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Engels before Marx

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For Judy
who encouraged me to write differently

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Abbreviations

CW	Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. *Collected Works in 50 volumes.* London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975–2010.
MEGA	Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. *Gesamtausgabe*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974–continuing.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: When Was Engels?

Abstract Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) is well known as Karl Marx's long-time political partner. Biographers have invariably filtered his life-story to show how he reached that ending. However, the Engels-archive for the decade preceding the inauguration of the partnership in 1845 is extraordinarily rich. This Introduction explains how *Engels Before Marx* is conceived and organized to present young Friedrich's world from his own perspective, and to convey to the reader the excitement of his life and times. Thematic chapters, incorporating clear chronologies, show what the youthful Engels achieved in his own right against formidable odds.

Keywords Biography • Teleology • Karl Marx

Friedrich Engels was certainly Karl Marx's long-time friend, closest political associate, and intellectual partner, albeit—as Engels himself styled this relationship—playing "second fiddle" to the greater man. But all those biographical truths were consolidated as such only after Marx's death in 1883, and indeed very largely by Engels himself. Of course the ongoing relationship, when both were alive, was well known to friends and associates, though interestingly seldom commented on by opponents and detractors, or even the ever-snooping Prussian secret police.

After Engels's death, the survivor and authority on the relationship was no longer re-living it in print, as he certainly was in his living role as Marx's

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literary executor. Engels not only re-published selected works by Marx and edited some of Marx's voluminous manuscripts but also produced his own essays, tracts, pamphlets, occasional pieces, and mountains of correspondence. But all that living activity expired on 5 August 1895, and memoirists and biographers—mostly following Engels's own narrative leadership—retold the tale of the Great Man and the "junior partner." That process constructed both fame and notoriety over more than a hundred years, so that by 2020, the bicentenary of Engels's birth (28 November 1820), we have a very clear picture.

But what exactly is this a picture of? Or rather, how exactly is this picture framed? And in whose interests is it framed that way? And what is left outside the frame? The answers to those questions begin to appear when we consider biography as a genre and biographers as story-tellers, albeit avowedly truthful ones, since the genre prescribes historical validation and intellectual honesty. Biography falls firmly to the non-fiction side of the librarians' and booksellers' binary scheme, ensuring that historical fictionalizing and hagiographical propaganda fail the test. Since 1895 Engels's biography has been firmly linked to Marx's because what makes the younger man important is the older one's fame—and of course notoriety. There are many biographies of Engels that fall within that frame, and of course many questions worth asking about his life, activities, and ideas arise from that consensus.

This book, however, is asking a different question: what was Engels like before he teamed up with Marx? After all Engels didn't grow up knowing that that was how fame would bundle him into biographies. And in any case all the biographies that purport to be his are actually explaining him in relation to Marx and stray from that claim-to-fame at their peril. Readers would not see the point, or rather biographers did not see that there might be some other point to make. The teleology of biography—that is, recounting a story for which we already know the one and only ending—controls the genre, and the genre controls the writers—though not this one, and not in this book.

Let's start the story where young Engels started it, not knowing how it would end, and what fame or notoriety might accrue along the way. Let's try to see the world through his eyes, brave and new as it was in the 1830s, and see what happens.

What Can We Find Out from What We Have Left?

Fortunately for the present genre-busting exercise, we have quite a lot of material conserved and at our disposal. Post-War/Cold War politics generated massive resources for ferreting out materials that Engels's fame had decreed were valuable, hence worthy of publication. These were published within editions that became ever more massive and in some self-defining sense "complete." However, the controlling hand of teleology relegates the pre-Marx materials to subordinating terminologies and skippable placements, such as juvenilia, minor works or experiments, merely "literary" effusions, and the like. All of those materials, now resting rather uncomfortably in official archives and scholarly editions, have a clear function: they work well for us when they foreshadow what is to come. And if they don't, then, well, we can skim through them lightly, and not take them seriously.

So when does conventional biography become literary violence? The young Friedrich didn't write for the archive, and it seems reasonable to presume that he took his writing—and sketching and cartooning—quite seriously. He doesn't seem to have been reaching for the stars, exactly, but in terms of earthly interests, we know that he was ambitious, thoughtful, daring, and trouble-making. He was gifted, acknowledged as such, well traveled, fluent in three living languages, and reasonable in at least one dead one, and most probably two. As period pieces go, it's an interesting collection from a really interesting era. And clearly Engels was an interesting young man.

Possibly the larval Engels didn't partner with Marx in the autumn of 1844 and suddenly turn into a butterfly. Possibly it was somewhat the other way round. Dwelling for a while on that hypothesis we might generate some answers to a set of questions that almost no one ever asks: Why was the twenty-six-year-old Marx so interested in the twenty-three-year-old Engels? Why did Marx stick to the friendship and—rather unusually for him—manage it so well? From the early 1850s to the end of Marx's life (and beyond, in the case of the later generations), there is a fairly obvious answer—financial support via handouts—and, after 1869, a private pension and family support. But Marx was well capable of biting the hand that was feeding him. Something else must figure in the explanation.

The three substantial chapters in this book will put up a case for re-imagining Engels's life going unknowingly forward, rather than haunted by his own—and his biographers' "standard"—version of how he wanted

to be remembered. Readers will find that the 1830s and 1840s—seen through young Friedrich's eyes—weren't all that different from how things look today in significant and troubling respects. That historical discovery for us might represent the exhilaration of novelty, though soundly tempered by a realization that, after nearly 200 years, things really should have become quite a lot better.

There is also a case here for tossing a hefty dose of skepticism in the direction of biographical certainties, namely that we already know for all time what's important about someone and what isn't. And moreover when that importance is assigned to a life, then it has to be assessed near the end. The end isn't of course necessarily old age: youthful death imparts a mandala of its own, and a glowing regard for what's left, given what might have been. However, the young Engels lived to be seventy-four, so "died young" isn't available in his case. And Engels didn't look back to his earlier life and works before he overshadowed himself—just as he turned twenty-four—with his collaborator.

Being and Time

Had the elderly Engels gone back to these manuscripts and published works—and sketches and watercolors—with any degree of seriousness, he would have destabilized the "second fiddle" narrative and contradicted the self-effacing persona he cultivated in that way. Perhaps it was—or wasn't?—an accident, but according to his last wishes, he even erased himself bodily. That instruction precluded a gravesite, or indeed much in the way of speeches at the crematorium. Engels directed that his ashes should be scattered into the sea off Eastbourne, on the south coast of England, facing the English Channel. That extraordinary self-immolation into a memorialized relationship of self-imposed subordination sealed the fate of the "early" materials that we will investigate here, remembering that at the time of writing they were contemporaneous—not "early." Those papers and publications are now carefully conserved but firmly cordoned off in the collected works as even less than incidental, since Marx isn't there at all yet, giving Engels a life.

Once that Marx-centric exclusion zone removes these works from serious scrutiny, we lose a living human individual, and in this book we will give resurrection a try. So when was Engels? For our purposes, the answer is 1836–1845. However, rather than guide the reader through yet another *Bildungsroman* of youthful and sentimental education, succeeding

chapters in this revivification will adopt a thematic approach to a decade's worth of materials, such as we have preserved. Rather than chronological "development," which presupposes a teleological goal, it seems fair to consider a well-developed personality, given the short, if youthful, timespan, and even starting the story at age sixteen. At that point in his final year at school, and knowing that he wasn't enrolled to prepare for university entrance, young Friedrich is already looking over and beyond the grammar school gates.

The chapter themes are themselves non-chronological, showcasing a multi-faceted and ambitious young intellect. Chronology will feature within each discussion, as and when it is essential to keep the reader signposted. The object is to keep this writer—and his readers—inside Engels's head, looking out to make an impact, rather than keeping ourselves outside, looking down at him. From that latter perspective he looks like a collection of dead artifacts that we'd have to try hard to revive. Of course the former approach is an imaginative exercise, but no more so than organizing artifacts into a strict chronology, and a life into an already-knowing teleology. That is why Chap. 2 opens with "Imagination."

CHAPTER 2

Imagination

Abstract Taking imagination as a theme, this chapter shows how apparently conventional topics and interests occurring in the compositions and letters of the teenage Engels were connected by him to the clandestine political struggles in his German context. That context was one of religious repression and authoritarian monarchism. Writing anonymously, young Friedrich learned how to engage with progressive, liberalizing politics, which necessarily proceeded in coded fashion. Messages concerning social change were encoded in poetry, music, art, and fiction, which he pursued when working for his family's business in Bremen. Protected by pseudonyms, he achieved publication in this adult world from age sixteen onwards, and with increasing success and notoriety. Denied university entrance by his commercially minded father, Engels educated himself and urged former schoolfriends to join his "virtual" university.

Keywords Pietism • Liberalism • Young Germany • Romanticism • Orientalism

The youthful Engels was highly imaginative, projecting himself into other worlds via historical narrative and fictional writing, both prose and poetry. This may not seem very startling to today's readers, accustomed to liberal education, imaginative arts, and a culture of creativity. What we have of Engels's youthful works and letters can look very clichéd, even hackneyed

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and ingenuous. But they look that way because nearly 200 years of recursive academic and cultural labors have explored and packaged romanticism, nationalism, and liberalism. Those ideas and episodes have been rendered objects of study, safely distant from today's supposedly different concerns and superior ways of understanding them.

Our familiar ways of understanding ourselves, however, are a direct result of the "culture wars" that, from an impressively early age, the very young Engels got himself involved in. What often gets lost in today's historicism—without which we would not have our *post facto* categories and conceptions—is the edgy immediacy of the ideas and enthusiasms of the 1830s and 1840s. And today in an age of legalized free speech, and only lightly regulated digital communications, the distinctly risky thrill of communicating unorthodox, even heterodox, views to others in print is hard to capture. A liberalism of romantic nationalism was not, in its day, how it looks to us now.

No doubt the young Engels wasn't unique, and we know that he expected his correspondents, and indeed certain reading publics, to get the message and spread the word. But he could hardly expect the reward of fame or the fun of notoriety—as a budding poet, writer, journalist, and self-evidently a "free-thinker"—because he had to cover his tracks with anonymity and pseudonyms. How many teenagers in the German states and state-lets of the time were similarly engaged? Young Friedrich may not have been unique, but as such a youthful figure he was in a tiny minority of a very tiny minority. He first achieved publication at the age of sixteen, so far as we know, and there is some hint later from a family friend that his writerly ambitions hit the local paper even earlier.

Teleologies, Biographies, Exclusions

The historical record, as we have it, and the exigencies and economics of archival preservation, are both teleologically selective. Much more attention goes to those who make it to a hall of fame (or infamy), and thereby become subjects for study, than to those understood by historians and educators to be of little, if any, significance. In that way artifacts of all kinds, provided they relate to the great and the good (or bad), acquire a scholarly and even market value. Those who don't make the cut, don't get celebrated (or denigrated), and so their legacy items don't get collected. And indeed, if they are very, very bad, such items get defaced and destroyed.

What is interesting about the Engels archive of youthful materials, first collected up and selectively published in the early years of the twentieth century, is that after he became somewhat famous (or marginally notorious) in his late 60's, there was still so much to be found and archived from adolescent days, even if there are a few missing items, "known unknowns." Even after *another* hundred years or so, boyhood artifacts still turn up and acquire an aura in their physicality, if not generally in their substance, which is what we are dealing with here.

Engels's boyhood years were spent in the Wupper Valley, which lies some 35 km east of Düsseldorf in what is now Germany. Between those years from 1820 to 1845, and before any suggestion of national fame (or infamy), which came along in the 1870s, we have some thirty or forty years. During those decades, unremarkable items would very likely have been prime candidates for disposal. That interval seems quite a long time for successive generations to keep papers and letters by or about someone who, from the local perspective, had apparently been as ordinary as anyone else, but had departed pretty much completely in body and spirit. Hometown family and friends were surely not just saving only his papers and letters from the outset but rather preserving family and localized collections of papers taking in other contemporaries as well. So in the Engels archive we are presumably looking at the results of a process of extraction and collection—from rather miscellaneous caches of materials—that has been guided by the reception of one individual understood retrospectively as "history."

Other individuals, but only those with a testified connection to the biographical subject, will thus feature merely as "walk-ons" in a life of historical interest. They and their papers would be lucky to become "context," and in the Engels archive we have some of those materials collected and conserved. But we don't have anything like even a representative sample from the milieu to work from, and thus we lack a good picture of all the characters in the setting. Rather we have a portrait in a frame, freezing the action, isolating the subject as already unique.

Unsurprisingly, museum-making for Engels as a biographized "life" is an activity centered on a former family house, repurposed—since the 1970s—for the curious, the faithful, and the scholarly. Young Friedrich's actual *Geburtshaus* or "birth-house," the parental residence, was bombed to destruction in the Second World War. Rather symptomatically for the process, his grandfather's house nearby does the job today, since it is fairly similar of the era, and from infancy Engels certainly knew it well.

As an intergenerational enterprise of early industrialists, the Engels clan built themselves a family compound of residential and office accommodation, warehousing, and the like, very close to the local yarn factories that provided their wealth. Large caches of family papers and memorabilia handed down through the generations are apparently not unusual in the era and in the area, as we have noted. But teleological selection for display and publication ensures that we see only holograph materials or testimonies deemed relevant to the biographical subject himself.

Thus, we have young Friedrich's teenage letters to various sisters (he had four) but not their replies. If we had those we could see something more of the situation into which he projected his urbane and borderline irreligious interests and anecdotes. A very few of his father's letters about him make the archive but not the family correspondence generally or replies from their correspondents. So we learn that the elder Engels—viewing his son from a piously Christian and relentlessly commercial perspective—always had religious and social conformity in mind as the way to heavenly and earthly rewards. But that testimony is a hint, rather than a picture. Most biographers move swiftly on in teleological terms, consigning the elder Friedrich to a snapshot characterization as pretty thoroughly repressive.

Conventional contextualizations of the social and political setting in the twin factory towns of Barmen and Elberfeld locate the Wupper Valley historically in the Duchy of Berg or regionally as the *Bergisches Land*. Since the early eighteenth century, the area had developed as an enclave of water-powered textile manufacture nestled in provincial, near-medieval peasant agriculture. Subject then to authoritarian rule within the Kingdom of Prussia, it is easily absorbed by biographers into a tale of backwoods hostility to enlightenment values. That binary comes with historical hindsight and forms a convenient frame through which to parse the Engels family into reactionaries and a sole persistent rebel, our subject and hero. In that pattern the somewhat enlightened local schoolmaster emerges as a cautious liberal and crypto-rationalist, and young Friedrich as a willing protégé and bright spark.

