“In one of these families, in a house which his father, who was a mason, had built with his own hands, Thomas Carlyle was born on December 4, 1795” (EL, 1:3). These biographical facts represented for Carlyle the place and time that constituted him as rebel and author. The house symbolized his birth into a community created by and embodied in its builder and chief authority, James Carlyle. Seventeen ninety-five, significantly, was the year with which Carlyle was to conclude his history of the French Revolution. He was born into both a timeless space in which authority and belief had not yet become problematic, and a world fraught with historical time as manifested in the revolutionary upheavals that culminated a century of skepticism and inaugurated an “Era of Unbelief” (SR, 112).

This birth into the conflicting realms of authority and revolution provided the terms of the narrative through which Carlyle represented his literary career. In the 1820s, he created a series of narratives describing the process of becoming an author. Through these biographical, fictional, and autobiographical narratives—which reached their climax in the narrative of Diogenes Teufelsdröckh’s discovery of his vocation as author in Sartor Resartus—Carlyle strove to make himself both author and authority.

Schiller, Goethe, and the Career Narrative

The revivers of the patriarchal theory of government in the early nineteenth century regarded the history of the family unit as a microcosm of the larger historical movement from theocratic patriarchy to social contract. Significantly, those writers like Burke and Coleridge who
wished to return to the theocratic idyll also helped to revive patriarchal theory (which had waned in the eighteenth century), making the family the model of hierarchical and communal harmony in opposition to the warfare inherent in economic individualism (Schochet, 276–81; D. Roberts, 17–32). Carlyle’s portrayal of the career of the man of letters borrows from this tradition the narrative exile from and return to the idyllic family.

We can see the critique of the national shift from theocracy to political economy being applied to the history of the family in Peter Gaskell’s *Artisans and Machinery* (1833), which represents the destruction of an idyllic family by the urban factory system. In Gaskell’s narrative, the home of the preindustrial family comprises a harmonious domestic economy to which each family member makes a contribution; because they work together, they do not have “separate and distinct” interests but share communal aims (60). The relationship between parents and children is a benign hierarchy in which “parental authority” guides children in their moral development (59). The urban economy, in which members of the family no longer work together at home but in separate factories or different parts of a factory, destroys this unity: as individual family members earn their own wages, they no longer hold a common interest in the profits of their labor. In fact, conflicting interests divide the family, and “quarrelling, fighting, a total alienation of affection, and finally, a separation from home” ensue (88; see 68). Correspondingly, urban factory life upsets the hierarchical relations between parents and children and undermines the moral influence of parents promoted by those relations: once they become financially independent, children are no longer compelled to obey their parents (64, 85–87). When “selfishness” replaces “Sacred obligations,” the home becomes a mere “lodging-house” in which the members of the family are related to one another only by “pecuniary profit and loss” (65).

Gaskell’s narrative suggests that the industrial system does not possess any means of producing a moral code or a just social order. On the contrary, he argues, in addition to destroying the moral influence of parents, the factory system itself promotes immorality. Although he does not offer specific solutions, Gaskell’s critique of the industrial “revolution” implies the necessity of introducing the familial community of interest into the urban economy by recovering the domestic idyll of a preindustrial era (362).
Carlyle's Schiller and Goethe recuperate the domestic idyll by turning to the institution of literature. In Carlyle's first book, *The Life of Schiller* (1823–25), the young Schiller wants to become a clergyman, but the duke of Würtemberg convinces his father to place him in a military college and make him study the law, which becomes "representative," for Schiller, of the restraints of education by "military drill" (10, 9). Schiller's desire for a higher calling beyond the limits of the law brings him into conflict with the authoritarian father figure, the duke. Unable to pursue his theological interests, he begins to read and write poetry. His first play, *The Robbers*, thematically enacts his rebellion against the authority of the duke while seeking to establish his own authority as an artist. The duke, recognizing the challenge to his authority, condemns *The Robbers* as a dangerous work and threatens Schiller with further repression. But when becoming a successful author frees Schiller "from school tyranny and military constraint," he rejects his prescribed career, flees Würtemberg, and establishes himself as a man of letters (24).

Since he has no religious doubts, Schiller does not, unlike Carlyle's other heroes who replace a religious with a literary career, reject the religious beliefs of his own father. But by rebelling against the father figure, the duke, he is effectively exiled from the "religious" idyll of the family, which disappears from the biography after he leaves Würtemberg. Precisely because he does not lose his religious faith, Schiller's exile makes his career in literature problematic. Literature does not enable him to return home because it cannot fully replace what it does not fully reject. He becomes a "wanderer" on an endless quest, and his ceaseless literary activities—figurative wanderings—necessarily fail to find their opposite; although he is "crowned with laurels," he remains "without a home" (81; see 51). Carlyle concludes that Schiller was never able to return home, that he found "no rest, no peace" (203). Had he remained in Würtemberg, he would have been oppressed by an authority that would not permit him to follow a higher calling, but his new-gained literary authority does not permit him to displace the duke so he can return to the childhood idyll.

Instead of creating a promised land into which he could lead his people, Schiller becomes a commercial traveler. Initially, he envisions literature as an idyll that, like the family, exists outside the laws of economy. Before his exile, he claims that he "honour[s]" literature "too highly to wish to live [i.e., make his living] by it," but, when he
cuts himself off from “his stepdame home,” he must “go forth, though friendless and alone, to seek his fortune in the great market of life” that “dissolve[s]” his “connexion” to his family and replaces them with the demands of a multifarious “public” (12, 28, 40; emphasis added). Instead of discovering a new idyll, he works in cities like Leipzig, which is the “centre of . . . commerce of all sorts, that of literature not excepted” (54). Although the bookseller system frees him, as it had others, from dependence on the aristocratic patronage of the duke, he is not truly free, because the new system replaces the law of the patron with the law of the public and its demand for particular kinds of literary commodities. Neither system of production can satisfy Schiller’s desire for the transcendental. Although The Life of Schiller concludes by affirming the “creed” of literature, it does not successfully envision literature as capable of reproducing the lost idyll.

Carlyle’s first major essay on Goethe (1828) solves this problem by separating the loss of home from the act of rebellion and by eliminating the constraints of economy from the representation of the literary career. The essay divides Goethe’s life into two phases: that of the youthful “Unbeliever” who wrote Die Leiden des jungen Werthers, and that of the mature “Believer” who wrote Wilhelm Meister (CME, 1:210). Because his father represents the authority of the law, not of religious belief, Goethe’s home is not the domestic idyll that Schiller’s had been. Goethe’s father plays the role that the duke had played in The Life of Schiller while the role of Schiller’s father is eliminated. Goethe’s father represents the law, both because he is a lawyer, and because, like the duke, he commands his son to study the law. Not only does Goethe rebel against the law laid down by his father, but, by refusing to become a lawyer, he questions the authority of his father’s career.

