated Promethean figure and his creation. The *Manifesto*, by contrast, offers an extension and expansion of that myth; it embodies the myth of development that Berman ascribes to Faust's progression, in which he narrates the widespread distribution of his modern vision and reaps its consequences. Berman notes that Marx recognised that Goethe was one of the few Romantic authors who acknowledged 'that the humanistic ideal of self-development grows out of the emerging reality of bourgeois economic development' (96). That reality is, furthermore, one of proliferation, as was the case with Faust's spit of land, in which isolated inventions become not only pervasive, but essential to society. Where in *Frankenstein* the reproduction of the monster is a threat that emerges when he demands that Frankenstein build him a bride, the proliferation of machinery is already complete in Marx's present, the bourgeoisie's dependency upon machines reaching its peak. *Frankenstein* presents the pursuit and self-annihilation of the monster and its creator almost within a vacuum. As Frankenstein expires on an ice-locked ship, the monster is swallowed up by the darkness and the elements, and the entire story is itself locked away in the frame narrative of Frankenstein's retelling. It is clear that the narrative is nearly a vision, halfway between dream and reality, the only evidence of its true existence the collateral damage. Marx, by contrast, extracts that narrative from its containment inside a new species, and in doing so presents a history of technology as it manifests in social conflict. The monster's need to perpetuate himself becomes the capitalist's need to innovate, and produce more capital. Its need goes beyond the feverish infection that Shelley had portrayed Frankenstein succumbing to, towards an addiction to the consumption of the proletariat's 'ferment' of labour-power, relying, in lieu

of a faster workforce, upon ever-evolving machinery.

It is ultimately the dependency of the bourgeoisie on its machines and on its exploitation of the proletariat that is the key motivating aspect of the *Manifesto*, and which is analysed but not used as a call to arms within *Capital*. It is also the most prophetic aspect, as the historical significance of industrialisation in Marx's interpretation is not only its role in creating the proletariat, but also its laying bare of the tenuousness of the bourgeoisie's stability. Marx seems to draw directly from Shelley for his vision of the proletariat's progression from destroyer to self-destroyer—when the monster in *Frankenstein* finds Frankenstein's corpse, he vows:

I shall die. I shall no longer feel the agonies which now consume me...He is dead who called me into being; and when I shall be no more, the very remembrance of us both will speedily vanish' (220).

Marx seems to interact with both *Faust* and *Frankenstein* in his reference to the sorcerer in the *Manifesto*, who also has 'called [powers] into being', and which now, in the guise of the proletariat, will self-annihilate. When the proletariat is finished destroying the bourgeoisie, 'it will...have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class' (*Manifesto* 491). The proletariat, like Frankenstein's monster, are a symptom of the natural order in distress, and the myth he presents is meant to throw that distress into high relief:

The selfish misconception that induces you to transform into eternal laws of nature and of reason, the social forms springing from your present mode of production and form of property—historical relations that rise and disappear in the progress of production—this misconception you share with every ruling class that has preceded you. What you see clearly in the case of ancient property, what you admit in the case of feudal property, you are of course forbidden to admit in the case of your own bourgeois form of property (487).

As in Engels' description of the progression of the development of technology, followed by factories, followed by free trade and exploitation, Marx captures the transformation of 'eternal laws of nature and of reason' into a profit-driven world of exploitation.⁴¹ Moreover, he presents it as a prophetic statement that acts as a revelation in the face of the illusions with which the bourgeoisie have been protecting themselves. This is obviously central to the *Manifesto's* position as a political, revolutionary document. Rather than leaving the work as a haunting, isolated tale that begins and ends far from civilisation, as *Frankenstein* does,

⁴¹ 'The history of the proletariat in England begins with the second half of the last century, with the invention of the steam-engine and of machinery for working cotton. These inventions gave rise, as is well known, to an industrial revolution, a revolution which altered the whole civil society; one, the historical importance of which is only now beginning to be recognized' (*Conditions* 37).

Marx establishes a structure for rebirth in purely material ways: ‘measures...which appear economically insufficient and untenable, but which, in the course of the movement, outstrip themselves, necessitate further inroads upon the old social order’ (490). He lists a series of imposed structures and abolition of property that he hopes lead to the dissolution of class distinction, including ‘Abolition of property in land and application of all rents of land to public purposes’, ‘Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the State’ and ‘Abolition of children’s factory labour in its present form. Combination of education with industrial production, &c, &c’ (*Manifesto* 490). Throughout these measures, industry plays a crucial role in further development of a communist society, but it is being governed, ideally, through society’s unified purpose. This purpose is similar to the one which Carlyle believed came from divine inspiration; however, rather than having individual poetic visionaries disseminate such wisdom, Marx envisioned his inspiration reaching all members of society equally, reasserting the unified nature of man and his society, and the equality to be found therein. In this way, despite aiming to illustrate the destruction of the bourgeoisie by way of uprising, he could conclude the *Manifesto* with a triumphal air: he called the proletariat to arms, signalling the modern world’s destruction, while also hoping to achieve a new beginning.

Umberto Eco has remarked in recent years that the *Manifesto* ‘should be read like a sacred text in advertising agencies’ (24), but arguably, its ‘sacred’ quality extends beyond its status as a model of effective propaganda. Rather, it is a document that sanctifies the process of industrialisation as the final stage of self-destructiveness before the final triumph of the proletariat and the beginning of a utopian communist state. Its opening, ‘A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of Communism’ (473) immediately alerts the reader to the emotions he intends to evoke through Gothic imagery, and the inversion of social conditions he seeks to prophesy. *Frankenstein* foreshadows this approach, having shifted the Faustian origin of the demonic from an outside entity to an internal one. In *Faust*, Mephistopheles always remains a separate character, but Frankenstein is driven entirely by his own obsession, and his monster is a product of that obsession, not an enabler of it. Marx develops the myth further, and in doing so, he rewrites the history of the bourgeoisie in terms of what they have built and what they have torn down.

Towards the end of *Capital*, Marx quotes Faust’s iconic lament, ‘Two souls, alas, do dwell within his breast; / The one is ever parting from the other’ (593; in *Faust* I: 1112-13). He re-orientates Goethe’s portrayal of Faust’s longing, however, as a commentary not on

spiritual versus material longing, but rather the continual draw of the capitalist towards the further accumulation of more capital.

At the historical dawn of capitalist production,—and every capitalist upstart has personally to go through this historical stage—avarice, and desire to get rich, are the ruling passions. But the progress of the capitalist production not only creates a world of delights; it lays open, in speculation and the credit system, a thousand sources of sudden enrichment... But along with this growth, there is at the same time developed in his breast, a Faustian conflict between the passion for accumulation, and the desire for enjoyment (593-4).

Marx reveals the ‘dark corners’ of modernism, as Berman puts it, by locating them within the desires of mankind, which have driven them to put technology to ‘wrong use’, and in doing so, have galvanised their own undoing. In essence, therefore, Marx’s creation of an industrial myth is the expansion of the Frankenstein narrative, and its context as the inevitable result of Faustian ambition and the misuse of Promethean power.