But what that conventional prologue misses, and what is hard to recover now, is the day-to-day conflictual and "edgy" way that that binary was constructed at the time through struggles and upsets, decisions and compromises. Catching all of that in a narrative would make an Engels biography a struggle for the reader rather than a page-turner. To be the latter, writers need to follow the rhetorical conventions and tropes that mark out

biography as a genre and generate readability. However, I think we can make an effort here to look around the edges of the genre and outside the biographical box, even if this requires some exercise of our imaginations.

What we might see in a more complete correspondence and further papers of the milieu is more evidence of debates, try-ons, squabbles, paths-not-taken, misperceptions, anxieties, subterfuges, and escapes. Unfortunately, museum-teleology obscures this process and biographical singularity rules, so we have for the most part only Engels's words to go by, and thoughts from others in so far as he recounts them back to the writer. Whether we lack the written replies in his correspondence because they are lost, or because they are not transcribed and available outside the Engels-Haus archive or elsewhere, is unclear. What is clear is that none of Friedrich's seven siblings or schoolfriend correspondents took up any of his—for the time—wild ideas, risky pursuits, and rebellious choices to anything like the degree that he did.

The introductions to the English translations of these works, and to the *Gesamtausgabe* complete works edition, as well as the prefaces to prior German-language publications, take the strictly teleological view. That set of presumptions decrees that what little there is of interest in the youthful Engels is exclusively found in ideas and ambitions that fit into the often politicized and Marx-centric views of the editors.

The English edition of the *Collected Work*s by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels—note the teamwork and clear priority—starts the Engels story with the *second* volume of the set, and gives the cover dates 1838–1842. But that volume also includes materials from 1833 to 1837, out of chronological order and denominated "Early Literary Experiments." That teleological segregation expresses the kind of judgment that contrasts with my project here: seeing Engels's world from his own perspective, even if he was only thirteen when the archival record begins. Or at least trying to do this, as an alternative to the subordinating biographical tradition, or anyway as an interpretive experiment.

Not only are the 1830s and early 1840s a lost world to us, but for many readers in the Anglophone world, the Germanic histories east of the Rhine will be quite foreign, or anyway viewed from a west-of-there perspective. It is also the case for nearly all of us—I am surmising—that such youthful perspectives are largely lost as well, or at any rate difficult to recover. In search of lost time has some currency as a writerly enterprise, but it could in principle apply beyond oneself and in extension to others, even if working from textual artifacts rather than personal memories.

Codes and Controversies

Though the archival record is an artifact of the exigencies of preservation and of an Engels-centric subject-focus, both of which constitute the hierarchical strategies and brute facts of selection and omission, there are nonetheless some observations and deductions that can plausibly be sustained. Writing affectionate schoolboy verses about and to his maternal grandfather, the barely adolescent Friedrich thanks the older storyteller for spinning tales of mythical heroes: Jason, Hercules, and Cadmus.[1] All very conventional, perhaps merely dutiful—we don't know—but from what we do know about his family's pietism and Bible-centric view of reading and education, Engels's—and evidently maternal grandfather Bernhard van Haar's—choice of "secular" stories wasn't the norm in those circles. Today it seems anodyne and typically small-boy-ish, but the absence of piety and the celebration of another and obviously non-Christian world has a resonance.

Remember that this is Engels's own and for us quite isolated train of thought—certain heroes that he singles out for praise—so here the letter is not ready material from which to connect Engels very early on to, say, Dutch enlightenment thinking. Maybe his grandfather—beloved evidently—was like that and a crucially important window through which to view a non-Christian world. Or maybe he wasn't. What we do know is that at age thirteen Engels picked out this detail to the exclusion, perhaps, of other more conventional narrations and allusions. Or to put it another way, Friedrich's father, as we will see, had little patience with such wanderings away from Gospel truths and redemptive certainties.

The reconciliation of Christian teaching with classical learning had been underway, and just as certainly resisted—often violently—for some centuries in Western Europe. Suffice to say that in the Engels household church-going and sermon-reading made those fancies problematic. The hero-worship in young Friedrich's letter makes an interesting contrast with the only work of Christian piety ever penned by him that survives, and none other is mentioned in the records that we have. The strictly doctrinal musings on the divine incarnation and the redemption of humanity are worked there into a hymn-like structure, which suggests an academic-religious exercise. This was apparently done when Engels was sixteen, just before leaving school in the summer of 1837, as his family prescribed.[2] However, we know a little as to how young Friedrich, when he was

thirteen going-on-fourteen, got into that school in the first place, the basis on which he was admitted, and the reasons for getting him out of the family house in Barmen.

Friedrich senior's choice to send the junior Engels off to boarding school in October 1834, albeit fairly nearby in Elberfeld, was carefully taken. In a letter to his wife—who was visiting her ailing father—the elder Engels refers to his first-born as "more polite, outwardly" but still evidently causing distress: "not even the fear of punishment seems to teach him unconditional obedience." He relates that again he has found a lending library volume, hidden away, this one concerning knights in the thirteenth century.[3] The pattern here for young Friedrich seems to be anything-but-the-Bible, with an urge to imagine a world with struggles other than the individualized Christian ones with temptation and purity. He is also imagining manners and morals quite out of line with Gospel-based perspectives, or even with such biblical tales of heroism as there are in the Old Testament.

It is easy today to marginalize the Engels family's faith-based fundamentalism as extreme and eccentric, and peculiar to a tiny minority—or only visible to us in that way, perhaps. But in the Wupper Valley at the time it was very respectably mainstream and actively interventionist. It was not, however, the exclusive repository of Christian belief and practice, since there were other Protestant sects, as well as official Lutheranism and tolerated Catholicism, present in the twin towns, as was segregated and disadvantaged Jewry and Judaism.

While today's readers would likely react with suspicion at the stirrings of Germanic nationalism in Engels's reading, the resonance in provincial Prussia, as throughout the scattered dozens of German-speaking and acculturated swathes of central Europe, was quite unwelcome to both churches and states. A unifying nationalism was quite the opposite of the dug-in duchies and patchwork of principalities, independent cities, and kingdoms where ruling elites brooked no opposition outwardly, and did their best—as did Engels's father—to make sure that inwardly strict obedience and pious conformity were uncritically absorbed.

The Diet of the German Confederation represented ruling families and their ancestral landholdings in a loosely coalitional "court" politics of greater and lesser powers ruling by divine sanction. Such few post-Napoleonic constitutions as existed in the major states were subject to unilateral abrogation, and were fully aligned with top-down sovereignty and submissive subjecthood. Advocacy of popular sovereignty, public

participation in politics, and non-elite electoral mechanisms—other than the very exclusionary and thoroughly hierarchical feudal advisory diets and Hanseatic commercial civic corporations—were all out of the question. Or in other words, popular sovereignty was the treasonous inverse of the *ancien regime* in the German states and state-lets, all of which guarded their past, present, and future with no little zeal.

In that context, the evocation, indeed celebration of popular folktales, the advocacy of a unity among German-speaking "peoples," and any emotional appeals to histories of political change-making, were subversive and proto-revolutionary. Histories of political change-making were themselves emotional flashpoints, even if they told the story of the present regime and social order in flattering terms, because what had once been changed could arguably change again. That kind of narrative was particularly controversial if the change arose "from below" and thus with popular participation, and also if it arose through more organized collective action, even though elitist in nature and only faintly rebellious.

The twentieth century turned that kind of nationalist folklore and romantic effusion, and anti-feudal, anti-authoritarian populism, around in ferociously destructive ways. The rather accidentally united "Germany" (i.e. *das Deutsches Reich*) of the post-1871 imperial constitution did not arrive through revolution, but rather through Prussian *force-majeure* within the state and state-let configuration. Those moves definitively demarcated imperial Germany from the Austrian Empire (i.e. *das Österreich*). The cultural evocation of German-ness, which was not the same as Prussian-ness (as many provincial localists would have it), then reappeared in various twentieth-century forms, notoriously as Hitler's *Ein Volk, Ein Reich*. That top-down sovereignty was then lodged exclusively in *Ein Führer*, and a unification of German peoples became the eastward *Anschluß* and genocidal *Lebensraum*.

However, from the radical perspective of the 1830s, through which Germanic nationalism and nation-state formation worked *against* political and religious authoritarianism, we turn to another of Engels's schoolboy efforts. This one presents a more contemporary version of that political process, and from source material that is easier for modern Anglophone readers to assimilate. "A Pirate Tale" appears in a school history notebook, showing us how histories alternative to biblical ones, and values rather similarly distant from Christian piety, merge in an imaginative literary exercise.

Engels's opening line tells us that the year is 1820 and the setting simultaneously contemporary and classically Greek: a modern ship off the island of Salamis, not far from Athens. The prose drama unfolds with considerable dialogue and geographically precise scene-setting, viewed from shipboard on the Aegean. This is clearly not a school assignment, yet a considerable amount of inspiration came from history teaching there. And evidently, young Friedrich was finding time to pursue his interest in the struggle for Greek independence from the Ottoman rulers of the Turkish Empire. That Byronic struggle for national independence of a "people" is much more fully inscribed into modern Anglophone cultures than the aggrandizing ventures of Teutonic knights or other elements of mythical romance, yet for the schoolboy there are distinct overlaps.

For the sixteen-year-old Engels, the heroics of liberalizing romanticisms were hardly historical, mostly taking place within his own lifetime—the liberalizing, radical poets Percy Bysshe Shelley died in 1822 and Lord Byron in Greece in 1824. Moreover, the Greek struggles for liberation were still ongoing at the time of writing in 1837, so "A Pirate Tale"—as editorially titled—merges his imagination with modern politics. Read allegorically the story is wholly on-side with struggle against tyranny, and wholly opposed to unconditional obedience to authority-by-tradition. The plot is convoluted enough but involves subterfuge—a trading ship is really running arms to national freedom-fighters under the noses of their alien imperial rulers. Our youthful Greek hero, seeking vengeance for his father, murdered by Turks, himself falls under the brutal and tyrannous hammer of the oppressor in a tragic death.[4]

The notebook containing the tale was intended for ancient history class notes, and preserves pen-and-ink drawings of the pyramids and the sphinx. But for Engels the 1820s weren't ancient, and were barely history, and the setting had nothing much to do with Barmen or Elberfeld, or with concerns that were common there in public or private. Neither Greeks nor Turks, nor nation-building nationalisms, were places where anyone's thoughts were meant to be, though clearly some news and views were trickling through. Engels's imagination at sixteen ran with what he could get, and it ran in certain highly problematic directions.

Looking ahead for a year or two to his very near future, we can see Engels reading Byron's melancholy epic *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* in English, and working for quite a time on translations of Shelley's transgressive poem *The Sensitive Plant* for publication, though acquiring only letters of rejection.[5] Another supposedly progressive poet-publisher,

Ferdinand Freiligrath, then turned him down as well. This was "not because of the poetry," but because of Freiligrath's political views: "First of all, he is not such a liberal, and secondly, they arrived too late," as Engels later explained to a schoolfriend in early 1841.[6]

However, back at school, time was running out for young Friedrich, as his school-leaving reference (25 September 1837) relates. While the headmaster clearly intended the report to reflect well on the school and its capacity to turn out properly educated young men—such an education for young women was unthinkable in provincial towns, and indeed even in larger German ones—he mentions that he himself "stood particularly close to" this commendable pupil, then age sixteen, and that his achievements, detailed by subject, were undertaken within the firm framework of Christian teaching and piety. There is an air of regret, though, in the comment that young Friedrich was "induced to choose" business as his profession, rather than the university studies "he had earlier intended."[7]

The controlling hand of Friedrich's father is evident here, as is his firm rejection of imagination and "other worlds" beyond the home truths of money-making and church-going. About the former Friedrich was to learn on the job—certainly not from text-books, if there were any—and about the latter the elder Engels maintained his hopes, albeit in vain. Sending the trainee-lad from the pious security and strict surveillance of Barmen, where he was working at the local headquarters of the family enterprise, to the port of Bremen, an independent state-let in the Germano-Austrian-Hanseatic archipelago, was a major paternal mistake. At age seventeen, the youthful Engels departed for the wider world in the summer of 1838.

Freedom and Fame

The Free City of Bremen was an independent entity among the many states and state-lets that were somewhat consolidated in the German Confederation of the post-Napoleonic period. It governed itself under a self-selected republican-style oligarchy drawn from the merchant-class and wealthy families of the town. Young Friedrich was posted there to learn the export-import angles on successful manufacturing, and from his effervescent letters home, we can tell that he obviously enjoyed the contrast.

However, today's readers should bear in mind that freedom in the free city was tightly controlled on the authoritarian and religious principles entrenched throughout the German states and state-lets, where ruling

elites monopolized and controlled opinion and discouraged public discussion. And as Engels remarked in a letter to his sister Marie: "What is unpleasant is that in the evenings the city gates are closed when it gets dark and whoever wants to come in or go out has to pay a toll."[8] Today this may seem quaint and Disneyesque, but at the time it was standard-issue medievalism and zealously protected as local tradition incarnate.

In those regimes, therefore, art, music, literature, and the like were avocations, but only when conducted in the approved "polite" manner. However, they were also coded modes of communication where politics could happen, even if it looked like culture, and even if it was subversively pushing the boundaries of opinion by pushing the boundaries of taste. Pushing the boundaries of the latter was thus a metaphor for pushing the boundaries of the former. All these modes of somewhat "edgy" expression were folded, by a very few, into a prospective nation-building liberalism of popular culture. A celebration of popular culture, rather than "court" or "civic" culture, was perforce a coded prelude to popular sovereignty.