Because the religious idyll is absent, Goethe’s rebellion is at first only a rejection of his father’s authority rather than an attempt to establish his own. Schiller’s rebellion against the duke and his adoption of literature had been a single, unified step. The literary career through which he attempted to recuperate the domestic idyll was inextricably linked with the rebellion that made it impossible for him to stop wandering and begin to find his way home. By eliminating the domestic idyll in his narrative of Goethe’s career, Carlyle shifted Goethe’s rebellion to the first stage of the narrative, separating the rebellious negation from the later affirmation of authority in litera-
ture. *The Sorrows of Young Werter* does not yet create a new mythology; it simply negates belief. During his period of “Unbelief,” Goethe, like Schiller, becomes a wanderer; blown about by the “Harmattan breath of Doubt,” a “nameless Unrest” prevents him from authoring a new idyll (*CME*, 1:216). Only in the second stage of the narrative, when he attains belief, does Goethe become a prophetic author who can lead his people “home” to the promised land (217, 224).

In his essay on Schiller’s correspondence (1829; published 1831), Carlyle employs the new structure of “Goethe” to revise the narrative of Schiller’s career. Just as he divides Goethe’s life into the phases of unbelief and belief, he now divides Schiller’s life into the “worldly” epoch before he takes his “Literary Vows” and the “spiritual” epoch afterward (*CME*, 2:175). *The Life of Schiller* had represented both epochs as posing the same problems, his youth divided between the piety of the family and the oppression of the duke, and his literary career divided between his desire for a high calling and the demands of economy. But “Schiller” creates a structural opposition between them: “what lies before this epoch, and what lies after it, have two altogether different characters” (175). Schiller begins life already in the “worldly epoch” of time and history where he experiences the “oppression, distortion, isolation” of economy and the duke’s law (177). While the essay mentions a “glad season” of youth at a time when Schiller still lived in the domestic idyll, the two-part structure excludes it from the basic narrative sequence, suggesting that this idyll exists outside of time, in a realm before Schiller’s life proper began (178; see *SR*, 90). The piety that had been associated with his family enters the narrative only in the second epoch, when Schiller, now a “priest-like” and “monastic” man of letters, “works and meditates only on what we may call Divine things” (175). The idyll excluded from the beginning of the narrative finally enters it through the activity of the artist. This essay does not, like *The Life of Schiller*, manifest anxiety about the loss of the home in the choice of the literary career, since the family is recuperated in the idyllic community of writers at Weimar, where Schiller triumphs over illness and the demands of economy are eliminated, freeing him to rise “into the highest regions of Art he ever reached” (*CME*, 2:187). In “Schiller,” Carlyle goes further than in “Goethe” by representing, even though excluding, the childhood idyll that then becomes the object of the artist’s quest and determines that
the literary career will take on a more distinctly religious cast. This Schiller not only discovers his authority but fully recovers the realm of the transcendental and discovers a promised land.

**Carlyle’s Fictions and the Career Narrative**

It is appropriate that *Sartor Resartus* portrays an “Editor” patching together Teufelsdröckh’s biography from six paper bags of fragments sent from Germany, for Carlyle himself had patched it together from the lives of German authors (see Tennyson, *Sartor*, 87–88, 191, n. 30). Virtually every detail of the biography of Diogenes Teufelsdröckh—himself a German writer—may be found in the sketches of the lives and works of German writers—Musæus, Fouqué, Tieck, Hoffman, Richter, Werner, Heyne, and Novalis as well as Goethe and Schiller—that Carlyle composed between 1823 and 1830. Like the narratives that preceded it, the biography of Teufelsdröckh does not seek to represent Carlyle’s life so much as to give it a meaningful shape by constructing a paradigm for the establishment of the literary career.

Carlyle’s satirical poem, “Peter Nimmo,” and his abandoned novel, “Illudo Chartis,” both represent the narrative of loss of authority and religious faith in a comic mode, mocking the world of his youth. “Peter Nimmo” is based on the life of an eccentric scholar who studied for seemingly countless years at the University of Edinburgh. The poem begins with a conversion experience in which Nimmo, “drifting” with no “‘fix’d point’... thro’ some mountain-pass,” has a vision and experiences a religious calling, a scene that anticipates, in the mock-spiritual mode, Teufelsdröckh’s Everlasting Yea. But the poem treats Nimmo’s election with all the skepticism of an Enlightenment critique of enthusiasm. Instead of bringing his wanderings to an end, Nimmo’s search for religious truth at the university turns him into an eternal student, an “old wandering Jew” who never completes his studies and never achieves rest. The narrator finally destroys the illusion of Nimmo’s divine election by putting out two pints of rum and secretly watching as Nimmo drinks it up and falls down “Dead-drunk.” In its treatment of Nimmo’s calling, the poem hints at how the university undermined Carlyle’s own religious vocation and perhaps attempts to disguise his anxiety by treating the event comically. Written at a time when he had rejected a religious vocation but was still uncertain what vocation
might replace it, the poem discovers no faith, no closure, no authority, and no alternative career.⁴

Just as “Peter Nimmo” treats comically the religious calling that Carlyle’s parents had sought for him, so “Illudo Chartis,” a fragment of a novel that Carlyle began and then quickly abandoned in 1826, parodies Carlyle’s family and origins. The fragment has three distinct parts, demarcated by sharp shifts in tone. It begins in a comic mode similar to that of “Peter Nimmo.” Like “Nimmo” as well, it does not discover a vocation for the hero, but, unlike “Nimmo,” it abandons the comic mode and concludes in the dark mood of Werter. In “Peter Nimmo,” the skeptical narrator is structurally and dramatically separated from the deluded questor, while the narrator of “Illudo Chartis” treats the hero, Stephen Corry, seriously, displacing the comedy from the hero to the hero’s family.

In the first chapter, describing Stephen’s origins in the “village of Duckdubs in the south of Scotland,” Carlyle comically inverts the characteristics of his own family (King, 164). Corry’s parents are of the “lowest sort,” his mother a “rampageant quean” and his father an incompetent stonemason whose cottages fall down “before [his] trowel had done pargetting them” (164–65). A mock genealogical investigation discovers that Corry’s ancestors were “weak, underfoot, unprosperous . . . all walked with a stoop, all splayed out their feet at a given angle, and all spoke with the same Northumbrian burr” (165–66). The comic details of the narrative—the premature collapse of Corry’s cottages and the debilitated male line—manifest the pressure of time on a family that has already fallen into history at the commencement of Stephen Corry’s life and is from the beginning exiled from the domestic idyll.