Dissemination, and the haunting of industrial England

As we have seen, the history of the world according to Marx is not only a series of class struggles but also a cycle of constant revolutions leading to a final realisation of the utopian communist state. The staying power of the Faust-Frankenstein myth has already been established, but in Marx's hands it lingers even more strongly to become significant to later Victorian society and the present. In Terry Eagleton's *The English Novel: An Introduction*, he discusses the Brontës' novels as examples of the ‘struggle to accommodate...bleak realities within...symbolic frames’ a dynamic which also serves as an apt description of the *Manifesto* and *Frankenstein* as well (141). Caught between metaphor and empirical research, both Marx and Mary Shelley are able to revolt against the status quo, but not in a capacity that would get them, as the earlier Romantics were, accused of creating a ‘cult of fear’.⁴² They are too self-conscious for that, and particularly in Marx's case, too aware of strategy and what needed to be said to turn the spectre of Communism into a palpable and rational force against the far more devious spectre, capitalism. Yet even as he grounds the *Manifesto* in an historical progression of prophesied events, Marx spins ideology in a way that remains visceral and therefore necessarily Romantic. It is what allows his work to become the ‘archetype of a century of modernist manifestos and movements to come’ (Berman 89).

Moreover, as an archetype, or better yet, a cohesive historical myth, Marx's

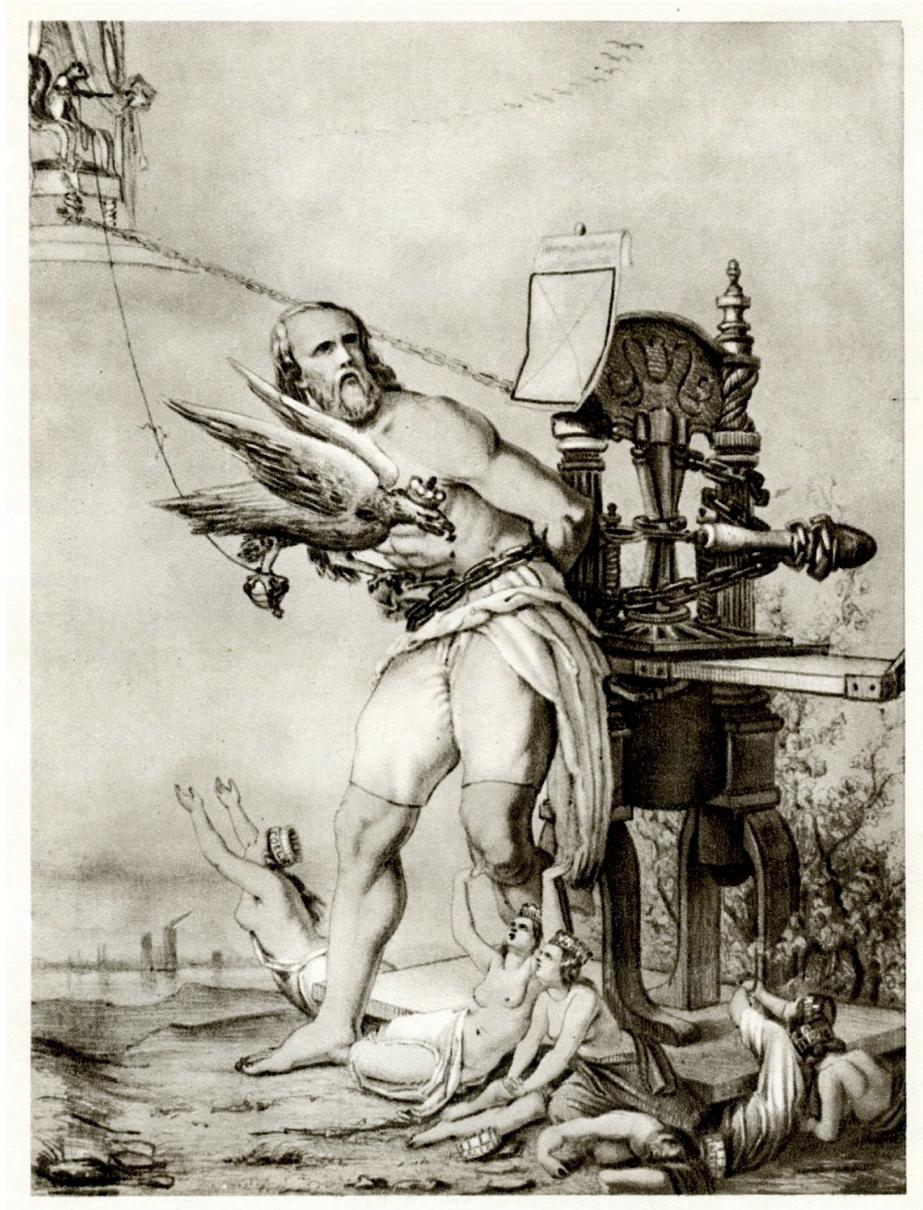
⁴² Thompkins cites Holcroft's first article for the *Monthly Review*, November 1792, as claiming such a thing.

conception of history deliberately serves to enhance and emphasise particular components of other literary and non-literary works that just as vitally speak to us about the nineteenth century as the *Manifesto* ever did. Marx and Engels had, as British residents, been very aware of the British novelists, and expressed admiration for Dickens, Gaskell, and others, for their commitment to social justice and willingness to portray the middle classes as ‘full of presumption, affectation, petty tyranny and ignorance’ (*New York Tribune* 1 Aug. 1854). That they should find echoes of their values, if not their ideology, within the English novel, seems significant when arguing that Marxism hit upon a zeitgeist that extended beyond its political radicalism. In surveying similarly-minded works from later in the nineteenth century, a pattern emerges which illustrates the scope of the impact of industrialisation, and the usefulness of Marx and Engels’ reading towards making sense of that impact. More than the philosophy of Romanticism that Marx began with, the narrative scope of the alternately heroic and destructive power of bourgeois technological innovation can be seen as the foundation for the perception of machines lying at the crux of man’s achievements and man’s downfall. When combined with bourgeois guilt in the latter half of the nineteenth century, such ideas could take hold as a reference point for general attitudes towards technology, particularly with the rise of political science fiction during the *fin-de-siècle*. In his study on working-class radicalism, Trygve R. Tholfsen remarks that:

In one way or another, historical scholarship has absorbed a great deal from the Marxist canon. The difficulty, of course, is that Marxist insights and concepts are not readily detached from the tightly interconnected theoretical structure in which they are embedded; since they permeate various interpretations of Victorian social history, a certain ambiguity has resulted (19).

In other words, consciously or not, the importance and pervasiveness of Marxism has been such that its invaluable contribution to the study of the working class has made it inextricable even from non-Marxist perspectives on nineteenth-century England. Yet this is very much from the perspective of twentieth-century historiography—the eminence of Marxism as the lens through which we view the Victorian working class is one that has been imposed very much after the fact. Marx’s impact at the time of his writing, particularly in England, was limited both by language and by his inherent radicalism. Nonetheless, our understanding of industrialisation as coloured by Marxism was not entirely a product of rewriting and reconsideration of the nineteenth century through a lens focussed in the twentieth. Like Carlyle and the mythmakers before him, Marx’s impact was on-going from the time of his writing, and gained momentum throughout the Victorian period.

