Plots of Opportunity
PLOTS OF OPPORTUNITY

Representing Conspiracy in Victorian England

ALBERT D. PIONKE

The Ohio State University Press
Columbus
# Contents

Acknowledgments vii  
Introduction ix  

1. Authorized Secrecy: The Figure of Freemasonry, Carlyle’s Clothes Philosophy and an Alternative to Democracy 1  
2. Combining the Two Nations: Trade Unions as Secret Societies, 1837–45 22  
3. Popish Plots: Catholic Emancipation, Tractarian Reserve, and “Papal Aggression” 50  
5. Italian Union: Red Republicanism, *The Woman in White* and *Lothair* 101  

Afterword 133  
Notes 135  
Bibliography 169  
Index 185
Acknowledgments

In the course of writing this book I have been fortunate enough to receive intellectual support and productive disagreement from many sources. This project began as a dissertation at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I would like to thank the department of English for its unstinting encouragement and crucial financial support in my final year of writing. I would also like to thank the members of my original doctoral committee—Amanda Anderson, Peter Garrett, Janet Lyon, and Julia Saville—for their unstinting sympathy and demanding criticism. David Hirsch and Jack Stillinger also offered valuable hints about relevant texts during my original writing process.

Librarians at a number of institutions greatly expedited both my original and subsequent research. I would like to thank the staff of the University of Illinois, Washington University in Saint Louis, George Washington University, and University of Cincinnati libraries.

A condensed version of the second chapter has appeared in the Victorian Newsletter 97 (Spring 2000): 1–14, and a version of chapter 4 has been published in the Victorians Institute Journal 28 (2000): 109–40. I am grateful to their editors and publishers for allowing me to use this material here. The perceptive readers and editor of Novel: A Forum on Fiction also provided a helpful critique of an earlier draft of chapter 5.

I would also like to thank the editorial staff at The Ohio State University Press for all their hard work. My two anonymous readers offered penetrating criticism and practical suggestions for how to improve the manuscript. Heather Lee Miller has also been unswervingly patient, persistent and highly professional; everyone should be lucky enough to have such a wonderful editor.

Finally, I want to thank Ruth Pionke, whose scientific skepticism during repeated readings of every word has forced me to discipline a sometimes unruly argument. I dedicate this book to her and to my parents, who, while they might not have always understood what I was up to, nevertheless remained my ardent supporters.
Introduction

In the autobiographical introduction to “Secret Societies” (1847), idiosyncratic English author Thomas De Quincey admits that a precocious fascination has prompted his essay on this “highest form of the incredible” (178). He remembers that between the impressionable ages of seven and ten, he engaged in numerous debates with “a stern lady” over Abbé Barruel’s Memoirs, Illustrating the History of Jacobinism and John Robison’s Proofs of a Conspiracy Against all the Religions and Governments of Europe, carried on in the secret meetings of the Free Masons, Illuminati and Reading Societies. Both texts appeared in English in 1797, amid the threat of French invasion and the looming presence of the French Revolution, and, from a Catholic and a Protestant position, respectively, they attack Freemasonry and Illuminism as the secret authors of European unrest. The Abbé’s “awful shape of four volumes octavo” established a particularly powerful hold over the young De Quincey (175), who recognized a certain sympathetic attractiveness in Barruel’s conspiratorial villains, even as he remained somewhat perplexed by their fantastical role in recent history:

This plot, by the Abbé’s account, stretched its horrid fangs, and threw out its fore-running feelers and tentacles, into many nations, and more than one century. That perplexed me, though also fascinated me by its grandeur. How men, living in distant periods and distant places—men that did not know each other, nay, often had not even heard of each other, nor spoke the same languages—could yet be parties to the same treason against a mighty religion towering to the highest heavens, puzzled my understanding. Then, also, when wickedness was so easy, why did people take all this trouble to be wicked? The how and the why were alike incomprehensible to me. (174)

Rather than feeling repugnance as a result of Barruel’s cephalopodic figuration of the societies’ wickedness, De Quincey instead found himself “fascinated” by their international commitment to resist “a mighty religion” for over a century. In fact, the societies’ very “wickedness” in the Memoirs invested them with a “grandeur” they never would have had on their own, while the incomprehensibility of the “how” and
the “why” of this wickedness “did but sharpen the interest of wonder that gathered about the general economy of Secret Societies” (177–78), thereby making De Quincey increasingly vehement in his debates. These often ended with a “violent exertion of authority” by his adult opponent, who was forced to assert that while logic might find flaws in Barruel’s argument, “experience” showed it to be essentially unassailable (176). Such conclusions were deeply dissatisfying to the young De Quincey, who desperately wanted to be proven wrong so that his logic and his secret belief in Barruel could be reconciled.

Elsewhere in the introduction, De Quincey acknowledges that his childhood engrossment with secret societies was unusual. However, he maintains that a similar interest is only natural among thoughtful adults:

Generally speaking, a child may not—but every adult will and must, if at all by nature meditative—regard with a feeling higher than vulgar curiosity small fraternities of men forming themselves as separate and inner vortices within the great vortex of society; communicating silently in broad daylight by signals not even seen, or, if seen, not understood except among themselves; and connected by the link either of purposes not safe to be avowed, or by the grander link of awful truths which, merely to shelter themselves from the hostility of an age unprepared for their reception, are forced to retire, possibly for generations, behind thick curtains of secrecy. To be hidden amidst crowds is sublime; to come down hidden amongst crowds from distant generations is doubly sublime. (173)

This passage builds upon the sense of secret societies’ historical continuity expressed above even as it more precisely accounts for the “why” of their prolonged secretive behavior. For De Quincey, secret societies serve as repositories of purposes and truths too advanced for the culture at large. In a tacit challenge to the prevailing middle-class standard of Victorian manliness as transparent and open, he approves and even celebrates the secrecy practiced by these “small fraternities of men.” In fact, their clandestine community of truth is described as “doubly sublime,” a label that grants them both spiritual and aesthetic status. “Secret Societies” thus invites its readers to practice the same kind of secrecy as its subject by appealing to a set of imperceptible standards of value accessible only to the “meditative” and too advanced for the middle-class “great vortex of society.” In other words, De Quincey attempts to overcome the presumed hostility to secret societies sparked by Barruel’s accusation of “treason” by abandoning the Abbé’s external political register in favor of his own discourse of interiority.

“Secret Societies” neatly captures the complex dialectic between exterior political condemnation and interior subjective attraction at the heart of Victorian
England’s multivalent rhetoric of secrecy. *Plots of Opportunity* offers an extended reexamination of this dialectic that seeks to clarify the unanswered questions of “how” and “why” from De Quincey’s original investigation of secret societies. Instead of accepting the ahistorical sublimity of these “small fraternities” or attempting to uncover their “purposes” and “awful truths,” however, this book strives to situate De Quincey’s “general economy of Secret Societies” within the specific confines of just over forty years of English culture, from 1829 to 1870. Although this period from Catholic emancipation to Italian unification contains many factual secret societies—the Freemasons, the Thugs, the Carbonari, the Fenians, etc.—it is the productive function of the secret society as a rhetorical figure that serves as my main object of analysis. Concentrating on the functions rather than the forms of secret societies at once obviates the tendency towards ferreting out the secret of a specific society and locates secret societies in general within the recently burgeoning critical discourse on nineteenth-century secrecy. Once within this discursive field, the secret society as a fact becomes less significant than the secret society as a figure that generates its own “facts” according to the particular historical agents involved.

These agents occupy a broad spectrum of class, religion, race, and nationality, ranging from aristocrats to trade unionists, Establishment clergy to Roman Catholics, British bureaucrats to Indian rebels, and Irish nationalists to Italian brigands. Their party affiliations and political positions similarly run the gamut from ultra-Tory to Liberal to radically Radical, from constitutional monarchist to red republican. Even these agents’ ideological investment in accusations of conspiracy ranges widely from an apparently genuine belief in the presence and danger of secret plots to more opportunistic denunciations for the purposes of propaganda. They are held together, however, by their common connection to a rhetoric of secrecy centered on the figure of the secret society and by their collective contribution to Victorian democratic debate through this connection. The central project of this book is to trace this rhetorical intersection of secrecy and democracy during several crucial moments of debate over the character of England’s emerging democracy. I approach these moments of democratic crisis by focusing, first, on the explicitly political reaction in Parliament, the periodical press and elsewhere to attempts by an under-enfranchised constituency to gain more equitable representation; and, second, on a network of more literary texts that absorb this initial political rhetoric and use it to construct a field of aesthetic possibilities that offers potential insights into and consequences for the original crisis. Due to the increasingly close connection between Britain’s domestic and imperial policies during the period under consideration, my investigation interrogates the productive functions of the figure of the secret society both at home, where it was often initially deployed in an effort to stop “the lower orders” from securing social and political equality, and abroad, where it served as a
useful tool for preserving the “natural” inferiority of the “non-English races.” In both cases, the figure of the secret society allows De Quincey’s dialectic between condemnation and admiration to become especially perspicuous, inflecting the parliamentary, periodical and literary discourses that, together, constitute Victorian England’s larger democratic debate.

I

My approach to this debate draws equally from the historicist and formalist branches of contemporary critical theory and, with respect to the most recognizably literary of the texts I address, the Victorians’ own expansive conceptions of the novel and novel-writing. Working out of a tradition of Marxist analysis established by Fredric Jameson and Raymond Williams, as well as developments in post-colonial theory following the publication of Edward Said’s Orientalism (1978), I examine texts, both literary and nonliterary, within the material and imperial contexts in which they occur. I do not argue that these contexts can be used to reduce every text to a simple matter of class conflict or colonial exploitation, but rather that they provide a field of historical possibility that the text helps to construct. This field of possibility adds an ideological dimension to my close readings of particular texts’ formal strategies of characterization, narration, structure and signification. I share with deconstructive critics the practice of seeking out the internal contradictions of such methods of self-presentation in order to expose the host of inevitably fractured, competing and even contradictory meanings within the text. I then use these intra-textual contradictions as a principle point of entry into the ideological fissures already present in the text’s field of historical possibility, paying particular attention to their role in the intersection of a uniquely Victorian rhetoric of secrecy and the ongoing debate over the character of England’s emerging democracy through the figure of the secret society.

Victorian theories of the novel allow prose fiction a large role in this debate. For example, Fitzjames Stephens, writing in 1857, asserts that “contemporary novelists” are “the most influential of all indirect moral teachers” (125). Overall, this power of influence disturbs him, especially when it is exercised by writers like Charles Dickens to satirize the upper classes, the government and others in authority through such fictional constructs as the Circumlocution Office. In fact, he spends a great deal of time criticizing Little Dorrit for its lack of fidelity to legal and historical precedent, thereby revealing his own equation of novel writing and history. Two years later in “Popular Literature—The Periodical Press,” English critic E. S. Dallas extends Stephens’s argument, asserting that literature “is now a complete representation of society, from
the crown on its head to the buckle on its shoe, from its highest aspirations to its meanest want...a perfect index of the innumerable processes at work throughout the whole frame of society” (96–97). Indeed, for Dallas, literature “is not only the expression of public opinion and the index of contemporary history, it is itself a great force that reacts on the life which it represents, half creating what it professes only to reflect” (97). Paradoxically, Dallas’s theory of reciprocal representation at once elevates literary works to an extraordinarily prominent cultural position even as it divests them of the exclusive aura of literariness that sets them apart from texts often seen as the province of history. It is this Victorian sense of disciplinary slippage that I have tried to reflect in my own choice of texts.3

My investigation into the crucial role of the figure of the secret society works against the hint of ridiculousness that the subject has elicited following De Quincey’s 1847 essay. Certainly among twentieth-century scholars denigration of research into secret societies has a long history. As early as 1937, in his otherwise positive review of Douglas Knoop and G. P. Jones’s *An Introduction to Freemasonry*, John Saltmarsh observes that the investigation of secret societies frequently leads one into “a department of history which is not only obscure and highly controversial, but by ill luck the happiest of all hunting grounds for the light-headed, the fanciful, the altogether unscholarly and the lunatic fringe of the British Museum Reading Room” (103).4 An entire field of what might be more moderately called para-scholarship on secret societies written for a mostly popular audience demonstrates the continued currency of Saltmarsh’s observation. Some of the best of this work, like Marie Mulvey Roberts’s *British Poets and Secret Societies* and Roberts and Hugh Ormsby-Lennon’s *Secret Texts: The Literature of Secret Societies*, hovers uneasily between the lunatic fringe that it strenuously repudiates and a more rigorous academic culture whose standards of evidence it struggles to meet.5 Even J. M. Roberts’s *The Mythology of the Secret Societies*, which more than any other book has brought secret societies within the pale of acceptable scholarship, describes itself as “a reconnaissance in an area of organized nonsense” (1).

Unfortunately, Roberts’s self-deprecating label of his own subject matter as “nonsense” may encourage a misleading presentist dismissal of what, in the nineteenth century, was a widespread belief in and practice of De Quincey’s “general economy of Secret Societies.” As Roberts himself notes, “For about a century and a half large numbers of intelligent Europeans believed that much of what was happening in the world around them only happened because secret societies planned it so....More believed such nonsense, probably, between 1815 and 1914 than at any other time” (102). One important example of the way in which this general “nonsensical” belief in the power of secret societies might translate into a more serious matter appears in Michael Ragussis’s *Figures of Conversion*. Throughout his compelling exploration
of the role that the idea of Jewish conversion played in England from the 1790s through the 1870s, Ragussis demonstrates how the historical idea of the Iberian “crypto-Jew” allowed for the figuration of English Jews as members of a potentially subversive secret society. In the case of the Jews, this kind of belief was catalyzed largely by the public prominence of Benjamin Disraeli. However, even the effect produced by Disraeli owes something to the existence of actual secret societies in the nineteenth century, as well as the presence of less-easy-to-define organizations like trade unions that employed secretive practices.

Such practices were not confined to revolutionary or working-class groups, however. James Eli Adams has shown how secretive practices analogous to those employed by the above societies were operative at Dr. Thomas Arnold’s Rugby School and John Henry Newman’s retreat at Littlemore. In addition, as the following account from Bernard Becker indicates, institutional secrecy was clearly operative even in the Royal Society at the time of his visit in 1875:

It will be seen that a visit to the halls of the Royal Society is not an expedition to be undertaken lightly, or in an irreverent spirit. He who seeks to be admitted to the sacred penetralia, where science sits enthroned among her chosen votaries, feels very much as he did on his first visit to the House of Lords, an institution which has much in common with the Royal Society. The would-be visitor must first look up a friendly F. R. S., who, if the applicant be deemed worthy, will introduce him to the acting secretary, Mr. White, who will enter his name on the book, bracketed with the name of the introducer, and he will now only have to present himself at the fashionable hour of 8.30 to be at once admitted to the Upper House of Science. (23)

Once admitted, the visitor would have been able to observe some of the ceremonies still operative at the time, including the ritualistic transferal of a silver mace from one speaker to another. Even more intriguing than Adams’s and Becker’s accounts of the divide between outsiders and initiates operative at Rugby, Littlemore and the Royal Society, however, is the following passage from Walter Bagehot’s The English Constitution:

The meetings are not only secret in theory, but secret in reality. By the present practice, no official minute is kept of them. Even a private note is discouraged and disliked. . . The committee which unites the law-making power to the executive power—which, by virtue of that combination, is, while it lasts, the most powerful body in the state—is a committee wholly secret. No description of it, at once graphic and authentic, has ever been given. It is said to be sometimes like a rather
disorderly board of directors, where many speak and few listen—but no one knows. (15–16)

One may be surprised to learn that the covert organization Bagehot so mysteriously describes is none other than the British Cabinet; however, this surprise is itself an indication of just how successful practices of secrecy, often reinforced by rituals like those witnessed by Becker, could be when institutionalized by respectable British organizations. In addition, Becker and Bagehot’s accounts indicate the degree to which secretive, even seemingly conspiratorial, practices were acceptable when confined to the protected space of the elite public. The presence of such elite public secrecy adds yet another dimension to De Quincey’s earlier fascination with the general economy of Secret Societies; secrecy was fascinating not only because it could be illicit and revolutionary, but also because it could be acceptable and indicative of public authority.