But when the narrative turns to Stephen himself, it changes tone, isolating him from a family corrupted by time and surrounding him with idyllic comforts. It separates him from the family by informing us that he is not like his father and has not inherited any qualities of the debilitated male line. It then situates Duckdubs in a womblike “little circular valley” that anticipates the idyllic Entephul (German for Duckpond) of Sartor Resartus (see Cabau, 193–99). By introducing the idyllic mood only after the comic opening, Carlyle displaces it from the aboriginal moment of the narrative just as he had excluded it from the primary narrative structure of “Goethe” and “Schiller.”

The idyllic mood is sustained only briefly, however, and when, at the
beginning of the second chapter, Stephen's father decides to send him to the University of Edinburgh "in the ever memorable year of 1795," the tone changes again. "To all literary men," the narrator comments, "such an epoch is like a second birth, the cardinal point on which most of their future life revolves" (King, 167). Stephen Corry's history is divided by this "second birth" just as Schiller's and Goethe's lives are divided into two epochs. As previously noted, 1795 was the year in which Carlyle was born and with which he was to end his history of the French Revolution. It is only at this moment that Stephen is exiled from the idyll and enters the temporal realm of his already fallen family. The narrative therefore doubly excludes the idyllic moment by representing 1795, literally the year of Carlyle's birth, as the moment of Stephen's birth into time and consciousness.

The narrative indicts Stephen's father for exiling his son and for allowing the idyll to fall into decay. Rather than being grateful to his father for receiving an education, Stephen leaves his family "sick at heart" and overwhelmed by "a black deep of Discouragement" (168). Attending the university exiles Stephen from home, just as rejecting the law had exiled Schiller and Goethe. But at this point, still a year and a half before he wrote "Goethe," Carlyle could not envision a way to lead Stephen from despair to affirmation and the literary career. Stephen must remain, like the Schiller of the earlier biography, an eternal wanderer.

Carlyle encountered the same problems in the far more ambitious but also unfinished Wotton Reinfred, begun in early 1827 soon after he abandoned "Illudo Chartis." It starts where "Illudo Chartis" left off, in the mood of despair, but then attempts to move its hero beyond the moment of despair in order to enable him to return to the idyllic home. By writing first in the mode of Werter, then in the mode of Wilhelm Meister, Carlyle anticipated the narrative movement from the despair of Werter to the belief of Wilhelm Meister in "Goethe." But, unlike Goethe and Schiller, who become authors, Wotton remains a passive observer whose career is still undecided when the narrative breaks off.

Wotton Reinfred, like "Illudo Chartis," excludes the childhood idyll by displacing it from the beginning of the narrative. Chapter 1 commences in the mood of despair and unbelief that follows exile from the idyll (the idyll itself does not appear until chapter 2). It associates the idyll with Reinfred's mother, whose soul is "full of loftiest religion,"
while his father, a “man of an equal but stern and indignant temper” is associated with the wrathful god who exiles sinners from the maternal paradise (14–15, 13). The death of his father when Wotton is still in “early boyhood” suggests that, since the father creates and sustains the idyll, it disappears with his death, which therefore constitutes exile (13). On the advice of the male authorities who replace his father (his pastor and teacher), Wotton is sent, like Stephen Corry, from home to the university, where the study of logic, mathematics, and science, as well as French philosophy, lead him to the “utter negation” and “doubt” with which the narrative begins (24, 22). The encircling walls of the home (which recall the “circular valley” of “Illudo Chartis”) are replaced by the “prison” walls that close him out of the childhood paradise (36).

The remainder of the narrative represents Wotton’s quest to escape this prison and recover the childhood idyll. Yet he does not try to obtain the authority of the father who created the idyll, and the narrative persistently suggests that his rediscovered idylls are illusions. He first hopes to recover the idyll through love. When he meets Jane Montagu, the “black walls of his prison” melt away, revealing a new “garden of Eden,” but this “celestial vision” quickly gives way to a “grim world” of Werterian despair when Jane’s relatives forbid her to see Wotton and arrange her engagement to Edmund Walter, a “man of rank” (36, 39, 38). It is at this chronological moment that the narrative of Wotton Reinfred begins, Wotton’s friend Bernard suggesting that in order to resolve his troubles he undertake a journey, the curative journey of novels like *Wilhelm Meister* in which the experience of the journey enables the questing hero to return to the idyllic home. But, unlike Meister’s, Reinfred’s “travels” last for only one brief chapter, at which point he discovers a new idyll or “Elysium,” the House of the Wold (55). His sojourn at the House of the Wold, during which he joins in lengthy discussions of transcendental philosophy, occupies about a third of the text; yet at the conclusion of these discussions, Wotton has not gained the authority to create his own idyll. Because he discovers the House accidentally, not through the rigors of the quest, he does not become a member of this ideal society. Appropriately, he is driven from the idyll by the unexpected appearance of Edmund Walter, the rival who had deprived him of his previous idyll, Jane Montagu.

The narrative concludes with Jane Montagu’s own story—Wotton has encountered her while fleeing from the House of the Wold—which
reinforces the pattern of recovery and exile from the idyll. Although Jane's narrative is based roughly on the life of Mme. de Staël's Corinne, to whom Jane compares herself, it almost exactly repeats the narrative of Wotton's life. Like Wotton, Jane has lost her father early in life and become "an orphan wanderer," exiled from an idyllic childhood (130; see 134–35). Yet in the career of Jane Montagu, Carlyle introduces what is missing in the life of Wotton Reinfred. Jane longs, like Corinne, to be a poet, hoping that through this means she can gain independence from the interdicting family and the ability to create her own domestic idyll. But her quest, too, remains incomplete, because the strictures society places on women prevent her from achieving authority. By explaining that it was not her desire to reject Wotton—she is just as much the victim of Edmund Walter and the interdicting family as he—and by suggesting a complementarity between her desire to be a poet and Wotton's freedom to be one, Jane's story offers the possibility of a reconciliation that would resolve the dramatic problem with which the narrative begins (that is, their separation) and so constitute a domestic idyll. But the resolution toward which the narrative appears to be moving does not provide the means for transferring poetic authority to Wotton. The manuscript breaks off at the point where Jane concludes her narrative, and neither Jane nor Wotton is any closer to completing the quest.