Marx moved to London in 1849, with no intention of staying permanently, but his impact was immediately apparent, if not in British culture, then in Marx's own methodical approach to inserting himself into the displaced German community within London. His exile from the continent is marked particularly, for our purposes, by the recognition and association of him and his politics, like the Lunar Society and Franklin before him, with Prometheus:



Wilhelm Kleinenbroich (unconfirmed), 'Der neue Prometheus' (1842)

In reaction to the censorship of *Rheinische Zeitung*, Marx's vision of himself and his cause became united under the Promethean banner not by his own doing, but by an anonymous submission to the newspaper, which managed to evade the censors by forging a caption

or any text within the image. However, this image would not entirely transfer to England. Previous to his relocation, the earliest British legacy of Marx's work (and of German socialism in general) can be found in the mutual recognition between the Chartist newspaper *The Northern Star* and *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*. In this exchange, the latter recognised that, 'The *Northern Star*...contains in its latest issue an appreciation of the manner in which the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* interprets the English people's movement and advocates democracy in general,' to which Marx and Engels replied positively and with mutual regard (*MECW* 129). Marx had been familiar with the Chartist movement before then, through Engels' experience working with its members, but here we can see mutual acknowledgement of purpose in their publications, and furthermore the beginnings of the revolutionary spirit being shared between them. Within the first year of his arrival, he worked with the German Workers' Educational Association, helped to reorganise the Communist League, and attempted to start a journal that would follow in the footsteps of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*. Marx's visibility to the British public, however, continued to be very limited, even while he and Engels continued to be productive. During the 1850s, Marx wrote various articles for the *New York Daily Tribune*, and published pamphlets with Engels on Prussian injustice, which were distributed in Switzerland and the United States. His participation in the British newspapers was even more limited—he published in the Chartist *People's Paper*, but on the whole, his contributions were mainly to newspapers abroad. Marx's influence as a unique voice and mode of thought among socialists was not made clear until the formation of the International Working Men's Association in 1864, whose ethos was deeply influenced by Marx. Even then, the Association's presence was strongest in continental Europe, rather than in the British Isles. It would not be until the 1870s that attention in England would be paid to Marx, and that attention would then be followed up by the reprinting of the translated *Manifesto* in 1888.

The original publishing of the *Communist Manifesto* had gone virtually unnoticed in 1848, a propaganda document rushed through publication but still not getting to the presses before revolutionary movements had mobilised. The 1872 German edition was, by contrast, a reaction to the Paris Commune, to which the British press had paid very close attention and had noted Marx's deep involvement. 'The *Gaulois* asserts that the insurrection which broke out in Paris on the 18th instant was organised in London, and that the details of its organisation were entrusted to Karl Marx, supreme chief of the "Internationale" and of Prussian nationality...' several newspapers reported, and from there Marx, and revolutionary communist movements at large, became firmly established in the public

eye.⁴³ The *Manifesto* had been translated into English once in 1850 and then several times in America in 1872, but ideas of social democracy beyond the failed Chartist movement with recognition of Marxism's involvement did not become apparent in popular circulation until the 1880s. At that point, *The Pall Mall Gazette* recognised the *Communist Manifesto* in a series of articles on social democracy, pointing towards Germany as the source of the clearest thoughts on the matter, noting that 'their convictions regarding the evil of our present economic system are the result of historical and practical knowledge which commands respect' (9 Sept. 1880).

Marx also had intellectual supporters in England, whose activism was not as directly geared towards revolutionary uprising. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, socialism experienced a second upsurge among the artists and intelligentsia of England, with figures like William Morris and Henry Hyndman drawing inspiration from his work. The organisations which were founded and heavily influenced by Marx's ideas were never ideologically consistent however, and several schisms occurred, as was the case of the Social Democratic Federation and its dissident offshoot, the Socialist League. The dramatic language of Marx, however, was often retained by his followers, along with his ideas. Morris, who was heavily influenced by Carlyle as well as Marx, quoted the *Manifesto* when formulating his own for the Socialist League, and paraphrased extensively. His reiteration of Marxist ideas echoed the Frankensteinian motifs from the *Manifesto*, of the mechanisation of the working class and the dehumanising nature of industrial work:

We have already shown that the workers, although they produce all the wealth of society, have no control over its production or distribution: the *people*, who are the only really organic part of society, are treated as a mere appendage to capital - as a part of its machinery (Morris 1).

Though he was himself not a Marxist, in his 1881 essay, Hyndman also wrote:

In the machinery of our daily life the real producer has as yet counted for little. The crowded room, the dingy street, the smoky atmosphere, the pleasureless existence, the gradual deterioration of his offspring – these things are noted and brooded upon by men who are being steadily educated to understand the disadvantages of their position, and are also being drilled to right them (Hyndman, n.p.).

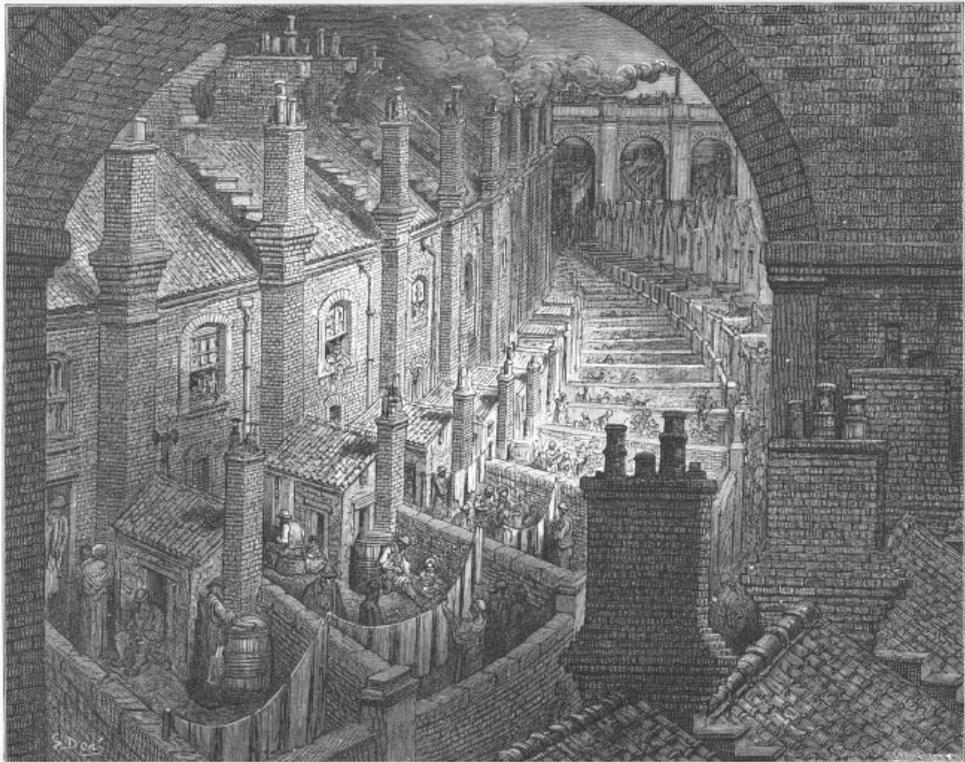
In both of these examples, a central concern remains the role of machinery in the social woes that are so apparent to the public at large. Machines as consumers of workers, and thus as enablers of the capitalist project, are placed at the core of British Socialist commentary on social ills. Along with the theoretical components of Marxism which

⁴³ *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* is quoted here, and *The Glasgow Herald* echoes it, among others on 1 April, 1871.