Among other things, the possible overlap of praxis from the Carbonari to the Cabinet documented in the above texts indicates the need for a less esoteric and more fluid definition of “secret society” than has yet been offered. For the purposes of this book, I propose defining a secret society as “a social institution for which the practice of concealment forms an essential part of its praxis and/or self-definition.” Such a definition has four distinct advantages. First, it removes the aura of bizarre para-scholarship from my investigation by allowing me to focus on more than just esoteric and occult societies like, for instance, the Rosicrucians. Second, this preliminary definition breaks down the false binary of secret/open society by allowing for a continuum of secrecy, with those societies which are invested exclusively in securing their own official nonexistence at one end and more public institutions with secretive practices at the other. Third, its value-neutral focus on institutional practices of concealment avoids the morally laden language of either condemnation or admiration with which the figure of the secret society was invested in Victorian England. Fourth, such an elastic definition better reflects the Victorians’ own confusion about what exactly was meant by “secret society.” The very flexibility of this definition also indicates the pressing need for a nuanced theory of secret societies as they functioned specifically within nineteenth-century English society.

This society, it is generally agreed, placed an exceptionally high premium on forthright honesty. In Victorian fiction one need look no farther than Bulstrode in George Eliot’s Middlemarch to see how the public revelation of a simple act of concealment
can help to transform a prosperous banker into a social outcast already convicted of murder in the court of public opinion. Once one encounters more villainous characters—i.e. Uriah Heep, Sir John Chester, Sir Percival Glyde, even Becky Sharp—it becomes clear that what makes them morally questionable is their penchant for dishonesty. In his series of lectures at Harvard University on the subject of Sincerity and Authenticity, Lionel Trilling traces this narrative convention of the dissembling villain to the Early Modern period of English history:

The original social meaning of the word “villain” bears decisively upon its later moral meaning. The opprobrious term referred to the man who stood lowest in the scale of feudal society; the villain of plays and novels is characteristically a person who seeks to rise above the station to which he was born. He is not what he is: this can be said of him both because by his intention he denies and violates his social identity and because he can achieve his unnatural purpose only by covert acts, by guile. (16)

Trilling also acknowledges that the value of personal honesty reached an historically unprecedented level in Victorian England, becoming “an element of personal autonomy” and “a progressive virtue” (47). Recently, John Kucich has gone a step further by exploring the class implications of this “hyper honesty” (6); Kucich’s argument is complemented by Adams’s contention that the Victorian period was devoted to a “civic ideal of manhood defined above all as an ideal of honest, straightforward conduct” opposed to “subtlety and obliquity of any kind” (65).

However, both Adams and Kucich also argue that this extreme emphasis on openness and truth-telling is only half of the story, that there was simultaneously an equally strong valuation of secrecy and lying. For Adams, the underlying elevation of secrecy in Victorian culture is tied to the concept of “manliness”: paradoxically, even as Victorian men were encouraged to live up to the civic ideal of manhood outlined above, their status as gentlemen depended on their ability to subtly indicate that they were reserving an essential part of their characters from the public gaze. This performance of reserve leads Adams in Dandies and Desert Saints to reinsert the subversive and unstable figure of the dandy back into such popular Victorian constructions of manliness as the priest, the prophet, the soldier and the gentleman. In The Power of Lies, John Kucich offers a similar argument for the productive power of socially sanctioned lying, especially for elite middle-class professionals, cultural intellectuals and writers. For these groups, Kucich argues, lying could be ethically justified by ideals of self-development and social privilege. Since such justifications were most often used in Victorian fiction to underwrite the actions of middle-class characters, rendering them sympathetic despite their dissembling, Kucich concludes that middle-
class claims to cultural authority were grounded not only on a stable ideal of truth-
telling, but also on a symbolic logic of transgression, signified by lying.

There are a number of potential explanations for why secrecy and lying came to
occupy such a prominent role in Victorian culture.10 In terms of symbolic logic, Kucich
points to “the inevitable interdependence of oppositions between honesty and
dishonesty in any symbolic system that reserves so prominent a place for issues of
truthfulness” (15). In other words, truth-telling and openness only make sense when
defined against lying and secrecy, which are thus elevated to a coequal position in a
culture so obsessively concerned with personal integrity. In “ Declarations of
Independence,” Jodi Dean historicizes Kucich’s logical imperative using Jürgen Habermas’s
theory of the formation of the bourgeois public sphere, observing that what
“ Habermas conceptualizes as the bourgeois public sphere has early roots in secret
societies; indeed, he allows that publicity itself, as a norm of reason, might require
secrecy” (290). Dean’s argument receives support in the work of Alexander Welsh
and David Vincent, who in George Eliot and Blackmail and The Culture of Secrecy, respec-
tively, identify the pressures that the dramatic development of a modern informa-
tion culture placed on the private individual as an important incentive for personal
secrecy. Welsh observes that Victorian novels with blackmail plots often endorse not
a revelation, but a reconcealing, of the truth as the proper end of ethical behavior,11
whereas Vincent uses the Post Office scandal of 1844 —when it was discovered that
the Post Office regularly opened suspicious mail, including potentially that of Radical
MPs—as an introduction to ways in which certain forms of information were con-
cealed from public view in the name of national security.12 This practice often encour-
aged individuals to keep secrets from government inspectors and statisticians in an
effort to preserve their privacy. This notion of individual privacy, and the private
sphere more generally, was institutionalized by the Victorians, many of whom uncrit-
ically maintained a sharp distinction between secrecy and privacy. However, as numer-
ous critics—including Adams, Kucich and Welsh, but also many feminist critics following
the publication of Leonore Davidoff and Catharine Hall’s Family Fortunes (1987)—
have shown, the public and private spheres were never very separate. If the spheres
in which they occur cannot be distinguished from another, then neither, I would argue,
can secrecy and privacy be so neatly segregated. Therefore, since privacy was held
in sufficiently high esteem to merit lying to government officials, it follows that secrecy
enjoyed tacit valorization as well.

Together, these critics provide a compelling theoretical underpinning for the sort
of multi-dimensional discourse of interiority to which we have already seen De Quincey
appeal in his panegyric in honor of secret societies. Adding to the attractiveness of
clandestine behavior was the legacy of Romantic individualism, with its overwhelming
valuation of the secret self and the poetic soul, as well as the pressures of political
and economic instability, the shift from parish relief to government workhouses, and an increasingly extensive network of commercial relations that threatened to take the capacity for autonomy away from unreserved individuals. As Adams concisely notes, “Victorian obsessions with secrecy are manifold and powerfully overdetermined” (13), forming a pervasive rhetoric of secrecy operative during the Victorian period.

Within this larger rhetoric of secrecy the figure of the secret society occupies an intriguing position, linking individual secrecy with institutional practice. In thus moving secrecy from an individual to an institutional level, the figure of the secret society may initially appear amenable to Foucauldian methods of analysis. Foucault never discusses secret societies per se, but his elucidation of the individual secret of sexuality in *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1* and of the social secret of the disciplines and panopticism in *Discipline and Punish* leaves ample room for the inclusion of secret societies and the rhetoric of conspiracy they help to foster under his explanatory rubric. Not only would secret societies foster the same type of disciplinary instruction encouraged by the larger society—loyalty, docility, normalization, an emphasis on the center point of secrecy—but public suspicion and fear of their existence would provide the perfect excuse for the productive extension of universal surveillance. This second function is exactly the point of E. P. Thompson’s assertion that, in the first twenty years of the nineteenth century, “the Government needed conspirators, to justify the continuation of repressive legislation which prevented nation-wide popular organization” (485). If anything, secret societies work even better than secretive individuals for maintaining social order because, whereas it is theoretically possible to incarcerate all individual subversives, it can never be unambiguously ascertained whether a given society has been definitely eradicated or has simply enveloped itself in a deeper shroud of secrecy, thus allowing for the spatial and temporal expansion of government surveillance.

However, such a Foucauldian account of secrecy and its implications for the productive function of secret societies would leave one with an insufficiently complex understanding of how secret societies actually functioned in nineteenth-century England. While it is true that many political invocations of the figure of the secret society were made to serve conservative ends, a purely Foucauldian explanation, by making the secret society just another ruse of power, fails to account for individual resistance to such rhetorical maneuvering. That resistance can take place through the formation of secret societies is exactly the point of nineteenth-century sociologist Georg Simmel’s observation that in general “the secret society emerges everywhere as the counterpart of despotism and police restriction, as the protection of both the defensive and the offensive in their struggle against the overwhelming pressures of central powers—by no means of political powers only, but also of the church, as
well as of social classes and families” (347). In fact, such resistance to “the overwhelming pressures of the central power” was the primary aim of many actual secret societies in nineteenth-century Britain, with the numerous secretive associations in Ireland providing the clearest example of just how effective sustained practices of secrecy could be for producing real social change—i.e., Catholic emancipation, the disestablishment of the Irish Church, and the eventual nullification of the Act of Union.14

In order to appreciate this potential for resistance, one must look beyond the idealized political perspective of those already in positions of power. Government officials and many prominent social and scientific figures would be at great pains to dampen the revolutionary potential of secret societies by containing it within their own hegemonic system, often by practicing secretive behavior themselves. Again, Simmel is instructive here when he observes that there exists “the peculiar attractiveness of formally secretive behavior irrespective of its momentary content. In the first place, the strongly emphasized exclusion of all outsiders makes for a correspondingly strong feeling of possession” (332). Among the social group possessed of a secret, these shared senses of exclusivity and possession promote solidarity and fuel the kind of fascination with secretive behavior evinced by De Quincey. Depending upon its members and their social position, the group may also accrue either social prestige or social disapprobation if the existence of the secret is made more widely known. In other words, once a secret society has entered the political realm, once it has become a figure in the exterior middle-class rhetoric of secrecy, its publicity can be used to undermine whatever revolutionary potential the society might originally have had either by implicating it within a system of social authority based on the exclusion of others or by fostering public condemnation of its dangerously secretive practices. From the perspective of those in power, neither strategy of publicity is risk-free: socially sanctioned practices of institutional secrecy look suspicious if they are made too public and may destabilize the binary opposition between acceptable and unacceptable forms of secrecy on which the condemnation of potentially revolutionary societies relies. This binary opposition is further threatened by the aesthetic, spiritual and intersubjective enthusiasm such societies may inspire. Nevertheless, for those interested in the uneven distribution of social power, the figure of the secret society remains an attractive way of preserving their own position.

III

In Victorian England, the uneven distribution of social power became the major focus of the century-long debate over democracy. Derived from the Greek words demos, or “people,” and kratia, “rule” or “power,” democracy was under enormous pressure
in the nineteenth century. On the one hand, the American and French Revolutions had revived democracy as a political theory uniquely suited to the modern state. On the other hand, democracy as it had been originally conceived, if not actually practiced, in ancient Athens was no longer possible, mainly because of the impracticable number of potential voters. Representative democracy mediated by institutions, what Robert Dahl refers to as polyarchy, seemed the logical answer to an enlarged population, but the fundamental question remained: who were the “people” and how much “power” ought they to have? The various positive answers given to this question in the nineteenth century can be broken down into two main “pro-democracy” positions: 1) radical or ideal democracy, in which the principle of guaranteed total equality among persons, often but not always translated as the political advocacy of universal suffrage, was considered “self-evident” and inherent in what it meant to be human; and 2) guardianship democracy, in which equality was something to be earned, often through education, by the lower orders, whose interests would be looked after in the meantime by middle- and/or upper-class guardians who would govern in their stead. The implications of these two positions for the terms “people” and “power” are fairly evident. Radical democracy interprets both terms in as literal and as broad a manner as possible—all residents over a given age constitute the people, whose power, equally distributed among these individual residents, should immediately be the will of the nation. Seen in the most sympathetic light, guardianship democracy might allow for a similar definition of these key terms, but only as a future ideal. A less sympathetic reading influenced by historical precedent, however, would probably agree with C. Douglas Lummis that “As a general rule when middle- and upper-class people in whatever country say that they support ‘people’s power,’ what they mean by ‘the people’ is themselves” (15), with a correspondingly truncated definition of power.

These implications for the terms “people” and “power” also lead to more theoretical implications about the goals of democracy for England’s domestic and international policies. Radical democracy again conceives of itself in comprehensive terms; it seeks not particular social institutions, but a social ideal of empowered individual equality. Within England this meant working to overturn the centuries-long domination of national affairs by the landed Protestant aristocracy, whereas abroad it could lead to a repudiation of British imperialism. By contrast, guardianship democracy limits itself to institutional forms, including popular education, open election of representatives, and perhaps legal guarantee of certain democratic rights (i.e., free speech) even as it preserves traditional divisions of people along, in the case of Victorian England, class, religious and racial lines. These divisions were especially strong in the colonies, where the strict maintenance of a rigid social hierarchy was the foundation of Britain’s imperial policies. In their extreme forms, then, radical and guardian-
ship democracy differ substantially on key issues, and this difference is important to maintain if one is to understand what was at stake in the Victorian debate over democracy.

In some ways the terms of this Victorian debate had already been established by earlier public confrontations over democracy, most noticeably those between Edmund Burke and Thomas Paine, and between James Mill and Thomas Macaulay. The substance of Edmund Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1791) and Thomas Paine’s *The Rights of Man* (1791–92) are well-known: the principal point at issue between them was whether Britain should retain its constitutionally validated social hierarchy of the people and their upper-class guardians, or whether the people ought to take a more active and radical role in their own republican democracy.18

More recently, James Mill’s “Essay on Government” (1820) had provided an equally radical Utilitarian argument for representative democracy. Specifically, after rejecting an Athenian-style model of democracy as unsuited for the much greater size of the modern electorate,19 Mill’s “Essay” proposed a representative democracy founded on universal suffrage and frequent elections as the best way to insure that the greatest happiness principle would be perpetuated by the government.20

Macaulay successfully repudiated Mill’s conclusions on two grounds. First, he criticized Mill’s lack of tangible evidence, declaring that “We have here an elaborate treatise on Government, from which, but for two or three passing allusions, it would not appear that the author was aware that any governments actually existed among men” (“Mill’s Essay,” 161–62). Second, in what would become a staple of guardianship theories advocated by both those in favor of and those in opposition to some version of democracy, he argued that the forces of public opinion and personal reputation are sufficient to guarantee that the aristocracy will always govern with everyone’s best interests in mind, and that the only thing universal suffrage could achieve would be a despoliation of the rich by the poor, resulting in social chaos and a worse life for all.