The biography of Diogenes Teufelsdrockh in Sartor Resartus attempts to solve the problems of the earlier fictions by borrowing structural elements from the biographies. Its explicit narrative structure is the two-part structure of the 1827–28 essays on Goethe and Schiller, the movement from unbelief to belief that excludes an initial moment of idyllic belief and implies an imminent three-part structure of belief/unbelief/recovered belief. In these essays, this structural sequence is elaborated through the search for the career and the topos of the journey. The sequence of careers—the religious ministry, the law, and literature as substitute for religion—corresponds to the movement from belief to unbelief to recovery of belief. The journey motif translates this sequence into the sequence of exile from the domestic idyll, desert wanderings, and the return home. Just as the explicit two-part structure excludes the initial moment of belief in the case of Goethe, so it excludes the primal home and the religious career.

The biography of Teufelsdrockh employs the same structure. Teufelsdrockh is banished from the "Idyll" of Entephul, descends to the
nadir of the Everlasting No, and finally achieves the celestial heights of the Everlasting Yea. The primal idyll is excluded in several ways. First, the narrator informs us, in the chapter entitled “Genesis,” that Teufelsdrockh was born not in Entephul but in the transcendental realm, “so that this Genesis of his can properly be nothing but an Exodus” (81). From birth, he begins wandering in the desert. Second, unlike Schiller, Richter, Heyne, Musæus, Peter Nimmo, and Carlyle himself, but like Goethe, Teufelsdrockh does not begin life with the intention of pursuing a religious career; he pursues only the two vocations of law and authorhood. At the same time that Sartor Resartus excludes the religious vocation, however, it introduces the element missing from the earlier fictions, the possibility of a literary vocation. Finally, the Editor, in patching together the biography from the six bags of autobiographical fragments, inserts the idyllic moment at the beginning of the narrative; but the first fragment quoted by the Editor comes from a bag marked with the zodiacal sign of Libra that, corresponding to the beginning of autumn, hardly seems appropriate for the beginning of life and a paradisal idyll.

The chapter entitled “Idyllic” goes out of its way to emphasize that Teufelsdrockh has been excluded from the idyll from the beginning. Initially, Entephul (Duckpond), where his family occupies a “Cottage, embowered in fruit-trees and forest-trees, evergreens and honeysuckles,” does seem idyllic (83). Teufelsdrockh’s honest parents resemble the good parents of Richter, Goethe, Burns, Heyne, Schiller, and Novalis. The chapter commences by attributing the “Happy season of Childhood” to “Kind Nature, that art to all a bountiful mother,” and the transcendental plenitude of this natural world is represented by the piety of his foster mother who, like Wotton’s and Novalis’s mothers, teaches him “her own simple version of the Christian Faith” (90, 99).

But, as in the earlier narratives, the possibility of exile from the maternal idyll exists from the beginning in the figure of the father. Whereas Teufelsdrockh’s mother is “in the strictest acceptation Religious,” his father attends church only as a “parade-duty” (99). The explicit contrast, which suggests that Andreas is not genuinely religious, associates him with the law rather than belief. While the mother is so closely identified with the idyll—she is mother nature—that she is indistinguishable from it, the father has created the idyll and is thus separate from it as the creator is separate from the creation. At
the same time, the father lives in his own creation and, as its author
and authority, possesses the power to exclude his children from it.
Whereas the mother imbues the idyll with a sense of unity, the father,
who shares the "rugged[ness]" of Goethe's father and the sternness
of Wotton Reinfred's, lays down the law and alienates the son from it
(WM, 1:13). The "paternal Cottage" that protects the idyll also "shuts
us in" and compels Teufelsdroéckh to "Obedience" (SR, 90). Conse-
quently, just as Schiller encounters the constraints of the duke, so
Teufelsdroéckh's "Active Power" is "hemmed in" and the timeless idyll
becomes a prison (98).

Fathers and father substitutes exile Schiller, Stephen Corry, Wot-
ton Reinfred, and Diogenes Teufelsdroéckh from the domestic idyll by
sending them to school. In Sartor Resartus, the father's authority be-
comes the authoritarian discipline of the Hinterschlag (Strike-behind)
Gymnasium. The father exiles the child not only by removing him
from the idyllic home but also by inserting him into a temporal, urban
world of unbelief. Significantly, the first objects that Teufelsdroéckh en-
counters as he enters town on his way to school are the town's steeple-
clock and jail, signs of his entry into the prison of finitude. The rural
idyll becomes urban prison; the father as creator and sustainer of the
idyll becomes oppressor who exiles the child from Eden.

As in Wotton Reinfred, Carlyle represents the loss of the idyll as the
loss of its creator and sustainer; a loss emphasized in Sartor Resartus
by repetition. The first instance is Teufelsdroéckh's separation from his
"real" father in heaven (Andreas Futteral is only a stepfather) which
is coterminous with his entry into life and time. Teufelsdroéckh ex-
presses a longing to know this "unknown Father's name," but discovers
that he is unknowable and therefore unable to sustain Teufelsdroéckh's
transcendental existence (86). (The special role of the father is sug-
gested as well by Teufelsdroéckh's total lack of interest in his unknown
mother.) The unknown father exiles and orphans him in the temporal
world just as Andreas will exile him by sending him to school, leaving
him "orphaned and alone." Teufelsdroéckh's second loss is the death
of Andreas, which occurs when he is only twelve, another instance
in which Teufelsdroéckh's life parallels Wotton Reinfred's.10 Because
Teufelsdroéckh learns simultaneously that Andreas has died and that
Andreas is not his real father, he now feels "doubly orphaned" (107).
The symbolic import of Carlyle's use of the orphan theme here is given
special emphasis by the fact that this event is distinctly nonautobiogra-
graphical. Carlyle did not lose his father as a child; indeed, his father
was still alive when, at the age of thirty-five, he wrote *Sartor Resartus*, the last of a series of "autobiographical" narratives in which the father dies. The death of the father represents the loss of the idyll, since the father creates and sustains it, but it also represents exile from Eden as punishment of the rebellious son who desires to possess the idyll for himself. In this respect, the narrative imaginatively kills off the father in order to enable the son to replace him. Since killing off the figure of authority has the immediate consequence of destroying the authority that sustains the idyll, which must then be restored and recreated, *Sartor Resartus* opens up the possibility that a rebellious son can become an authority, an author.

By exiling his son from the transcendental realm and sending him to a "Rational University," the father also deprives him of religious belief. Just as Adam and Eve are exiled from the garden because they desire knowledge, Teufelsdröckh is exiled from the world of his father by the education that undermines his religious faith. At the university, Teufelsdröckh, like Goethe, feels the "Harmattan-wind" or "fever-paroxysms of Doubt" and falls under the spell of "the nightmare, Unbelief" (*SR*, 186, 114; *CME*, 1:216). Their education substitutes authoritarian law, which divides everything into right and wrong, good and evil, for unified belief. The legal career comes to represent for Teufelsdröckh, as it does for Schiller and Goethe, imprisonment by the laws of rational economy.