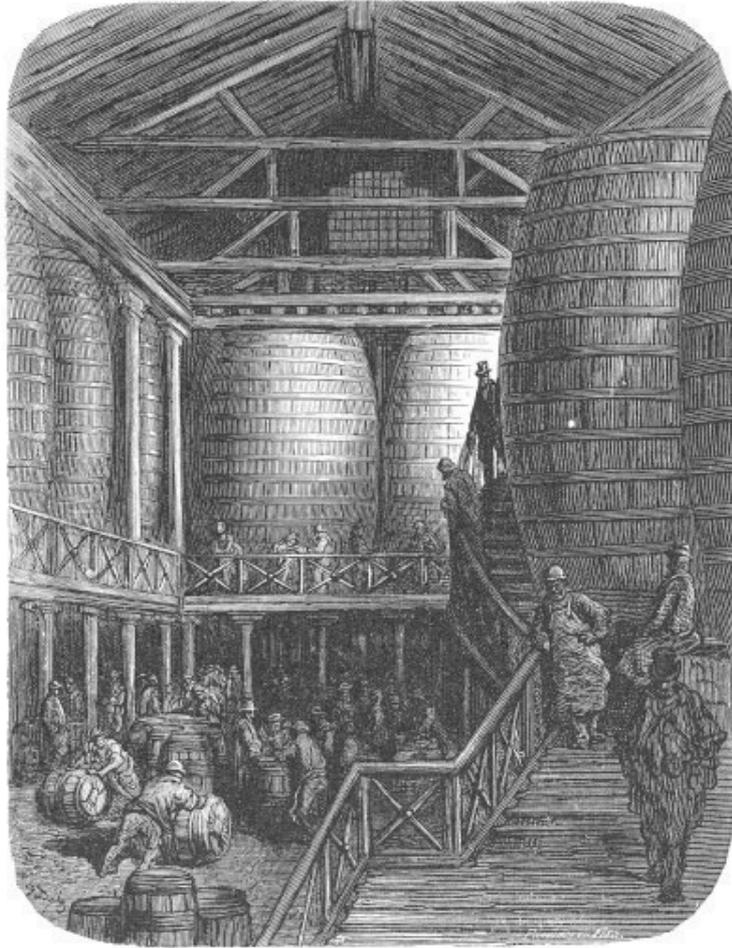
explore the dynamics of epochal conflict and class power, the environmental factors created by the introduction of factory labour haunt the language of Marx and that of his followers. The spiritual crisis of industrialisation may have been put aside in favour of the material, but the impact *on* the spirit appears in the works of Marx as a palpable, material concern. Thus, the soot and the dim conditions of factory life are built into the spectral, demonic struggle that characterises the Faustian metaphor used to describe the bourgeoisie and proletariat:

That tyranny of capital which has so often been denounced as if it were an embodiment of the evil spirit in a new and dangerous shape, and which Lamennais inveighed against as the modern incarnation of the slave-driver without the slave-driver's interest in the life of his property – this it is which the Socialists are striving to overthrow (Hyndman, n.p.).

Though fractious and inconsistent perhaps in ideologies and in considerations of how best to achieve socialism or communism in England, Marx's impact upon the nation's thinkers was not solely through ideology, but rather also through the dissemination and reinforcement of imagery that had been captured and reiterated by fellow industrial writers, and fitting that imagery into a framework of economic and philosophical theory. The bourgeoisie's 'vampire-like' effect upon the drained and mechanised working class was no longer a free-floating, though observable, metaphor, but a gateway into Marxist discourse. Gustav Doré's renditions of London in Blanchard Jerrold's *London, a Pilgrimage* (1871), for example, captured the uniformity and closeness of the working class within their living conditions, while contrasting it with the behemoths with which they, as minute shadowy figures, worked.



OVER LONDON BY RAIL.



From *London: A Pilgrimage* (1872)

Though London was hardly representative of the condition of England at large, the sense of scale in production, and its necessary consumption of workers, and expelling of darkness into the air was thematic of many illustrations outside of the city as well. For this reason, relying only on the appearance of Marx himself in the public eye neglects the resonance of Marx's conception of material historiography as a partial product of British political economy and Engels' explorations and observations of the British landscape. Marx's lasting influence on intellectual history has been on the political scene, but arguably, his impact on historiography has been a product of his artistic approach to his own historical studies resonating with those of his contemporaries.

While Communism may not have had a strong following in England in the nineteenth century, Marx's historical construction of industrialisation has since become so ingrained that it became a building block for attitudes towards future technology's role in society and culture. Spengler, in illustrating his Faustian age of man, made thorough use of Marx, though he missed the mythological element of Marx's work in favour of constructing his own; he contended (as Carlyle likely would as well) that Marx was far too invested in economic life, and that this and other reductions of life to numbers only scratched the surface of the character of a civilisation, stating that, '*All economic life is the expression of a soul-life*' (470). Economics, he argued, has a physiognomy that can be interpreted through understanding that it is shallow manifestation of a hidden high Culture—a culture, which for the modern world, is identified as Faustian. Yet even as he contested Marx's overall conception of history and denied the existence of a 'working class' in favour of a de-politicised peasantry, Spengler utilised Marx's characterisation of 'parasitic' capitalists, who prey 'vampire-like' upon the heterogeneous serving classes. He also claimed that: 'Faustian money-thinking "opens up" whole continents...and transforms them all into financial energy' (485-6). He defines such energy in the same way that Marx defined capital—rather than possessing any physical, intrinsically valuable substance, money that arises from this financial energy exists only as a 'Function', an alchemical, transforming and transformative force (489). In short, Spengler's efforts to conceive a world-structure, which was built upon mythic tales, relied upon the components of a specifically industrial myth in order to diagnose a Faustian modern world. The steam-engine still 'upset everything and transformed economic life from the foundations up' and for a short time, Spengler writes, production and creation peaks in a 'drama of...greatness' (502-3). Yet 'Man has felt the machine to be devilish, and rightly' because the 'Faustian

man has become *the slave of his creation*' (504). In regards to the machine, if nothing else, he and Marx were entirely in accord, and by envisioning the supersession of the machine over mankind, Spengler also foresaw the death of Faust.

Donald MacKenzie calls this attitude 'technological determinism'—the belief that technology was responsible for shaping society. Thorstein Veblen, an American sociologist, published an article in 1906 entitled 'The Place of Science in Modern Civilization' which established the central tenets of the theory wherein western culture finds its 'highest material expression in the technology of the machine industry' (586), which is demonstrative of the theory that, 'men have learned to think in the terms in which the technological processes act' (598). Veblen's theory in relationship to Marxism has been much contested, and from his own writings it is clear that he disagreed with some of Marx's fundamental ideas; nevertheless, there is reason enough to understand that his thought and Marx's have on several occasions been paired. Faustian danger pervades his reading of material history, especially when science as an accepted discipline becomes 'idolatrous' while 'the human nature of civilized mankind is still substantially the human nature of savage man' (605). The progression of technology may shape civilisation, Veblen argued, but it did not change human nature, and thus the capacity to put things 'to wrong use' still remained. In this observation, he also touched on the central assertion of this study—that even as 'technological processes' become increasingly 'pragmatic', mankind must still seek out myths, even as the scientific method encroaches, like Carlyle's conception of mechanism, upon other disciplines (607). He summarised that 'so long as the machine process continues to hold its dominant place as a disciplinary factor in modern culture, so long must the spiritual and intellectual life of this cultural era maintain the character which the machine process gives it' (608-9).

In the wake of technology being put to devastating use a decade later, both the interpretation and lesson that Veblen offered became increasingly compelling. It is also a model that continues to be debated, particularly because of how it is observed in contemporary media's treatment of technology. Advertisement's adage that a new technology will 'change the way we live' has a long history, but its foundation specifically in industrial culture can be traced to the mythologizing of industrialisation itself through the readings of it as an essential, epochal change. For both he and Carlyle, machinery, when put to wrong use, becomes a dark force, pathological in its spread, needing to be diagnosed and treated. Moreover, it is the manifestation of mankind's power, and his Faustian temptation to abuse it. Marx therefore is part of a continuum of thought from

which he extracted a theoretical structure of history, consistent with the more visceral, romantic elements of industrial life that had been picked up on by his contemporaries. The key to his longevity is not just his influence upon the political landscape, but also his careful highlighting of the most vivid and easily propagandised elements of his historical environment, and creating from his evidence a coherent narrative. For Marx, as was the case with Carlyle, it is the underlying diagnosis of the Industrial Revolution that asserts their texts' usability, and which remained important and relevant to the western world as it entered into the Machine Age of the twentieth century.