The crucial addition to these earlier debates, and perhaps the single most influential work on democratic theory written in the nineteenth century, is Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*.21 This two-volume magnum opus offers nothing less than a comprehensive overview of the political and social practices, individual and societal effects, and practical and theoretical implications of democracy as suggested by its implementation in the United States of America. Tocqueville begins by explaining that his purpose is neither to advance nor to prevent the spread of democracy to Europe—a spread that he believes inevitable in any case because it is the will of God—but rather to suggest ways in which the democratization of Europe might learn from the American example before it is too late: “Christian peoples in our day appear to me to offer a frightening spectacle; the movement [toward social
equality] that carries them along is already strong enough that it cannot be suspended, but it is not yet rapid enough to despair of directing it: their fate is in their hands, but soon it will escape them” (7). Democracy requires guidance because, although it remains for Tocqueville the best way of both insuring individual freedom and fostering a sense of mutual interdependence or community, it is also susceptible to a number of dangerous tendencies. Theoretically, democracy produces an inherent tension between individual equality and individual liberty; taken to its extreme, this tension can actually result in the sacrifice of liberty in order to maintain equality. Such a sacrifice becomes practically evident in what Tocqueville identifies as a “tyranny of majority” operative in the United States at the levels of legislation and, most insidiously, of public opinion. In other words, the numerical majority tends to pass laws and prompt judgments that are despotically homogeneous in that they silence minority opposition. In addition to these two primary dangers, democracy’s focus on individual equality also risks producing both atomistic individuals and oppression of the wealthy, as well as allowing for the formation of despotic sects that purport to represent the majority even as they pursue their own self-serving goals. None of these tendencies is unavoidable, says Tocqueville—in fact all can be effectively combated by publicity in a free press—but it is up to those nations progressing inevitably toward social equality to determine whether “equality leads them to servitude or freedom, to enlightenment or barbarism, to prosperity or misery” (676).

Immediately translated into English in 1835 and 1840, Tocqueville’s even-handed and thoughtful appraisal of democracy and its dangers exercised enormous influence over English reformers struggling to cope with the growing popular demand for more direct political representation in Britain. Two reviews of *Democracy in America* written by John Stuart Mill give some indication of Tocqueville’s English reception. Both reviews agree that the book ranks “among the most remarkable productions of our times” (*Essays*, 198), with Mill’s second review going so far as to declare that *Democracy in America* heralds “the beginning of a new era in the scientific study of politics” and that “nothing on the whole comparable in profundity . . . had yet been written on democracy will scarcely be disputed by anyone” (*Essays*, 232, 275). In addition, whereas his first review had attempted to palliate somewhat Tocqueville’s fears about a “tyranny of the majority” (*Essays*, 220–25), Mill’s second, considerably lengthier review not only endorses Tocqueville’s conclusions, but goes on to offer evidence for the relevance of *Democracy in America* for an English audience. Mill writes,

If America has been said to prove, that in an extensive country a popular government may exist, England seems destined to afford the proof, that after a certain stage in civilization it must; for as soon as the numerically stronger have the same advantages, in means of combination and celerity of movement, as the stronger
number, they are the masters; and, except by their permission, no government can any longer exist. (Essays, 243)

He then points out numerous similarities between England and the United States (Essays 278–82), arguing ultimately that in order to guide democracy in England away from the tyranny of the majority, self-absorption and love of wealth evident in America, there should be established a separate “social support for opinions and sentiments different from those of the mass” (Essays, 284).

As one might expect, neither Burke’s and Macaulay’s early successes nor Tocqueville’s Democracy in America silenced advocates of radical democracy. However, those earlier debates, and Tocqueville’s warning that democracy could produce a conflict between equality and liberty and a “tyranny of the majority,” provided a set of terms within which to advocate more limited forms of democratic guardianship. In order to illustrate the range of specific opinions that could fall under this general term, I will present four versions of guardianship democracy proposed by Thomas Macaulay, Walter Bagehot, W. R. Greg and John Stuart Mill. Each of these men characterized himself as “pro-democracy” in the sense that each argued that his political position offered the best method for securing the rights of “the people,” and all believed that England remained unsuited for radical democracy in the form of universal suffrage. However, their reasons for this common belief are strikingly different. Macaulay’s History of England (1848–61) presents the English Constitution as sufficiently adaptable not to require dramatic revisions of the kind the Chartists proposed. Bagehot’s The English Constitution (1867) also endorses the effectiveness of the present Constitution, not because of its adaptability but because of its “effective secret” of the Cabinet. By contrast, W. R. Greg in “Representative Reform” (1852) cautions against universal suffrage on the grounds that sufficient education is the necessary precondition for the franchise. Finally, John Stuart Mill’s Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform (1859) and Considerations on Representative Government (1861) agree with Greg that education remains the necessary precondition for the franchise and propose an elaborate system of political representation designed to limit the ability of the under-educated majority to exercise tyranny over their intellectual superiors. What unites these diverse writers is their shared conviction that some form of guardianship would be necessary to save democracy from its own excesses.

For Thomas Macaulay, whose public career was launched by his early opposition to James Mill’s “Essay on Government” and to Utilitarianism more generally, radical democracy is rendered unnecessary by the adaptable excellence of the Constitution of 1688. As portrayed in The History of England, this Constitution manages to answer the demands of the future by preserving the best of the past: “The
main principles of our government were excellent. They were not, indeed, formally and exactly set forth in a single written instrument: but they were to be found scattered over our ancient and noble statutes; and, what was of far greater moment, they had been engraved on the hearts of Englishmen during four hundred years" (History, III: 282). For Macaulay, the continued worth of these principles is demonstrated by the resulting peacefulness of England:

The highest eulogy which can be pronounced on the revolution of 1688 is this, that it was our last revolution. Several generations have now passed away since any wise and patriotic Englishman has meditated resistance to the established government. In all honest and reflecting minds there is a conviction, daily strengthened by experience, that the means of effecting every improvement which the constitution requires can be found within the constitution itself. (History, III: 287)

Since the Constitution of 1688 provides within itself the mechanisms for its own revision, radical proposals to alter it by introducing the points of the People’s Charter are without merit. The balance already in place between the monarchy, the House of Lords and the House of Commons as presently constituted would ensure that the rights of the people are being preserved by the competing interests of the crown, the aristocracy and the commons, and that England would never suffer the kind of “destroying revolution” already witnessed in France in 1789, 1830 and 1848 (History, III: 288).

Walter Bagehot also endorses the excellence of the Constitution of 1688, though for somewhat different reasons. Bagehot divides England into “the educated ten thousand” and everyone else, and observes that the “lower orders, the middle orders, are still, when tried by what is the standard of the educated ‘ten thousand,’ narrow-minded, unintelligent, incurious” (7). For Bagehot, the excellence of the Constitution of 1688 is that it accounts for this division of England by providing a portion of the government suitable for each group. He theorizes that the venerable, “dignified” parts of the constitution—mainly the monarchy, and to a lesser extent the House of Lords—are there to impress and motivate the lower orders through theatricality. For the educated ten thousand, the Constitution provides for the union of the executive and the legislative branches via the cabinet, which Bagehot describes as “the efficient secret of the English Constitution” (12). In other words, the queen secures the loyalty, respect and deference of the masses for the government as a whole, while only a small part of that government, the cabinet, does all of the important work behind closed doors. Bagehot believes that the cabinet is uniquely positioned to govern effectively because it is not subject to direct democratic control. Instead, it is elected by the country’s elected representatives,
who, on the whole, are considerably wiser than their electors. In fact, he identifies the process of electing the Prime Minister, who selects the cabinet, as the single most important function of the House of Commons. Bagehot also considers and rejects what he calls the “ultra-democratic theory” of universal suffrage for two reasons: first, “Such a Parliament could not be composed of moderate men” (182); second, “A country of respectful poor, though far less happy than where there are no poor to be respectful, is nevertheless far more fitted for the best government. You can use the best classes of the respectful country; you can only use the worst where every man thinks he is as good as every other” (54).

In contrast to Bagehot, W. R. Greg’s opposition to universal suffrage stems from what he perceives as the fundamental principle of the Reform Bill of 1832. According to Greg, the First Reform Bill established a precedent that “the elective franchise was not a right inherent in every man by virtue of his residence in a free country, but an instrument for the attainment of a national end” (454). As he sees it, this precedent means that whereas the 1832 Bill was “at once conservative and popular,” subsequent attempts to expand the franchise “would be assuredly at once democratic and retrogressive” even if “just wise and necessary (as to which we here offer no opinion)” (457). In essence, universal suffrage would be retrogressive because it would lower the standards required to vote. Greg approves of the enfranchisement of the intelligent and educated middle class, but is distrustful of similar working-class goals, mainly because he sees education as the fundamental condition for the suffrage. As he recognizes, enfranchising the working classes “would throw the entire preponderating control over that representation—in other words, the supreme power of the State, into their hands” by virtue of their superior numbers (460–61). However, without proper education, these new voters would have the potential to exercise a “tyranny of the majority” (465–69). For Greg, making the franchise dependent on education would preserve the principles of the First Reform Bill by acknowledging both that the right to vote is something “endowed,” not something inherent, and that its endowment depends upon one’s ability to “exercise it for their country’s good” (471). Presumably this ability would be rated by those who had already achieved the proper level of education to assume the mantle of guardianship.

Finally, there is John Stuart Mill, whose ultimate allegiance to either radical or guardianship democracy is a bit more complex. On the one hand Mill’s position on electoral reform has certain affinities with Macaulay’s, Bagehot’s, and Greg’s. Like Macaulay, Mill is concerned to preserve a balance of power among England’s diverse social orders and to inculcate in individuals the habit of obedience to recognized authorities (Considerations, 74). Like Bagehot, Mill wishes to insure that England’s leaders are the best available and he believes that “No progress at all can be made towards obtaining a skilled democracy, unless the democracy are willing that the
work which requires skill should be done by those who possess it” (Considerations, 117). Finally, like Greg, Mill values education:

I regard it as wholly inadmissible that any person should participate in the suffrage, without being able to read, write, and, I will add, perform the common operations of arithmetic. Justice demands, even when the suffrage does not depend on it, that the means of attaining these elementary acquirements should be within the reach of every person, either gratuitously, or at an expense not exceeding what the poorest, who earn their own living, can afford. (Considerations, 167)

On the other hand, Mill also supports expanding the franchise, and this support may make his argument initially more difficult to classify. In Thoughts on Parliamentary Reform he argues that “It is important that every one of the governed should have a voice in government” (Essays, 338). He would expand on this argument two years later:

There is no difficulty in showing that the ideally best form of government is that in which the sovereignty or supreme controlling power in the last resort, is vested in the entire aggregate of the community; every citizen not only having a voice in the exercise of that ultimate sovereignty, but being, at least occasionally, called on to take actual part in the government, by the personal discharge of some public function, local or general. (Considerations, 53)

Mill even goes so far as to recommend suffrage for women as well as men, a position far in advance of his time. At first, this conviction that all of the governed ought to have a voice in their government looks like radical democracy; however, Mill’s fears about a potential conflict between liberty and equality and a “tyranny of the majority” lead him to place limitations on such popular sovereignty. These fears are best expressed by Mill’s attempt to define the concept of democracy: “Two very different ideas are usually confounded under the name democracy. The pure idea of democracy, according to its definition, is the government of the whole people by the whole people, equally represented. Democracy as commonly conceived and hitherto practiced, is the government of the whole people by a mere majority of the people, exclusively represented” (Considerations, 132). This second conception of democracy Mill sees as prone to “the domination of sectional or class interests, pointing to conduct which would be dictated by impartial regard for the interest of all” (Considerations, 120). In thus characterizing the common conception of democracy, Mill leaves himself open to criticism from at least three kinds of radical democrats: 1) working-class radicals might reply
that a government of the whole people by a mere majority is probably less prone to sectional or class interests than the extant government of the whole people by a mere minority has shown itself to be; 2) utilitarians would argue that the function of government is to secure the “greatest happiness principle” and that majority rule achieves that by definition; 3) contemporary Marxist radicals could reply that the current mode of capitalist production renders all claims to govern according to the “impartial regard for the interest of all” suspect on a number of grounds, the most charitable of which is false consciousness.34 For Mill, however, the threat of a tyranny by newly enfranchised manual laborers is real, leading him in Thoughts to append to his conviction that everyone ought to have a voice the question, “But ought everyone to have an equal voice?” (Essays, 339). In fact, Mill believes that one’s voice ought to be determined by one’s “individual mental superiority” (Considerations, 175),35 and he proposes an elaborate electoral scheme designed to insure both that the educated minority would remain a potent force in every election,16 and that Parliament would contain “the very élite of the country” (Considerations, 145). Even allowing Mill the most sympathetic meaning of “élite,” one cannot help but place him among the many supporters of guardianship democracy, since these élite and their super-enfranchised, intellectually superior supporters would serve as guardians for a common good only they would be equipped to determine.

As these four thinkers make clear, there were many reasons in the nineteenth century for opposing radical democracy. Tradition, effectiveness, education, and the maintenance of independent minorities might all lead one to advise against such radical goals as universal suffrage, at least for now. However, alongside these reasons should be placed another, somewhat less disinterested motive. As Alexis de Tocqueville asked in 1835, “Does one think that after having destroyed feudalism and vanquished kings, democracy will recoil before the bourgeoisie and the rich?” (6).37 At its most radical, democracy would do away with all of the sources of social inequality, including those founded on the uneven distribution of wealth. This is not to say that all radical democrats in the nineteenth-century were socialists, although many, like William Morris, did seek to fundamentally change the way industrialism worked. Instead, what I mean to suggest is that nineteenth-century advocates of guardianship democracy realized that once the principle of equality found social acceptance, there was no telling where it might lead. Jon Roper lucidly summarizes the efforts of many to control democracy’s possibilities: “In a society which recognized the antagonisms of class, therefore, there were those who argued that democracy—as it implied an equal right to liberty—would disrupt the habits of social deference. They searched for alternative methods of checking the social ideal” (15), or limiting democratic reform to such an extent that the principle of equality would not come into conflict with Victorian England’s well-established social hierarchies.
One such “alternative method” was the strategic political invocation of the figure of the secret society. To understand how the figure of the secret society could play a role in “checking the social ideal,” one must consider the specific actors involved in each invocation, a task I will take up in detail in the following chapters. In the context of the debates over democracy, the figure of the secret society was often deployed by advocates of guardianship democracy to discredit those whose actions furthered more radical ends. This is not to say that there were no “true believers” in the influence that secret societies could have on England’s political future, but rather that even the apparently sincere belief of such Victorian “conspiracy theorists” as Charles Newdegate and David Urquhart differed little in results from the more opportunistic accusations of conspiracy leveled by political propagandists concerned only with preserving the status quo. That, to borrow J. M. Roberts’s formulation, such an interested “delusion of the directing class . . . was able to have great political and practical effects” (8), securing public condemnation and governmental repression, is due to the ways in which the figure of the secret society effaces the gap in social power that enables its deployment. Once it has been invoked, several loosely affiliated individuals striving for democratic social change become the leaders of a powerfully unified conspiracy whose clandestine goals are subject to the wildest speculation. Certainly the secretive and hierarchical nature of the secret society itself demonstrates that these goals cannot be radically democratic: not only must the group have something unsavory to hide, but the fact that it is being led by a select group of individuals smacks of a form of despotic guardianship. If allowed to prosper, such a group would create an even worse balance of power than already exists. What is needed is a strong, open democracy governed by guardians equipped to counteract this kind of “un-English” behavior.