Believing, like Schiller, that he is destined for a "high[er] vocation," Teufelsdröckh "breaks off his neck-halter" (Richter also "broke loose" from his first vocation to become a literary man) and rejects the legal profession (*SR*, 119, 121; *CME*, 2:114). But, unlike Schiller, he does not immediately take up the literary profession because, in the process of freeing him from the imprisoning structures of the law of the father, his rebellion destroys those structures and leaves him without any form of belief. At this point, he resembles instead the Goethe of *Werter*, who has not yet achieved the "high calling" of literature. Teufelsdröckh's search for knowledge continues the enlightenment project against which it rebels. His wanderings begin when he walks to school, intensify when he escapes the law and begins searching for a place in society, and reach their height after he is rejected by Blumine. Not only does his rebellion divide him from the still center of the domestic idyll, it thrusts him into a life of restless, apparently endless, wandering.

Because knowledge is never certain, the search for it can never
end. Teufelsdröckh needs knowledge to obtain authority, but he can only achieve authority and rest when he stops seeking knowledge. In the prelapsarian idyll, where belief is stable, everything is known and the search for knowledge is unnecessary as well as unthinkable—the mind is unaware of itself. In the search for knowledge, the mind becomes aware of itself and the limits of its knowledge; it becomes self-conscious. Carlyle borrowed Novalis's philosophy of \textit{entsagen}—the renunciation of self-consciousness—to solve Teufelsdröckh's dilemma.\footnote{Authoring the Author} Like Teufelsdröckh, Novalis discovers this philosophy after the loss of his youthful love, Sophie (\textit{CME}, 2:12–17). Only after Novalis and Teufelsdröckh attain a new belief by adopting the philosophy of renunciation do they become authors. The son's self-negation gives him the authority to restore his lost father to the world; Teufelsdröckh discovers that nature is not a dead machine but "godlike and my Father's" (\textit{SR}, 188). Teufelsdröckh's discovery of his vocation as author of a "new Mythus" completes the unfinished narratives of Carlyle's previous fictions—Peter Nimmo, Stephen Corry, and Wotton Reinfred do not discover any profession—and places him in the company of Goethe and Schiller (194).

\textbf{Authoring the Author}

At the same time he was formulating the history of the loss and recuperation of authority in his biographies of German writers and fictional characters, Carlyle was representing his own history in his letters and journals. Although his loss of faith and abandonment of a religious calling appears to have been a gradual process, he represented it in later years as a cataclysmic event resulting from his reading of Gibbon: "I read Gibbon, and then first clearly saw that Christianity was not true" (Allingham, \textit{Diary}, 232).\footnote{Authoring the Author} The authority of miracles—a form of revelation, as they manifest the divine in the realm of the human—had been at the forefront of the debate on revelation since the seventeenth century. Carlyle describes Gibbon's attack on "the orthodox belief in miracles" as the central event in his loss of faith. His first reading of the \textit{Decline and Fall} in its entirety—between November 1817 and February 1818—is almost certainly combined in his representations of the event with his decision, just a few months earlier, to abandon his studies for the ministry (\textit{CL}, 1:112, 115). Six months before he read
Gibbon, he had announced to his friend Robert Mitchell that "every 'true religion' is propped & bolstered, & the hand of its rivals tied up; till by nursing and fattening it has become a bloated monster that human nature can no longer look upon—and men rise up & knock its brains out" (CL, 1:99). When assessing the importance of Gibbon to this process, it is important to keep in mind that Carlyle had already decided that the religious vocation was no longer a high one, it too having been reduced to a "trade" (CL, 1:60). Carlyle did not just accidently turn to Gibbon at this moment; he was seeking in his history the means to knock the brains out of a bloated Christianity.

Although the idea of earning his living as a writer occurred early—in 1814 he envisioned himself as attaining "literary fame," and in 1817 he began his first attempts at professional writing—literature did not initially represent for Carlyle a means of achieving authority, replacing the religious vocation, and recovering the domestic idyll (Kaplan, 39). From 1817 into the mid-1820s, he contemplated several careers, only slowly establishing himself as a professional writer. After rejecting schoolteaching and pursuing studies in mathematics and science that might lead to a university career, he enrolled, in 1819, as a law student. This brief episode later enabled him to identify with Goethe and Schiller, although it is important to note that in Carlyle's case it was not the law but the religious vocation that had been imposed by paternal authority. Sartor Resartus, in representing Teufelsdröckh constrained by the law rather than religion, disguises the fact that Carlyle had rebelled against the very religious authority that he sought to recuperate.

It was not until Carlyle encountered the German Romantics that he began to represent literature as a replacement for religion.13 He began learning German in 1819, and by the middle of 1820 was writing that German literature promised to reveal a "new Heaven and new Earth" (CL, 1:268). He learned from the Germans to represent literature as the new liturgy: from Goethe's Wilhelm Meister, who tells his friend Werner that "it was the poet . . . that first formed gods for us; that exalted us to them, and brought them down to us" (WM, 1:114); from Schiller, whom he depicted as an "Apostle" whose "creed" was "Literature" (LS, 200); and from Fichte's On the Nature of the Literary Man, which depicts authors as the "appointed interpreters" of the "Divine Idea," a "perpetual priesthood . . . standing forth . . . as the dispensers and living types of God's everlasting wisdom" (CME,
This myth of poetic inspiration and genius represented poets as transhistorical individuals whose visionary capacity gives them the transcendental authority of both prophets and kings. Since literary men were prophets who would constitute the new church, their literary productions would be its liturgy and revealed texts, replacing the discourse of Christianity with literary discourse. Carlyle consistently depicted the writers he most admired, especially Goethe, as priests and prophets, and German literature became his Bible (CL, 6:271, 7:3; SR, 252–53). The literary artist reinstitutes revelation, Fichte's literary man, for example, manifesting a "Divine Idea." "Every man that writes," he concluded, "is writing a new Bible; or a new Apocrypha; to last for a week, or for a thousand years" (TNB, 264). By the time he wrote his essay on Burns in 1828, he could claim that "Poetry . . . is but another form of Wisdom, of Religion," and, by the 1830s, the notion that "Literature is fast becoming . . . [a] Church" in which the man of letters is "Pope" had become a commonplace in his writings (CME, 1:314, 2:369–70; see 3:201–2; TNB, 223).

