

On the Theatricality of Historical Narrative and the Heroism of the Ordinary People in Thomas Carlyle's *The French Revolution*

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Abstract: This essay discusses how narrative theatricality contributes to exposing the heroism of the ordinary people in Thomas Carlyle's *The French Revolution: A History* (1837). Contrary to the traditional grand narrative of history characterized by a linear, systematic and analytic narrative *The French Revolution* re-imagines and enacts history by its distinct traits of narrative theatricality. For Carlyle, historical writing should always take into account the perspective of individuals under consideration, which explains why his focus on historical events of the Revolution is laid not exclusively on any one single and/or dominant group. Instead, he employs a narrative technique that attempts to present the multi-facets of the same event by switching narrative voice from the third person to the first person plural. In this way, Carlyle adds immediacy to the (his)story and dramatizes the performance of the heroism of the ordinary people in the French Revolution. This unusual shifting of multi-perspective narrative augments the simultaneous panorama of history and foregrounds the heroic power of the masses or mobs in Revolution in rewriting history under certain political and social conditions, forming a sharp contrast to Carlyle's former assertion of the dominant power of the aristocratic or elite hero in shaping history. In so doing, the narrative theatricality enhances the effectiveness of the heroism of the common individuals in the Revolution. Indeed, by histrionically engaging the readers into the scenes of the Revolution, Carlyle intends both to celebrate (ambivalently) the coming of democracy and to warn the Victorian aristocracy of the danger of social anarchy that they might have confronted with.

Key words: Carlyle; historical narrative; theatricality; heroism of ordinary people; *The French Revolution*

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标题：论卡莱尔《法国革命》历史叙事的戏剧性及平民英雄主义

内容摘要：本文以卡莱尔的《法国革命》为例，探讨卡莱尔历史叙事的戏剧性及其与平民英雄主义之关联。传统的宏大历史叙事遵循的是线性的、系统的、分析的叙事方式，卡莱尔在写作《法国革命》时摒弃了这一传统的历史写作范式，他对法国革命进行了重构和重现，他的历史叙事呈现出强烈戏剧性特征。对于卡莱尔来说，历史的书写必须纳入个体的视角。因此，他的历史叙事视角并不仅仅聚焦在某一单一的或主导的群体上。相反，他从多个视角来呈现同一历史事件的不同侧面。《法国革命》的叙事声音会不断地从第三人称转换为第一人称复数，这一手法不仅凸显了（历史）故事的现场感，而且还戏剧性地将读者置身于历史场景，并藉此呈现普通民众的英雄主义行为。这种视角的转换一方面放大了历史的共时全景画面，另一方面也预示了革命中的群众（或群氓）亦可具有英雄的力量并在一定的政治和社会条件下改写人类的历史，而这与卡莱尔之前主张的历史是由贵族（精英）英雄创造的观点形成了反差。由此看来，《法国革命》中历史叙事的戏剧性手法有效地凸显了普通个体的英雄主义。事实上，卡莱尔将读者戏剧性地置身于法国大革命的场景中，表达了一种矛盾心态：他既欢呼民主的到来又担心维多利亚时代的贵族可能陷入像法国大革命那样的混乱和危险之中。

关键词：卡莱尔、历史叙事、戏剧性、平民英雄主义、《法国革命》

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Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) was a well-known Victorian author. He was also highly controversial, paradoxically regarded as “sage and impious, a moral leader, a moral desperado, a radical, a conservative, a Christian.”¹ Contradictory images of Thomas Carlyle were frequently found in the biographies about him and even up to this century Carlyle is still far from being properly understood. Apart from experts in Victorian literature and culture, not many people refer to Thomas Carlyle as a literary and cultural critic. He is in the mind of many professional experts of history a fictional writer instead of a historian in the strict academic sense, but to many

1 See Ian Campbell, “Thomas Carlyle” <<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/thomas-carlyle>>.

serious fictional writers, he was more of a historian than a novelist. Yet, Thomas Carlyle was undoubtedly an enormous figure in the nineteenth-century intellectual world, as his writings set the terms for an whole Victorian generation and more significantly he was a prophet of the problems in the process of urbanization, democracy and mass culture of the modern world , west and east.