Such, at least, was the reaction the figure of the secret society was supposed to elicit towards those groups whose acts threatened the current delineation of social and political authority. Once fully public, however, the figure of the secret society never remained so monologically stable. Within the political realm, radical critics tended to question its tautological collapse of secrecy and despotism and to point out that such conspiratorial paranoia was self-perpetuating, even without a legitimate object. Many more moderate critics also remained uncomfortable with a standard of meaning that claimed to differentiate between “English” and “un-English” institutions purely on the absence or presence of secretive practices. Some were themselves members of “respectable” organizations like Parliament, the Royal Society,
or the growing number of professional associations, all of whose methods for divid-
ing outsiders from initiates were difficult to separate from similar practices by less acceptable groups. Ironically, perhaps the most far-reaching political critique of the figure of the secret society and of guardianship theories of democracy was already present in Democracy in America itself. At the end of Volume Two, Tocqueville worries that the greatest danger inherent in democracy is its vulnerability to the despotic influence of “an immense and tutelary power . . . which takes charge of assuring their [the people’s] enjoyments and watching over their fate. It is absolute, detailed, regular, far-seeing, and mild” (663). As an antidote to this almost Foucauldian vision of despotic guardianship, Tocqueville advocates the need for powerful private associations dedicated to securing everyone’s equal right to liberty, in other words for those organizations of the under-enfranchised that were often pejoratively represented by the figure of the secret society.

Outside of these objections to monologically negative invocations of the figure of the secret society were a host of less overtly political reasons why institutional secrecy might meet with qualified approbation. Practices of secrecy offered not just an avenue for social and political resistance but also a retreat from the public pressures of society and politics. Within this extra-political space, secrecy could provide a means for and a measure of spiritual and aesthetic self-development. Moreover, when such secrecy was institutionalized to govern the collective practices of a group of like-minded individuals, it could promote a sense of intellectual community and historical continuity. This positive dimension of the figure of the secret society remains in constant tension with the political pressures of the ongoing debate over democracy, thereby producing a complex dialectic on the subject of institutional secrecy in the Parliamentary debates, the periodical press, and the popular fiction of the Victorian period.

My first chapter establishes the allure of secrecy, especially for the more privileged members of Victorian society, by, first, examining the rhetoric surrounding one particular secret society, English Freemasonry, and, second, tracing the related political implications of Thomas Carlyle’s praise of secrecy in Sartor Resartus (1833–34). Specifically exempted from the restrictions placed on private associations in the Combination Acts of 1799, the Masons enjoyed noble, even royal, patronage for the whole of the nineteenth century. They held parades, published journals and provided charitable assistance to widows and orphans, all while carefully cultivating an image of institutional secrecy. Public approbation of their activities suggests that, so long as it remained the protected space of the elite public, secrecy enjoyed widespread acceptance in Victorian England. In fact, secrecy could be not merely accepted, but valorized, as it is in Carlyle’s Sartor Resartus, which presents the reader with a metaphysics of heroic signification that is built on the positive valuation of
silence and secrecy. Carlyle’s theory of secrecy is important not only because, as George Eliot admitted in 1855, “there is hardly a superior or active mind of this generation that has not been modified by Carlyle’s writings, and especially by Sartor Resartus” (187–88), but also because his theory, together with the example of the Masons, shows that positive valuations of secrecy and vehement opposition to democracy could be mutually supportive. The next three chapters illustrate how this positive valuation of secrecy complicates attempts to pejoratively label as secret societies constituencies supposedly unfit for democratic representation by virtue of their class, religion or race. Chapter 2 reexamines accusation that trade unions were dangerous secret societies by focusing on the 1838 trial of five Glasgow cotton spinners for conspiracy and murder. During the trial and its aftermath in Parliamentary and periodical debates, these men, and through them the working classes, were condemned as dangerous conspirators akin to the Indian Thugs. Intended to demonstrate the working class’s unfitness for full participation in English democracy, this invocation of the figure of the secret society did not go wholly uncontested. I trace some of the implications of this resistance through the arguments of a small number of MPs and periodical writers, as well as through Charles Dickens’s Barnaby Rudge (1841) and Benjamin Disraeli’s Sybil (1845). Both novels absorb the range of debate over the trial in their representations of trade unions as secret societies; however, both also extend this method of representation to middle- and upper-class associations as well. This extension suggests that secretive practices operate at all levels of English society and therefore that such practices cannot serve as a reliable indication of any group’s fitness for democratic enfranchisement. Both novels also locate their representations of trade unions within the social context of English anti-Catholicism, itself a prolific source of secret society references. In fact, charges similar to those made against the Spinners were also applied to English Catholics, only instead of being labeled Thugs, Anglo- and Roman Catholics were represented using the figure of Jesuitism. Chapter 3 concentrates explicitly on Protestant fears of various Catholic and Catholic-like conspiracies as articulated during 1) the debate over Catholic emancipation, 2) the Tractarian controversy of the 1830s, and 3) the public uproar prompted by the reestablishment of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Britain in 1850. By interrogating responses to these manifestations of the Catholic Question in a wide range of Victorian nonfiction prose, I reveal the extent to which Victorian anti-Catholic and nationalist rhetorics become increasingly conflated through the figure of Jesuitism. In 1829, the vast majority of English anti-Catholics vilified foreign and domestic Papists alike, but by 1850 their denunciations had become much more particular, excoriating only the papacy for the international threat it posed to all patriotic Englishmen, both Catholic and Protestant. In thus collapsing reli-
gion and politics together, however, anti-Catholic nationalists left themselves open to ideological critique by both moderate Protestants committed to catholicity and Roman Catholic apologists quick to reverse conspiratorial accusations by appealing to the aesthetic and spiritual attractiveness of secretive practices. In addition, by using accusations of conspiracy to denounce only foreign Catholics, mid-century anti-Catholic propagandists began to weaken the connection between the figure of the secret society and democratic reform, thereby sacrificing one of their central arguments, that Catholics did not deserve equal citizenship. The result of counter-offensive texts aware of this rhetorical shift, like John Henry Newman’s *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England* (1850), is similar to the implication of Dickens and Disraeli’s novels: that secretive practices cannot diminish one’s entitlement to English democracy.

In Chapter 4, I investigate the similarly strained marriage of politics and religion through the figure of the secret society that took place during England’s response to the Indian Mutiny. As one writer for *The British Quarterly Review* wryly noted, “Never before, in any era of its Parliamentary history, had this country to decide upon a case of such magnitude, with so little of the preparation necessary to decide upon it wisely” (“India as it is—India as it may be,” 203). In the absence of wisdom, many English statesmen and writers fell back on the familiar rhetoric of secret conspiracies to explain how the Indian army’s religious objections to a new rifle could lead to armed rebellion. From religious differences, English attempts to explain affairs in India quickly turned to questions of race, with the figure of the secret society neatly eliding the difference. This strategy of refiguring the rebellion as a conspiracy efficiently 1) silenced those advocating direct representation for the Indians by demonstrating their unsuitability for open democratic institutions; 2) limited the spread of the rebellion by confining it to the actions of a few conspirators; 3) generated a rhetoric of Carlylean heroism to justify the English and their rule in India; and 4) supported a burgeoning rhetoric of British racism. These results of secreting rebellion come under critical scrutiny in Wilkie Collins’s *The Moonstone* (1868). Collins’s novel employs several techniques, including temporal and spatial doubling, to return British heroes to earth and reveal their complicity in and responsibility for the Indian rebellion, thereby undercutting any blanket assertions about Indians, or any other “dark race’s,” inferiority to their light-skinned colonial “guardians.”

When, only months later, English attention turned to the unification of Italy, the combined rhetoric of democracy and secrecy became increasingly implicated in ideological conflict. Chapter 5 navigates among the competing claims of politics, trade, class, religion, race and empire raised by the Italian Question to show how the Victorians’ resulting ideological relativism combined with their divided attitudes towards secrecy to frustrate any attempt to assert ideological order by invoking the figure
of the secret society. Everyone involved in reunifying Italy, from the Pope to Napoleon III to Victor Emmanuel to Garibaldi, seemed complicit in a wide range of plots and conspiracies, making it difficult for their supporters in England to retain any ideological high ground on the subject of secrecy. Two literary texts that appeared during the messy resolution of the Italian Question deploy the figure of the secret society in their critiques of England’s ideological confusion. Published in 1859–60, during the first period of Italian unification, Wilkie Collins’s *The Woman in White* represents the ambivalent attractiveness of the Italian figure of the secret society through the character of Count Fosco, an Italian conspirator and arch-villain who nevertheless remains one of the most problematically charismatic figures in the novel. Benjamin Disraeli’s *Lothair* (1870), which appeared the same year that Italian unification was finally achieved, presents Italy and England as overflowing with the conspiratorial machinations of an explosion of factual and fictional secret societies. Both novels help to dramatize the chaotic rhetoric surrounding Italian unification and to reveal the kind of ideological relativism brought on by English responses to the Italian Question. In addition, *Lothair* offers evidence that, since 1850 and certainly by 1870, the significance of England’s rhetoric of conspiracy had begun to change, an issue I take up briefly in my final Afterword.

Ultimately, I intend to establish that, far from being a mere “aberration of matur- ing bourgeois society” (J. M. Roberts 2), the figure of the secret society actually played an ideologically central and largely overlooked role in the ongoing development of that society. In the first two-thirds of the nineteenth-century, the ongoing connection between accusations of secrecy and the period’s tumultuous debate over the character of England’s emerging democracy means that the figure of the secret society can serve as a useful barometer for Victorian England’s failure to manifest its promise of universal political subjecthood. Liberal interpretations of the post-Enlightenment doctrine of “natural rights” simultaneously appealed to universalist notions of equality in order to justify electoral reform and the preeminent status of the Commons even as they sought to keep undesirable constituencies perpetually disenfranchised by branding them secret societies. These accusations were intended to deny groups like trade unionists, English Catholics and colonized peoples the chance to assert themselves as citizens by representing them as non-subjects—they could not be trusted to vote, for example, because their ties to clandestine organizations precluded their ability to function as autonomous individuals. What I will argue throughout this book is that such “plots of opportunity” should be viewed with extreme suspicion, since they usually indicate that the ideals of democratic equality and political universalism are being circumvented in an effort to perpetuate an uneven distribution of social power.
1

Authorized Secrecy:
The Figure of Freemasonry,
Carlyle’s Clothes Philosophy and an
Alternative to Democracy

“To what extent Democracy has now reached, how it advances irresistible with
ominous, ever-increasing speed, he that will open his eyes on any province of
human affairs may discern,” writes Thomas Carlyle in *Past and Present* (1843). He con-
tinues, “Democracy is everywhere the inexorable demand of these ages, swiftly ful-
filling itself. From the thunder of Napoleon battles, to the jabberings of Open-vestry
in St. Mary Axe, all things announce Democracy” (*Works*, 10: 215). For Carlyle, the
problem with the “Morrison’s Pill” of democracy is that it proposes an exclusively polit-
cal solution to what he perceives as a fundamentally spiritual problem. Democracy’s
universal panacea of the vote will not give people the intellectual, moral and spiritual
development that he believes they so desperately need. Much of Carlyle’s own writ-
ing can be seen as an attempt to impart and justify the value of such extra-political
attributes, and thereby to secure for himself a degree of social authority that the Victorian
period’s overwhelming focus on democracy would prevent him from gaining.

As the example of De Quincey makes evident, Carlyle is hardly alone in his attempt
to establish his own authority by shifting from a political to an aesthetic/spiritual reg-
ister. In fact, Carlyle’s frequent reliance on a discourse of secretive interiority
rhetorically links him to the practices of Victorian England’s single most prominent
exception to the general distrust of clandestine organizations, namely English
Freemasonry. Although an avowed secret society, Freemasonry remained something
of an accepted institution throughout the Victorian period. Just how accepted can be
seen from the Unlawful Societies Act of 1799, which contains a clause specifically
exempting English Freemasonry from the otherwise universal prohibition of oath-taking. Inserted largely as a result of efforts by the Duke of Atholl and the Earl of Moira, the Grand Masters of the two branches of English Freemasonry operative at the time, this clause not only allowed English Masons to continue practicing their craft, it also granted them official recognition from the Crown, and therefore an unusual degree of authorized secrecy.1

The Masons worked hard to retain this authority by projecting a combination of divinely inspired mystery and apolitical respectability to the general public. Since throughout the nineteenth century Freemasonry was the subject of numerous exposés like those by Abbé Barruel and John Robison, many of them written by former members and therefore offering detailed descriptions of Masonic “mysteries,” the “fact” of Freemasonry was something of an open secret; at the same time, partly as a result of this publicity and partly due to the Masons’ preservation of ritualistic practices that they claimed were designed to preserve and perpetuate certain divine truths of which they were the guardians, the “figure” of Freemasonry continued to evoke a sense of aesthetically pleasurable secrecy and spiritual authority among the general public. The Masons then supplemented this aura of figurative secrecy with an image of institutional respectability. Unlike their counterparts on the Continent, English Freemasons always remained scrupulously apolitical, concentrating their energies on public parades and charitable causes. In addition, like the many professional organizations from which it drew its members, English Masonry published a number of “trade” journals, including the Sentimental and Masonic Magazine (est. 1792–94), the Freemasons’ Journal; or Paley’s Universal Intelligence (est. 1795), the Free-Mason’s Magazine (est. 1793–98), the Freemasons’ Quarterly Review (est. 1834–49), the Freemasons’ Quarterly Magazine and Review (est. 1850–52), the Freemasons’ Quarterly Magazine (est. 1853–54), the Freemason’s Monthly Magazine (est. 1855–58), and the Freemasons’ Magazine and Masonic Mirror (est. 1859–71).2

The success of English Freemasonry’s campaign for institutional respectability suggests that the discourse of interiority that they shared with De Quincey and Carlyle has the rhetorical power to reveal another dimension of the period’s middle-class ethos of transparent openness. In this chapter I use the Freemasons’ exceptional acceptance as a point of entry into this more positive side to Victorian England’s dynamic rhetoric of secrecy. I examine how several Victorian authors invoke the figure of Freemasonry in an attempt to establish an alternative set of standards according to which institutional forms of secrecy might not be just acceptable but even attractive. I then turn to the secret practices of English Freemasonry itself in order to illustrate how a careful manipulation of political, aesthetic and spiritual registers of meaning contributed to the Masons’ respectable status. However, although the English Freemasons are the most recognizable beneficiaries of the period’s intersubjective valuation of secrecy, they
are not principally responsible for establishing a theoretical defense of secretive practices; that role belongs to Thomas Carlyle, whose complex metaphysics of heroic signification, first fully articulated in *Sartor Resartus* (1833–34), offers one of Victorian England’s strongest arguments for embracing the aesthetic and spiritual value of secrecy. The majority of this chapter is devoted, therefore, to an extended close reading of *Sartor Resartus* that traces the subtle nuances and hyperbolic expressions of Carlyle’s theory of heroic signification and its contribution to the Victorians’ dialectical attitude towards secrecy. The chapter concludes by connecting Carlyle’s theory of signification in *Sartor* with his more overtly political version of heroism and hero-worship in his later work. The ease with which Carlyle adapts his early radical aesthetics to his later reactionary politics leads me to reconsider the Victorian democratic theorists discussed in the Introduction in light of the issue of apparently extra-political authority raised by Carlyle and the Freemasons. I contend that, despite their ostensible support for some version of democracy, these theorists and the Liberal English culture that produced them retained a degree of authoritarianism that was uncomfortably similar to Carlyle’s, and that this predilection for select forms of authority helps to explain why the century’s many organized calls for radical social and political equality met with accusations that they were products of a secret conspiracy.