Because literature recuperates theocracy, the author is not only prophet but king, producing the texts of the law as well as of belief (CME, 2:370). Just as literary authors create new beliefs and new Bibles, they also create new laws as "legislators" and lawmakers. Goethe is "king of himself and of his world," superior to Napoleon and Charles XII, and Burns, a "Napoleon among the crowned sovereigns of modern Politics" (WM, 1:24; CME, 1:297). A journal entry made in early 1831 envisions in the poet the theocratic union of prophet and king that supplants feudal monarchy: since King William—the heir to feudal monarchy—has become a "usurper," the "only Sovereigns of the world in these days are the Literary men (were there any such in Britain), the Prophets. It is always a Theocracy; the King has to be anointed by the Priest, and now the Priest (Goethe for example) will not . . . consecrate the existing King, who therefore is a usurper, and reigns only by sufferance" (TNB, 184).

In 1822, Carlyle's first article on German literature appeared, and his career as translator and promoter of German literature, a career that would continue until 1832, had begun. By early 1825, he had adopted as his "very creed" the passage—translated and quoted at length in his Life of Schiller—in which Schiller condemned hack writing and depicted literature as a high vocation, making its aim "philosophy,
religion, art" (CL, 3:271; LS, 200; see 201–2). Although still a hack writer, Carlyle had raised himself to the level of the translator and interpreter of the new prophets, enabling him to claim to his mother that he was after all "a kind of missionary" (CL, 4:180).

The adoption of this creed—the creed that men of letters could create a new creed—was crucial to the recovery of belief Carlyle achieved during the famous Leith Walk episode in 1822. In retrospect, this episode, like his reading of Gibbon, acquired special importance for Carlyle, so much so that he claimed late in life that the Rue St. Thomas de l’Enfer episode of Sartor Resartus "occurred quite literally to myself in Lieth [sic] Walk" (TR, 49). But this event, which passed unnoticed in his letters and even in the privacy of his journal, only became significant in retrospect when combined with the discovery of the Germans (see Moore, "Carlyle’s Conversion"). A new realm of possibilities had opened up in that year when he published his first essay on German literature ("Faustus") and began making the transition from student of German literature to preacher of its doctrines. Although still without his own authority, he was no longer hacking at encyclopedia articles and translations of geometry, but proclaiming a new gospel. His claim that he was "indebted to Goethe" for the Leith Walk experience suggests that what actually happened in 1822 was that he began to envision the achievement of authority through literature (Rem., 282).

By 1827, Carlyle had formulated the narrative of a career in which literature recuperates lost religious faith, enabling one to return home by recreating the lost domestic idyll. This "history" is outlined in one of his earliest letters to Goethe:

I was once an Unbeliever . . . exasperated, wretched, driven almost to despair; so that Faust’s wild curse seemed the only fit greeting for human life. . . . But now, thank Heaven, all this is altered . . . I look forward with cheerfulness to a life spent in Literature. . . . No wonder I should love the wise and worthy men by whose instructions so blessed a result has been brought about! For these men too there can be no reward like that consciousness that . . . those that are wandering in darkness turn towards them as to . . . loadstars guiding into a secure home. (CL, 4:248)

In discovering his authority and creating a "period of new Spirituality and Belief, in the midst of old Doubt and Denial . . . wherein Rev-
ere is again rendered compatible with Knowledge, and Art and Religion are one,” Goethe had enabled Carlyle to establish his own authority as well (CL, 5:106).18

Because Carlyle’s authority could not take the form of the religious authority of the pious father who had never experienced doubt, he had to imagine his own authority, his ability to become a father, via the model of Goethe. In June 1824, Carlyle wrote Goethe of his need to “pour out before [him], as before a father, the woes and wanderings of a heart whose mysteries you seemed so thoroughly to comprehend” (CL, 3:87; emphasis added).19 From this time forward, Carlyle adopted Goethe as his “spiritual Father” (CL, 4:209; see 248, 408). The authority lost with the death of the father must be recovered in a new father figure. Just as Teufelsdröckh discovers his authority in the moment that he rediscovers the presence of his father in the universe, so Carlyle’s adoption of Goethe as father signified the recovery of authority that validated his literary career.

Yet if Carlyle was to be an authority in his own right, he could not be content to proclaim the gospel of German literature; he must produce his own sacred texts. So long as he could only preach the gospel of German literature and was unable to preach his own, his calling remained an “Egyptian bondage” (CL, 4:102; see 1:310, 2:145–46, 3:4, 10, 23, 5:226, 230, 214, 285–86, 303). Despite protestations that “literature is the wine of life; it will not, cannot, be its food,” he had to find his food, and later Jane’s as well, through writing (CL, 3:244; see 5:237). But he insisted that literature, which was “another name for ... Religion,” could be distinguished from “Periodical writing” (CL, 5:250–51; see 254–55; TNB, 170–71). As early as 1821, he declared that he wanted to “write a book for [his] own convenience,” a longing that persisted in his subsequent desire to create “a Kunstwerk of [his] own” (CL, 1:399, 3:407). Yet, before 1830, he managed only three unsuccessful attempts to write a novel.20 Although he could represent others recovering authority, he could not recover authority himself until he created his own authoritative text. Sartor Resartus was especially important as an attempt to break out of the bounds of political economy. With it, Carlyle not only enacted the mythology of the literary career by producing a narrative in which the hero becomes an author, he also succeeded in creating his first original work of literature. In addition to representing the recuperation of authority in the
career of Teufelsdröckh, Carlyle hoped this work would establish his own authority as a man of letters.

Crisis in the Career: “The Reminiscence of James Carlyle”

The representation of Teufelsdröckh’s achievement of authority did not attain transcendental authority for Carlyle. As we shall see in the following chapter, the authority achieved in Sartor Resartus remains problematic. But even putting that aside, the book could not establish Carlyle’s authority when he completed it in 1831 because he could not get it published, the publishers rejecting, in effect, his authority. Six months after taking the manuscript to London to seek a publisher, he still remained there, but he had given up hope of getting Sartor into print. At this point his father died, and he expressed his anxieties about his tenuous authority in the “Reminiscence of James Carlyle.” Although Thomas Carlyle the narrator attempts to revive and assume the authority of his father by literally authoring him in the memoir and making him the model of his own authority, the themes of loss, exile, and death insistently suggest the radical distance between father and son, and so the impossibility of achieving authority.