I

Most scholars of English literature tend to take the 19th century simply as a period of having no drama in England, at least from Richard Sheridan to Bernard Shaw. However, this could be a misconception, since we find most of the popular novelists of the 19th century wrote plays, novelists such as Walter Scott, William Makepeace Thackeray, Charles Dickens, George Eliot and so on. Despite the fact that the period suffered from an obvious decline of the theatre, the frequent practices of the novelists' play-writing inevitably left theatrical traces on their novels. As David Kurnick points out, many scholars have "catalogued the thematic and stylistic borrowings that obtained between theatrical and narrative arts in the period" (Kurnick 307). The 19th century novel, as Joseph Litvak correctly argues, shifts from "theater to theatricality" (332) , demonstrating that the theatre can " survive and flourish in a less conspicuous form, reaching into the most unlikely recesses of text" (Litvak 332). Therefore, it would be problematic or contradictory if we make a simple dichotomy between theatre and novel in the 19th century English literature, since theatrical elements were implanted within and interwoven with the novels of this period. However, there were obvious difference and contradictions between the genres of novel and drama, the former demanding a relatively private and subjective reading activity while the latter a more public and sympathetic visual activity. Kurnick (2012) suggests that "perhaps the most important English novelistic meditation on these contradiction was written in German" (307) by Jonhann Wolfan von Goethe, whose *Wilhelm Meisters's Apprenticeship* (1795-96) reached the English readers through Thomas Carlyle's translation in 1824. Kurnick further argues that the novel is significant in literary history for at least two reasons: firstly it was the first example of the *Bildungsroman* that serves as "a pivot between the picaresque fiction of the 18th century and the introspective novels of the 19th century" (307); secondly as a romantic novel *Wilhelm Meister* was also "a meditation on the fact and the fantasy of the theatre" (307). Goethe's first version of the story was about the young man Wilhelm who is fascinated with a collection of marionettes , tracks his attempts to write plays while erotically obsessed with the actress Mariana, and ends with his joining a

professional theatrical troupe, all actions closely related with the theater. Kurnick's observation is right since a glimpse of the opening of the novel is evident enough to show its theatrical concerns. The story begins with the servant old Barbara waiting for her beautiful mistress Mariana who acts as a young officer in the play: "The play was late in breaking up: old Barbara went more than once to the window, and listened for the sound of carriages. She was waiting for Mariana, her pretty mistress, who had that night, in the afterpiece, been acting the part of a young officer, to the no small delight of the public" (Goethe 1). In Goethe's final version of the story he refashioned it as the *Apprenticeship* and added a latter section in which Wilhelm gives up the theatre and starts his journey with hope for a bright future and a sense of social obligation, dedicating himself to what Carlyle in his translator's introduction called "the greatest of all art—the art of life" (Carlyle, "Translator's Preface" xiii-xiv). Carlyle's translation of *Wilhelm Meisters's Apprenticeship* would later become a source of inspiration for his writing of the half-autobiographical novel *Sartor Resartus* as well as the historical book *The French Revolution: A History*, both to more or less extent stylistically possessing evident features of theatricality.

While the critical heritage of Victorian studies has shown enormous scholarly interest in the "theatricality" of Victorian fiction, this paper will expand that focus to include Carlyle's historical writing. Like his novelistic counterparts, Thomas Carlyle integrated pictorial and theatrical modes of representation into his historical writings despite of many historians' complain and denial of such a mode of historical narrative. In *The French Revolution* and *Past and Present*, most particularly, Carlyle employed the mode of theatrical narrative in history writing as the surest means of providing his readers with the lively and enacted history that he promised them in his essays such as "Thoughts on History" and "On History Again." For Carlyle, the traditional mode of grand narrative of history characterized by purely linear and seemingly logical narrative was dead and mechanically stereotyped, while any enacted history "alive, solid, and corporeal and inevitably theatrical one" (Schoch 34). What, then, basically gives rise to Carlyle's ideas of theatricality in his narrative of history? And how does narrative theatricality contribute to dramatizing the performance of the the Heroism of the Ordinary People in the French Revolution?