I. Figuring F/freemasonry

It is not difficult to find either incidental allusions or more in-depth references to the figure of Freemasonry in a wide range of Victorian writing. In fact, such prominent nineteenth-century novelists as George Eliot, Charles Dickens and William Makepeace Thackeray all make opportunistic use of the Masons’ publicity. These three authors deploy the figure of Freemasonry with a healthy dose of irony, even as they allow for the aesthetic attractiveness Freemasonry might generate by virtue of its connections to the practice of art, the profession of law and the mysterious inner workings of “the great world.” Thomas De Quincey manifests a similar dialectical relationship to the figure of Freemasonry in his two non-fiction prose essays, “Historico-Critical Inquiry Into the Origin of the Rosicrucians and Free-Masons” and “Secret Societies.” Both cast doubt on the Masons’ public respectability, “Historico-Critical Inquiry” by debunking their pretensions to pre-seventeenth-century origins, and “Secret Societies” by lightheartedly arguing that “The great and illustrious humbug of Modern History—of the History which boasts a present and a future, as well as a past—is FREEMASONRY” (191). At the same time, however, De Quincey does admit to a certain intersubjective sympathy for Freemasonry, especially in “Secret Societies,” where in the midst of his playful depiction of a Masonic initiation rite as
an elaborate excuse to drink he declines to reveal what he knows of the actual rituals of membership because doing so would violate his own oath of secrecy. These authors’ acceptance of Masonic secrecy hinges on the connection between the Masons and the elite public, reflected both in the professional and high-society associations made by the novelists and by De Quincey’s appeal to the period’s valuation of integrity through his unwillingness to violate his oath.

Finally, Dr. Thomas Arnold, headmaster of Rugby School, adds an aura of respectability and social authority to the figure of Freemasonry in his private correspondence on the topic. Arnold’s yearning for “a sort of masonry” has already been documented by Adams in *Dandies and Desert Saints* and has been related to various conceptions of Victorian manliness, but Arnold’s thoughts on the subject deserve a second look in the context of the more public references to Freemasonry outlined above. Written five years apart, Arnold’s two recorded comments on the Masons reveal his deeply conflicting feelings towards them and the broader practices of secrecy they had come to represent. On the one hand, Arnold appears thoroughly opposed to the Freemasons themselves. Writing to Reverend Trevenen Penrose (10 April 1841), he declaims, “The half-heathen clubs, including, above all, Freemasonry, are, I think, utterly unlawful for a Christian man: they are close brotherhoods, formed with those who are not in a close sense our brethren” (Stanley, *Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold*, 2: 230). It is difficult to pinpoint what exactly Arnold objects to, whether it is Freemasonry’s ecumenicism, although English Freemasonry was almost entirely Anglican, or the ways in which the society’s commitment to equality prompts improper connections across class lines, although again most English Masons were members of the middle and upper classes. In either case, it seems evident that Arnold finds them wanting according to public middle-class notions of propriety; however, one should also note that, in this letter at least, Arnold does not overtly oppose Masonic secrecy.

In fact, in an earlier letter to Sir Thomas S. Pasley (11 May 1836), Arnold seems friendly to what we might call freemasonry divorced from the Freemasons. His comments, though lengthy, are worth quoting in full because they help to dramatize the ways in which one might authorize one’s own exercise of secrecy by appealing to a discourse of interiority:

I meet with a great many persons in the course of the year, and with many whom I admire and like; but what I feel daily more and more to need, as life every year rises before me in its true reality, is to have intercourse with those who take life in earnest. It is very painful to me to be always on the surface of things; and I think that literature, science, politics—many topics of far greater interest than mere gossip or talking about the weather—are yet, as they are generally talked about, still on the surface; they do not touch the real depths of life. It is not that I want much
of what is called religious conversation,—that, I believe, is often on the surface, like other conversation; but I want a sign, which one catches as by a sort of masonry, that a man knows what he is about in life,—whither tending and in what cause engaged; and when I find this, it seems to open my heart as thoroughly, and with as fresh a sympathy, as when I was twenty years younger. (Stanley, Correspondence, 2: 42)

Arnold begins by asserting that he feels he is acquiring an increasingly complete access to Truth, or life “in its true reality.” This information encourages him to establish a binary opposition between “the surface of things,” or those things that most people ordinarily talk about and the manner in which they talk about them, and “the depths of life,” in which life “in its true reality” resides. Since this binary division clearly privileges “the depths of life,” it seems implicit that the division between surfaces and depths is itself one of the facets of “true reality.” If everyone could see the difference between the two types of conversation, all would choose to operate on a deeper level rather than merely at the surface. The perception of surfaces and depths, then, becomes a sort of initiating mechanism into the fraternity of earnest like-minded men with whom Arnold would like to have dialogue. Most of the time, these men would interact with others on the surface-level of middle-class virtues, concealing their knowledge of life’s true reality, its secret of interiority, until another of similar perception gave them a sign, “which one catches as by a sort of masonry,” and which would signal to all those qualified by their earnestness and superior knowledge that a more meaningful discussion of life’s depths, of Truth, could begin. Presumably, such a depth-level discussion could even take place in mixed company, since only the initiate would know that it had begun and could thus conduct it “beneath the surface” of ordinary conversation. For Arnold, these depth-level discussions, initiated by a secret sign, and dedicated to the unearthing of Truth, would be not only meaningful, but distinctly pleasurable, even intimate. Arnold thus links truth, privilege, and pleasure together under his intersubjective endorsement of a select form of secrecy.

English Freemasons would have made claims similar to Arnold’s about their own “sort of masonry.” Indeed, Masonic secrecy was justified by the Freemasons’ supposed access to sacred truths that they claimed to guard from corruption and potential misuse in the world at large. They did so by a carefully controlled method of recruitment, an internal hierarchy and an elaborate system of allegory and symbol. In order to become a Mason, the prospective applicant had to first find two members willing to sponsor him, a deceptively difficult task since active Masons were sworn to neither reveal their membership nor to recruit new members. After finding his sponsors, the applicant would then have his application reviewed by the officers of the Lodge; upon their approval he would undergo an elaborate initiation ceremony,
during which he would be partially disrobed, blindfolded, placed at sword-point, and made to swear that he would keep the secrets of the Lodge or suffer horrible, though probably figurative, penalties. Only then, with the force of secrecy already impressed upon him, would the new Mason be initiated into the elementary secrets of the Masonic step, handclasp and password. The acquisition of more esoteric and significant truths would have to wait until the Entered Apprentice had attained more advanced degrees and titles within the Masonic hierarchy, which in English United Grand Lodge Freemasonry was composed of over thirty distinct positions. Masonic historian A. E. Waite explains that in thus subdividing themselves, English Freemasons ensured that “there are always Mysteries behind the Mysteries and a more withdrawn adytum behind the Holy of Holies” (2: 208).

These “Mysteries behind the Mysteries” were kept veiled by a complex range of symbols, the most prominent of which were a builder’s square interlaced with two compasses, the architecture of the Lodge itself, and the Masonic apron. The precise meanings of these items in Victorian English Masonry is difficult to fully recover today. However, in 1922 Master Mason W. L. Wilmhurst published his *The Meaning of Masonry* in an attempt to revive Masonic traditions he felt were disappearing, and his conservative account of Freemasonry’s more esoteric side gives an adequate idea of the symbolic significance these items possessed. According to Wilmhurst, the compass and square design most readily associated with the Masons represents the triadic human soul, which combines within itself the divine Word, the passive reception of that word and the active embodiment of its principles. The architecture of the Lodge is a bit more complex, but is founded on the belief that “the four sides of the Lodge point to four different, yet progressive, modes of consciousness available to us. Sense-impression (North), reason (West), intellectual ideation (South), and spiritual intuition (East); making up our four ways of knowledge” (93). These points of the compass take on special significance during rites of initiation and promotion, with the principle officers of the Lodge occupying strategic positions reflecting their role in the ceremony—the Chief Officer, for example, stands in the East, the most privileged direction, reflecting his high degree of knowledge—and candidates progress from the west end to the northeast corner to the southeast corner to the center of the room as they advance in degrees. During this progression from Entered Apprentice to Master Mason, the candidates’ aprons also undergo a number of symbolic transformations. According to Wilmhurst, the apron represents “our body of mortality . . . the real ‘badge of innocence,’ the common ‘bond of friendship,’ with which the Great Architect has been pleased to invest us all” (31), with its triangular top and square bottom signifying the spiritual and physical sides of that body respectively. When a Mason progresses from Entered Apprentice to Fellow-Craft, the triangular section is folded down onto the square section, symbolizing the union of these
two sides, and the apron is decorated with pale blue rosettes, indicating the first blossoming of his true nature. Wilmhurst becomes almost enraptured when describing the installation of a Master Mason, whose apron, he says,

is garnished with a light blue border and rosettes, indicating that a higher than the natural light now permeates his being and radiates from his person, and that the wilderness of the natural man is now blossoming as the rose, in the flowers and graces incident to his regenerate nature; whilst upon either side of the apron are seen two columns of light descending from above, streaming into the depths of his whole being, and terminating in the seven-fold tassels which typify the seven-fold prismatic spectrum of the supernal Light. . . . He also wears the triple Tau, which comprises the form of a level, but is also the Hebrew form of the Cross. (45–46)

It is doubtful whether every Fellow of the Craft in Victorian England would have seen his installation in quite this way, but the important thing to note is that the sense of Wilmhurst’s almost mystical account bears a remarkable semblance to Arnold’s admission that meeting a like-minded man with whom to plumb the depths of Truth opens his heart with fresh sympathy and pleasure. In other words, Arnold’s yearning for a “sort of masonry” may have been precisely the feeling that led many Victorian men to actual Masonry, which combined a claim to spiritual Truth with a feeling of privileged belonging and, in the case of Wilmhurst, an obvious aesthetic pleasure.

In addition to their multivalent appeal to a standard of interior value, the Masons also offered prospective members an institutional history that lent political value to their practices of secrecy. After being officially recognized in the Unlawful Societies Act, English Masons embarked upon a period of consolidation and expansion that continued largely unabated for the rest of the century. The fifty years prior to the Act had been ones of internal division, with Freemasonry in England divided into the Antient and Modern factions. These two groups were brought together in 1813 by their mutual agreement to the 21 Articles of Union and the formation of the United Grand Lodge of England. This centralization and normalization of Freemasonry then allowed for the society’s rapid expansion throughout the burgeoning British Empire. Grand Lodges had already been founded in Ireland (1717), Scotland (1729), and a handful of British colonies at this time; they were joined after unification by Grand Lodges in Bengal (1813), Malta (1815), Brazil (1821), Bombay (1843), Canada (1857), Nigeria (1867), New South Wales (1888), New Zealand (1890), and Tasmania (1890), not to mention the numerous lodges of English origin in Europe and the United States. In sum, English Freemasonry and British colonialism went hand-in-hand, increasing the financial and cultural influence of England throughout the world. As a result, Freemasonry
came to be seen as a distinctly “English” organization whose secretive practices could be legitimately differentiated from those of less acceptable secret societies by virtue of their complicity within Britain’s global empire.

This process of expansion took place under the leadership of a number of socially prominent men whose connection to English Freemasonry increased its public acceptance. Freemasonry’s ranks had long been composed almost exclusively of the wealthy middle classes, but its leaders, beginning with the fourth Grand Master, the Duke of Montague (1721), have often been members of the landed nobility. In the nineteenth century, Freemasonry counted among its leaders George, Prince of Wales (1805; later George IV), The Duke of Sussex (1813), the Earl of Zetland (1843), Earl de Gray and Ripon (1870), and Edward, Prince of Wales (1875; later Edward VII). Even Queen Victoria’s father, the Duke of Kent, had been elected the leader of the Antients in 1813; it was he who nominated the Duke of Sussex as the first Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge. In a period that placed significant stress on social deference and aristocratic rank, these leaders gave English Freemasonry enormous prestige and public endorsement; how could one question whether or not the society was acceptable when it was being led by some of the same men who governed the nation?

The final historical reason for Freemasonry’s acceptance in England was provided almost independently of the Masons themselves by the Roman Catholic Church. Since 1738, when Pope Clement XII issued the Bull In Eminenti, Masonry was publicly condemned by a long succession of Popes. In Eminenti was renewed by Pius VII in 1814, and was followed by two similar Papal Bulls in 1825 and 1884, as well as by anti-Masonic Papal Allocutions or Encyclicals in 1821, 1829, 1832, 1846, 1849, and 1856. Given the long tradition of English anti-Catholicism, such an adversarial relation to Rome was an asset in the minds of many Englishmen. Rome’s animosity provided a public religious reason to go along with the private spiritual, aesthetic, intersubjective, imperial and deferential reasons for granting English Freemasons’ institutional secrecy an exceptional degree of social acceptance. That this acceptance was forthcoming at all also shows that secrecy could be valued so long as it was connected to the correct mix of social strata and nationalist ideology.

II. Carlyle’s Clothes Philosophy

Although the Masons serve as the most prominent practical example of the ways in which public distrust of secretive behavior could be dialectically mollified by appeals to the attractiveness of secrecy, they do not provide the most theoretically sophisticated rationale for how practices of secrecy might enhance one’s own extra-
political authority. In *Sartor Resartus*, Thomas Carlyle proposes just such a theory of authorized secrecy. Carlyle’s championing of the heroic status of society’s “tailors” is grounded on a metaphysics of signification that centrally relies on the practice of secrecy. In fact, secrecy and silence become the hallmarks of spiritual and aesthetic authority in *Sartor*, which offers itself to the reader as a kind of justification-by-example for the value of these attributes.

Significantly, Carlyle presents his idiosyncratic defense of secrecy even as he makes a peculiar contribution to the field of allusive references to English Freemasonry. The most explicit allusion to the Masons in *Sartor* appears in book two, where Teufelsdröckh lists, among “the everstreaming currents of Sights, Hearings, Feelings for Pain or Pleasure, whereby, as in a Magic Hall, young Gneschen [himself] went about environed” (II.2.73), a family of swallows for whom his father had provided a nesting location:

The hospitable Father (for cleanliness’ sake) had fixed a little bracket, plumb under their nest: there they built, and caught flies, and twittered, and bred; and all, I chiefly, from the heart loved them. Bright nimble creatures, who taught you the mason-craft; nay, stranger still, gave you a masonic incorporation, almost social police? For if, by ill chance, and when time pressed, your house fell, have I not seen five neighborly Helpers appear next day; and swashing to and fro, with animated, loud, long-drawn chirpings, and activity almost super-hirundine, complete it again before nightfall? (II.2.74)

Interestingly, Teufelsdröckh’s swallows lack two crucial masonic attributes, secrecy and authority: these “bright nimble creatures” keep nothing hidden from the “young Gneschen,” nesting openly at the sufferance of Teufelsdröckh’s father. Such a lack of freemasonry in this allusion to the Masons is an important rhetorical move since it preemptorily eliminates any Masonic connotations from his later linkage of secrecy, heroism and authority, thereby allowing Carlyle to attach his own meanings to these terms.

The sense of this bizarrely non-Masonic allusion to Freemasonry is difficult to discern at the moment it appears, however, because of Teufelsdröckh’s ironic stance towards his own remembrance. As the English Editor notes, “it remains ever doubtful whether he is laughing in his sleeve at the Autobiographical times of ours, or writing from the abundance of his own fond inaptitude” (I.2.73). This central doubt about whether or not Teufelsdröckh should be taken seriously, and the Editor’s unflagging insistence that the reader should be made continuously aware of this doubt, led to a great deal of confusion, if not outright condemnation, among the first readers of *Sartor Resartus*. American reviews were generally less vituperative than their British counterparts, but
even they did not know what to make of the book. An article in the *Southern Literary Journal*, for example, judged, “In this work with a singular name, and based on such a singular fiction, there is, nevertheless, much deep thought, much eloquence of expression, much high feeling, much even of exalted religious conception” (“Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus*,” 1). However, this judgment should be tempered by the fact that the article spends the majority of its time using *Sartor Resartus* as a platform from which to launch proposals for proper university instruction, with the result that the actual philosophy of clothes goes almost unmentioned in the review. A similarly incomplete article in the *North American Review* seemed largely content to prove the factual basis of *Sartor Resartus* “a hum” and to conclude rather vaguely that the text “contains, under a quaint and singular form, a great deal of deep thought, sound principle, and fine writing” ([Everett], “Thomas Carlyle,” 456, 481). In contrast to these two reviews, which hide their own confusion behind platitudinous praise, Joseph H. Barrett’s article in the *American Whig Review* attacked Carlyle’s apparent impenetrability, dismissing Teufelsdörrckh’s philosophy of clothes as “the purest abstraction” (128), “cant” (130), and even as evidence of “mental disease” (131), and noting throughout the book “an inexcusable, if not, as would sometimes appear, an intentional ambiguity” (133).