Pandaemonium: Industrialisation retold

As we know from contemporary politics and Communism's earlier reception, Marx's exact imagining of industrialisation has never been the dominant perspective in Britain, and nor has Carlyle's. Rather, the effect of their mythmaking is cumulative. The concept of technological determinism, despite its rejection by prominent twentieth century Marxists and its debatable accuracy as a legitimate interpretation of Marx's work, best encapsulates the amalgam of class struggle and exploitation through technology that Marx captured in the *Communist Manifesto*. It has stuck within the public consciousness, and is still affecting the way we view technological change, particularly now that technology has become more central to our daily lives than ever before: as MacKenzie has remarked, 'There is much in Marx's writings on technology that cannot be captured by any simple technological determinism... Yet... It resonates excitingly with some of the best modern work in the history of technology' (473). From a mythological standpoint, its empirical value is superseded by its usefulness in processing technological change. Myths, if they began their lives as histories and as stories, truly become myths in the repeated retellings, which distil and gloss and become more meaningful and useful through their transformation. The tellings and retellings of industrial myth for Marx and Carlyle, as based on the more traditional myths of Faust and Frankenstein, are necessarily raw and complex because of their closeness to historical study and because they accommodate specific ideologies. But in accumulating readings of industrialisation, the central themes that emerge from both direct engagement with industrial culture through critical work and indirect engagement through myth narratives can be found in the previous chapters' titular quotations: these readings are founded upon the increasing presence of 'mechanism' for which society 'hopes and struggles' to the exclusion of all else, risking that 'mechanism' may be 'put to a wrong use'. In this way, the myth of the Industrial Revolution is in essence about awe and fear—awe for the fire we have stolen from the gods, and fear that not only have we have been changed by it, become reliant on it, but that we have become reliant upon its abuse. Ultimately, it is a narrative of encroachment, wherein the incorporation of mechanism into all aspects of society and individual existence necessitates loss of spiritual and/or physical life.

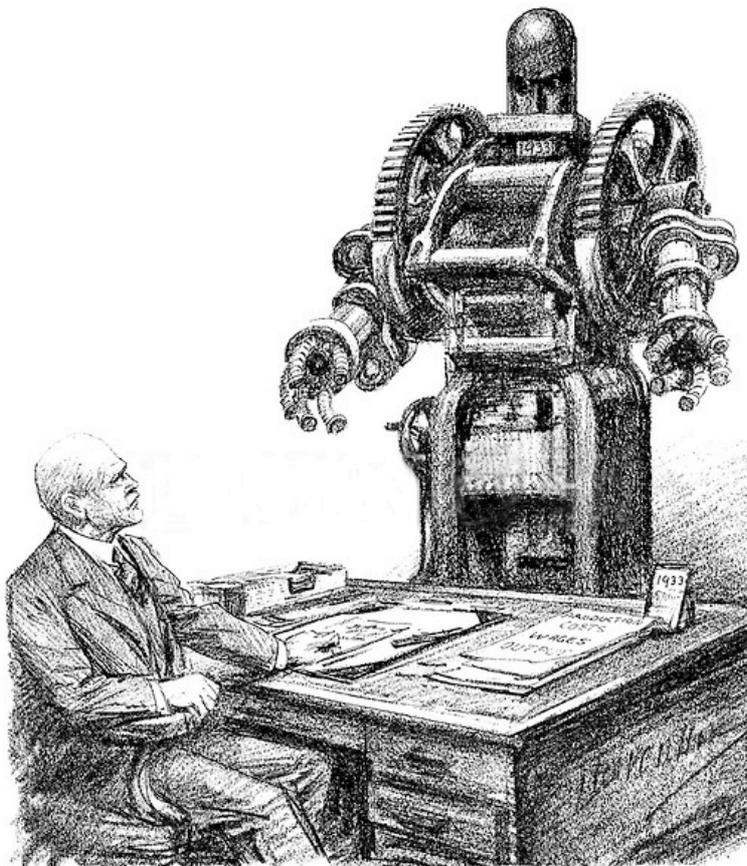
This narrative became increasingly important as England moved into the twentieth century, and the technology of war, as well as that of production, became just as epoch-changing, and just as visible. The Industrial Revolution became a legacy, part of the recent

past that now hung over the new century's head, a model of what to do (and more importantly, what not to do). Furthermore, the mythistory of industrialisation formed by its contemporary observers began to be retold. Among those retellers, though the culmination of his work would not be published until decades after his death, was Humphrey Jennings, whose work, *Pandaemonium: 1660-1886: The Coming of the Machine as Seen by Contemporary Observers* (1985) would become so vital to Danny Boyle's Olympic opening ceremony. It is a work predominantly of *bricolage*, in which Jennings (and his daughter, who completed the work after his death) assembled short excerpts from a vast variety of writers by theme and chronology, allowing moments and experiences of writers over the course of two centuries to be curated in the broader context of industrialisation. Their observations, together, cohere through the reader's impressions of underlying patterns and preoccupations in the texts, into a narrative of the Industrial Revolution. In this way, it is a unique demonstration of the process of retelling the new mythistory that this study has sought to explore: it asks that readers navigate through selective remembrance of resonant ideas and memories in service of an historical narrative that can be used in the present day. Closing this study by returning to Jennings, the source of Boyle's inspiration, will therefore serve to reinforce the usefulness of the mythistory that has been analysed in Marx and Carlyle, as well as indicate opportunities for future study.

In many ways, *Pandaemonium* is both a reflection of Jennings' time and Jennings himself; it participates in the myth of industry in such a way as to put in sharp relief the excitement and trepidation that arise from a Faust-Frankenstein narrative, now wrapped up in the story of 'the Machine', which was still in many ways a subject of the same debates that had been posed since the beginning of industrialisation:

Leonard Raven-Hill, 'The Saving of Labour' (18 January 1933).

Published in *Punch Magazine*, and summarising much the same debate as those brought up at the end of the eighteenth century.⁴⁴ Caption: "The Robot. "Master, I can do the work of fifty men." Employer. "Yes, I know that. But *who is to support the fifty men!*"



THE SAVING OF LABOUR.

THE ROBOT. "MASTER, I CAN DO THE WORK OF FIFTY MEN."
EMPLOYER. "YES, I KNOW THAT, BUT WHO IS TO SUPPORT THE FIFTY MEN?"

Out of a milieu of interwar pessimism followed by the trauma of the World Wars (exemplified, as we have seen, by Spengler's treatise), Jennings assembled *Pandaemonium* from a vast number of sources, beginning the work in 1937, and nearly completing it by the time he died in 1950. The varying Liberal ideologies that had most impacted the late nineteenth century, most prominently those of Matthew Arnold, Herbert Spencer, and T.H. Green, had all by this time completely fallen by the wayside as a result of their naïveté. While their proposed solutions were all distinctly different, they had all attempted to integrate the inevitability of progress with their awareness of the changing and disintegrating cultural order—even before the First World War these notions came to be seen as impossibly optimistic.⁴⁵ Dillon Barry, a friend of Jennings who had spoken to him

⁴⁴ A letter entitled 'To the Landholders of the County of Wilt' (1793) discusses precisely the same fear. It protested the continual replacement of men with machinery, which left workers without work, and therefore reliant on the 'general stock' for support (*British Labour Struggles, Contemporary Pamphlets 1727-1850* III: 12).