II

Although it would be difficult to reach a universal agreement concerning the definition, the term "theatricality" could be simply defined as related to the theatre,

or to the performance (dramatic presentations) .However,some ambiguities should be clarified when “theatricality” is applied in this context to illustrate Carlyle’s historical writing. Besides its technological relations to the theatre, another point of discussion here refers to the mixed quality of historical narrative as a prose genre which imitates the performance of the theatre. Lepaludier suggests that when the dramatic elements of historical writing surpass the narrative elements the atmosphere of a certain condition of theatre will be created and “the effects of theatricality will thus be evoked” (18). As Lepaludier rightly notes, when historical writing blends the materials of history and those of drama, it becomes “a sort of versatile hybrid form whose powers should be examined” (Lepaludier 18).

However, theatricality as a critical term still remains controversial. In their co-edited book *Theatricality* (2003) , Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait discuss several distinct concepts, among them mimesis, antitheatricalism, *theatrum mundi* (“all the world’s a stage”), and ritual, that help to understand the meaning of theatricality. They maintain that these concepts, although related to the term, still fail to define the idea of theatricality. According to Davis and Postlewait, the idea of theatricality seems not to have being systematically approached. They assert that “the idea of theatricality has achieved an extraordinary range of meanings, making it everything from an act to an attitude, a style to a semiotic system, a medium to a message” (Davis &Postlewait 1). Davis and Postlewait question “the defenses and celebrations” (12) that some practitioners and theorists have presented for theatricality, on the base that their concerns are largely on one ideal spectator while ignoring the idiosyncratic manner in which each individual spectator perceives a performance. That is to say, when we are talking about “theatricality” or the stage and the audience (spectator), most of us do not take into account the perspective of individual spectator, hence a failure to achieve a multi-perspective on different facets of the world . In this light, theatricality seems to “stem from the spectator’s awareness of a theatrical intention addressed to him” (Feral 98-99). Davis and Postlewait argue that “both the performer and the spectator are complicit in the mimesis” (6).To illustrate this opinion, Davis focuses on Thomas Carlyle’s notion of theatricality in historical writing and examines “the political and social dimensions of theatricality in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.”¹

The term “theatricality” was coined by Thomas Carlyle in 1837 to describe the appropriate stance of the historian to observe historical events. According to Sandey Fitzgerald (2015), Carlyle regarded the historian as the “Eye of History”

1 See Elena Siemens, “Theatricality” (review) <<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/218791/summary>>.

whose task was to place momentous events into historical contexts. Theatricality was thus a “mode of perception” specifically to do with the observation of others “under conditions in which the obligation to feel for other predicament was waived in the interests of gaining a better view” (Fitzgerald 31). Fitzgerald suggests that similar conditions could be found both inside or outside the theatre, “although the dependence of the theatre on sympathy for its impact suggests that Carlyle did not see the concept as a theater term” (Fitzgerald 32). But I would argue that Fitzgerald’s understanding of Carlyle’s employment of theatrical techniques could be problematic in that Carlyle’s theatricality, at least in *French Revolution*, is a perception similar to that of the theater which invites both the neutral stance and the sympathetic involvement of the narrator, or in other words, a detached engagement of the audience/ reader. Gullian Russel, in her book *Women, Sociability and Theatre in Georgian London* (2010) endorses Davis’ opinion that Carlyle’s “theatricality” is an anticipation of Brecht’s alienation effect in “meaning a capacity for the reflexivity that is in the concomitant of sympathy and essential for the functioning of public sphere”(Russel 14). In reading *The French Revolution*, as in watching a play in the theatre, we should be able to identify or sympathize with the characters, meanwhile we also need to distance or estrange ourselves in order to recognize our own theatricality “in order to make a space for political and social change”(Russell 14).

Traditionally, critics tend to treat fiction as a mixed narrative mode, a mode which blends the narrative and the dramatic forms, as is evident in many passages of narrative fiction. However, historical writings are supposed to be chronological, documentary, impersonal, analytical and of course not dramatic nor emotional. It is therefore academically inappropriate for historians to allow any imaginative or lyrical element in historical writing. However, when Thomas Carlyle sat down in 1834 to write *The French Revolution*, he challenged the traditional mode of historical narrative by incorporating imagination into his writings. *The French Revolution* thus turned out to be a controversial but innovative book of history filled with elements of theatricality.

III

In September 1834, when Carlyle was writing the first two pages of *The French Revolution*, he wrote to his brother Jack that he was facing the trouble of creating a new style for his book and thinking as if he was writing “an Epic Poem of Revolution.”¹ When *The French Revolution* was published in 1837, Carlyle’s friend

¹ See *The Carlyle Letters On Line*, Duke-Edinburgh edition of *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle* <<http://carlyleletters.dukejournals.org/>>.