In “The Reminiscence of James Carlyle,” as in the previous narratives, the future author’s family resides in a theocratic idyll. Whereas his predecessors represented the dominance of the law over belief, James Carlyle represents the ideal union of belief and the law. His belief is authoritative, both in the sense that it is unshakeable—he is “never visited with Doubt”—and in the sense that it enables him to author or create a religious ethos for his family that he introduces into the Burgher Seceder sect (4; see 9–10). He also participates in and affirms the hierarchical order through which the transcendental authority of religion is transmitted into the polity. Within the family, James Carlyle is the head, a natural aristocrat and communal patriarch who pays his men “handsomely and with overplus,” and he in turn defers to the Scottish gentry because they are the “true ‘ruler[s] of the people’” (11, 8). These hierarchical gradations of authority ordain and sustain a stable and just social order. The Carlyles are ideally situated between the corrupting wealth of aristocracy and the severe poverty that strikes many of their neighbors during the “dear years” of
1799–1800. As in Gaskell’s representation of the pastoral family, the domestic economy of the Carlyles promotes a community of interests uncontaminated by the individualism of political economy.

James Carlyle’s authority as leader of the religious community, respectable citizen, and father is embodied in his skill as a mason, a craft he practiced from the age of fifteen to the age of fifty-seven, some seven years after Carlyle left home for the university. James Carlyle built the house in which his family lived, symbolically constructing the structure of belief through which they lived their lives. His buildings function, like the Bible, as sources of authority, of belief and law; they are sacred “texts . . . of the Gospel of man’s Free-will” (2).21

Although James Carlyle’s buildings function like sacred writings, the fact that they are made of stone distinguishes them from paper documents—most certainly from the writings of his son. Like sacred texts, James Carlyle’s buildings incorporate the transcendental into the material; his labors lay the “foundations” of a heavenly “city” (31). Carlyle emphasizes this process in his discussion of the first project his father worked on, the bridge at Auld Garth. In Sartor Resartus, the “Bridge-builder” is a “Pontifex, or Pontiff,” the “Poet and inspired Maker” of symbols that combine the natural and the supernatural (79, 225). Carlyle draws on the etymological derivation and the historical application of the term pontiff to suggest that the bridge-builder is a religious authority who builds bridges between the realms of everyday life and the supernatural.22 Consequently, Auld Garth bridge, as Carlyle represents it, partakes of the transcendental, remaining unchanged in the fifty years since it was built even though all around it has altered: “The Auldgarth Bridge still spans the water, silently defies its chafing . . . O Time! O Time! wondrous and fearful art thou; yet there is in man what is above thee” (24).

Thus Carlyle makes the very substantiality of masonry—James Carlyle becomes a mason in an era of “Substance and Solidity”—the emblem of his father’s ability to bridge the gulf between the natural and the supernatural (5, 23; see 31). By filling the natural world, a world that consists only of insubstantial “husks” of things, with the reality of divine presence, he gives substance and solidity to that world, a plenitude that manifests itself in the fertility of the pastoral idyll (5; see 28). Work—James Carlyle’s “great maxim” is “That man was created to work”—becomes the human equivalent of divine creation (5). In equating his father’s power and authority with that of
kings, Carlyle emphasizes this procreative capacity: James Carlyle is "a true Workman in this vineyard of the Highest: be his work that of Palace-building and Kingdom-founding, or only of delving and ditching, to me it is no matter" (3). The king and the mason are united in the Palace-builder, a man who creates the building that houses the royal family, but also a father who builds the hereditary dynasty. Furthermore, Carlyle equates the creation of a human society—a king founding a land or nation—with the substantial act of ditching and delving that makes land arable. Not surprisingly, when the "industrious" James Carlyle turns from masoncraft to farming, he remains equally creative: "Two ears of corn are now in many places growing where he found only one" (24, 31). Not only does this activity make the land produce, it is irreversible, leaving a permanent mark: "a portion of this Planet bears beneficent traces of his strong Hand and strong Head" (2). The text of James Carlyle's teaching here takes its most substantial form, and this image of turning wasteland into productive tillage would become a major topos in Carlyle's later writings.

Carlyle's narrative does not so much recover James Carlyle's world in the process of representing it as mourn its passing. The form of the narrative radically separates the narrating son from the narrated father, who exist in parallel narratives, the narrative in which Carlyle writes—referring to London and the present—and the narrative in which his father lives—referring to Ecclefechan and the past. Carlyle wrote the reminiscence at intervals over the four-day period from Wednesday evening, January 25, 1832—the day after he learned of his father's death—to Sunday evening, January 29—two days after the funeral. He records the individual times of writing (Wednesday evening, Thursday morning and evening, Friday during the funeral and in the evening, and Saturday evening) in the text of the reminiscence and comments on events in the present like the funeral and the condolatory visit of the Irvings. These references to the act of writing frame the reminiscence, separating the rememberer from the remembered. While the form of the private memoir and the tone of loss suggest an emotional union with his father, the fact that the intention to write it appears to have been premeditated suggests a more ritualistic distance. When Teufelsdröckh's father dies, Diogenes writes a "Character" in which, like Carlyle, he speaks of his father's "natural ability" and "deserts in life" and makes "long historical inquiries
into the genealogy of the . . . Family” (107). The death of the “real” James Carlyle becomes submerged in the symbolic death of the father already imagined in “Illudo Chartis,” Wotton Reinfred, and Sartor Resartus. Although, in the conclusion of his narrative, Teufelsdröckh appears to recover the lost authority of his father, Carlyle finds that in January 1832 he can only reenact the moment of loss.

While representing James Carlyle as the creator of eternal structures, both domestic and institutional, the reminiscence repeatedly mourns the passing of the world he created. Although that world is timeless and so not subject to decay, the narrator resides in a historical realm, radically cut off from the timeless idyll that exists only in relation to his father. “With him,” Carlyle writes, “a whole three-score-and-ten years of the Past has doubly died for me” (33). Carlyle intimates that this loss predates the literal death of the father when he tells us that his earliest recollection—experienced when he was only two years old—is of the “united pangs of Loss and of Remorse” (29). Although he depicts his father living in a timeless idyll, Carlyle describes his own experience as a series of losses, the death not only of his father, but of two uncles, a grandfather, and his sister Margaret. Like the “doubly orphaned” Teufelsdröckh, Carlyle feels that his father is “doubly” dead.