⁴⁵ Arnold's approach, typified by *Culture and Anarchy*, favoured the elevation of literature as the new focus of moral guidance in lieu of religion: 'culture being the true nurse of the pursuing love, and sweetness and light

just before his death, recalled that she had asked him about his objectivity in choosing his images, to which he responded that, ‘his purpose and choice were entirely objective, but that he found a theme emerging from the collection almost spontaneously—that the coming of the Machine was destroying something in our life...’ (Jennings xvi). This instinctive reaction to his source materials can perhaps be traced to his upbringing, as the child of two ‘guild socialists’ whose sympathies lay with the worker, and who subscribed to the tenets of the Pre-Raphaelites. It can also be linked to his studies at Cambridge, where he began doctoral work under I.A. Richards’ supervision, and would have been exposed to Richards’ innovative efforts to understand underlying habits and predispositions of readers in the ways they instinctively reacted to works of literature. What his comment to Barry might illuminate in addition to that, however, is that while Jennings had a sensitivity to the material that was no doubt influenced by the feelings of his time, he was also using ‘his powers of assimilation, of perceiving possible and hitherto unnoticed connections and synthesising his perceptions with systems,’ which Richards had praised (Jackson 124). He would use those powers particularly not only in his films, but also in his ‘imaginative history’ of the Industrial Revolution.

Jennings’ feeling for the ‘spontaneous’ themes that emerged from his material is not only testament to his personal feelings and the pessimism of his time period. Rather, it is indicative of the level of usability that the narrative emerging from those sources possessed. As a ‘*bricoleur* of English culture’, Jennings captured the accumulated imagery and themes of previous chapters within *Pandaemonium*, exemplifying the ongoing resonance of the mythistory of industrialisation (Mengham n.p.). His experience as a filmmaker and as a student of literature allowed him to recognise not just what is useful to us, but rather what is specifically appealing about a mythic conception of industrialisation. More than reiterating the mythology, *Pandaemonium* actively demonstrates how narrative power clings to history, that the seeking of it elicits a response that is of course shaped by personal and

the true character of the pursued perfection’ (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1932) p. 108. By contrast, Spencer favoured a Lamarckian evolutionary approach, citing ‘Super-Organic Evolution’ as the basis for man’s progress, bearing society forward towards perfection through physical and psychological change that would be expressed through societal improvement. By the 1890s, however, the complacent success of industrialists which had supported Spencer’s ideas during the mid-nineteenth century had been undermined by economic depression and working class dissension, such that his own optimism was dampened in the last volume of *Principles of Sociology* (see Göran Therborn, *Science, Class and Society* (London: NLB, 1976) pp. 228-9). T. H. Green was more similar to Arnold in his analysis of the crises of Victorian society--the movement away from religion and towards the advancement of science--but favoured the reframing of religion as will and reason, much in the vein of Kant and Hegel, over the advancement of literature as a moral course (Paul Harris, ‘Moral Progress & Politics: The Theory of T. H. Green,’ *Polity* 21.3 (1989) pp. 538-562. *JSTOR*. [accessed 23/3/2013] 540). For more involved discussion, see Melvin Richter, *The Politics of Conscience: T. H. Green and His Age* (London, 1964)).

political circumstance, but is also imaginative, and necessarily shaped by the imaginations that shaped it before. The mythology of the Industrial Revolution therefore has always functioned as a strategy for dealing with the incorporation of the machine into the cultural consciousness and the social body, but it has since become a permanent part of our shared historical awareness, and coloured our perception of the industrial age.

In opposition to some of his contemporaries' observations of decline, Jennings did not hesitate to capture the excitement of invention, as well as the trepidation; in this way, he is more aligned with the mythistory set out by Marx and Carlyle than others in the post-war milieu. While the work of the Hammonds would come under fire for their damning history of industrialisation, which Jennings would occasionally cite within *Pandaemonium*, his portraiture does not overtly claim to pass judgement, or indeed take sides, though the shaping and selection of his images are obviously the product of deliberate choice. Jennings shows his hand not only as a critic and observer of technology culture, but an enthusiast as well. His personal fear and awe was apparent in his university years; Leonard Amey recalled Jennings' distrust of the mechanisation of modern life, sketching the idea of a masque 'whose climax should be the entry of the Devil on a reaping machine' (Jackson 64). However, his predisposition towards the devilish narrative of industry, which resulted from an upbringing on Morris and Ruskin, was also arguably tempered by his interest in modern and avant-garde art movements. In addition to French surrealist films, he took pains to study Picasso, Klee, and Modrian, among others, and was an accomplished painter himself.



Humphrey Jennings, *Train (Locomotive 101)* (1939-40), Tate Modern

In this later painting, the train exudes both compelling kinetic energy and danger. This fascination and fear seems to form the bulk of Jennings' interest in his subject. That this should be notable specifically in his paintings, which Gerald Noxon described as 'for himself' and 'an essential part of his explorer-adventurer technique in the arts', rather than meant as a public statement, seems indicative of a certain unity of purpose in his own processing of the coming of the Machine and its portrayal in *Pandaemonium* (21).

Jennings approached his book like a film; his chosen 'images' are allowed to speak (mostly) for themselves, arranged mostly chronologically, loosely titled and grouped according to themes, thereby putting forward his ideas through their juxtaposition with each other. His cinematic style was heavily influenced by French surrealism, whose approach to history was built upon the unconscious effect of history, rather than the conscious.⁴⁶ Yet this resulted in a similar balance of narrative-seeking versus fact-reporting that the mythistory of forebears had sought. As a result, though Carlyle was not in vogue at this time, Jennings' use of montage seems oddly in tune with Carlyle's presentation of time periods flowing into each other in *Past and Present*. The giving way of industrial and urban spaces to pastoral idylls visually echoes the layering of transparencies that Carlyle constructs where the images of the past glory of St. Edmundsbury, relic of 'another world', become overlaid with those of the present ruin made up of 'grim old walls' (62). Jennings seemed to have an affinity for Carlyle's work as well, as it appears nine times over the course of the book, the majority of the 'images' in Part Three, the last in Part Four. Alongside him are most of the Romantic and Victorian poets, as well as the industrialists themselves, and an excerpt from Engels' *Conditions*, which Jennings had read avidly just after university.

Given the composite nature of *Pandaemonium*, Jennings' thoughts on his subject matter within the text are always implicit, rather than explicit. However, the narrative arc which the assembled images follow is familiar, progressing through time and encountering the excitement, awe, and fear which the Prometheus myth had so usefully captured. Each of the authors in this study make an appearance, as well as Dickens and Gaskell and a multitude of others. What dominated Jennings' taste was the imaginative force of his subjects, as well as the synergies of meaning and emotion that occurred when he placed them together: 'The presence of *Imagination* is apprehended by the Imagination,' he

46 Michael Saler discusses this extensively, as well as putting into perspective how Jennings moved away from the anti-historical and anti-mass culture attitudes of I.A. Richards and F.R. Leavis after leaving his doctoral research at Cambridge (131).

explained, ‘therefore the reasons for choice are not reasonable’ (xvii). Both the selection of texts and their results, therefore, are by Jennings’ intent an ‘imagined’ Industrial Revolution, and the work is all the more vital for it. *Pandaemonium* begins far earlier than the Industrial Revolution is generally understood to have begun, but even the earliest of his images have resonance with the developing mythology of industry. He begins with a passage from *Paradise Lost*, in which the angels descend to hell to build Pandaemonium. Jennings’ notes on the choice of image are particularly illuminating, and in this case, break from the impressionistic mould of the majority of the work:

Pandaemonium is the Palace of All the Devils. Its building began c. 1660. It will never be finished - it has to be transformed into Jerusalem. The building of Pandaemonium is the real history of Britain for the last three hundred years. That history has never been written. The present writer has spent many years collecting materials for it. From the mass of material the present book is a selection. A foretaste of the full story (5).