J.S. Muller soon hailed it as a “great epic”. Today most scholars would still take Carlyle's *The French Revolution* as an epic mainly for the passionate performance of the characters and the dramatic scenario he depicts in the book. However, Carlyle had previously not regarded history as epic, not even as any other form of literature. When he was young he showed great enthusiasm for history, as his Calvinist family and his utilitarian culture had a strong bias against fiction or literature. In the early 1820s, in a letter to his brother he refused to include history as a literary form, distinguishing Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* from “general literature.”¹ It was not until after his intellectual encounter with Goethe and Schiller in 1822 that he began to turn to literature for inspiration and by 1830, when he wrote “Thoughts on History” he had begun to consider historian an artist and history an art, an essential part of literature. His second essay(now known as “On History Again”) went further to argue that history was the primary form of knowledge, which “ is the only study, and includes all others whatsoever” (Carlyle, *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays* 191). Since the 1830s, Carlyle no longer regarded history as a genre different from fiction or literature. Instead history is to him the fundamental literary form. As Bossche correctly points out, by the time Carlyle decided to write *The French Revolution*, he “considered history a branch of ‘literature’ rather than an academic discipline” (qtd. Kerry and Hill 22). Carlyle's view of history as a literary genre is crucial for us to evaluate his narrative theatricality in historical writings.

In Carlyle's view of history as a literary genre, the narrator of history and the reader are inextricably linked, as for Carlyle history is only valuable and only comprehensible when one is able to “read [oneself] into it ... make himself at home, and acquainted in that repulsive foreign century” (Thomas Carlyle: “Baillie the Covenanter” 237-238). Indeed, the narrator of *The French Revolution* is quite like the Editor of *Sartor Resartus*, who pieces together the fragments and episodes of individual history in a framework. Carlyle did not write *The French Revolution* as a factual chronology of political events but as a group of symbolic episodes through which the narrator and the reader discover the meaning of their own age together with the historical characters under examination. For this purpose, Carlyle designed a unique historical narrator who speaks in the first person and present tense, represents the voices of the historical actors, and dramatically creates an epic of the Revolution. Carlyle wrote a long passage in “Thoughts on History” explaining his philosophy of historical narrative, arguing that there is a “fatal discrepancy between our manner of observing these [passing things], and their manner of occurring”

1 The Carlyle Letters On Line , Duke-Edinburgh edition of *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle* <<http://carlyleletters.dukejournals.org/>>.

(Carlyle, *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays* 249), as even the most gifted man can observe and record only the series of his own impressions. Carlyle insists that historical events are often “simultaneous” and appear in synchronized groups instead of analytical and chronological series. Carlyle questions the traditional mode of historical narrative which is based on cause-and -effect logic:

It is not in acted, as it is in written History; actual events are nowise so simply related to each other as parent and offspring are; every single event is the offspring not of one, but of all other events prior to contemporaneous, and will in its turn combine with all others to give birth to new: it is an ever-living, ever-working Chaos of Being, wherein shape after shape bodies itself forth from innumerable elements. And this Chaos, boundless as the habitation and duration of man, unfathomable as the soul and destiny of man, is what the historian will depict, and scientifically gauge, we may say, by threading it with single lines of a few ells in length! For as all action is, by nature, to be figures as extended in breadth and in depth, as well as in length; that is to say, is based on Passion and Mystery, if we investigate its origin; and spreads abroad on all hands, modifying and all Narrative is, by its nature, of only one dimension; only travels forward toward one, or toward successive points: Narrative is linear, Action is solid, modified; as well as advances toward completion. (Carlyle, *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays* 250)

Although Carlyle’s philosophy of history exhibits somewhat Romantic mysticism, it may well explain Carlyle’s choice of shifting multi-perspective narrative to enact the history. With such concept of history, Carlyle employs a narrative technique that attempts to present the multi-facets of the same event by switching narrative voice from the third person to the first person plural. In this way, Carlyle adds immediacy to the (his) story and dramatizes the performance of the heroism of the ordinary people in the French Revolution.