As we have seen, young Friedrich was already prepared for this milieu. His excited commentary on a symphony concert sums this up: "[Ludwig van] Beethoven's Symphony [no. 5] in C Minor … and the Eroica [Symphony in E-flat Major] are my favourites." He says that he is "going to hear them not just in the piano arrangement," as at Barmen, "but played by the full orchestra." "What a symphony it was last night!" For young Friedrich this was, in his own words, "a tremendous, youthful, jubilant celebration of freedom."[9]

At the opening of the nineteenth century, Beethoven had been inspired by Napoleon's eastward wars to liberate subject peoples from medieval authoritarianism, hence the heroic revolutionary inspiration for a work that was revolutionary enough already in musical terms. The story that Beethoven had angrily scratched-out his original dedication, having judged that the Emperor had betrayed the cause of popular sovereignty, circulated widely in subsequent decades and doubled-up the symbolic content and political meaning. Those works by Beethoven heralded the rebellious urge to instantiate the rights of man and the citizen, though obviously not in so many words. Indeed, those were words that could not be said in public, and were certainly risky ones to voice in private.

Getting such sentiments into print in these highly censored, authoritarian regimes was problematic in itself and posed distinct risks. We are dealing here with an underground or alternative press, tolerated but on sufferance, because its writers and readers were engaged in promoting

controversy rather than pious respectability. Thus they were troubling approved values and judgments. Unsurprisingly, Engels's first ever published work, apart from an earlier work of translation done in Barmen, appeared anonymously in a Bremen literary supplement, and succeeding ones anonymously or under pseudonyms.

Throughout this period Engels's letters record, for his schoolfriends, the indignation and frustration that he felt and experienced with the varied regimes of censorship across the German states and state-lets. This comes up in his commentaries for his correspondents on those established *litterateurs* whose publications often went on tortuous journeys to find a printer. Liberalizing German authors sometimes had to set up in exile in France, Belgium, or Switzerland, where censorship of foreign language publications, or anyway writing by foreign expatriates and exiles, was perforce of less interest.

Writing to his schoolfriend Wilhelm Graeber in Berlin, Engels says: "I am now a large-scale importer of banned books into Prussia." And four copies of works by one of his liberalizing heroes, Ludwig Börne, and six volumes of a critical work on Prussian history—"most strictly prohibited"—are ready for dispatch to Barmen. Explaining that Wilhelm's residence within the kingdom had prohibited him from fully appreciating the new German literature, where aesthetic and political innovation were melded together, Engels noted that there "the works of [Karl] Gutzkow, etc., first require a special and rarely granted permission."[10] "A few days ago," he continues, "I read in the paper that Hegelian philosophy has been banned in Prussia," and that a famous Hegelian lecturer in Halle has been ordered by ministerial rescript to suspend his lectures. "It was also intimated to several junior Halle lecturers," Engels says, "that they cannot expect appointments."[11] Philosophy, even the recondite and highly academic philosophy of G.W.F. Hegel, was part of the subversive mix.

Young Friedrich had his own problems in this regard. His *Odysseus Redivivus*, a satirical epic which has not survived, delighted his publisher who "will take the first novel from my factory." But, Engels continues, "the censorship! … let them cross out as much as they like … *I* don't commit infanticide on my own thoughts." These cuts are "always disagreeable, but also honourable," he writes: "Scarred warriors are the best." Censorship is liberal in Hamburg, another free city, he comments, noting that the liberalizing *Telegraph für Deutschland*, recently relocated there by the editor, Gutzkow, had published several pieces of very bitter sarcasm, "but not a letter has been crossed out."[12] Censorship in the Austrian

Empire, Engels said to Friedrich, the other Graber brother, was distinctly worse.[13]

And it didn't take much. Engels writes to Friedrich Graber that a textbook study of world history was banned in Prussia: "it says that in 1814 our majestic snot-nose in Berlin," the current king Friedrich Wilhelm III, had recognized the Spanish constitution of 1812. Yet in 1823 he had sent the French into Spain to bring back to the Spaniards "the noble gift of the Inquisition and torture." "I hate him with a mortal hatred," Engels wrote to his friend, "and if I didn't despise him, the shit, I would hate him still more."[14]

Poetical satire today is something of a dead genre, though novelistic satires, and moving into cinematic and social media, are going strong. But in the early nineteenth century the metaphorical and periphrastic poetical mode suited ironic and coded communication, and it nodded to high-minded classical traditions that were suitably distanced from direct and ordinary speech. "The Bedouin" was young Friedrich's debut set of verses in ten stanzas, and on the surface an unremarkable evocation of a then fashionable orientalism. Nowadays, this trope is distinctly out of fashion, given late twentieth- and early twenty-first century postcolonial thinking. But as Engels explained in a letter to his schoolfriends, the Graeber brothers Friedrich and Wilhelm, there was more to it than oriental exoticism and Rousseauean pathos.

The main idea, Engels wrote, is to contrast the Bedouin, even in their present degraded condition, with the audience, "who are quite alien to these people." And there is a contrast within the contrast, namely the "proud and free" Bedouin appear on stage as captive acrobats, ready to jump "at money's beck and call." Moreover, as Engels says in his letter, the poem contains "a delicate irony" in implying that the "merry audience" is incapable of discriminating between the reactionary playwright August von Kotzebue (notoriously assassinated in 1819 by a liberal-minded student) and Friedrich Schiller, who was for liberals the "good principle for our theatre." The circulation of liberalizing ideas in the German states and state-lets dated back to the 1780s and Schiller's revolutionary play *Die Räuber* ("The Robbers"), which had sensationally challenged the boundaries of language, theatrical representation, conventional morality, social stratification, and authoritarian rulership. Schiller is unmentioned in Engels's poem, but for those attuned to political controversy, he was the obvious but still controversial contrast. Those in the

know would read an approving mention of Kotzebue as a coded reference to the sentiments attributed to his political opposite.

Engels's view of his poem is that it was expressing contrasting cultures—the *faux*-sophisticates of the audience, with the Bedouin sons of the desert, but as they were when they were home and free, not slaves of civilisation. He objected that an editor had changed the ending so that the main contrast for the reader was simply grief at their pathetic appearance on stage, which was the less interesting trope. The poet's own superior trope was rather more the anti-authoritarian evocation of freedom as itself a contrast to the aesthetic philistinism of the audience. And for Engels aesthetic philistinism implied hostility or indifference to revolutionary values. The deep double-coding in this short poem evokes Schiller's coded poem *An die Freude* ("Ode to Joy"), where *Freude* was widely taken to imply *Freiheit*, that is, freedom from tyrants and tyrannies.[15]

While enraged at the way an editor had mangled his poem, Engels also turned his critical eye back onto his own verses, saying that it gives one "a peculiar feeling to see one's verses in print like this." Seeing them with a clearer eye than when they were handwritten, he critiqued his own work for repetition and dissonance, and for lack of clarity in expression. He closes his letter to the Graeber brothers with the full and correct version of the poem, and appends lengthy order-lists for transmission to local booksellers, to be paid for by his Old Man.

The books that Engels had in mind were folktale collections, cultivated by rebellious-minded *litterateurs* as an implied criticism of high-minded philistine authoritarianism. Those tales were taken to be an evocation of commonsensical people and values, extending to jester-ish truth-telling and trickster satires of misrule. Rather more seriously, and for him a new study, he asked for works by the philosopher Jacob Böhme, an early seventeenth-century mystic. Those writings had been taken up over the ensuing centuries by a variety of unorthodox Christians, and then eventually by anti-conformist romantics and radicals.[16]

The point here is not so much the content of Böhme's alchemical and neo-Platonist speculations on divinity, sin, and redemption, but the fact that as a mystic he was thinking well beyond long-established Christian orthodoxies and well outside academic-religious establishments, so therefore he could serve as a rebel icon. Engels was challenging the boundaries that were in place, and conventionally accepted, that demarcated acceptable authors from "weirdos," as it were. We might say today that he was interested in investigating "alternative" ways of knowing. Nothing much

resulted that appears for us in the record, but then the point for us here is the curiosity and import of the search itself, set against the risks involved, which were disapproval and ostracism. Young Friedrich was perfectly well acquainted with the heavy-handed enforcement of incuriosity and normalization of credulity.

"To the enemies," published in Bremen early the following year, when Engels was just eighteen, was rather more successful as satire, a genre commonly used to blind-side literal-minded censorship. It was brilliantly successful at generating comment, not least by building on a current topical controversy, albeit within the rather rarefied limits of the time and place. Engels succeeded in publishing an ironically written poem in the very newspaper that the poem itself was satirizing. Writing to his brother Hermann, and again to his sister Marie, Friedrich declared his opinion of the *Bremer Stadtbote*, edited by "a very great blockhead." That paper had been in rival conflict with his favored broadsheet, the *Bremisches Unterhaltungsblatt*. To enter the fray, Engels was writing poems while at the office, praising the blockhead's paper to the skies, but, as he said to his correspondents, the poem was "all mockery."[17]

Engels's view was that the *Stadtbote* had been publishing the editor's nonsense on all manner of subjects, so while excoriating an unnamed "He," Engels parodied the editor's supposed views on similar subjects, such as botany, emotion, and truth. The young author was then overjoyed when the feckless editor of the *Stadtbote* published the poem as a straightforward defense of such rambling thoughts. The favored *Unterhaltungsblatt* then published Engels's poem as a straightforward satire on a rival, thus creating notoriety for the poet, "Th. Hildebrandt," Engels's pseudonym.[18] That name was probably an allusion to Germano-Scandinavian epics set in the fifth and sixth centuries, Hildebrand being fictional (= "battle sword"), so far as is known, but associated as a saga-character with the non-fictional Theodoric, king of the Goths.

Quite what the Engels siblings made of this kind of fame has not been preserved.

Music and Metaphor

What is evident, not just from these efforts, but from Engels's newsy letters to siblings and schoolfriends, is the extent to which he was determined on continuing his education and self-development. Engels was gaining acculturation to a milieu distinctly different from the religiosity,

conformism, and self-denying, but self-regarding pieties of Barmen bores. His disdain for learning the family business folded into his disdain for philistines in general, not an uncommon view among the would-be *literati* and *artistes*. This is a theme picked up explicitly in Robert Schumann's *Davidsbündlertänze*, composed in 1837 just a year before Engels arrived in Bremen. The sixteen piano pieces evoke fictional heroes who, like the youthful David of the Old Testament, would defeat the philistines, musical and otherwise.

Schumann and his circle were composers of, and champions of, "new music," publishing defenses of Frédéric Chopin, Hector Berlioz, and themselves in the journal *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, beginning in 1835. While this contemporaneity is more in the realm of *Zeitgeist* then explicit evidential reference, it illustrates the point that in the coded radicalism of the post-Napoleonic, and politically reactionary times, the arts were the proto-public space—limited, contested, censored, and problematic—through which authoritarian neo-medievalism was being challenged.

Young Friedrich embarked on a fairly short course in musical composition, self-taught, as recounted in his letters to Marie: "I have now started composing and am working on choral[e]s," followed by a key of D harmonization of "A Mighty Fortress is our God." The Lutheran chorale hymn-tune was a conventional subject for four-part harmonization at this beginner level, but Engels did it for two voices only, since, as he said, "four voices is still too hard."[19]

The following week Engels was working on another chorale exercise, alternating bass and soprano lines, missing out the accompaniment and acknowledging the Hymn Book for the tune. "Listen," he writes, "composing is hard work; you have to pay attention to so many things"; harmony and progression give "a lot of trouble."[20] And in the spring to his brother Hermann he writes: "I continue to practise my singing and composing regularly," offering a one-line tune in triple time.[21]

And along the way Engels joined a choir, though note that these secular societies—singing and sometimes banqueting private clubs—were also often operating as clandestine discussion groups. They were thus objects of police snooping and so at risk of censure and closure. Engels writes: "a dreadfully boring day. Half dead from slaving in the office. Then choir practice, enormous enjoyment."[22] Writing to his sister he says: "The day after tomorrow we are going to perform [Felix] Mendelssohn's *Paulus* ["St Paul"], the best oratorio written since Handel's death."[23] Even if that work were put on in Barmen (highly unlikely, given the lack of resources),

it is doubtful if others from the Engels family would have attended. Public concerts signified frivolity, and in this case—a dramatic text adapted from Holy Scripture—an intolerable sacrilege. In Bremen, there was also the opera. "Tonight," he writes to sister Marie, "they are giving *Die Zauberflöte*" ("The Magic Flute," by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart); "I hope it will be really good."[24]

Young Friedrich's musical ambitions then took a more literary turn. This was rather a perfect blending of his recognition that composition wasn't his *forté* with his ambition to use dramatic verse to encode a political message. Versification could be done with rather less hard study and much quicker results, and Engels had already had considerable practice. This musical project also seems to have involved an element of peer-group collaboration. The unfinished manuscript libretto "Cola di Rienzi" was discovered only in 1974 and so didn't make it into the English-language *Collected Works*. Whether it would have crossed the chronological line there (1837/1838) between "Early Literary Experiments" and "Works" (1838 onwards) we'll never know. The operatic collaboration seems to date from 1840 to 1841 and to have involved schoolfriends, one of whom—Gustav Heuser—was assigned to write the music.[25] Engels's manuscript libretto is apparently all that survives, though given teleological selectivity for the archive, as previously discussed, we can't be certain.

Edward Bulwer Lytton's historical romance *Rienzi, Last of the Roman Tribunes*, was for Engels just recently published in 1835. It circulated in a German translation and also in a dramatization of 1837, which young Friedrich could possibly have seen. The novel recounts the story of popular politics and armed revolt in Rome during the Middle Ages, something of a re-run of the political turmoils of the classical period but also evoking—in the hands of some—the romanized republican aspects of the French Revolution. Our hero, from humble origins, styles himself tribune of the people in the ancient mode and overthrows the reactionary rule of the aristocratic elite.

Engels's version of these mid-fourteenth-century events plays rather more to the theme of "people-power" than other versions of the time. The hero-turned-tyrant is himself overthrown as the armed people—enacting the popular sovereignty that fired Friedrich's imagination—emerge triumphant. And again, rather significantly, the hero-tyrant-killer at that point is a female sword-wielding character Camilla, perhaps evoking Eugène Delacroix's iconic bare-breasted figure of Liberty. In that

oversize painting, she fights on the Parisian barricades in 1830 for a revolution that famously succeeded.

Engels was not alone in this enthusiasm for the subject, as the young Richard Wagner (albeit seven years older than Friedrich, and rather more accomplished musically) was working on the same material at exactly the same time. This became his first successful opera *Rienzi, der letzte der Tribunen*, premièred in Dresden in 1842. Wagner wrote his own libretto, which was rather more focused on glorifying the individual leadership of the hero over and above lesser mortals, who mistook his superior qualities. Ultimately, Wagner's version dramatized Cola di Rienzi's tragic death at the hands of his inferiors, who had turned against him—rather the opposite of Engels's take on the tale.