For the purposes of this study, however, the most insightful expression of confusion came from an anonymous notice in *Tait’s Edinburgh Review*, which wondered “By what fatality was it that the most radically Radical speculation upon men and things, which has appeared for many years, should have first come abroad in a violent Tory periodical?” (*Tait’s* 611). By applying the labels “Radical” and “Tory” to Carlyle’s text, *Tait’s* places *Sartor Resartus* squarely within the political realm and suggests that it may have a certain amount of relevance to the nineteenth century’s debate over democracy. What the text’s relationship to that debate might be is difficult to determine, though, since *Sartor* largely avoids explicitly political language in favor of a discourse of aesthetic and spiritual authority. This rhetorical shift to an alternative standard of interior value has significant, if tacit, political implications, however, especially when considered in light of Carlyle’s later work. In other words, even though *Sartor* is in many ways “the most radically Radical speculation upon men and things, which has appeared in many years,” its politics are ultimately well-suited for “a violent Tory periodical.”

One can see Carlyle echo the Masons in his attempt to shift his readers’ standards of value from the political to the aesthetic when a single passage, Teufelsdörrckh’s disquisition on Emblems, is subjected to close inspection. Since this paragraph succinctly captures a significant portion of the argument and the rhetoric of Teufelsdörrckh’s philosophy of clothes, it can serve as a sufficiently representative example of both the content and the style of *Sartor Resartus* as a whole. The passage on Emblems is as follows:
All visible things are Emblems; what thou seest is not there on its own account; strictly taken, is not there at all: Matter exists only spiritually, and to represent some Idea, and body it forth. Hence Clothes, as despicable as we think them, are so unspeakably significant. Clothes, from the King’s mantle downwards, are Emblematic, not of want only, but of a manifold cunning Victory over Want. On the other hand, all Emblematic things are properly Clothes, thought-woven or hand-woven: must not Imagination weave Garments, visible Bodies, wherein the else invisible creations and inspirations of our Reason are, like Spirits, revealed, and first become all powerful;—the rather if, as we often see, the Hand too aid her, and (by wool Clothes or otherwise) reveal such even to the outward eye? (I.11.55–56)

This paragraph neatly turns what could be taken as a highly charged political comment on the monarchy—the almost casual example of “the King’s mantle”—into a radical aesthetic reflection on the making of meaning. “Matter,” according to Teufelsdröckh, does not exist except as a physical manifestation of an already extant “Idea” that fills it with meaning. This obvious act of homage to “learned, indefatigable, deep-thinking Germany” effectively undercuts the authority invested in appearance, politics and the material realm by the Scottish Common Sense school and the then-dominant Utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill and replaces it with an authority grounded in an aesthetic discourse of interiority.

In the second half of the paragraph, Teufelsdröckh adds a spiritual dimension to his argument as well. These last few sentences preserve the idea that all meaning is constructed through visible emblems even as they identify the agency behind this construction in increasingly sacred terms. The impersonal attributes of Imagination and Reason turn out to be the weavers of society’s Clothes, and even these intellectual categories do not act alone. They, too, are directed by “else invisible creations and inspirations” to reveal meanings that, “like Spirits,” are already there. The religious overtones of this formulation are difficult to ignore, and their presence subtly shifts the original political register implied by “the King’s mantle” into more spiritual terms by theorizing that all Emblems come from a higher authority to which the only proper response is “the reverential wonder inspired by the immeasurable and the incomprehensible” (Deen 439). At the level of content, then, Teufelsdröckh’s paragraph on Emblems at once enacts a move from political to aesthetic/spiritual standards of value and offers the beginnings of an implicit justification of authorized secrecy: if this secrecy can legitimately claim superior Imagination, Reason, and/or divine inspiration, then accepting it is the highest form of consistency for a faithful people.

At the level of form, this paragraph further reinforces Teufelsdröckh’s appeal to
an interior standard of value. For example, the text rewards those readers willing to look beyond its surface with a good laugh. As G. B. Tennyson rather boldly states, “He who has never laughed at Sartor has missed a substantial part of its appeal” (273), an appeal most obviously manifested by the somewhat blasphemous English translation of Diogenes Teufelsdröckh’s own name as “God-born devil’s dung.” More serious rewards appear to beckon these same readers if they are willing to contend with the paragraph’s formal obscurity—its opaque declarations, fragmentary clauses, unfamiliar patterns of capitalization and unusual syntax. However, I would agree with G. B. Tennyson that the emblems passage is less concerned with rewarding readers than it is with securing a kind of textual authority for Teufelsdröckh, and by extension for Carlyle, through deliberate rhetorical obfuscation. Referring specifically to this passage, Tennyson writes, “Carlyle’s kind of statement grasps and entwines, and we struggle as the fly in marmalade” (246). This simile is particularly apt since, on a first reading, the paragraph seductively appears to have all of the elements of a logically balanced argument: it begins with a short proposition, which is subsequently expanded upon in a series of curt clauses; the next sentence progresses onward with “Hence”; an “On the other hand” two sentences later signals the end of the first part of the argument and the beginning of an alternative; these two sides are then logically reconciled after the final dash and this synthetic position stated in the form of a question that invites readerly activity.

Those readers who take up Teufelsdröckh’s invitation and pause for a closer look, however, are sucked into a rhetoric so thick that they may never get free. What, for example, are the relations between the four clauses in sentence one, and how does this relation logically permit the substitution of “Matter” for “all visible things,” not to mention the blatant contradiction that this Matter is simultaneously “not there at all” and able to “represent some idea and body it forth”? Also, “Hence” implies that a sort of proof has taken place, but what is the exact nature of this proof? Similarly, where is “the one hand” that balances out “the other hand” of sentence four? Finally, although the terminal question is rhetorical, and therefore interested in prompting passive agreement from the thoroughly stuck reader, what, other than its impressive and somnambulistic length, would prevent a negative answer? The fact that the paragraph has been prefaced by the English Editor’s amused question only adds to its power of persuasion, since, by chummily preparing the British Reader for more airy sailing, the Editor’s comments encourage him to pardon Teufelsdröckh any obscurity and to “study and enjoy, in simplicity of heart, what is here presented him, and with whatever metaphysical acumen, and talent for Meditation he is possessed of” (1.2.10).

In one of the most theoretically supple and compelling articles written on Sartor in recent years, “Devising New Means: Sartor Resartus and the Devoted Reader,” Vivienne Rundle begins to show how Carlyle’s careful use of rhetorical obscurity,
or textual secrecy, serves to elevate Carlyle to a position of aesthetic and spiritual authority over the reader. Bringing together theoretical work by Derrida, Lacan, and, implicitly, Barthes, she investigates the readerly role that emerges from the unconventional structure of Carlyle's text. Rundle begins by asserting that the contemporary negative reaction to *Sartor Resartus* "derives in fact from the text's action upon its reader: an action that oversteps the bounds of the conventional contract between text and reader in ways which may be considered unfair, underhanded or even unethical" (13). This unethical treatment consists primarily of "forcing the reader to abandon conventional notions of narrative structure and authority" in order to incite "a readerly revolution" (14). Unlike the solely radical revolution implied by Brian Cowlishaw and other critics, however, Rundle’s “readerly revolution” is far less liberating because it relies on a bivalent definition of revolution as both upheaval and stasis. Like Cowlishaw, she argues that Carlyle’s difficult style goads a reader into activity; however, for Rundle this activity takes the form of an endless circling around a “truth of the text” that, if it exists at all, is never revealed. Instead the various narrative voices all adopt “the persona of the ultimate subject-presumed-to-know, alternately flaunting his presumed knowledge and withholding it from the frustrated and subjugated reader” (20). Connecting this explicitly to practices of secrecy and their role in structures of authority, Rundle continues, “both Teufelsdröckh and the Editor finally refuse to divulge their secret knowledge: to do so would necessitate the surrender of the only authority they possess. For all the figures of textual authority in *Sartor Resartus*, mystery—which involves submission to a truth beyond human reason—is a necessary element of mastery” (20). In Rundle’s sophisticated argument, then, Carlyle assumes a position of extra-political authority over the reader by means of a textual freemasonry of his own.

In order to fully understand how Carlyle’s appeals to aesthetic and spiritual authority centrally rely on his own practice of secrecy, one must turn from Teufelsdröckh’s single paragraph on Emblems to his larger Philosophy of Clothes. At the heart of this extended theory of signification is the English Editor’s cunningly “practical” arrangement of Teufelsdröckh’s “speculations on *Symbols*” (III.3.161). Curiously, these speculations do not begin with symbols at all, but with the larger topic of Concealment:

> "The benignant efficacies of Concealment," cries our Professor, "who shall speak or sing? SILENCE and SECRECY! Altars might still be raised to them (were this an altar-building time) for universal worship. Silence is the element in which great things fashion themselves together; that at length they may emerge, full-formed and majestic, into the daylight of Life, which they are thenceforth to rule." (III.3.161)

Here is De Quincey’s praise of the sublimity of secret societies written over fifteen years earlier. Carlyle’s version contains two intriguing extra elements, however:
rulership, and, implicitly, virtue. This tacit connection of secrecy and virtue is reinforced by Teufelsdröckh’s allusion to the Gospel of Matthew 6:3 in the next paragraph: “Thought will not work except in Silence: neither will Virtue work except in Secrecy. Let not thy right hand know what thy left hand doeth!” (III.3.162). Like the Freemasons, Teufelsdröckh insinuates that secrecy, insofar as it derives from a privileged access to Truth, is a perfectly legitimate, even a praiseworthy, practice.

It is only after this initial panegyric on concealment and secrecy that the chapter turns to “the wondrous agency of Symbols” (III.3.162). Teufelsdröckh divides symbols into two categories, the extrinsically valuable and the intrinsically valuable. Symbols of the first category appeal to humanity’s “shallow superficial faculties . . . Self-love and Arithmetical Understanding” and tend to last only so long as those “accidental Standards of multitudes” that originally produced them (III.3.166, 164). Although within an extrinsically valuable symbol “there glimmers something of a Divine Idea” (III.3.164), this Idea is warped by the historical contingency of its symbol and therefore is likely to be unrecognized or at least imperfectly actualized before the symbol becomes obsolete. Teufelsdröckh gives as his first two examples of extrinsically valuable symbols “that clouted Shoe which the Peasants bore aloft with them as ensign in their Bauernkrieg (Peasants’ War)” and “the Wallet-and-staff round which the Netherland Gueux, glorying in that nickname of Beggars, heroically rallied and prevailed, though against King Philip himself” (III.3.164). Though not without a plebeian sort of power, then, extrinsically valuable symbols retain their authority for a very short time. By contrast, intrinsically valuable symbols last far longer. Building on humanity’s “deep infinite faculties . . . Fantasy and Heart” (III.3.168), this second category of symbols manifests more than just a glimmer of the “Godlike.” In fact, intrinsically valuable symbols show “Eternity looking through Time” (III.3.165). Among these symbols of “the Godlike rendered visible” are “all true Works of Art” and those religions in which “all men can recognize a present God” (III.3.165). As the supreme example of an intrinsically valuable symbol, Teufelsdröckh cites “Jesus of Nazareth, and his Life, and his Biography, and what followed therefrom” (III.3.165).

However, since “Jesus of Nazareth, and his Life, and his Biography” can only be known indirectly through contextually dependent translations of the Gospels, this final example begins to break down the firm distinction between historically contingent extrinsic symbols and eternally viable intrinsic symbols. This collapse of categories is hinted at by Teufelsdröckh himself, who admits that Christianity’s “significance will ever demand to be anew inquired into, and anew made manifest” (III.3.165). Even the most enduring symbol of Christianity, the Cross, originally “had no meaning saving an accidental extrinsic one” (III.3.164), and so cannot escape the process of resignification and the burden of historical contingency. For Teufelsdröckh the idea of the Divine itself remains unchanged and unchangeable, but the manifestations of this sacred
realm are always subject to their historical contexts. As Catherine Gallagher succinctly observes, this contingency means that “symbols, like all other representations, have a partially oppositional relationship to the content they signify” and are therefore “at least partially socially determined, arbitrary and potentially ironic” (195, 196). This potential irony, or the gap between the sacred realm and its manifestation in a particular symbol, connects symbols to Teufelsdröckh’s earlier comments on concealment and secrecy. It turns out that “In a Symbol there is concealment and yet revelation: here, therefore, by Silence and by Speech acting together, comes a doubled significance. And if both the Speech be itself high, and the Silence fit and noble, how expressive will their union be!” (III.3.162). In other words, in the right hands performative extra-political secrecy itself may be as close to an intrinsically valuable symbol as one can get, since by thus making secrecy a figure one simultaneously speaks, “I have a secret,” and remains silent about that secret’s aesthetic and/or spiritual contents, thereby protecting it from historical contingency.

Since it is “in and through Symbols that man, consciously or unconsciously, lives, works, and has his being” (III.3.164), the question of authorized secrecy—of who can legitimately practice secrecy and who cannot—becomes increasingly important. In other words, who is qualified to ensure that practices of secrecy preserve virtuous rulership? In a gesture towards Carlyle’s later work, Teufelsdröckh responds that this is the task of the hero. Among his examples of intrinsically valuable symbols he includes “the Lives of heroic, god-inspired Men” (III.3.165), a theme also taken up later in the chapter. After declaring that all symbols fade with time, Teufelsdröckh prophesies the need for new symbols and for heroic poet-prophets to craft them: “A Hierarch, therefore, and Pontiff of the World will we call him, the Poet and inspired Maker; who, Prometheus-like, can shape new Symbols, and bring new Fire from Heaven to fix it there. Such too will not always be wanting: neither perhaps now are” (III.3.166). The final clause of this exhortation suggests that these heroic makers and guardians of the transcendentally symbolic are already in the world, though perhaps unrecognized by most people.