IV

In writing *The French Revolution: A History*, Carlyle went beyond a mere chronicle of the series of events to “engage the readers to smell the blood spilling from guillotines, to taste the fear in the streets of Paris during the Terror, to experience the decadence of the Bourbon monarchy, to observe the sartorial cavalcade when

the Estates-General meets for the first time since 1614.”¹ In order to accomplish his task of exposing the many simultaneous aspects of historical events, he employed the same mode of narrative by novelists—shifting point of view, imagery, and impressive details. Consequently, what we read from Carlyle was not a dry linear account of the French Revolution, but a brilliant pastiche of episodes alive with passion and performance, which set a new style of storytelling for the Victorian writers.

Filled with the imaginative qualities of lyrical writings, *The French Revolution* is, of course, an unconventional work of history. Writing more than four decades after the French Revolution, Carlyle might have enough materials to reconstruct what had happened. Yet, despite rich historical memos and reliable documents, Carlyle abandoned the conventional mode of historical narration represented by Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, a masterpiece approaching history objectively and chronologically. Carlyle did not expect us to be a passive audience as Gibbon obviously did. What Carlyle did in writing *The French Revolution* was to invite us to wander through the events with him, experiencing the historic scenes as they were happening. In so doing, Carlyle's book captured the rage of the revolution, its dramatic power and its most memorable details. By dramatizing the details of history, he believes a historian would be free from the restraint of seeing only part of the historic events and take a panoramic command of the simultaneous happenings which conventional historians might fail to conceive. The following excerpt from *The French Revolution* juxtaposes the details of the stormy terror in Bastille and the peaceful scenery in the countryside with the dancing party in the palace, creating an ironic and inharmonious picture:

Rigorous de Launay has died; crying out, “O friends, kill me fast!” Merciful de Losme must die; though Gratitude embraces him, in this fearful hour, and will die for him; it avails not. Brothers, your wrath is cruel! Your Place de Greve is become a Throat of the Tiger; full of mere fierce bellowings, and thirst of blood. One other officer is massacred; one other Invalide is hanged on the Lamp-iron: with difficulty, with generous perseverance, the Gardes Francaises will save the rest. Provost Flesselles stricken long since with the paleness of death, must descend from his seat, ‘to be judged at the

1 Meredith Hindley, “The Voracious Pen of Thomas Carlyle,” *HUMANITIES*, March/April 2009, Volume 30, Number 2. <<https://www.neh.gov/humanities/2009/marchapril/feature/the-voracious-pen-thomas-carlyle>>

Palais Royal:—alas, to be shot dead, by an unknown hand, at the turning of the first street!

O evening sun of July, how, at this hour, thy beams fall slant on reapers amid peaceful woody fields; on old women spinning in cottages; on ships far out in the silent main; on Balls at the Orangerie of Versailles, where high-routed Dames of the Palace are even now dancing with double-jacketted Hussar-Officers;—and also on this roaring Hell porch of a Hotel-de-Ville! Babel Tower, with the confusion of tongues, were not Bedlam added with the conflagration of thoughts, was no type of it. (Carlyle, *The French Revolution* 191-192)

Here, Carlyle's narrative intention was obvious: he wanted to show us that the riot and terror in Bastille co-existed paradoxically with the peace of everyday life that and that a historian should keep an eye for all that is happening simultaneously. Observing what perspectives a historian should adopt, Le Quesne points out, "historical events should be perceived and understood in the distance view of the transition from old era to a new one" (74-75). Similarly, in "Thoughts on History," Carlyle highlights the significance of seeing the "wholeness" of history. He makes a distinction between the "Artist in History" and the "Artisan in History," the former, according to him, has an eye and feeling for the Whole, the latter are men who labor mechanically in a department, without an eye for the Whole. Carlyle criticizes the "Artisan in History," arguing that

Historian, who examines some special aspect of History; and from his or that combination of circumstances, political, moral, economical, and the issues it has led to, infers that such and such properties belong to human society, and that the like circumstances will produce the like issue; which inference, if other trials confirm it, must be held true and practically valuable. He is wrong only, and an artisan, when he fancies that these properties, discovered or discoverable, exhaust the matter; and sees not, at every step, that it is inexhaustible. (Carlyle, *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays* 252)

The combination of the first person narrative account and commentary runs throughout the book as well, allowing Carlyle to involve us into the historical scenes. The description of the storming of the Bastille is a best example of theatricality characterized by action and passion:

A slight sputter; — which has *kindled* the too combustible chaos; made it a roaring fire—chaos! Bursts forth Insurrection, at sight of its own blood (for there were deaths by that sputter—of fire), into endless rolling explosion of musketry, distraction, execration;—and over head, from the Fortress, let one great gun, with its grape-shot, go booming, to show what *we could* do. (Carlyle, *The French Revolution* 185)

Carlyle uses the third person to describe the scene and action, then switches to the first person plural as if he and his readers were joining the mob as it takes the Bastille. Carlyle's use of present tense and fragmentary sentences to describe the sequence of events lends an almost journalistic quality to his work. He is in the moment, recording the scene as it happens, breathing energy and emotion into history. The above passage also reveals Carlyle's most distinctive deviation from the tradition in that he was well aware of the subjectivity in re-writing a history of his own imagination and of the meaning that readers should be brought into the texts with their act of reading. In *The French revolution* he clearly indicates that "...in every object there is inexhaustible meaning; the eye sees in it what the eye brings means of seeing" (Carlyle 5).

It deserves notice that in his other writings, Carlyle questioned the ability of common people to organize themselves, believing they need to have order imposed on them. However, in *The French Revolution*, Carlyle time and again praises the power of the mass or mob:

The French mob, again, is among the liveliest phenomena of our world. So rapid, audacious; so clear-sighted, inventive, prompt to seize the moment; instinct with life to its finger-ends! That talent, were there no other, of spontaneously standing in queue, distinguishes, as we said, the French People from all Peoples, ancient and modern. (Carlyle 246)

Evidently, there would be no French Revolution without the French people questioning the monarchy and taking action. Here Carlyle turns to confirm his view that "hero-worship was now synonymous with theatricality and chimeras" (Sorensen 5). Carlyle stressed the role of the individual of the mass in history-making, as he argues in "Thoughts on History" that "in a certain sense all men are historians" (Carlyle, *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays* 244) and that "our very speech is curiously historical" (Carlyle, *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays* 245). By focusing on the mob and what happens in the streets to everyday people and showing the

actions of ordinary people through theatrical narrative, Carlyle demonstrated that the stage of history could be dominated by the mob or mass if the king and parliament were ignorant of the poverty and sufferings of the common people.

IV

As a matter of fact, Carlyle had been to France (briefly, in 1824). So his historical narrative of the French Revolution was not all imagination, but partly memory. Also worth mentioning is that Carlyle grew up in wartime with Napoleon a constant threat, a threat that would have led to chaos in Britain if Napoleon had invaded: Carlyle's lifelong wish for order would have regarded this as absolutely unbearable. So, to write in 1834-1837 with Napoleonic wars still alive in the memory of the English people and with the Peterloo riots of 1819 as well as the radical riots of the 1820s which culminated in the Reform Acts of 1832 (England) and 1833 (Scotland) set a strong background to his view of society, history and war based on his own lifetime experience.

Therefore, the French Revolution in Carlyle's theatrical narrative was a history in action. Carlyle brought the conflict vividly to life for an audience who, in 1837, still kept in mind the uncomfortable anarchy of Napoleonic war or Reform disturbance in Britain. The narrative power of Carlyle as a historian as well as a man of letters was not just to recreate the past but also to use the past to alarm the present and to warn the king or the government of the danger of injustice and chaos in a society.

The theatrical narrative of Carlyle's historical writing constitutes a very rewarding experience as it invites the reader to "explore the borderline between narrative and drama" (Lepaludier 22). The reader may thus experience an "intertextual and intergeneric journey" (Lepaludier 22). The "in-between" generic position allows a view which throws a light on both genres. Indeed, Carlyle's historical narrative provides added effects or a greater significance when combined with a theatrical scene. What is more, by histrionically engaging the readers into French Revolution, Carlyle adds immediacy to the (his)story and foregrounds the heroic power of the the ordinary people in Revolution in rewriting history ,forming a sharp contrast to his former assertion of the dominant power of the elite hero in shaping history. In so doing, the narrative theatricality enhances the effectiveness of the heroism of the common individuals in the Revolution. Indeed, by histrionically engaging the readers into the scenes of French Revolution, Carlyle intends both to celebrate (ambivalently) the coming of Democracy and to warn the Victorian Aristocracy of the danger of social anarchy that they might have confronted with.

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