In Engels's Bremen days, there is a thread of vicariously attending university after all, even if self-taught and to his own curriculum, by using his time off work, as well as his time at work, to learn what it takes to batter the philistines. That concept of Philistia linked together aesthetic anesthesia and commercial narrow-mindedness. Young Friedrich set out to mock the philistines in high places, not forgetting the dull colleagues sitting next to him—on high stools, as we learn from his caricature cartoons—in the office.

Bremen provided ample opportunity for staging personal send-ups and thus attaining notoriety: "Only last night at the concert," Engels writes, "six young dandies stood around me, all in tail-coats and kid-gloves, and I stood among them in an ordinary coat and without gloves." That, and his radical mustache-growing, caused the kind of comment that he wanted: "three months ago nobody knew me here and now all the world does."[26]

Or anyway, that is Engels's vision of himself out in the world. He was perhaps finding more fuel for his intellectual fires than he would have done in a university setting, whether attending lectures or bunking off in the taverns (as Marx had been doing in Bonn and Berlin during these same years), given small-city medievalism and conservative teaching and curricula. Rather improbably, Engels writes to a university-bound schoolfriend that "there will be more art there [in Berlin] than you are likely to get at any other university, except Munich." He added, though from what kind of knowledge is unclear, that what "is also lacking in Berlin is the poetry of student life, which is at its best in Bonn."[27] In Bremen Engels was doing his best as a university wit, and reporting on endeavors "to give a philistine … some idea of the beauty of Low German." A philistine, he says, is "unhappy yet over-happy nonetheless in his stupidity." In his letter

he offers a damning review of a local production of *Hamlet*, as "quite horrifying." Shakespeare on the stage in the German states and state-lets at that time was not so much a translation as a roughly hewn "re-telling the story" with made-up dialogue.[28]

And throughout the correspondence with his favored sister and schoolfriend best-mates we have the show-off polyglot and polymath writing lines in Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Latin, and classical Greek, with forays into Dutch, English, and a single word—Berlin!—in Hebrew script.[29] Elsewhere Danish is mentioned, and to his sister he boasts, "I now know 25 languages." "I am now at the Club," he writes, which he says is somewhat like the local institute for improvement back home in Barmen. The best thing about it, he continues, "is the many newspapers—Dutch, English, American, French, German, Turkish and Japanese."[30] Some of this voracious enthusiasm for widening his horizons seems quite genuinely assiduous: "Today (April 30 [1839]), because of the magnificent weather, I sat in the garden from 7 in the morning to half past 8, smoked and read the *Lusiade*," the epic poem by Luis de Camões, presumably in Portuguese. After that he went to the office.[31]

"It's remarkable," Engels wrote to his friend Friedrich Graeber, "that if you consider our greatest writers, they always seem to go in pairs": [Friedrich Gottlieb] Klopstock and [Johann Gottfried] Lessing, [J.W. von] Goethe and Schiller, [Ludwig] Tieck and [Ludwig] Uhland. This commentary has something about it of the student essay, though the subject matter was rather too modern for university students of Engels's time. But now "[Friedrich] Rückert is on his own," Engels continues. As a "love poet," he and Heinrich Heine could be paired, but have not "the slightest other similarity."[32] The former poet isn't well known in English, other than for the very long list of German composers, beginning with Franz Schubert, who set his verses to music; the latter is known in the Anglophone world for the same reason but also celebrated in German literature for his ironic wit and subversive sarcasms, which were rather more to Engels's taste.

As Engels related to his schoolfriends: "I am getting good practice especially in literature which one would never be allowed to print in our parts, quite liberal ideas etc."[33] These evidently included arguments about "the old Hanoverian he-goat," Ernest Augustus the new king of Hanover, that is, Duke of Cumberland and uncle to Queen Victoria, who could not succeed King William IV under the Salic Law. Rather unsurprisingly, young Friedrich had been reading Goethe's essays addressed to young poets, saying that he "found himself described as aptly as could be,"

drawing the expected sorrowful conclusion that "my rhyming achieves nothing for art." Agreeing with Goethe, however, that it is "'a pleasant addiction'," and with seventeen-year-old exuberance, he says he'll publish "in some journal because other fellows also do so who are just as big if not bigger asses than I am," whatever the results for German literature.[34]

After lengthy laments on the poor state of contemporary letters, young Friedrich sympathizes with Julius Mosen's *Volksbuch Ahasuerus*, an epic poem of 1838. The title character was a stock figure, the "wandering Jew," in whose characterization Engels finds real "depth and poetry."[35] Additionally, the talented young man added his own line-drawings in the *Volksbücher* woodcut style, showing himself at work in the office, which seems mainly to consist of copying out letters received into a ledger and making copies for onward transmission, then running them to the post.

What follows in this lengthy letter are epigrammatic critiques of four leading periodicals which had literary pretensions and wide circulation, together with young Friedrich's critical notes on the historical novels, fairly recently published, that he has been reading. Suffice to say that, as we noted earlier in this chapter, that kind of reading was discouraged back home, whereas the young-man-about-Bremen could please himself. Schoolboy enjoyment in rebellion, and fantasy-imagination as daydream, have given way here to thoughtful literary criticism, though the inspirations are much the same. In particular, Engels considers the technicalities of successful literary characterizations: Are they well drawn? Proportional between primary and secondary characters? Are there original "views on history"? Is there dramatic plausibility? Eduard Duller's novel, *Kaiser und Papst* ("Emperor and Pope"), is written off by Engels as "thoroughly trite and silly," especially at the end where he says there are daggers, volcanoes, eruptions, and so on.[36]

Amusing as all this is in schoolfriend correspondence, what is interesting here are the ways that Engels is pursuing his imagination into more public realms, and honing the skills needed to develop it beyond the schoolboy level. His will to succeed as a published *litterateur* was quite determined and relentless, and indeed those interests form the major part of every epistolary narration.

Running Wild to Wilder Shores

However, some of this growing skill and judgment worked the other way round. Sending a poetic composition to Friedrich Graeber, back home in Barmen, Engels dispatched a verse drama "for the next little party," evidently a literary *soirée* Barmen-style. "Florida" is a topical essay on European colonialism, noting the connection between the second Seminole War, which was then ongoing, and the punishment of these native Americans by US federal forces for, among other things, harboring runaway slaves from southern plantations.

Modern readers might also like to appreciate the ecological framing, namely the "Spirit of the Earth." He speaks in prologue, bemoaning the coming of the white man. Their arrogance disturbs the harmonious relationship of indigenous peoples to the land and compromises its natural abundance: "with their quadrants measured out my Hand,/Drawing strange lines across from side to side." The Seminole, speaking next, vows bloody revenge, proudly declaring that as independent men they made poor slaves, and patronisingly advising "the cowardly Blacks" to "learn the strength and courage of our brood."

Unsurprisingly, Rousseauean romanticism meets commonplace racism in these passages, but the twist comes when "The White Man" speaks: he is German and youthful, having served seven years in prison as a freedom-fighter, making kings tremble and princes fearful. This characterization clearly marks an allegorical tale putting into romantic drama the aspirations of the liberal, anti-medieval currents of the time, rather than revisiting any facts of recent history. Thus the audience could read the text as either as a call to arms, or as a fanciful might-have-been, but thankfully wasn't. Moreover, the denouement is one of explicitly Christian redemption: shipped off into exile, our hero is wrecked off the coast of Florida, where his execution by the Seminoles figures as proper retribution for white colonialism, commercialism, and brutality.

Probably this scenario came from such news as was picked up in Bremen, possibly enlarged with shipping firm reports and gossip, mixed with a hefty dose of youthful freedom-fighting and political liberation derived from Schiller and his successors. The redemption story would have the familiar ring of conventional piety for some, but yet a dig at doctrinal Christianity for others. Engels's working of politically coded versification is impressive. When our German youth is dying on the Florida shore, and just as a floating crucifix appears, he calls to his Redeemer that God

Himself has become "a corpse for me"—Christian enough, but rather pointedly not continuing on to any notion of resurrection as doctrinal orthodoxy requires.[37]

Writing again to Friedrich Graeber, Engels demands a review of "Florida" and lets rip—in a literary critique—about contemporary religious poetry, suggesting that he himself was setting it on "new paths." He warns his friend that Gutzkow's Hamburg-based *Telegraph* has reviewed the poems of a Barmen clergyman. The "Young German" *literati* at the *Telegraph* had ridiculed them and further widened the gap between metropolitan free-thinking (within the censorship) and provincial backwardness. Engels comments that this division would only become more entrenched. "I am despairing more and more about Barmen," he wrote. "What is printed there is, at best, piffle, with the exception of the sermons." That is damning with very faint praise: "Religious things are usually nonsense," he declares. "Truly, it is not without justification that Barmen and Elberfeld are cried down as obscurantist and mystic." With increased confidence and *élan* he writes that Bremen is not that much different, since "Philistinism linked with religious zealotry" resides within a "vile constitution," which restricts decision-making to a self-perpetuating elite.

To the *Telegraph*'s scorn for pietist love poetry, Engels adds his own: "I should like to see a marriage in which the man does not love his wife but Christ in his wife; and is it not an obvious question there whether he also sleeps with Christ in his wife?" Worse than ludicrous piety, though, is the intolerance and bigotry that Engels attacks, evidently from hard experience: "these fellows pride themselves on having the true teaching," so they "damn anybody who does not so much doubt what is in the Bible, as interpret it in a different way from them."

The critique here is predominantly literary and worth following for its experiential qualities—we are seeing the world through young Friedrich's eyes. And it is worth noting that his contemporaries were going this far, and no further, or sometimes regaining faith as life went on. What Engels is engaged with, however, isn't a teleological slippery slope to atheism, though biographers have made it look like that. Rather he was engaged with a milieu through which literary expression had to be crafted for an audience, whether epistolary intimates or unknown readers. These modes of expression constituted an intervention in a more or less veiled culture-war—which of course hasn't finished to this day.

Advocating freshness of expression is advocating novelty in thought, and critique is directed at those unwilling or unable to contribute at all, or

at a high enough level. From that vantage point a desire to promote understanding between rationalists and mystics, which was what Engels then had in mind, shows quite a critical edge, given that conventional religiosity represented for him a zone of risk-aversion and creative implosion: "With both Catholics and Protestants everything goes on in the same old humdrum way," he writes. The former "compose hymns about the Virgin Mary," and the latter "sing the old songs with the most prosaic words in the world." Judging the religiosity of Barmen—and of Bremen—as platitudinous and hackneyed, even in correspondence, represents quite a step and certainly a self-referential feedback loop.[38]

Engels was effectively creating his own university-by-correspondence, not just for himself, but cheerleading his former schoolfriends—some at university, some not—into the excitement of "modern" ideas worked out primarily through poetry, fiction, drama, music and philosophizing essays, broadsides, and editorials. This entailed keeping up with broadsheet-style publications, obtainable from booksellers, and foreswearing the philistinism of sticking to business just to make money. Improving oneself and others with sermons and Bible-studies, far from contradicting commercial philistinism, materially reinforced it, as he viewed the scene.

For Engels the radicalization of thought takes the good fight straight to the enemy. But one needs companions-in-arms. In a letter to Wilhelm Graeber he says, "You, too, should begin to write a little, either in verse or in prose," mentioning likely local outlets in Berlin. "Later," he says, "you take it up more seriously, write short stories, which get printed in magazines, then by themselves." That way, "you get a reputation, acclaimed as a gifted, witty narrator." Warming to this vision of the future, Engels imagines their various friends in similar terms: "I see you all again, Heuser a great composer, Wurm writing profound studies on Goethe … Fritz becoming a famous preacher, Junghaus composing religious poems … and me becoming the town poet of Barmen."

Possibly this accolade was ironic—did Engels see his future in Barmen? Or possibly he is simply presuming that he will return to the family business HQ after serving his time with the shipping agents in Bremen, which seems more likely.[39] In the meantime he was keeping up with *faux*-university life, as it was in those days—which reserved it for upper-class educated males, of course—by taking up fencing and fighting the duels through which the traditional student scars were created: "I had two duels here in the last four weeks. I fought with the second fellow yesterday and gave him a real beauty above the brow, running right down from top, a

really first class prime [cut].” Summing up his life in Bremen, Engels wrote: “fence, eat, drink, sleep and drudge.”[40]

Friedrich Graeber was further given a long disquisition on the writers whom Engels admired, gathering them up collectively as Young Germany, the self-styled movement that went up against the censorship at various points and thus took financial and legal risks. Gutzkow’s *Telegraph* was generally at the center of controversy, both in terms of current thinking about politics, albeit in aesthetic modes, and philosophizing about aesthetics, albeit in political modes. Engels very much identified with these writers, their topics, and their debating styles, and rather more with the debating angles as such than with any particular tendency, other than progressive anti-medievalism and republican anti-authoritarianism. Reviewing the history of liberalizing debates in the German states and state-lets, he begins: “Then, like a thunderclap, came the July revolution, the most splendid expression of the people’s will since the war of liberation.”[41]

The revolution of 1830 in France had of course taken place just a few years earlier, evidently a thunderclap still resonating east of the Rhine. The French revolutionary wars there, just a few decades earlier, had been a liberation, to some degree and in some localities, from absolutist authoritarianism and reactionary medievalism. Under the Napoleonic version of the rights of man and the citizen, which dated from the revolution of 1789, some dynastic territorial patchworks were supplanted, consolidated, and re-codified into modernity. After 1815 the post-Napoleonic restorations had worked hard—though against resistance—to put paid to such notions, and to shore up the rights of rulers against even weak forms of constitutionalism. In particular, they sought, through aggressive “culture wars,” to mold and maintain the virtuous conduct and intellectual orthodoxy of their subjects.