In order to help his readers to detect these heroes already in their midst, Teufelsdröckh presents three groups with a sufficient connection to Clothes to lay claim to heroic status. The first two of these groups, Dandies and Poor-Slaves, are represented as falsely heroic secret societies in “The Dandiacal Body.” “A Dandy,” the English Editor explains, “is a Clothes-wearing Man, a Man whose trade, office and existence consists in the wearing of Clothes” (III.10.200). Teufelsdröckh waxes more metaphorical when he describes the Dandy as a member of a quasi-religious “Sect” composed of “moon-calves and monstrosities” and dedicated to “that primeval Superstition, Self-Worship” (III.10.202). Striving “to maintain a true Nazarene deportment,” these self-worshippers gather in the Temple of “Almack’s,” where they read sacred “Fashionable
Novels” and practice rites which, though “by some supposed to be of the Menadic sort, or perhaps with an Eleusian or Cabiric character, are held strictly secret” (III.10.203). Teufelsdröckh purports to expose “the true secret, the Religious physiognomy and physiology of the Dandiacal Body” by outlining the “Seven distinct Articles” of the Dandies’ creed as follows:

1. Coats should have nothing of the triangle about them; at the same time, wrinkles should be carefully avoided.
2. The collar is a very important point: it should be low behind, and slightly rolled.
3. No licence of fashion can allow a man of delicate taste to adopt the posteri-al luxuriance of a Hottentot.
4. There is safety in a swallow-tail.
5. The good sense of a gentleman is nowhere more finely developed than in his rings.
6. It is permitted to mankind, under certain restrictions, to wear white waistcoats.
7. The trowsers must be exceedingly tight across the hips. (III.10.204–05)

As these Articles of Faith make clear, although the Dandy does have an intimate connection with Clothes and strives to project a dignified mien, his self-absorption and willfully extrinsic values make him utterly unsuited to be a heroic and god-inspired man. Likewise, his “Sect,” with all of its secretive practices, is an unacceptable secret society because, even though it does maintain privilege and doubtless produce pleasure for its members, it does not have a legitimate claim to transcendental Truth.

Like their counterparts, the Dandies, the Poor-Slaves also fall short of heroic status. Chiefly composed of the Irish poor, though rapidly spreading throughout the British Isles, this alternative Sect has a bivalent connection to Clothes. On the one hand, “they appear to imitate the Dandiacal Sect in their grand principle of wearing a peculiar Costume,” which consists of “innumerable skirts, lappets, and irregular wings, of all cloths and of all colours; through the labyrinthic intricacies of which their bodies are introduced by some unknown process” (III.10.206). On the other hand, though Teufelsdröckh never says so directly, his description of the Poor-Slaves, also known as the Drudge Sect, implicitly includes the poorest of clothes-makers, British textile workers. Rather than being understood as narcissistic Self-Worshippers, Poor Slaves might be better fancied “worshippers of Hertha, or the Earth: for they dig and affectionately work continually in her bosom; or else, shut up in private Oratories, meditate and manipulate the substances derived from her” (III.10.206). Teufelsdröckh confesses his ignorance of any common Articles of Faith
among the Poor-Slaves, saying that his lack of information can be attributed to their lack of “Canonical Books” (III.10.205). However, the fact that he includes among their ranks “Ribbonmen,” “Peep-of-day-Boys,” “Babes of the Wood” and “Rockites” (III.10.205), and predicts that they will one day also absorb “Radicals” (III.10.209), implies that, if they did exist, these Articles would be politically radical, distinctly lower class, and potentially unlawful. In other words, the Poor-Slaves are too extrinsic, in terms of both ideology and class, to be either true heroes or members of an acceptable secret society.

Standing in contrast to both of these falsely heroic Sects are tailors. “The Tailor,” says Teufelsdröckh, “is not only a Man, but something of a Creator or Divinity” (III.11.212), and this connection to intrinsic Truth makes him the only legitimate maker, mender and guardian of society’s Clothes. Preeminent among Tailors are the poets, about whom Teufelsdröckh quotes Goethe as saying “‘Nay, if thou wilt have it, who but the Poet first made Gods for men; brought them down to us; and raised us up to them?’” (III.11.212). The world, Teufelsdröckh triumphantly predicts, “will recognize that the Tailor is its Hierophant, and Hierarch, or even its God” (III.11.213). As the title of Carlyle’s text, Sartor Resartus (The Tailor Retaliored), makes clear, Teufelsdröckh is himself the primary example of a “Metaphorical Tailor,” or poet-prophet. His grounding in German metaphysics connects him with a transcendental realm of intrinsic value that he manifests, or clothes, in his Die Kleider ihr Werden und Wirken (Clothes, their Origin and Influence). Teufelsdröckh’s connection with Divine Truth and his position of social privilege are simultaneously reflected by the Professor’s private domicile. It was the attic floor of the highest house in the Wahngasse; and might truly be called the pinnacle of Weissnichtwo, for it rose sheer up above the contiguous roofs, themselves rising from elevated ground. . . . So that it was in fact the speculum or watch-tower of Teufelsdröckh; wherefrom, sitting at ease, he might see the whole life-circulation of that considerable City; the streets and lanes of which, with all their doing and driving (Thun und Trieben) were for most part visible there. (I.3.16).

This ability to see and subtly direct the world while sitting at ease outside of its doing and driving is precisely the point of the text’s endorsement of the heroic. Only when secreted in his celestial apartment can Teufelsdröckh access the intrinsically symbolic and establish his own aesthetic and spiritual authority by writing Die Kleider.

When coupled with his earlier comments on Symbols, Teufelsdröckh’s final location of the divine in the heroic offers an answer to the question of authorized secrecy with important political implications. Much like Teufelsdröckh’s attic room in Weissnichtwo,
heroism provides a moral and spiritual high ground that remains above the level of logic, where political problems can be solved by an appeal to “intrinsic value” and proximity to a realm of divinity whose authority is absolute. From this vantage point above the extrinsic chaos of everyday life, one can remain unperturbed by pressures for social change, since, as Vanden Bossche lucidly notes, “The clothing metaphor . . . represents the fundamental historicity of cultural institutions and the inevitability of periodic revolution. Since nothing can prevent the processes of decay that destroy old clothing, *Sartor’s* pervasive organic imagery suggests that revolution and historical change are natural, noncataclysmic processes” (*Carlyle and the Search for Authority*, 43). Once accepted, the necessity of organic change can actually forestall potentially disastrous revolutions, like the French Revolution, by allowing them to be guided, or guarded, by poet-prophets and other heroes. These heroes enjoy a privileged connection with super-social values that most people, especially those of the extrinsically laboring classes, simply cannot perceive, and so not only is their authoritative role divinely sanctioned, it is also effectively kept secret.

This divine naturalization of the aesthetically and spiritually authorized secrecy of the hero in *Sartor Resartus* thus provides an argument for accepting some forms of secrecy while condemning others. However, this argument hinges on Teufelsdröckh, author of *Die Klieder* and proponent of the doctrine of heroism, being a true hero himself. If he is not a hero and therefore does not have privileged access to a realm of intrinsic values, then his whole clothes philosophy becomes simply “the tatters and rags of superannuated worn-out Symbols (in this Ragfair of a World) dropping off every where, to hoodwink, to halter, to tether you; nay if you shake them not aside, threatening to accumulate, and perhaps produce suffocation!” (III.3.166). In fact, the English Editor himself explores this possibility at some length in the text’s final chapter, where he identifies three possible reasons for doubting Teufelsdröckh’s heroic status: 1) a problem of style: “How could a man occasionally of keen insight, not without keen sense of propriety, who had real Thoughts to communicate, resolve to emit them in a shape bordering so closely on the absurd?” (III.12.215); 2) a problem of intent: “Teufelsdröckh is not without some touch of the universal feeling, a wish to proselytise” (III.12.215); and 3) a problem of commitment: “Professor Teufelsdröckh, be it known, is no longer visibly present at Weissnichtwo, but again to all appearance lost in Space!” (III.12.216). Although the Editor offers little or no response to these potential reasons for doubt—the best he can manage is a vague assertion that Teufelsdröckh is not “made like other men” (III.12.216)—it is the third of these reasons that is perhaps the most damaging. Teufelsdröckh’s friend, Hofrath Heuschrecke, in a “copious Epistle,” suggests that he might no longer be at Weissnichtwo because he has joined the “Saint-Simonian Society” or one of the other revolutionary “Sects that convulse our Era” (III.12.217). In other words,
Teufelsdröckh may have gone against his own theory of interiority and joined a group of extrinsic radicals.

At least one critic, Stephen Franklin, has proposed that whether or not Teufelsdröckh is a hero is unimportant, since the true hero of *Sartor Resartus* is the English Editor. In Franklin’s reading, Teufelsdröckh is himself “emblematic of those things incapable of reconstructing themselves and in want of reconstruction” (36). He symbolically arrives in the Editor’s hands as the Die Kleider—an “enormous, amorphous Plumbpudding, more like a Scottish Haggis” (III. 12.214)—and

Six considerable PAPER-BAGS, carefully sealed, and marked successively, in gilt China-ink, with the symbols of the Six southern Zodiacal Signs, beginning at Libra; in the inside of which sealed Bags, lie miscellaneous masses of Sheets, and oftener Shreds and Snips, written in Professor Teufelsdröckh’s scarce-legible cursiv-schrift; and treating of all imaginable things under the Zodiac and above it, but of his own personal history only at rare intervals, and then in the most enigmatic manner! (I.11.59)

These the Editor heroically retailors into the meaningful form of *Sartor Resartus* itself, thus indicating that he, not Teufelsdröckh, is the true tailor of the text.

The problem with making the English Editor into the hero is that his connection to the heroic has not been biographically established. As his own painstaking reconstruction of “Teufelsdröckh, his Life and his Biography” indicates, the Editor clearly endorses the text’s emphasis on the biographies of “heroic, god-inspired men” as the primary means of accessing the intrinsically symbolic. However, other than periodically deprecat ing his own fitness for the job, the Editor provides no biographical information about himself, leaving the reader unable to judge whether the Editor’s rewriting of Teufelsdröckh’s Die Kleider is itself intrinsically or extrinsically valuable. This indecision about the transcendental status of *Sartor Resartus* is not helped by the Editor’s assurance that he has given a “practical,” and therefore implicitly extrinsic, summary of Teufelsdröckh’s doctrine of Symbols, leaving the reader to wonder if the extrinsic/intrinsic division is historically contingent and therefore itself extrinsic.

### III. Conclusions

Despite its tendency towards solipsism—the hero’s practice of secrecy serves as both his warrant of authority and his chief authorized activity—Carlyle’s theory of heroic signification retains a prominent place in his later works; this longevity makes perspicuous the tacit political implications of Carlyle’s attempts to use the heroic to
secure aesthetic and spiritual authority in Sartor. Certainly the progression in On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History (1840) from “The Hero as Divinity” through “The Hero as Poet” and “The Hero as Man-of-Letters” to “The Hero as King” suggests that for all his apparent efforts to replace political authority with spiritual and aesthetic authority, Carlyle still seeks to construct a “great man” philosophy of history that favors autocratic monarchs over democratic reformers. In other words, his definition in On Heroes of the hero as “he who lives in the inward sphere of things” ultimately lends spiritual and aesthetic authority to political autocrats like Cromwell and Napoleon I (134). Carlyle is much clearer about the specific implications of Sartor for contemporary democratic debate in Past and Present (1843). Immediately following the assertion of democracy’s ubiquity quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Carlyle scathingly defines democracy as closely akin to “Atheism,” using as evidence a lengthy quotation from Teufelsdröckh (Works, 10: 215–17)!

For Carlyle, then, advocating and demonstrating the aesthetic and spiritual value of secrecy not only grants him an unusual degree of textual authority over his readers, it also supports his political opposition to democracy in favor of political authoritarianism. One can recognize similar authoritarian leanings in the writings of many advocates of limited democratic reform, including Thomas Macaulay, Walter Bagehot, W. R. Greg and J. S. Mill. Such reliance on select forms of authority is most clearly visible in the works of Macaulay and Bagehot, both relatively conservative advocates of the “pro-democracy” position. Macaulay, for example, supports a limited degree of representation for the middle classes in The History of England, but argues that expanding the franchise will only upset the delicate balance that guards the general public’s interests. Although this position appears marginally democratic, in the sense that everyone is being at least indirectly represented, it is actually devoted to a rigidly stratified definition of equality, in which everyone deserves semi-representational rule but in which only some are ever qualified to be rulers. According to The History of England, the monarchy, the aristocracy, the commons, and the people are ideal categories whose relationship to one another is forever fixed according to a definition of Truth that Macaulay locates in the semi-divine Constitution of 1688. Since this document conveniently remains unavailable because it is unwritten, those who may wish to reform these categories can be silenced by Macaulay’s authoritative invocation of tradition.

Walter Bagehot provides a similar role for the idealized Constitution of 1688 in his The English Constitution. Even more than Macaulay, Bagehot explicitly supports representation for the “lower” orders in the House of Commons. This separation of the lower orders from the “educated ten thousand” who are meant to actually rule the nation appeals to a standard of personal cultivation that was set, maintained, and to a certain extent concealed by those already in power. Authority is most selec-
tively exercised in *The English Constitution* by what Bagehot describes as the “efficient secret” of the cabinet, which derives its power precisely from its practice of authorized secrecy. Bagehot even slyly provides a role for heroes as the “dignified” elements of government whose apparent connection to Truth pacifies the masses into following the dictates of government. In other words, for the lower orders the aristocratic elements of government, the queen and the House of Lords, serve as a spectacle worthy of hero-worship while the true heroes—the cabinet—preserve their connection to the Truth of the Constitution and virtuously rule the nation in secret.

More so than Macaulay and Bagehot, W. R. Greg and J. S. Mill support truly representative institutions for the English people; however, even their advocacy of limited democratic reform linked to education in “Representative Reform” and *Considerations on Representative Government* remains uncomfortably close to an antidemocratic conception of authority. Their causal connection between education and the right to vote implicitly relies on both a static conception of the Truth of, in Mill’s words, “individual mental superiority,” and a stratified notion of individual equality. Everyone, according to Greg and Mill, deserves to be represented, but only the educated deserve to be fully enfranchised by electing and serving as those representatives. Moreover, these same “educated ten thousand,” to borrow an appropriate phrase from Bagehot, also get to set the educational standards required to vote, allowing them to use themselves as the model for citizenship. By requiring others to think like themselves, the already enfranchised members of the “élite” therefore preserve their aristocratic influence over elections by inculcating the masses into their own standard of Truth.

This widespread investment in selective notions of aristocratic authority among even liberal advocates of limited democratic reform explains why a conservative secret society like the Masons could enjoy a high degree of social acceptance even as more radical groups were being publicly condemned by accusations that they employed secretive practices. Domestically, such condemnatory strategies were directed at trade unions and English Catholics, while abroad rebellious colonial subjects were targeted. Ironically, all of these underenfranchised constituencies appealed to the same ideal of equality officially subscribed to by the Masons, and yet their attempts to raise themselves to the status of full citizens were denounced by many who already enjoyed that respectable station because they allegedly relied on institutional secrecy. Such denunciations were made possible by the strategic deployment of the figure of the secret society. In the following chapters I will trace the productive appearance of this figure through several moments of democratic stress in order to demonstrate its important and hitherto neglected place in the larger construction of national identity taking place in Victorian England.
Bibliography

An Act for the Relief of His Majesty’s Roman Catholic Subjects (13 April 1829). Parliamentary Papers. Statutes at Large. 10 George IV, cap. 7.


The Annual Register, or A View of the History and Politics for the Year 1829. London: J. G. & F. Rivington, 1830.


The Annual Register, or A View of the History and Politics for the Year 1850. London: J. G. & F. Rivington, 1851.

The Annual Register, or A View of the History and Politics for the Year 1851. London: J. G. & F. Rivington, 1852.


The Annual Register, or A View of the History and Politics for the Year 1858. London: J. G. & F. Rivington, 1859.


“Austria.” *All the Year Round* 1 (18 June 1859): 173–77.


Bibliography


“Crisis of the Sepoy Rebellion.” The London Quarterly Review 9, no. 18 (January 1858): 530–70.


Bibliography


Bibliography


“Garibaldi’s Invisible Bridge.” Cornhill Magazine 9, no. 53 (May 1864): 537–54.


Bibliography


“How Is India to be Governed?” Bentley’s Miscellany 43 (February 1858): 111–23.