The reminiscence persistently emphasizes the distance between father and son. The idyll dies with the death of its creator and sustainer, James Carlyle, who lived in “the ruins of a falling Era,” and consequently has not “left his fellow” (13, 7). After his death, the religious faith that is the foundation of the domestic idyll becomes inaccessible. He belongs to the “second race of religious men in Annandale,” but “there is no third rising” (26). Carlyle implies that he should have belonged to that latter generation just as, when he underscores the word “he” in the sentence “He was never visited with Doubt,” he implies that others, including himself, do doubt; as he writes elsewhere: “I cannot remember that I, at that age, had any such force of belief” (19). Just as there is no new religious generation, his father’s respect for the political hierarchy is “perhaps no longer possible,” and just as he contrasts his own doubt with his father’s faith, he recalls his own rebellion against the gentry and social hierarchy when he writes that his father “was there to be governed” and therefore “did not revolt” (31). In the absence of the theocratic combination of religious and
political authority, political economy emerges to ruin masoncraft by substituting "show and cheapness" for "Substance" (31).

Even in Carlyle's own special realm of activity, language, James Carlyle possesses a creative power to make transcendental meaning that is no longer available to his son. Since Carlyle shares the traditional suspicion that tropes substitute persuasive expression for real meaning, he contrasts his father's "clear" language of "full white sunlight" to the obscuring "colours" of rhetoric. James Carlyle's "potent words" make us see the things he speaks of, his "bold glowing style," both "energetic" and "emphatic," "render[ing] visible" his meaning (3—4). He talks as much as the average man, Carlyle concludes, but "by extent of meaning communicated" he says far more because he never uses words for their own sake, always subordinating them to the concrete effects they are intended to produce (6). He is "a man of Action, even with Speech subservient thereto"; like "sharp arrows," his words rend "asunder [the] official sophistries" of the law, enabling him to produce "natural justice" (9, 4, 6).

In this portrait, Carlyle privileges speech over writing, thus differentiating his father's use of language from his own. James Carlyle's language produces the same plenitude as his masonry, while Thomas's words are as ephemeral as the paper on which they are written. Whereas Carlyle has chosen writing as his vocation, his father exhibits his character most fully by "silence" in the midst of dispute (32). Even when he does speak, his words partake more of silence than of speech, since they efface themselves before the truths they represent or the actions they effect; they are articulated silences that give direct access to the transcendental signified. While James Carlyle can complete his silent substantial work and "rest from [his] labours" in the idyll he has created, his son's highly self-referential writings, which draw attention to the surface of writing itself, open up an endless discourse that constantly attempts, but fails, to author the lost idyll (2). Carlyle can only conclude his description of his father's language by lamenting its inaccessibility: "Never shall we again hear such speech as that was . . . Ach, und dies alles ist hin [Ah, and this is all gone forever]!" (3—4).

Carlyle, however, blames his father, not just himself, for the loss of the maternal idyll. Early in the reminiscence, Carlyle insists that it had been his father "exclusively that determined on educating me . . . and
made me whatever I am or may become” (2–3). Like his predecessors, James Carlyle exiles his son from the domestic idyll by forcing on him an urban education, an act that entails his separation from “Mother” and “Home” (29–30). 23 That Carlyle associates the world from which he is exiled with home and mother rather than with his father indicates the extent to which the father is not what Carlyle longs for or misses in his exile. The father is simply the possessor of the idyll who has the power to exile his son from it. The loss of the mother manifests itself by her almost total exclusion from the reminiscence, a variant of the excluded idyll in Carlyle’s earlier narratives. Carlyle was deeply attached to his mother, as his loving letters demonstrate, yet he excluded her not only from the “Reminiscence of James Carlyle” but from The Reminiscences as a whole; he mentions her only briefly, representing her, like the mothers of his German heroes and his fictional characters, as a religious woman descended of “the pious, the just and wise” (27). 24 The mother as idyll cannot be represented or recovered; she can only be mourned for, her absence indicated. Consequently, the reminiscence cannot return him to his mother or her domestic idyll; it can only attempt to cover over the loss of them. 25

When he exiles his son to the urban academy, the father transforms the protective walls of the home into the oppressive walls of the prison. Excluded from the realm of his mother’s belief, the son experiences the law laid down by his father as an “inflexible . . . Authority encircling” the family (28). While this circle, like the house he built for his family, protects, it also encloses and confines, and Carlyle portrays his father as a man enclosed within the encircling walls he has constructed for himself. As opposed to his much-travelled son, he is “limited to a circle of some forty miles diameter,” a circle that becomes a barrier “walling in . . . [his heart] so that his family, even his wife, cannot “freely love him.” The circle finally contracts to a point, the narrow world of a man who, though “genuine and coherent, ‘living and life-giving,’” remains but “half developed” (10). The James Carlyle of the reminiscence is an arbiter of the law concerned with the most trivial transgressions, even his friends’ card playing and his own father’s fondness for reading fiction. From this point of view, he is not so much God the loving progenitor as the “dreaded” God of “wrath,” an “irascible, choleric” man who creates “an atmosphere of Fear” and “awe” rather than love and protection; “To me,” Carlyle concludes, “it was especially so” (6, 10, 28).
Bound within the narrow confines of the law, Carlyle can only establish his authority by rebelling against his father and breaking down the walls of his prison. The “Reminiscence of James Carlyle” suggests the possibility that he might obtain his father’s authority by imitating it. Carlyle insists throughout that he must “imitate” his father, admonishing himself to “write my books as he built his Houses” and to become a “continuation, and second volume of my Father” (2, 7, 33; see 3, 4, 7, 10, 19–20, 33–34; CL, 6:109, 111). But, when the father becomes the law that deprives the son of belief, the son can no longer discover authority, authority that unites law and belief, by imitating the father. He can only discover it by rebelling against the law of the father. Revolution is both an exterior force that intrudes on the domestic idyll, forcing history upon it, and an inner force that enables the prisoner to break out of the prison, to break down the walls of the finite in order to reattain the transcendental: “The great world-revolutions send in their disturbing billows to the remotest creek; and the overthrow of thrones more slowly overturns also the households of the lowly” (30). Just as the revolutionaries in France had torn down the Bastille, so the son tears down the walls of his prison in the hope of building a new home.

Carlyle’s rebellion asserts his own authority, his ability to write books as his father built houses, but it also inserts him into the circuit of desire that constantly undermines authority. In Sartor Resartus, he had claimed superiority to his father by arguing that books are far more lasting than bridges, that the author of a book has “built what will outlast all marble and metal, and be . . . a Temple, and Seminary and Prophetic Mount” (173). But in the “Reminiscence of James Carlyle” he reverses himself, asserting that “a good Building will last longer than most Books, than one Book of a million” (24). If the “Reminiscence of James Carlyle” suggests the son’s need to rebel, it also manifests the son’s anxiety that his rebellion will not lead to the establishment of renewed authority, that Sartor Resartus had not created a new home or a new “Mythus” but only reinforced the walls of his prison.