Writing to Friedrich Graeber in July 1839 Engels celebrates the (forthcoming) “German July Days” in verse to give his friend “practice in liberalism and in reading ancient metre”: “… you German kings and you princes,/How the patient people bore on their heads the gilded throne you ascended.” The poet pictures himself on the Rhine where “… a storm blows up out of France, and the people rise up in their masses.” The new and reactionary king of Hanover seems to have been particularly on Engels’s mind: “Despotic and reckless, you flouted the law … are you safe on your golden throne?”[42]

The king’s summary abrogation of the constitution, granted by his liberalizing predecessor, set off a storm of university protests in 1833,

resulting in high-profile prosecutions and retreats into exile. And again the following year, Engels writes: "… we celebrated the July revolution which broke out ten years ago in Paris; we spent one evening in the town-hall cellar," the *Bierkeller*, a traditional feature below the civic offices. And there were other evenings "in Richard Roth's tavern," a venue frequently mentioned by young Friedrich.[43] Universities were not, however, all dueling and beer-drinking, but were also very visible sites not just of controversial ideas but of political intimidation and symbolic protest. Engels did his best to perform in this way and to these scripts, rather than to succeed at business. Perhaps he was banking on his position as son and heir to see him through, though we get no hint as to where he thought he was actually headed.

While the overall political tenor of this proselytizing is clear enough, young Friedrich's enthusiasm is for debate as such, albeit with clear boundaries. Those limits are Barmen's religious bigotry, as he sees it, and outright atheism beyond doubt, at the other extreme: "Blank," another schoolfriend, "is a wicked rationalist and throws the whole of Christianity overboard, what will it lead to?" The Barmen "noble people," Engels says ironically, accuse Young Germany "of wanting the emancipation of women and the restoration of the flesh," also wanting "as a side-line to overthrow a couple of kingdoms and become Pope and Emperor in one person."

The unfairness (or otherwise) of these charges are what occupy young Friedrich, rather than taking a position and making a stand one way or the other: "Of all these charges, only the one concerning the emancipation of women (in the Goethean sense) had any grounds." It could only be brought "against Gutzkow, who later disavowed the idea (as high-spirited, youthful over-hasty)." Overall, the "ideas of the time," as debated among themselves for the public good and Germanic advancement, "are not anything demagogic or anti-Christian," such as they are made out to be. They are based on "the natural right of every man," extending to "everything in the present conditions which conflicts with it."[44] There is quite a sense here of liberal centrism, that is, maintaining the center by debating the periphery.

For his friend and their circle Engels spelled this out: "above all, participation by the people in the administration of the state, that is constitutional matters."[45] A letter to his sister two days later makes graphically clear what he had in mind as the opposite. The "election" of a new Burgomaster for the Free City of Bremen had taken place the previous week, generating a winner from a very narrow corporate body of electors.

Young Friedrich had no great respect for the civic installation ceremonies, a spectacle that exclusively constituted the formal participation of the townsfolk. "The Right Honourable Senator Dr J.D. Noltenius got the appointment," and there was a "big procession."

Engels clearly regarded this as a ridiculous burlesque of civic rights and duties. "First came the eight gentlemen servants." Each was "wearing short porcelain-white breeches, fine hose and bright red frock-coats, swords at their sides and tricorns on their heads." Following on came "His Magnificence Dr. Smidt, the shrewdest of them all and as good as King of Bremen." And then "senators, preachers and citizens, some 600–800 people, perhaps more." At civic receptions they were all given "macaroons, cigars and wine, ate as much as they could hold and crammed their pockets full." This was the "strut of the Bremen state," gathering up "youngsters who made a din," presumably appreciative. The *reductio* was the election of the replacement senator: "It is the custom on these occasions that one of the new senator's relatives has to drink the pig [*das Schwein trinken*], i.e., he has to drink himself under the table." If not eyewitness testimony here, there is an element of "earwitness" from the locality: this "difficult task was carried out by Herr H.A. Heinecken, a broker, to the satisfaction of all."[46]

The remainder of the list, comprising "ideas of the time," was "emancipation of the Jews, abolition of all religious compulsion, of all hereditary aristocracy, etc." And rhetorically: "Who can have anything against that?"[47] From this narration we get a sense of what Engels most admires, which is not entirely what Young Germany stood for, since that label was applied to what was actually a loose collection of writers. The various writers grouped together by others were publishing in a number of journals, which themselves promoted debate around contrasting ideas. Through those means they were all, in Engels's estimation, raising the bar for good writing and clear thinking: "As early as 1836–37," which was barely a year or so before, "the idea was clear and definite." The "high quality of their writing … won for themselves the recognition of the other, mostly wretched, writers and attracted all the young talents." The looseness of this association, "bound together by unity of purpose," was clearly exciting and attractive, but whether for Engels this was avocation or vocation, who knows? And probably neither did he.[48]

Wilhelm Graeber was treated to a very long and enthusiastic review of Börne's dramaturgical writings. Not well known now in Anglophone circles, Börne was quite the hero for young Friedrich: "a great writer for

freedom and justice."[49] Like Heine, he was a critic and satirist, Jewish but converted to Lutheranism after the post-Napoleonic repressions, later writing from Parisian exile. At the time of Engels's letter, he was very recently deceased. Note that the politics went with the writing style: "The modern style unites in itself every excellence," Engels writes, "compact brevity and pregnancy which hits the mark with a word, alternating with epic, calm description." He praises "simple language, alternating with shimmering images and brilliant sparks of wit," and at the "same time the greatest freedom is left to the author's individuality."[50]

More personally, Engels closes, saying: "I am an honest, and in comparison with the others very liberal super-naturalist." There is a sense here that young Friedrich is not so much wrestling with demons as enjoying the exhilaration of uncertainty, and certainly not making sudden and willful choices. "How long I shall remain such I don't know, but I hope to remain one, even though inclining now more, now less towards rationalism." He seems quite relaxed about getting all this "settled."[51]

Looking Backward to a Brave New World

Throughout this university-like correspondence course, one-sidedly as we have it, young Friedrich has to pester his friends continually for replies: "Today is May 24 [1839], and still not a line from any of you." "You," he says to Friedrich Graber, "are again qualifying for non-receipt of poems," and "I don't understand you."[52] And a few weeks later: "Really, you could condescend to write to me. It will soon be five weeks since I received your last letter."[53] And more poignantly to Wilhelm: "It is now at least six months since you wrote to me. What shall I say to such a friend? You don't write, and your brother does not write." And similarly with Wurm, Grel, Heuser, Blank, and Plümacher.[54]

It is quite easy, from the vantage point of the present, and after a century of studies into the romantic movement from every conceivable angle, to pigeon-hole the youthful Engels as another joyous minor romantic, dabbling in literature, the arts, and *avant-garde* ideas. However, looking back at him that way misses out not just his infectious sense of engagement and admirable wonder at the world of ideas but also how contemporary to us these feelings are, and how acute are the similarities there with our present issues.

Whether it's religion and politics, church and state, self-selected corporate decision-making or publicly accountable policies, constitutional rule

or rule by impunity, even the limits of free expression guaranteed by, or undermined by, state surveillance—all these issues and debates can be traced back to the concern that Engels shows for raising and resolving such things in literary ways. Moreover, he delves into the aesthetics of style in various genres, so that what is literary—and good literature—is up for grabs, rather than complacently reproduced.

We have digital media far beyond the kind of periodical publications available to young Friedrich, but the liberalizing enthusiasms are still on the boil, and rather similarly threatened, even if the range of issues has widened considerably. Engels's rather dismissive notice of, and hasty disavowal of, female emancipation shows, of course, that he was not ahead of his time: Goethean liberation was limited to education and activities suited, from that male perspective, to what many termed the female nature, and not an invitation to gender equality or a common humanity.

Jewish emancipation, by contrast, had been openly discussed as a liberalizing bell-weather since the later eighteenth century, but rather dividing that community through conversions to Christianity. These were often undertaken so as to obtain entrance to the professions and "polite" society, and to escape ghettoization through residential restrictions. The liberal goal was to turn back medievalism, literally embodied in the segregation imposed on Jewry, and thus to knock back at the Christian establishments through which authoritarian rulership gained and exercised its legitimacy, not least by encouraging anti-Semitism. This campaign for toleration had suddenly succeeded in some of the French-occupied territories, but in the post-Napoleonic settlement, political reaction reversed those measures. This retrenchment happened particularly in bureaucratic Prussia, and in areas under Prussian influence, hence the appearance of this item in Engels's list.

The necessarily discrete and controversial campaign for Jewish emancipation, perhaps unsurprisingly, was consistently upheld in Engels's writing, and indeed in most progressive writing of the period, though often combined with casual anti-Semitism and general presumptions of Jewish inferiority, whether on racial or religious grounds. And in any case those two lines of thought are often difficult to disentangle. While Engels does not seem to have had Jewish friends, he does remark to his sister that there were none resident in Bremen, and only a few in the suburbs. Quite what the import of those remarks was meant to be, and exactly how those observations relate to the hometown Barmen context, we don't know. We do know, however, that he seems to have had no difficulties making friends

with one Jew in particular, albeit non-observant and non-religious, and indeed atheistic, just a few years later.

Notice that nearly of all this, as we have the record, is taking place in Engels's head; he says little about any friendly associations, intellectual or otherwise in Bremen. One friend, Adolph Torstrick, departs to study in Berlin; another student, Engels writes, "will return, whereupon there will follow two merry days and then a lonely horrible winter."[55] "I had no college notebooks," he laments, "only invoice and account books."[56]

Engels's imagination projects himself into far away ideas, such as popular sovereignty and republican constitutionalism, as much as into faraway places, such as Florida, or even the eastern Aegean, North Africa, and the Turkish Empire. Few of his acquaintance would have thought much about all of these things. Possibly the unpreserved replies from the schoolfriends would have been similarly effusive and didactic by turns—we don't know. And possibly Friedrich was very self-regarding and ignored what comments they offered. But all that seems unlikely. The picture here is that it was easy for him to slide imaginatively from the real, if minority and embattled world of ideas, to the fictional, mythical realm of versified storytelling. In the tragicomedy fragments "Horned Siegfried," the parody hero is clearly young Friedrich, pursuing yet another of his literary but liberalizing satires, penned for the delight and edification of his friends.

In the poem the boy Siegfried, eighteen years old (as Engels was at the time), "goes and listens to the birds" (as does the legendary Siegfried to the "forest bird"). Setting off to slay dragons and giants he visits a rather unusual smithy. It pounds out poems and the "Long Short Story," hammers out "magazines/Where verse and criticism unite," and beats "those novellas long and thin!" Siegfried drinks up the master smith's wine and meets an array of authors, some stars already and some still struggling to find fame. The master reveals himself as "Saxon literature's spirit," though Siegfried responds by picking a fight with an author and overpowering them both. After that he settles the quarrel between two national academic historians, Heinrich Leo and Jules Michelet, the former defending Christianity and, according to Engels, hereditary aristocracy, from the latter's anti-clericalism, identified here for the German context with the non-doctrinal pantheism of the Hegelians. Siegfried remarks on the "fierce defiance" displayed by these "peaceful, learned men."[57] Having imaginatively created a university—and universe—of sparky but peaceful debate, where wit is at the service of politics, young Friedrich mocks the real universities from an "outside" that isn't just geographical, but mordantly political.

Obviously the above epic is satirical but educative for friends, yet it is reflective of ambition and a vocation. It also expresses the urge for change and the will to bring it about, even if in a small way in Barmen and by the backdoor in the universities. Engels's imagination places him counterfactually in a university environment, where free-thinking change within those institutions and the wider professions and metropolitan centers was certainly thinkable, if only by a few. And, as we know from other memoirs and correspondence of the period, this liberalizing process was underway, albeit with determined resistance and distinct set-backs. But as with the press and publication generally, universities were controlled and pressured. Academics showing liberalizing sympathies were frozen out or worse, sometimes going into exile, voluntarily or otherwise. Engels was, of course, protected from such scrutiny and harassment, other than social and familial pressures, yet through his imagination he was there in the thick of it.

"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive"—*William Wordsworth*, The Prelude

What is missing from the story so far is the teleological selectivity through which the young Engels is most commonly, and most easily understood, namely what signs there are of his later, more settled views. Generally, the major question is how soon the biographer can get readers to that place of established safety, away from the indeterminacy and apparent triviality of such immature works and thoughts. Conventional accounts get quite frustrated with young Friedrich for balancing mysticism against rationalism, and not opting at once for the latter, so as to get to atheism as fast as possible. And, as with intellectual biography generally, the living human subject is treated somewhat in isolation as a thinking mind, rather than closely associated with *compères* who weren't all that much different at the time, but are now quite forgotten. As it happens, they did not attain the recognition that makes biography a possible seller.

Engels was unusual, though not utterly special or more talented, so one assumes—for lack of the full range of contextual materials. What we can see very clearly is that he was highly motivated intellectually and very adept socially. He was quick at absorbing ideas that were usual in certain circles and publications, but were quite foreign to most of those immediately around him, and openly discouraged by states and churches. But at this point, for young Friedrich, it's the joy in debate, and the will to provoke it, that come across in the literary poeticals and epistolary high-jinks.

If there was ever a trace of sadness, despondency, or self-doubt in the record we have of him, it has long since been expunged.

Writing to his sister Marie, Engels projects the satirical fun and games back into his family life, in fictional form, in a hilarious one-act comedy, "The Dressing Up." The cast includes their mother, their siblings, and a servant, variously quarreling amidst missed visits to the lavatory and some talk of donning costumes. The plot, such as it is, thickens when mother dresses up in father's clothes, and a sister and brother cross-dress and gender-swap. At the end father enters, astonished, the masks come off, and a "gigantic feast" follows.[58] How Engels's sister reacted we don't know, and how far away from the reputedly dour pietist household this little drama takes us, again we don't know. What we have is Friedrich's imaginative projection of a vivid and liberalizing reality that he enjoyed creating.

Having honed a capacity for finding controversy and making it work publicly (if anonymously and pseudonymously), and then celebrating his private notoriety with carefully selected family and friends back home in Barmen, the next step taken by young Friedrich—still just eighteen—was a major bombshell, and with definite collateral damage.

Notes

1. CW2:553.
2. CW2:555–6.
3. CW2:582.
4. CW2:557–71.
5. CW2:450, 497.
6. CW2:527.
7. CW2:584–5.
8. CW2:391.
9. CW2:530.
10. CW2:484–5.
11. CW2:487.
12. CW2:488; emphasis in original.
13. CW2:491.
14. CW2:493.
15. CW2:3–4, 392–3
16. CW2:394–6.
17. CW2:418–19
18. CW2:419–20.