Jennings’ reading of all of his images stem from this reasoning, and within it is Jennings’ own mythological reconstruction—the Machine Age as the building of Pandaemonium—and also the legacy of the accumulated myths built up in the century before his time. This conception anticipates most literally the inclusion of Blake’s introduction to Jerusalem, complete with ‘dark Satanic Mills’, but that in turn anticipates the expectation of transcendence by Faust, and revolutionary hope in Marx. He later includes Marx’s description of machines being ‘rous[ed]...from their death-sleep’ by living labour (Jennings 316), and that passage, isolated from the vast economic treatise of *Capital*, is elevated into myth even more obviously when placed amid banal anecdotes of railway travel and a more unsettling description of women and girls engaging in the laborious task of brick-making. It appears that Jennings had more of a sense of how ‘religious’ Marx’s work was decades before the academy began addressing the notion seriously. Moreover, the comment implies a continued movement forward—there is no return to a prelapsarian Jerusalem, but rather, Pandaemonium must be ‘transformed’; indeed, it must be developed into a new sort of Jerusalem. Meanwhile, however, it cannot be discounted that while Pandaemonium is a project of building and creating, it still necessitated the descent of the angels from Heaven, and as such, Britain’s ‘real history’ is also about a fall from grace. While Jennings eschews the Promethean narrative in favour of a Miltonian one, the points of tension are much the same—Jennings identifies them as conflicts of class; of dualism and materialism; of ‘the expropriated individual with his environment (in effect, alienation); of ideas; and of systems’ (xxxvi). He encompasses in this summary all of the central features that have come into play from Goethe to Marx.

With this in mind, the selections that Jennings chose for inclusion in *Pandaemonium* become unified not through individual points of view, but by the continuing processing of contrasting works as part of the long development into *Pandaemonium* and towards Jerusalem. Just as Marx was flanked by scientific study, mundane observation, and dramatic report, Carlyle's description of the 'Poor-Law Bastille' from *Past and Present* is followed by a brief report on the building of a new cemetery, replete with Egyptian-inspired monuments and entranceway (216-218). Life, art, and suffering all are moving forward even as they are picked apart, excoriated and praised. In this way, a Promethean narrative of loss and achievement emerges all the more clearly through Jennings' selection and ordering process. This new story was not purely pessimistic, nor was it necessarily political. It was Faustian, was Frankensteinian, but moreover, it was about industrial discovery that emerged slowly, before accelerating, and how we have been feeling excited and fearful ever since. This is not the work of Pre-Raphaelites, nor is does it seem particularly socialist or Marxist (though certainly Jennings encountered Marxism, and leaned left, towards Cobbett's patriotic social conscience). Jennings instead was sensitive to the inherent tension of development. It is this that makes his vision, and the images that it consists of, so accessible to us. Jennings anticipated this contrast in his films as well; in *Listen to Britain* (1942), agricultural machinery works steadily against the backdrop of Spitfires flying overhead, and it is the use of machinery, in these different contexts, that form some of the unifying foundations of the film. The machinery of war become 'ignorant armies clash[ing] by night', even as life in cities and the countryside, in factories and dance halls, continue on, united in freedom. In this way, in the grand tradition of transcendentalists before him, Jennings was able to elevate social interaction, production, and modern life overall, into a manifestation of liberty in wartime.

It is easy to see how that vision of Britain could have been appealing to Danny Boyle when he went looking for a source of unity and identity for Britain. The ceremony at the Olympics was, after all, meant to be a celebration of Britishness. Yet in the realm of contemporary usefulness, *Pandaemonium* proved a far better fit, arguably because the narrative it offered, as fragmented and contradictory as it is, did not merely reaffirm the condition of the day, but continued to look forward, even as it also acknowledged profound loss. Its purpose was ultimately poetic, and therefore belongs to the older tradition of Romantics and Victorians who had struggled against the tide of the Enlightenment. His assembled images were designed to provoke a response, and not necessarily one that could (or should) be controlled by the author, unlike propaganda.

Jennings suggested in a note marked 'To the Reader' that one could read it back to front as a *'film on the Industrial Revolution'*, explore it at random, or by subject (*Pandaemonium*, 1st ed.: xviii). His imaginative history was therefore his own, but he intended it to be recalled and retold much in the same way that his mentor, I.A. Richards, explored poetry at its fundamental levels as well as holistically for the reasoning behind its readers' reactions. In an anecdote on Jennings' film career, Noxon recalled preparation for the filming of a slum, and Jennings commenting, 'SLUM...is not a real substance. It is an idea, and what is more it is essentially an emotional idea. Therefore its nature must be demonstrated in a way which will produce a direct emotional response from the audience' (24). The same could be said of his construction of the Industrial Revolution in Milton's conception of *Pandaemonium*, wherein the idea of industrialisation is transferred in our memories through the resonance of its myth to our present lives. Indeed, Jennings said as much in his choice to include a short anecdote from Emerson:

Milnes brought Carlyle to the railway, and showed him the departing train. Carlyle looked at it and then said, 'These are our poems, Milnes.' Milnes ought to have answered, 'Aye, and our histories, Carlyle' (216).

Jennings makes the claim in his commentary on Milton that the history of the industrial experience, as the forging and construction of *Pandaemonium*, 'has never been written'. Yet it has been, in increments and reconstructions that he was in part able to find and curate, which Emerson here recognised. The Machine, as the manifestation of the Industrial Revolution in *Pandaemonium*, as it was for Marx and Carlyle, was now an entity much like Jennings' slums—poetry and history in addition to its physical trappings, loaded down with emotional and physical memories and knowledge. Jennings understood this very well, especially in relation to memory and imagined memory: 'They are facts (the historian's kind of facts) which have been passed through the feelings and the mind of an individual and have forced him to write' (xxxv). His understanding and creation of mythistory is overt, and by depicting it as a narrative of loss and creation, and most importantly as an exploration of 'what may have been the place of imagination in the making of the modern world' (xxxix), the total of the work is a montage of history that captures the myths that gave birth to the imaginative understanding of the time period while also distilling and tempering it, as it would be many times over in our collective memories.

That Jennings' work was such a rich source of material for Danny Boyle, both in content and structure, places in cinematic relief the effectiveness of his and his

predecessors' cultivated mythistory. It also, through its inclusion of a vast array of texts that extend the reach of industrialisation far beyond factory labour, proves that the development of this myth was not just an aberrant product of isolated intellectuals like Goethe or Carlyle, but rather a pervasive narrative that emerged from a changing culture, was processed by writers, and was then disseminated once more into the public consciousness. Jennings could not entirely shake the pessimistic attitude of his day; he (or possibly his editors) ends *Pandaemonium* with William Morris's *A Dream of John Ball* (1887), in which a man from the idealised medieval past is thrown forward in time, and speaks to a man of the modern era. The passage Jennings extracted is from the close of the story, in which the modern man says farewell to his time travelling companion, and goes back to work, feeling the loss of the medieval idyll keenly. Boyle's opening ceremony, by contrast, was ultimately celebratory because it moved beyond the mid-century to the present day, embracing multiculturalism and music and technology along the way. Nevertheless, the industrial narrative's trajectory is clearly mythic, in that it presents, 'a set of propositions, often stated in narrative form, that is accepted uncritically by a culture or speech-community and that serves to found or affirm its self-conception' (Heehs 3). Even if it is not an uncontested model of history, it certainly appears to be accepted by both Britain and the wider international community. Moreover, Boyle's own vision was not uncritical, as he himself admitted in his introduction to the new edition: 'we are children of the machine age, locked inside this terrifying beast, increasingly innocent of how it makes things for us' (*Pandaemonium*, new ed.: ii). This glossed observation has all of the trappings of Marx and Carlyle as well as Jennings within it, in addition to the new fear that we no longer understand the things that we are creating, and are thus more vulnerable to them than ever before.