“India as it is—India as it may be.” The British Quarterly Review 27, no. 53 (January 1858): 202–44.

“Indian Heroes.” Westminster Review 70, no. 138 n. s., 14, no. 2 n. s. (October 1858): 350–75.


MacDonagh, Gwendolyn. “‘Fill Up All the Gaps’: Narrative and Illegitimacy in The Woman in White.” Journal of Narrative Technique 26, no. 3 (Fall 1996): 274–91.


Bibliography


“Mr. Thomas Trollope’s Italian Novels.” *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* 93, no. 567 (January 1863): 84–98.


Bibliography


“North-Italian Character.” *All the Year Round* 1 (10 September 1859): 461–67.


Pastoral Appeal from his Holiness the Pope to some Members of the University of Oxford. 3d ed. London: B. Fellows, 1836.


“Piedmont.” *All the Year Round* 1 (16 July 1859): 269–74.


Bibliography


Robynson, John. Proofs of a Conspiracy Against all the Religions and Governments of Europe, carried on in the secret meetings of the Free Masons, Illuminati and Reading Societies. Edinburgh, 1797.


Sharpe, Jenny. Allegories of Empire: the Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.


“The Supremacy of the Church of Rome not Acknowledged by the British Christians Till the Ninth Century.” Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine 25, no. 150 (March 1829): 331–45.


Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine 5 (September 1838): 611–12.


The Times:

“The Bishop of London’s Charge.” 5 Nov. 1850: 5.


“Cardinal Wiseman and Dr. Ullathorne.” Letter. 5 Nov. 1850: 5.

“Dr. Cumming on the Romish Aggression.” 8 Nov. 1850: 5.


Editorial. 4 Nov. 1850: 4.

Editorial. 5 Nov. 1850: 4.

Editorial. 6 Nov. 1850: 4.
Bibliography

Editorial. 7 Nov. 1850: 4.
Editorial. 16 Nov. 1850: 4.
“Great Meeting of the Clergy.” 1 Nov. 1850: 5.
“Gunpowder Plot.” Letter. 7 Nov. 1850: 5.
“Gunpowder Plot.” Letter. 11 Nov. 1850: 5.
Letter. 11 Nov. 1850: 4.
“Papal Aggression.” 9 Nov. 1850: 5.
“Papal Aggression.” Letter. 8 Nov. 1850: 3.
“The Queen and the Pope.” 16 Nov. 1850: 8.
“Reply of the Bishop of London.” 8 Nov. 1850: 5.
“Treason Within the Church.” *Fraser’s Magazine for Town and Country* 18, no. 108 (December 1838): 751–58.
———. “The Speech of God-Devils: Artist as Mason and Freemason in Carlyle’s Early Works.”
Bibliography


“Viva L’Italia!” All the Year Round (9 July 1859): 253–57.


Index

Adams, James Eli, xiv, xvi, xviii, 4, 61, 62, 67, 135n. 1, 136n. 13
Altick, Richard, 140n. 3
anti-Catholicism, xxx–xxxii, 8, 52–61, 63–64, 71, 73, 74–77, 78, 84, 102, 106. See also Jesuits; “Papal aggression”; Tractarianism
An Appeal to the Reason and Good Feeling of the English People (Wiseman), 71–72, 74, 78
Arnold, Thomas, xiv, 4–5, 62–64, 151n. 22
Arnstein, Walter, 51–52, 54, 141n. 24
Bagehot, Walter, xiv–xv, xxiii, xv, 20, 67. See also The English Constitution
Barnaby Rudge (Dickens), xxx, 26, 36–44, 48–49, 50–51, 71, 166n. 45
Becker, Bernard, xiv
Bentham, Jeremy, 137n. 20, 137n. 25
Bleak House (Dickens), 140n. 4
Bok, Sissela, 135n. 2
Brantlinger, Patrick, 34, 45, 47, 90, 143n. 23, 145n. 18, 148n. 44, 154n. 2, 5, 157n. 29, 167n. 45
Burke, Edmund, xxii, xxiii
Carbonari, xi, xv, 102, 103, 108–9, 117, 120, 161n. 14, 165n. 41
Carlyle, Thomas, xxxi, 1, 2–3, 19–20, 35, 100, 151n. 22. See also Chartism; On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History; Past and Present; Sartor Resartus; “Signs of the Times”
Catholic Association, 53, 54–55
Catholic Emancipation, xix, xxx, 50, 51, 52, 54–59, 63, 78, 85, 129, 149n. 5. See also Catholic Relief Act
Catholic Relief Act, 50, 51, 56–58, 72, 78, 151n. 24
Chartism (Carlyle), 26, 33–35, 38, 48, 79
Collins, Wilkie, 158n. 36, 159n. 43, 161n. 14. See also The Moonstone; “The Perils of Certain English Prisoners”; The Woman in White
Combination Acts, xxix, 24–25, 29, 33, 135n. 5, 147n. 29, 40
Conrad, Joseph, 133–34
conspiracy, xv, xviii, xxviii, xxxi, 26–36, 38, 48, 51, 52, 53, 57, 58, 61, 62, 72, 74, 77, 79, 80, 83–90, 93, 97, 98, 99, 104, 107, 108, 113, 116, 122, 125, 126, 129, 130, 131, 133–34. See also secret societies
Conspiracy Bill, 101
David Copperfield (Dickens), 140n. 4
De Quincey, Thomas, ix–xii, xiii, xv, xvii, xix, 1, 2, 3, 13. See also “Historico-Critical Inquiry Into the Origin of the Rosicrucians and Free-Masons”; “Secret Societies”
Dean, Jodi, xvii
Defoe, Daniel, 96–97, 99
democracy, xi, xii, xix–xxvii, xxviii, xxix, xxxi, xxxii, 1, 10, 20, 21. See also Catholic Emancipation; Indian Mutiny; Ireland; Italian unification; Parliament, trade unions
Dickens, Charles, xii, xxxi, 3, 93, 158n. 33. See also Barnaby Rudge; Bleak House; David Copperfield; Little Dorrit; “The Perils of Certain English Prisoners”
Disraeli, Benjamin, xiv, xxxi, 44, 48, 82, 86, 87, 129. See also Lothair; Sybil
Ecclesiastical Titles Act, 153n. 43, 153n. 45, 153n. 48
Elliot, George, xv, xxx, 3, 140n. 4
Engels, Friederich, 25, 34, 144n. 5
The English Constitution (Bagehot), xiv–xv, xxi, xxiv–xxv, 20–21
Epstein, James, 24, 137n. 26
Fenians, xi, 102, 120, 123, 128, 130, 166n. 43
Freemasons, ix, xii, xiii, xxix–xxx, 1–8, 9, 10, 14, 21, 24, 84, 99, 102, 108, 120, 124, 128, 135n. 5, 158n. 36, 167n. 45
Froude, Richard Hurrell, 64, 65
Gallagher, Catherine, 15, 45–46, 142n. 20
Garibaldi, Giuseppe, xxxii, 102, 103, 104–5, 107, 110, 118, 120, 122, 123, 125, 126, 127, 128, 161n. 9, 164n. 31
Glasgow Spinners Union, xxx, 26–36, 37, 39, 41, 48–49, 52, 53, 61, 63, 73, 79, 80, 85, 87, 102, 108, 129, 130
Greg, W. R., xxi, xx, xxxvi, 20, 21
Gregg, Hilda, 90–91
Hadley, Elaine, 138n. 29
Hampden controversy, 62–64, 69
Heckethorn, Charles, 135n. 8, 140n. 6, 145n. 19, 160nn. 1–2, 164n. 33, 167n. 45
Hinde, Wendy, 53
“IHistorico-Critical Inquiry Into the Origin of the Rosicrucians and Free-Masons” (De Quincey), 3
The History of the Arians (Newman), 65, 66
Illuminati, ix, 120, 135n. 5
Indian Mutiny, xxxi, 78, 79–90, 91, 93, 95, 99–100, 101, 102, 106, 110, 111, 129, 165n. 43
Irish, xix, 7, 16, 52, 54, 69, 102, 103, 106–7, 110, 111, 115, 119–20, 121, 122–23, 126, 128, 130, 166n. 43
Italian unification, xxxi–xxxii, 101–110, 116, 118–20, 122, 123, 124, 127
Jameson, Frederic, xii
Jesuits, xxx, 52–53, 58–61, 62, 64, 65, 67, 68–69, 71, 72–73, 74, 76, 84, 106, 109, 118, 120, 122, 124, 125, 126, 129, 130, 151n. 21, 152n. 39, 163n. 24
Kingsley, Charles, 135n. 1
Kipling, Rudyard, 135n. 5
Knight, Peter, 134
Kucich, John, xvi, 136nn. 9–10, 136n. 13, 163nn. 21–22
Little Dorrit (Dickens), xii, 140n. 4
Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England (Newman), xxxi, 74–78
Lothair (Disraeli), xxxii, 104, 120–31, 133
Lyon, Janet, 139n. 42
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Page Numbers</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Macaulay, Thomas</td>
<td>xx, xxii–xxiv</td>
<td>xxv, 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MacKenzie, Norman</td>
<td>135n. 8, 140n. 6, 145n. 19, 160nn. 1–2, 167n. 45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“manliness”</td>
<td>x, xvi, 4, 71, 113, 114, 115, 135n. 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazzini, Giuseppe</td>
<td>102, 107–9, 118, 119, 125</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mill, James</td>
<td>xxii–xxiii, xxv–xxvii, 20, 137n. 24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mill, John Stuart</td>
<td>137n. 24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miller, D.A.</td>
<td>98, 136n. 14, 163n. 22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Moonstone (Collins)</td>
<td>xxxi, 80–81, 92–100, 104, 136n. 14, 166n. 45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morris, William</td>
<td>xxvii</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mouffe, Chantal</td>
<td>139n. 37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Napoleon I</td>
<td>20, 113, 117</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Napoleon III</td>
<td>xxxii, 101, 104, 105, 109, 117, 118, 119</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nayder, Lillian</td>
<td>114–15, 158n. 34, 159n. 45, 161n. 14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newdegate, Charles</td>
<td>60, 151n. 24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newman, John Henry</td>
<td>xiv, 51, 69. See also The History of the Arians; Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norman, Edward R.</td>
<td>71, 148n. 3, 149n. 5–9, 150nn. 17–18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oath-taking</td>
<td>2, 22–23, 24, 25, 26, 28–30, 39, 47, 52, 57–58, 72, 73, 107, 108, 145n. 16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O’Connell, Daniel</td>
<td>33, 49, 53, 106, 145nn. 14, 16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History (Carlyle)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opium</td>
<td>93, 97, 158n. 40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orsini plot</td>
<td>101, 102, 109, 117</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of the Flaminian Gate (Wiseman)</td>
<td>70, 71, 152n. 34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford Movement. See Tractarianism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paine, Thomas</td>
<td>xxii–xxv, xxvi, 20, 102, 106, 129</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Papal aggression,”</td>
<td>xxx, 61, 69–77, 80, 102, 106, 129</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papal infallibility</td>
<td>102, 118, 119, 120, 129</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parliament</td>
<td>xiv, xxviii, 32–33, 36, 39, 44, 46, 47–48, 49, 51, 52, 59, 63, 69, 86, 130, 160n. 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past and Present (Carlyle)</td>
<td>1, 20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peacock, Thomas</td>
<td>135n. 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peel, Sir Robert</td>
<td>53, 56, 59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pelikan, Jaroslav</td>
<td>74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The Perils of Certain English Prisoners” (Collins and Dickens)</td>
<td>91–92</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plotz, John</td>
<td>145n. 17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poovey, Mary</td>
<td>135n. 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>privacy</td>
<td>xvi, 41, 98, 114, 121, 122, 131, 166n. 45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ragussis, Michael</td>
<td>xiii–xiv</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhodes, Cecil</td>
<td>166n. 43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risorgimento. See Italian unification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roberts, J. M.</td>
<td>xiii, xxvii, xxxii, 135n. 2, 135n. 4, 140n. 6, 163n. 36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosicrucians</td>
<td>xv, 135n. 5, 167n. 45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Society</td>
<td>xiv, xxviii, 167n. 45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rundle, Vivienne</td>
<td>12–13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russell, John, Lord</td>
<td>69, 156n. 20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Said, Edward</td>
<td>xii, 157n. 29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sartor Resartus (Carlyle)</td>
<td>xxx–xxx, 3, 9–19, 67, 134, 166n. 45</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scott, Sir Walter</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| secrecy                        | xi–xii, xiii, xiv, xv, xvi–xviii, xxxi, xxxii, 78, 98, 100, 103, 111, 112, 114, 115, 122, 123, 131, 133–34, 144n. 5; attraction of, ix–x, xv, xix, xxix, xxxi, 2–20, 22, 42, 62, 65–68, 78, 84, 108,
secret societies, x–xiii, xv, xvii, xviii–xix, xxviii, xxxi, xxxii, 15, 21, 22, 69, 76, 83, 87, 92, 95, 102, 103, 112, 116, 118, 119–20, 123, 124, 125, 126–31, 133–34. See also Carbonari; Fenians; Freemasons; Illuminati; Jesuits; Rosicrucians; Thugs

“Secret Societies” (De Quincey), ix–xi, xiii, 3–4

Shelley, Percy Bysshe, 135n. 5

“Signs of the Times” (Carlyle), 137n. 21

Simmel, Georg, xviii–xix

Sybil (Disraeli), xxx, 26, 36, 44–49, 50–51, 166n. 45

Taylor, Philip Meadows, 79

Tennyson, Alfred, Lord, 91, 160n. 6

Tennyson, G. B., 12, 141n. 12, 143nn. 21, 23

Thackeray, William Makepeace, 3, 140n. 4

Thompson, E. P., xviii, 143n. 2

Thugs, xi, xxx, 34–36, 48, 52, 73, 79, 85, 109, 129, 130, 165n. 43

Tocqueville, Alexis de, xxi–xxiii, xxvii, xxix

Tolpuddle Martyrs, 135n. 5, 144n. 6

116, 143n. 22, 166n. 43, 167n. 45; as indication of a conspiracy, xxviii, 23–24, 25, 26–36, 48, 49, 53, 56, 60, 61, 95–96, 107–8; political forms of, x, xv, xxiv, 21, 43, 47–48, 60, 111, 112, 147n. 40; as reserve, xvi, 65–68, 78, 130

Tosh, John, 130–31

Tractarianism, xxx, 50, 51, 61–69, 78, 129, 130, 149n. 4, 153n. 49

Tracts for the Times, 51, 52, 64, 65–68, 69

trade unions, xiv, xxx, xxxii, 21, 22–36, 38, 39, 41, 46–47, 48–49, 50, 52, 53, 62, 73, 130, 143n. 1, 151n. 27, 165n. 43

Trilling, Lionel, xvi

ultra-montane movement. See Papal infallibility

Unlawful Societies Act, 1–2, 7

Urquhart, David, xxviii, 86

Vanden Bossche, Chris, 18, 140n. 9, 143nn. 21, 23

Vincent, David, xvii

Viswanathan, Gauri, 139n. 41, 156n. 15

Wellesley, Arthur, Duke of Wellington, 56

Welsh, Alexander, xvii, 136n. 12

Williams, Isaac, 51, 62, 64, 65, 69, 71

Williams, Raymond, xii, 136n. 16, 137n. 21

Wiseman, Nicholas, Cardinal, 70, 72, 78. See also An Appeal to the Reason and Good Feeling of the English People; Out of the Flaminian Gate

Yeats, W. B., 135n. 5, 167n. 45