19. CW2:404.
20. CW2:405–6.
21. CW2:418.
22. CW2:475.
23. CW2:523.
24. CW2:400.
25. MEGA I/3:863.
26. CW2:525.
27. CW2:397.
28. CW2:396–7.
29. CW2:415.
30. CW2:470.
31. CW2:445.
32. CW2:411.
33. CW2:389.
34. CW2:394.
35. CW2:412.
36. CW2:413.
37. CW2:407–9.
38. CW2:414–17.
39. CW2:445.
40. CW2:528–9.
41. CW2:420.
42. CW2:457–64.
43. CW2:501.
44. CW2:420–1.
45. CW2:421.
46. CW2:423–4.
47. CW2:421.
48. CW2:421.
49. CW2:448.
50. CW2:472–3.
51. CW2:423.
52. CW2:448.
53. CW2:457.
54. CW2:513–14.
55. CW2:475.
56. CW2:479.
57. CW2:428–37, 452.
58. CW2:438–42.

CHAPTER 3

Observation

Abstract Taking observation as a theme, this chapter shows how the young Engels's travelogues and literary criticism were written from his own eyewitness and "ear-witness" source materials. He wrote pseudonymously for a nationally circulated literary magazine, publishing "Letters from Wuppertal" about his hometown when he was just eighteen. His graphic depictions of industrial pollution, working-class exploitation, and grinding poverty caused a local scandal. Moving to Manchester to continue his commercial training, young Friedrich made contact with Chartists and socialists. He reported on these turbulent times in British politics by writing in German for papers back home. He also surveyed the limited progress toward social reform on the Continent by writing in English for the local press. These activities culminated in a full-length book written and published on his own account and under his own name.

Keywords Universal suffrage • Social question • Industrialization • Pollution • Urban geography

Young Friedrich's first article for the widely circulated *Telegraph für Deutschland* was not on its usual literary themes, for which—as we saw in Chap. 2—Engels had schooled himself with fan-ish enthusiasm. While his political sincerity and skeptical wit come through in his earlier creative writings and literary publications—albeit within the codes that would pass

T. Carver, *Engels before Marx*, Marx, Engels, and Marxisms,
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the censorship—they run rather more toward a gifted-amateur-rating than scoring today as noteworthy thought. In short, the work is more than a bit derivative, though worthy within the various genres that he attempted, and chiefly notable now because—unlike much of his audience then—we can see him as a teenager. But for most readers at the time his identity was still unknown.

Engels's first, very adult publication in original prose, was written in very early 1839, just after he turned eighteen. His editors at the *Telegraph* presumably didn't investigate the real identity of their new author "Oswald." This *nom de plume* was possibly an allusion to Oswald von Wolkenstein, a late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century German-speaking poet and adventurer. Presumably, they didn't encourage contributions from would-be writers for Young Germany at quite such a tender age. It seems likely that there were amendments to the text to suit the editors and the censors, especially given that the former had to please the latter, at least minimally, though this is informed supposition by historians of the period.[1]

Hometown Horrors

"Letters from Wuppertal" is quite different, not just from earlier but also from succeeding publications of this period. However, modern editors of Engels's works have done their best to assimilate this one to what he was doing a bit later at the time, and to a genre that makes it safely familiar to us—travel writing.

While it is true that the young Engels went on to write travelogues for publication, notably offering observational accounts of the city of Bremen and the port of Bremerhaven. And he later wrote up adventures further afield, recounting travels in England (a visit on business in the summer of 1840) and on holiday in the Swiss Alps and Italian lakes (after leaving Bremen in the spring of 1841). Much of this is in the grand tradition of the romantic picturesque, tinged with *frisson* at the sublime, but nonetheless nicely done for the medium. For example young Friedrich gives his readers a nineteen-year-old's breathlessly excited evocation of a trip on the recently opened Liverpool to Manchester Railway.[2]

However, it is true that there are some characteristic—as we now see these things—Engelsian touches to these pieces. Visiting emigrant ships in Bremerhaven he goes below deck to steerage and comments movingly on the "sad sight" of men, women, and children all stacked together "like

paving stones."[3] At age twenty, he takes the reader round the elegant saloon, furnished in mahogany with gold trim, then for a look at nearby cozy cabins. He comments on the ventilation via an open door admitting a whiff of ham in the larder, which seems quite commonplace on a breezy ship. But he then returns the reader to the main deck and explains that to get down to the "terrible" realm of the lower reaches (alluding to Schiller, the poet of democratic protest) he takes care to note that a completely separate gangway is required, thus keeping bad sights and smells away from higher-class passengers. Employing romantic imagination in an unusual and decidedly unrefreshing way, he speculates on storm-tossed chaotic conditions below amid the closely berthed families, and observes that the single "hatch, which alone admits fresh air, cannot then be opened."[4] The geographically precise tour-guide, whom we'll meet again later on in this chapter, is a feature of his writing.

It seems highly unlikely, however, that the editors of the *Telegraph*, receiving the "Wuppertal" manuscripts for serial publication in early 1839, saw Engels's "Letters" as travel writing. The reason would have been obvious, namely who would want to visit Elberfeld and Barmen? The twin towns were not notably picturesque, like the Swiss Alps or Italian lakes, or exotically overseas for German readers, such as the English landscape. Editors and readers would certainly have had some inkling that the Valley of the Wupper was at best boringly provincial and at worst unaesthetic as a factory-district. For romantics, fearful landscapes sometimes induced a sublimity of fear and terror, but these were sought-after natural wonders, whereas industrialized works and detritus were—in Wordsworthian terms—very regrettable blots on the otherwise romantic landscapes.

So why did Engels's "Letters" from such an unknown and/or despised locality get such star-billing in a leading literary periodical? Even today Wuppertal is known only for its dance-theater (founded as a ballet company in 1973), its rather bizarre "gliding" overhead monorail system (dating from 1901), the Engels-Haus Museum (exhibitions began in 1970), and most recently eco-tourism along the revivified river system and its post-industrial cycle paths. Then and now it was not really on anyone's grand tour.

Engels's "Letters" made it into the *Telegraph* for decidedly non-geographical and non-aesthetic reasons. We know that the editors pitched these didactic essays as an authentic description of a region which they identified as "the true Zion" of pietism in its "*ugliest* form." Thus they introduced the pseudonymous work to its liberal-minded readers as an *exposé* of a dangerously irrational religious cult which, they said, is "rife" in

the German lands. In that way, they fitted the work into the genre that the journal featured, which was liberal-minded commentary. The editors cultivated rationalist critiques of old, unprogressive ideas, including religious ones. Necessarily they attempted to do this without advocating an anti-Christian extremism, or even a departure from confessional orthodoxies. These would never have been permitted as public or private opinion.

And indeed anti-pietist critique, even from rationalists, was to some limited and unpredictable extent in line with the power-structures through which the ruling elites of the German states and state-lets operated. This was broadly confessional rather than dogmatically fundamentalist. In short, over-religiosity was nearly as unwelcome to the monarchical state as out-of-control rationalism, so we're looking here at a political zone of "my enemy's enemy is my friend" as a *de facto* if unlikely configuration. From the *Telegraph's* point of view, "Letters from Wuppertal" was not only on-message, it was—very likely—publishable without too much troubling censorship. Evidently, it all worked, and the "Letters" appeared in print. *Précis* appeared in other papers, as did a variety of comments and notices.[5]

Neither the editors at the *Telegraph* at the time, nor the editors of Engels's works 145 years later, lacking both foresight and hindsight, have really caught on to what was presciently original—at least in the German context—in Engels's take-down of his hometown scene. His focus on the industrial sociology of, and human misery of, the twin towns followed from his political focus at the outer edge of liberalizing republicanism. His observations of the "wrong side of town" obviously date from his early experiences as a boy living in the middle of the cloth-works and allied industries. Though we have no direct testimony, this could hardly have been otherwise. His imagination was self-fed by encounters—of which we do have some testimony, as recounted in Chap. 2. These were with works of romantic, liberalizing subversion, even if they hardly look like that today.

What is really intriguing here is the curiosity and daring of even bothering to notice what young Friedrich evidently took in and ruminated on. Moreover, he was able, very fluently, to fit it to a context—political republicanism—that was itself both geographically remote and intellectually abstract. The poet Ferdinand Freiligrath, for instance, was twenty years older and briefly resident in Barmen 1837–1839 as a bookkeeper, and of somewhat similar republican inclinations. He didn't have this kind of curiosity, so far as we know, and—possibly being rather more experienced with

literary editors—probably couldn't conceive how it could possibly get into print. Poetic radicalism was one thing; nitty-gritty observation in vibrant prose, informed by excoriating anger at religious hypocrisy, was quite another.

Young Friedrich's opening sentences set a scene of stressful contrast. The muddy river fights against inundations of "Turkey red" flowing from the numerous dye-works and bleaching-yards, interspersed with houses that were crowded together along its banks. The mountains, woods, meadows, and blue skies, in Engels's scene-setting, are clearly losing out to the gloomy streets. Very similarly humans enter the scene—"the most degraded … and totally demoralised people." They are pictured wandering around drunk, sleeping in haystacks or doorways, showing "no trace here of the wholesome, vigorous life of the people." At which point—whether this is Engels's or his editors' cut in the copy—the first letter closes on a downbeat cliffhanger. Why?

The opening sentence of the next of the "Letters" says that it's "perfectly clear" why there are such people in the gloomy streets: "factory work is largely responsible." And then from the mill-owner's eldest son, we get the further details: "low rooms where people breathe in more coal fumes and dust than oxygen"; child labor, "beginning already at the age of six"; hand-weaving workers, "bent over from morning till night" in front of a hot stove that will "dessicate their spinal marrow"; consumption, syphilis, and lung diseases; physical and mental ruination from drink.[6]

Skeptics might pounce here and wonder where the following statistics came from. For this genre, and at age nineteen, Engels provides no notes or references:

> … in Elberfeld alone, out of 2,500 children or school age 1,200 are deprived of education and grow up in the factories …[7]
>
> … three out of five [leather-workers] die from consumption …[8]

Interestingly, the German editors of the authoritative *Gesamtausgabe* edition of the collected works, in their very extensive and thoroughly researched notes (covering eighteen printed pages) on these "Letters" (which themselves cover only twenty printed pages), provide sources and context for a very great number of largely local sources. These give information about the various pastors and religious references that dot the text. And the editors also provide contextual information concerning the

literary politics and controversies of the time. But they have apparently found no sources on anything like this kind of rather modern-looking sociological material and statistical argumentation that Engels inserts for his reader to consider. If young Friedrich is following a genre, then there would be exemplars, even if we didn't find source material. And we would really have to be looking in German- or possibly French-language studies, since English-language sources—of which there were some—were most unlikely to have been available. From what we know at present about young Friedrich and the likely non-existence of such material, or anyway unlikely access to any that did exist, I conclude that he was apparently striking out on his own in factuality rather than in fiction.

Engels opens his "Letters" with a mini-tour of the river valley, parodying the travelogue genre by touching on the conventional tropes of picturesque views and sights. But from the outset his savage wit drops the reader straight into the unpicturesque toxic river and its noxious surroundings, and raises the sight-line only to a mediocre modern church and muddled civic architecture. Some of this scene-setting is an excuse for aesthetic scorn—the modern Catholic church, "built very badly by a very inexperienced architect from a very good plan." But the story continues with a mordant sociological wit: the "old Catholic church was demolished" to make way for a new wing for the Town Hall ("not yet built"), yet the tower remains to serve "the general good after a fashion, namely as a prison."[9] Nearby, he tells us, is a large and "clumsily proportioned" building with columns that display aesthetic ignorance and penny-pinching: "Egyptian at the bottom, Doric in the middle, and Ionic at the top," dispensing with "superfluous accessories, such as a plinth and capitals." This had been the museum, "but the Muses kept away." Civic debt had accumulated, and the building was sold at auction, then used as a casino, and at night it "looks like a camel."[10]

Looking back to Friedrich's grammar school days, which had ended barely eighteen months earlier, it is evident that he had acquired classical values and aesthetics via German poetry of the *Aufklärung* ("Enlightenment"), as well as directly from the ancients of Latin and Greek literature. His contribution to school-leaving ceremonies in September 1837 was a featured oration of his own epic composition in ancient Greek, "The Single Combat of Eteocles and Polynices."[11] Any number of star pupils would have left it at that, as Engels was expected to do during his time working on-site at the family business. This vocational training continued up to the summer of 1838 when he departed for

Bremen. We don't know how or when the idea of merging his own local knowledge, and perhaps further enquiries locally, with a decidedly unschoolboy-ish genre first took shape. But it is clear to readers from his vigorous prose that they are in the hands of someone who knows what he is talking about, and cares deeply and fearlessly about what he sees.

The travel-parody opening is of course physically geographical in the first instance, as was the case with romantic landscapes—whether in the visual arts or in prose. And the tour is rather carefully map-like. Crossing the bridge into Barmen we see that new stone houses "are springing up everywhere … and the street continues as a straight highway."[12] There is a geographer's eye here, peering into history and politics for explanations: is Barmen actually a town, or just "a mere conglomeration of all kinds of buildings"? And our guide offers an answer: "it is, indeed, just a combination of many small districts held together by the bond of municipal institutions."[13] But this is also a historian's eye taking in what was at the time not a usual or even acceptable historical subject, namely the social, political, and moral upheavals and contradictions of industrialization. To do this the text flickers between aesthetic judgment and an enquiring eye, as detailed above, and a moralist's anger. The angry moralism rages at religious hypocrisy, medieval mysticism, smug self-satisfaction, willful ignorance, and the like.

The "Letters" thus proceed from a moralized, aestheticized, and historicized geography to further substantial sections. These cover the pietist bigotry, in which the *Telegraph* was interested, previewed in an anecdote that conjoins local credulity with international criminality. The scornful hilarity of this little episode contrasts in tone, though not in substance, with the gruesome descriptions of disease-ridden drunken depravity and the cost-cutting employment of poorly waged children.

An American pastor had turned up, preaching to large crowds: "most people imagined that being an American he must be dark-skinned or even black." He conducted both public and "secret" gatherings, collected "rich gifts," and "made both men and women weep."[14] The pastor was then arrested, jailed for some time, and deported back to the United States. "It also became known," Engels continues, "that he had already practised his tricks in America." After this past deportation he had started up again in nearby Westphalia, and had then "crowned his dissolute life by another repetition in Elberfeld."[15]

The interest here is not in sourcing or validating the story, or in assessing its rhetorical impact, but rather in remarking on the interest, curiosity,

and memory involved in young Friedrich's teenage years. His head wasn't always in chap-book mythologies, or in high-minded critical liberalism.