However, as was pointed out by one technology journalist, 'Everything seemed double-edged' (Mayes n.p.). Mythical forms provided a cultural context and lens through which they could relate their present to their past, but the self-conscious nature of this rekindling of myth made it a tense endeavour of trying to look forward while desperately trying to tie it to the past. As a result, the benevolent faces of the top-hatted capitalists flanking Kenneth Branagh's smiling depiction of Kingdom Brunel, overlooking the rising spires of smokestacks, can appear heavy with irony. The tension between embrace of the present and future, in light of the failures of the past and the knowledge of our continued inability to rise above the baser qualities of human nature, make it impossible to commit to the full effect of propagandistic faith which could be found in *Listen to Britain*. In that

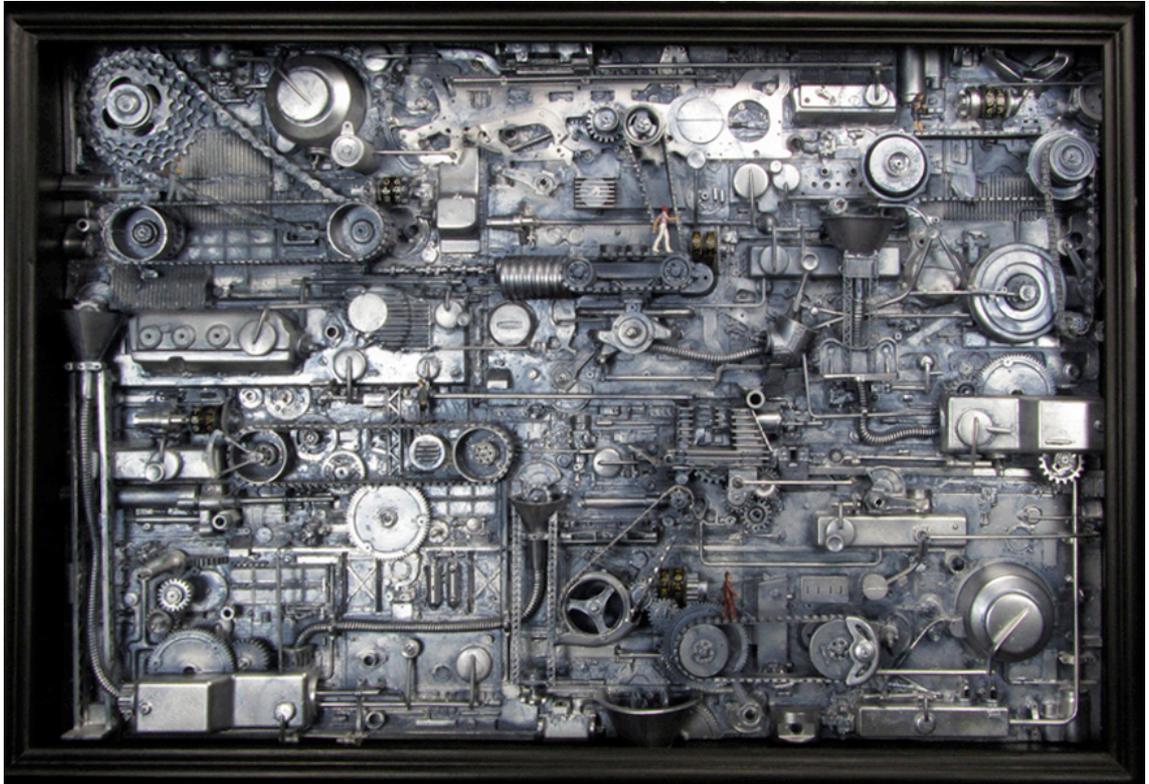
light, the ceremony did capture the usefulness, or even necessity, of a cultural industrial myth. It became, as Mayes put it, ‘no simple portrayal of past events, but a raid conducted to shore up a particular view that exists at this time; a malaise suffered here and now’ (n.p.).

Across the broader expanse of human history, the Industrial Revolution as a myth is simply an example of the ‘recency illusion’, the ‘the belief that things you have noticed only recently are in fact recent’ (Zwicky, n.p.). It is part of a long line of historical events wherein technology has always moved forward and has always been met with certain degrees of consternation as to how its existence will effect the ways in which society functions. One may consider the printing press as a prime example of a similar epochal change, or even the apocryphal refrain attributed to Cicero that states, ‘Times are bad. Children no longer obey their parents, and everyone is writing a book.’ The Industrial Revolution, as a vivid and recent process that has been documented and observed with the thoroughness of an increasingly empirical society, therefore might be merely an easily-accessible reference point when considering what our attitudes should be towards progress, technology, and other pervasive trappings of modernity.

Yet there have obviously been far more recent epochal changes in the world of technology and the sciences that should be of greater, or at least equal, use to us. Despite this, the use of the Industrial Revolution as a mythic touchstone seems more important and visible than ever—the plethora of Neo-Victorian novels that are now gaining scholarly attention, as well as numerous period films, make use of visual shorthand of urban slums and factory production to establish place and time. In the recent adaptation of *North and South* (2004), the opening of the second episode emerges just as mist-like as Carlyle’s layering of memories upon ruins, but the mist is instead the fluff of cotton fibres being thrown off by the constant motion of row upon row of looms. In the soft-lensed and meditative title card, however, is implied the death of workers whose lungs would fill with the drifting fibres. What begins as an analogous aesthetic to the previous episode’s title card of a train cutting through the countryside, therefore, is transformed into a new threat. In this way, the new recreations of nineteenth-century culture seem to be relying on the structures and contrasts to which Jennings and his predecessors were sensitive.

Moreover, the aesthetic of industry has become increasingly visible and compelling; the development of ‘steampunk’ subculture, as a fantastical offshoot of neo-Victorian literature, has become increasingly pervasive in recent years, and its selectivity of focus—the aristocratic dress, adorned with the gears of industry—deserves to be studied for what

myths they are now overlaying upon the ‘nonfictional’ past. More broadly, the industrial ‘look’ has come into vogue, as an attractive and engaging aesthetic that also never forgets the human cost of its demands.



Jed Turner 'Quaestus' (2013)

The recent scholarship on these contemporary works would benefit from a more complete knowledge base regarding what we want to remember about industrialisation, as well as what we might be tempted to forget. What we are choosing to remember and reconstruct out of the Industrial Revolution and its myth has already been manipulated into usefulness, and we must take that into account when exploring how specifically it is put to use. How we look at the mythic narrative Industrial Revolution now dictates how we approach our present and our future with technology. This has been the case since *Frankenstein*, and it bloomed in the science-fiction of the *fin-de-siecle*. From the future degradation into helplessness of the Eloi in *The Time Machine* (1895), to the stubborn reliance on automated lifestyle systems in *The Machine Stops* (1909), it seems that technological determinism—or at least basic meaning without Veblen’s more varied and controversial details—holds sway over the public imagination more than ever, and that this imagining began with the Industrial Revolution.

It has always been the case that Promethean fire has had the capacity to burn us, and bring the punishment of the gods down upon us. What I hope this study has

illuminated, however, is that the industrialisation of Britain elicited a response that went far beyond that initial narrative warning, enough that it became its own parable. It affirms our capacity to build what before only the gods could provide, while also encapsulating our doubt of being worthy of our own capabilities. Even more importantly, however, it also points us on our future way: as much as our species is perhaps unworthy of the creative power we wield, that power is also intrinsic to us. As such, we can only carry onwards, building further—though not without looking back, and remembering what that construction has cost us.

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