There is rather more here than a dramatically balanced literary opening that contrasts squalor with hilarity and hooks the reader rhetorically into sharing the enlightened scorn of the writer. It isn't likely that Engels made all this up, not least because some readers of the *Telegraph* would spot the deception. And our author names the rogue preacher: Pastor Jürgens. But evidently the editors of any collected works have been unable to help us with any printed or recounted local confirmation, since it seems that such provincial sources for this locality, anyway, are rather imperfectly preserved. It also seems unlikely that Engels suddenly learned all this once he got away from school.

This anecdote seems most likely to have come from bothering to listen to local tittle-tattle, drawing critical conclusions and saving it up for some timely re-telling. The point here is not particularly whether the tale is attested elsewhere (and if it were, probably contested as well) but rather to note the way that observation depends on curiosity, and curiosity depends on imagining what to look out for, and then what to make efforts to recollect and write up. Once we are liberated from biographical teleologies we can consider what is going on in the mind that lies behind the subject's eyes.

The "Letters" are done to a plan: the take-down of pietism as bigotry and obscurantism; its malign influence on local schools and culture; and a review of the local press, which merges with a commentary on local writers, poets, and bookseller-publishers, thus coming full circle with the general tenor of the *Telegraph*. In most cases, Engels names the names throughout, and we know from later correspondence that he had local friendships going with former schoolmates. The "Letters" are self-evidently journalism, and very polished with it—though possibly his editors might have helped him along—and in that way they are unreferenced. But the "Letters" encourage readers to trust the writer by offering judicious and meaningful detail.

While rationalistic critique of biblical orthodoxies was nowhere officially encouraged, it was certainly *en vogue* among enlightened philosophers, albeit in coded forms that would hopefully pass the scrutiny of censorship and public authority. But even so, passing the censor and getting into print didn't guarantee any kind of protection. David Friedrich Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu, kritisch Bearbeitet* ("The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined") had been published in 1835–1836, putting an end to his

university career and causing him considerable moral distress. Young Friedrich doesn't seem to have read it, so far as we know, until later on in 1839 after the "Letters" were drafted.[16] And the text doesn't wheel on anything like such a heavy gun to assist the author in his *exposé* (which very likely would have sunk it anyway).

Strauss had tried hard—but failed quite tragically—to sift through the Gospel stories in order to pin down the historical facts that would prove the Saviour's human existence. In the "Letters" Strauss is mentioned in passing, but only as Engels is recounting a pietist pastor's claim to have at Tübingen—Strauss's home territory—successfully refuted the dastardly attack on the fundamentalist faith that true Christianity requires.[17] Young Friedrich clearly regards that pastor's whole sermon as risible: "It is impossible to understand how anyone can believe in such things, which are in most direct contradiction to reason and the Bible." And he mentions, again in passing, that Strauss gives a very different account of this disputation in a letter, presumably a published one.[18] We're seeing very deft use here of very controversial material, nesting a radical point within the kind of anti-pietism that he could get away with.

Engels then gives a burlesque account of Pastor Krummacher's predestinarian doctrines and deductions, saying sarcastically that this unorthodoxy makes nonsense of some things that are actually insightful and inspiring in the Bible: "the contradiction between earthly riches and the humility of Christ, or between the arrogance of earthly rulers and the pride of God." Besides turning confessional orthodoxies and biblical verses against the pastor, Engels warns him—again sarcastically—to see that his own arrogance, as some kind of would-be decision-maker, doesn't get him into trouble with the Prussian government. This kind of critique was, of course, not a one-person crusade against pietism, since the doctrinal-political controversies of "church politics," on the boil during the reign of Friedrich Wilhelm III, had been ongoing for a generation or more.[19]

However, rather than sticking to rationalist criticism, or Gospel dogmatics, in exposing pietism as ludicrously unorthodox, Engels's analysis turns to literary aesthetics. His expertise in rating the sermons of local pastors up and down the valley parodies the mode of the *Evangelische Kirchen-Zeitung* ("Evangelical Church Times"), founded in Berlin in 1827 and widely read in conservative Christian households, such as the Engels's. Evidently, young Friedrich had read—or had been made to read—the reported sermons therein, making him well informed. This

expertise was not just on the content but on the way that the *cognoscenti* made their judgments. Typically, these concerned all the qualities of a good sermon, and the performance values of a good pastor. Was this passage derived from Engels's personal "ear-witness"?

> The third [pietist pastor] in this company is Döring, whose absent-mindedness is most odd; he is incapable of uttering three sentences with a connected train of thought, but he can make three parts of a sermon into four by repeating one of them word for word without being at all aware of it.[20]

The Berlin clerical newspaper also offered critical judgments on the quality of religious literature generally, and was mercilessly parodied by Engels in the "Letters." He offered his readers newsy bits of church gossip: the Lutheran pastors in Elberfeld "behave with courtesy to each other, but the pietists try to revive the dissension between them."[21] And rounding off this aesthetic take-down of religious philistinism, Engels damns a pastor would-be-*litteratur* with faint praise. One Barmen pastor, he relates, "has distinguished himself by making some of Schiller's pagan poems ["The Greek Gods"] acceptable to the orthodox" by revising the controversial poet's lines. "Really very ingenious, truly mystical indeed!"—we see the sarcastic Engelsian flourish. What could be more philistine, and reactionary, than rewriting the works of an acknowledged poetic genius and liberal icon?

Engels's damnation of the pietists is as comprehensive as the tour: "It goes without saying that in an area so full of pietist activities this spirit, spreading in all directions, pervades and corrupts every single aspect of life."[22] The "chief influence" is on elementary education, which he neatly parses into church schools, some wholly controlled by pietists, and the other schools, which are "civil" or state, though still under the supervision of a clerical inspectorate. The latter schools attempt "the rudiments of some sciences" and "a little French"; the former, though, are cheaper and less prone to "worldliness."[23]

Here, of course, we are entering the realm of direct personal experience, though the authorial voice generally insulates readers from first-person witness. Readers learn that for secondary education there are three high schools: the municipal school in Barmen, the secondary modern school in Elberfeld, along with the grammar school that Engels himself attended. What follows is remarkably similar to a set of "rate my professor" postings, starting with the headmasters and then considering selected form-masters at each location.

Schoolboy gossip must have something to do with this factual-sounding and sarcastically judgmental survey of these rather strung-out communities. But the comments on finance and funding stand out as a question. Does this information come from overhearing the conversation of elders, or from asking questions of those who would know? Young Friedrich was then only seventeen—at the oldest.

The Barmen municipal school, Engels says, is "very poorly financed and therefore very badly staffed," but does "everything in its power" to educate its pupils. Here we have young Friedrich writing as a school inspector, and not apparently in parody. The "niggardly governing body" mostly "selects only pietists as teachers," while the headmaster balances religious constraints against his duties as an educationalist. Engels comments (from what insider-knowledge?) that he "manages very skilfully to keep every teacher in his place." The history master there is the author of a two-volume pedagogical work "all full of lofty ideas, pious wishes and impracticable proposals," but "in practice his teaching lags far behind his beautiful theory." This wasn't the school that Engels attended, so does it derive from schoolboy gossip?

Engels then gives a further master a favorable review for his scholarly researches into modern French grammar and authorship of teaching courses that enjoy unprecedented circulation "as far as Hungary and the Baltic provinces of Russia." And here we get close to a source. Engels mentions "an annual report," so evidently there was documentary material going into the "Letters" alongside local knowledge and personal experience. But the seamlessness of the discourse—and evident confidence of the writer in making his own factual observations—doesn't mark this out as some superior form of knowledge. The last comments on this school contrast an enlightened young teacher, a friend of the newly arrived poet Freiligrath, with his opposite, another teacher, "who, when asked by a pupil who Goethe was, replied 'an atheist.'"[24]

Unsurprisingly, the Elberfeld secondary modern-*cum*-trade school gets a shorter review, but possibly there are traces of schoolboy conversations in the sketch: the school "is addicted to that horrible system of filling up exercise books which can make a pupil dull-witted in six months."[25] "Incidentally," Engels says, "the headmaster is away half the year and proves his presence only by excessive severity."[26]

Then we get to the grammar school that Engels himself attended and about which he is excessively well informed. School politics outside and inside the boundary walls and impressive front gate sets the scene.

Negotiations, he says, are underway for the Prussian government to take over the school, currently the object of criticism by the inspectorate for needing top-ups to the school fees. The inspectorate, Engels says authoritatively, "have no conception at all of Greek, Latin or mathematics," and thus "not the slightest idea of the advantages of the Prussian grammar school education." But at least "the preachers are not interested in it,[27]" though the "guiding principle" of the institution is, "better to choose a mediocre Reformist [evangelical] than an *efficient* Lutheran, or worse still, a Catholic." Note the emphasis on "efficient" in connection with the Lutheranism of metropolitan Prussia, as opposed to the picture of the mind-numbing fundamentalism with which Engels characterizes pietist "reformers" of the state church.

Dr. Hantschke, the temporary headmaster and royal professor, who "writes poetry and prose in Ciceronian Latin," gets a good review from his former pupil, who adds a career note: "he would have been made permanent headmaster long ago if he were not a Lutheran, and if the school inspectorate were less miserly." But something quite interesting happens when our author gets to Dr. Clausen, "outstanding in history and literature," and "the most capable man in the entire school." He is the only teacher who can arouse *feelings*! These are for poetry, and "his lectures have a rare charm." Engels mentions Clausen's thesis on "Pindar the Lyric Poet" printed in an "annual report" (a source traced to 1834). Engels says with a hint of regret that this is the man's only published work, "so far as I know."[28] With that our omniscient but pseudonymous author breaks into the first person and thus possibly jeopardizes his cover.

Rounding off his review of Wupper Valley education, Engels, turning historian, goes back a generation to a common year of foundation for these institutions, which was 1820, and deduces that the philistinism and obscurantism of the older generation of merchants—obviously his extended family and all their church-friends, "the philistines of Wuppertal"—are due to inadequate education: "anyone who plays whist and billiards, who can talk a little about politics and pay a pretty compliment is regarded as an educated man in Barmen and Elberfeld."[29]

The following extended passages represent a deeply felt and cruelly spot-on portrait of small-town boredom, self-satisfaction, and repression. At this point in 1838–1839 young Friedrich was somewhat ahead of his exact contemporary Gustave Flaubert in getting his literary work published. And Engels is not far removed from the major works of the older novelist Honoré de Balzac, which are of the mid-1830s. Engels doesn't

mention such novelists, and indeed savaging the hometown bores has been around since classical times. But there is remarkable compression and facility here: "The life these [pietist] people lead is terrible, yet they are so satisfied with it." In the daytime "they immerse themselves in their accounts," Engels recalls, "in the evening at an appointed hour they turn up at social gatherings where they play cards, talk politics and smoke." Then they "leave for home at the stroke of nine." He concludes judgmentally: "So they live day in, day out, with never a change."

Poignantly this generic study gets personal: "Fathers zealously bring up their sons along these lines, sons who show every promise of following in their fathers' footsteps." The political conversations are carefully and analytically explained: "In politics they are all good Prussians, because they are under Prussian rule and *a priori* against liberalism." But in an acute comment, Engels says that "all patriotism would disappear" if it suited His Majesty [King Friedrich Wilhelm III] to abolish the Napoleonic Code.[30] It was that code which provided legal security for property rights and capital holdings, as opposed to the reactionary medievalisms that looked back to birthright feudal tenures and manorial economies of exchange-in-kind. As for progressive ideas Engels says: "No one knows anything about the literary significance of Young Germany; it is regarded as a secret alliance … under the chairmanship of Messrs. Heine, Gutzkow, and [Theodor] Mundt." When Engels's "Letters" hit the booksellers, critics and commentators piled in, one of whom disputed the view that in the valley those figures were not so completely unknown as all that.[31]

The intellectual scene had a bright spark, however, but not from a native. Freiligrath, as we have seen, had by then a reputation as a progressive poet, already well reviewed in the literary journals of Berlin. Here Engels is clearly writing from personal acquaintance with, or at least very well-informed hearsay about, the writer. Freiligrath was then modestly getting by in Barmen as a bookkeeper. His trading company employers, writes Engels, "have always behaved in a decent and friendly manner towards him," despite "their precarious situation," and surprisingly the poet is "an extremely accurate and diligent office worker."[32]

Is this Engels family dinner table or drawing room commercial conversation and local gossip? Certainly the peroration isn't. Engels gives the poet a good review, rather auditioning for a continuing role himself in that capacity at *Telegraph*. The reviewers in Berlin, Engels says, have paid insufficient attention to the poet's deep attachment to his homeland, his "allusions to German folk-tales." Even if these "few points in his poetry" seem

tangential, and even if the substantial content of the poet's work goes "in the opposite direction" and off to "distant parts," one of the points of such poetry is to excite readers to think outside and beyond the neo-medievalisms and repressive Christianity cultivated by their rulers.

Lastly, and moving into the wider world beyond family parlor and commercial office, Engels tackles local journalism. One of the local papers, he says, has reached national attention, though the leading articles are not much read locally but rather in the metropoles, where the *Elberfelder Zeitung* also circulates. We get the background in a history of editorial direction and commercial mergers, which does reveal that during that the summer of 1838 young Friedrich was already a budding journalist and newspaperman, not just a literary reviewer, poet, and essayist. Engels also reviews the various literary pages and features sections, and says which paper derives its content almost exclusively from elsewhere. Bottom of the pile is the *Barmer Wochenblatt*, which has "pietist asses' ears sticking out constantly from its literary lion's skin."[33] Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* also turns up in "Landscapes," a travel-writing piece, again for the *Telegraph*, published in the following summer.[34]

Engels then dismisses prose works originating in the valley, other than booklets on the history of Barmen and Elberfeld, "written very superficially"—possibly we have a hint here of source material for the "Letters," beyond the eyewitness and earwitness diction and rhetoric through which the work gets its liveliness and immediacy. However, poetry, he says, is much cultivated in the "'blessed valley'" with a number of poets in residence. Quite a few are mentioned, which gives occasion for shorter or longer character-sketches that give life to the author's authoritative if mostly poisonous judgments.

Friedrich Ludwig Wülfing, "indisputably the greatest Wuppertal poet," gets the lash of Engels's sarcasm: he is "the Horace of Barmen," author of highly embarrassing odes to his three successive wives, masterpieces of "eccentric, popular crudity." Johann Pol, a pietist pastor and author of a slim volume of verse, gets a dose of *faux*-technical criticism for his anti-rationalist epigrams, of which Engels quotes this line: "To slander and blaspheme against Lord God." The great poet Friedrich Schlegel (fairly recently deceased), says Engels, had never "ended a hexameter with such a perfect spondee," that is, LORD GOD.[35] For publisher-booksellers there isn't much to say: two accept and offer only pietist works, and the other one—who was also the author of (yet another) romantic tragedy on "The Wandering Jew"—rises in Engels's estimation, not for his verse, but because Freiligrath lives in his house.[36]

For an eighteen-year-old's summer experience back at home after leaving boarding school—and taking in years of observation, curiosity, and questioning from boyhood days in the community—this flow of confident detail seems astonishingly mature. The auto-didactic construction, done by a jobbing journalist, couldn't have originated in the first few months in Bremen, and it wasn't overtly fostered by the repressive institutions and experiences of the Wupper Valley. These lively and well put together, but excoriatingly sarcastic and sometimes cruel, "Letters from Wuppertal" came from a precocious and subversive intelligence.

It is apparently useless looking for "influences" to explain this, and indeed that kind of search represents another trope-trap of intellectual biography over and above teleology. Tracing what we have extant in a subject's life activities and living prose back to texts, which lie outside the author's immediate curiosity and ambition, may be scholarly and informative—if indeed we can find any specific sources, which in this case proves pretty fruitless. But if and when we do find such sources—searches which often occupy considerable space in literary biography—attributing "influence" to them then makes the subject an object, an effect and not a cause, and robs the biographical subject of agency. That seems a terrible thing to do to anybody, and it is pleasing that in writing the "Letters" in the way that he did, and working up his material in the way that he did, the eighteen-year-old Engels has defied intellectual biographers who might be looking for "early influences." But rather fortunately, Engels escapes their attentions for two reasons: he was only eighteen, and he sourced what he said from his head.

These "Letters" had a limited, though notable and mixed reception after publication. During the ensuing 180 years since then there has been plenty of time to take them down as derivative of previous authors and under some generic influence. But neither romanticism nor rationalism nor aesthetics provides a model, since the "Letters" offer a sharply entertaining, satirically amusing, and ambitiously comprehensive conspectus of physical, social, and moral change for the metropolitan reader unfamiliar with industrialization.

Writing to a schoolfriend in Berlin, and clearly enjoying the post-publication reports of puzzlement and controversy emerging from the Wupper Valley, young Friedrich says, "everything I wrote was based on proven data which I have from eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses."[37] Close examination of the text, and the historical absence of criticism (other than for Engels's relentlessly judgmental moralism), suggest

that this terse statement is as close as we'll get to anything of methodological interest. But then what is really of interest here is the quality of this genre-defying work of precisely focused reportage from an eighteen-year-old.

Moving to Manchester

Engels took his observational powers to Manchester in December 1842, having just turned twenty-two the month before. In the four years since publishing the "Letters from Wuppertal," he had successfully placed approximately fifty items in various genres in German-language publications.

As a good journalist, Engels wrote an article straightaway on arrival in England, by-lined "*London*, November 29 [1842]," knowing that he had a ready outlet in the *Rheinische Zeitung* back in the homeland. This periodical was a struggling liberal paper founded and published in Cologne during a brief period when Prussian censorship, under the new king Friedrich Wilhelm IV, was somewhat more relaxed.

Young Friedrich, or "x" as he signed his articles, had been publishing regularly there since April, and anonymous publication was very much a norm. Perhaps his use of "x" in the Cologne paper was a way of putting gossipy Rhinelanders off the scent. In that way, he would maybe spare himself family ructions, given that "Oswald," who signed the "Letters from Wuppertal," had obtained some national notoriety. Some people might start putting two-and-two together. In October he passed through Cologne to make contact with the editors, *en route* from Berlin to Barmen, having completed his military service at a barracks in the Prussian capital.

And in November, *en route* from Barmen to London, Engels—on the eve of his twenty-second birthday—stopped again at the newspaper offices, meeting with the newly installed editor Herr Marx, and no doubt other associates. Marx had fallen into the editorship somewhat by default, and certainly not by experience.[38] At that point Engels had contributed around twice as many articles to the paper as Marx, and Marx had placed only a couple of articles elsewhere at all.

Many years later Engels recalled this meeting between the two of them, saying it was notably cool on Marx's side, given that Marx disapproved of the overly philosophical Berlin set of Young Hegelians. But in his recollections Engels says nothing about the other editors, or indeed how he himself felt about Marx at the time. It must have been clear, though, that

Engels was by far the more accomplished writer and indeed publicist for "free thinking" and liberalizing political progress. And he was the one embarking on a breath-taking adventure to the world's major economic and military power. Engels had even been to England before, his English was fluent, and he was off out of the German states and state-lets to the wider world of imperial Britain. This was all rather beyond Marx's imagination at the time.

The news from England was already of some interest in the German-speaking and reading public. Or rather it would be of topical and political interest, unless your interests lay elsewhere—as was certainly the case with the ruling elites—namely in keeping any notion of social change and political innovation firmly at bay. In that case, then, the less news about England, the better.

What the evidence of the time demonstrates—as opposed to the erasures that teleology imposes on later recollections—is that Engels was evidently commissioned to continue his career with the paper with news of liberalizing modernity. These were the themes bannered up under the paper's name: politics, trade, and industry. Though this time, in writing for the *Rhenische Zeitung*, he would be an international correspondent, not just a commentator on the Prussian literary-political scene.

As we have seen, politics at the time necessarily proceeded through literary and academic codes, and in that mode young Friedrich was of course highly skilled and very readable. Writing acutely from sources in the realm of ideas, for people interested in ideas, was a form of political communication at which he was adept. We know this from his publications right back to the beginning and also from his correspondence with family and schoolfriends.

As a "stringer" for a liberalizing newspaper young Friedrich was quite a gift, and of course he was remarkably cheap, probably *gratis*, or nearly so. He was not only externally funded by trade and industry, but employed at a major metropolitan center. With that background and that kind of knowledge, and resident at that kind of location, he could add a unique dimension to their ongoing reportage. His politics was progressive and liberalizing, but not—apparently—utopian and visionary. Since he was such a successful writer, he could clearly manage the Prussian censorship. And youthful and energetic as he was, he would be working well off-site, so he would not be annoying his elders on-site and anyone among them who was better educated.

In the journalism of the time in the German states and state-lets, someone who could write from this modernizing perspective—which was the milieu of the businessmen-editors of the paper—was a really valuable asset. And anyway even for those readers perhaps not quite so interested in the conflictual politics of social change, travel writing could certainly be enjoyable, and doubtless help to sell papers. Travel to France and the low countries was not uncommon in the Rhineland, possibly even eastward for some through Saxony into the Austrian Empire. Other than for emigration, travel as far as England was rare, and emigrants publishing their experiences as polished journalism even rarer.

Engels's first dispatch, "The English View of the Internal Crises," observes English politics for his readers from an experiential perspective, namely his experience of the English "ruling classes, whether middle class or aristocracy." His experiences of or with the aristocracy would have been minimal and from hearsay, since he had no connections to such exclusive realms. But for him the middle classes are clearly commercial and obviously of interest, and he singularizes this ideal-type for his readers as "the practical Englishman."[39] This typical businessman sees politics "as a matter of arithmetic or even a commercial affair." In Engels's view, this indifference to the larger world of ideas, or even to "the precarious state of the country," underpins the calm assurance and confidence—"amidst the hustle and bustle of English life," as he put it—that seems odd.

Clearly, Engels finds English commercialism an impressive social force, certainly compared with the reactionary medievalisms in the German states and state-lets, and quite different from Prussian bureaucratized authoritarianism. In that context, modernizing changes—if any—were to be carefully determined and controlled within the non-constitutional monarchical and Christian confessional state. The political explosion of Chartism in English life, and at the time, very much in the streets of the major cities, was a movement for "'legal progress'" and universal suffrage—the article, as edited through the censorship, doesn't explain Engels's scare quotes on legal progress.

The key contradiction, for Engels here, is the one between mass agitation for universal (male) suffrage, and middle-class and aristocratic beneficiaries of the *status quo*. From 1832 a barely reformed and thus highly unrepresentative parliament, arising from a tiny, privileged (male) electorate and peerage, was firmly in control, "whether Whigs or Tories."[40] Writing analytically, Engels comments that universal (male) suffrage, as promoted through a decade of Chartist agitation, would put an end to this complacency and "inevitably result in a revolution."

Engels's article is very much in the liberalizing vein of re-running the French Revolution along the lines of the radical constitution of 1793. That revolutionary document mandated universal (male) suffrage, a world-first. It was not actually instituted then and not yet instituted anywhere at the time when young Friedrich was writing. In the context of Rhineland politics, and in the editorial offices of the *Rheinische Zeitung*, the businessmen backers of the newspaper faced off—for a time—the Prussian authorities who had concerns about *any* ideas of social change. They could certainly not countenance elected representation derived independently, and even in part, from "the people."

The article is both observation of somewhere safely distant but also allegorically written as an account of official and even middle-class complacency versus "the inevitable."[41] This was a liberal revolution in politics everywhere, and in the German context, a liberalizing revolution in commerce. The *Rheinische Zeitung* was a paper dedicated on the masthead to politics conceived through trade and industry, rather than the more coded literary-cultural periodicals through which Engels had obtained his start and his readership. The career-shift for him from arts and letters to the politics of business, and the business of politics, is quite a genre-shift, if not so much in terms of content, which would have to be similarly coded as culture. In terms of observation, though, the content still has the sense of experiential and locally derived knowledge that featured in the "Letters from Wuppertal." However, the youthful glee in exposing middle-class religious hypocrisy has faded into a more sociological view of resistant and resurgent classes. In discursive terms, these are much more sharply defined than the earlier disjunction between harrowing poverty and self-satisfied indifference.

The later article by-lined "*From Lancashire*, December 20 [1842]" is rather different. Rather than explaining to his German readers the "internal crises" in the political struggles and class-relations of England, Engels addresses "The Condition of the Working Class in England." This short piece looks back to both Wuppertal and Bremen.

Moving on from the "Letters," Engels focuses down on the gritty details of working-class poverty in factory districts, again in an allegorical and predictive way, given conditions in the German states and state-lets, as he sees them. In an earlier article in these postings he had written that there "the middle class comprises the craftsmen and peasants" and—drawing a comparison with England—"such an extensive class of factory workers is unknown."[42] However, unlike his eyewitness observations in his

hometown, this dispatch is written up from newsy reportage and reportorial guesstimates.

That way of developing his interests, and expanding his portfolio of publications, recalls Engels's browsing in the newspapers and periodicals available at the office and elsewhere in Bremen, which he had evidently located with some speed in Manchester. The likely sources are the northern English and lowland Scottish weeklies that printed the news from factory districts for a literate but disenfranchised readership, particularly the *Northern Star and Leeds Advertiser*.

While not overtly censored, such periodicals were harassed by elites, working through local magistrates and governmental threats, for allegedly inciting riots, sedition, and treason. That paper, and others, promoted the progressive, liberalizing politics that Engels was thoroughly familiar with, and on-side with, and through modes—including poetry and literature—that he relished. But rather than inform his German readers along familiar lines, telling them more about Shelley and Shakespeare from their own homegrounds, he zeroes in on sociological and economic terms and statistics that his readers are unlikely to have seen in the German-language press, whether about England or anywhere else.

Nonetheless, the article is comparative, referring German readers to local experiences and to nearby France, and thus to their own observation, or rather to observations that they could be making, if they cared to do what he had done in the Wupper Valley. In those Continental countries the worker "lives on bread and potatoes," and "is lucky if he can eat meat once a week," an observation unlikely to have come from the English press. Whereas a Manchester textile worker—in the factory for a twelve-hour day—"eats beef every day and gets a more nourishing joint for his money than the richest man in Germany." Engels's worker "drinks tea twice a day and still has enough money left to be able to drink a glass of porter at midday and brandy and water in the evening." There must be some element of local eyewitness and earwitness here, as the argumentative mode of the article is not to extol the virtues of wage-work in factories as a way out of poverty: the opening line is "The condition of the working class in England is becoming daily more precarious."[43]

What does come from the English progressive papers, that were oriented to Chartism and the then-illegal trades union movement, is the factual mode in reporting unemployment statistics, however collected; the political economy of mutual welfare-schemes, however attested; and socio-political predictions concerning individual crime and mass conflict,

however generated. At present we are told that "for every ten workers in Manchester there is perhaps only one unemployed, and the proportion is probably the same in Bolton and Birmingham." However, the "slightest fluctuation in trade leaves thousands of workers destitute," using up "modest savings" and posing a risk of "starving to death." Such a crisis "is bound to occur again in a few years' time."[44] This latter observation is a commonplace both of contemporary nineteenth-century political economy and of hands-on commercial experience. The latter was an important subject in the Engels family's life and community. Young Friedrich didn't need a library ticket at Chetham's in central Manchester to find that out.

Possibly the linkage of "robbery, assaults against richer people, etc." to mass action, as in the "summer disturbances" of earlier in the year, was derived from observational speculation, though these observations were easily sourced through northern journalism and pamphleteering. Engels had arrived just after rioting workers in Lancashire and Yorkshire had clashed with armed troops of the regular forces and of professionalized policing, recently introduced outside the London metropolis. He avers that mutual benefit funds, drawn from weekly contributions, "only suffice when the factories are working well," and unemployment is already increasing in some districts, from 7000 to 10,000 in a fortnight in Paisley in lowland Scotland, "a relatively small town." Alert to hypocrisies, the sharp-eyed or sharp-eared Engels comes up with this anecdote—again pointedly allegorical in relation to his readers: "At a meeting of the noblemen and gentlemen of the county it was decided to organise subscriptions which are expected to yield £3,000." But this method, too, is already outworn, Engels says, and "the gentlemen themselves secretly admit that they do not expect to collect more than £400."[45]

The following peroration has an air of original deduction rather than imitative citation. It fits well with the tone of the "Letters," though here the geographical vision is much vaster and the analytical use of economic categories much sharper. But what is additional here is the allegorical import rather than just local moralizing outrage: "What all this boils down to is that England with her industry has burdened herself not only with a large class of the unpropertied." But among these, Engels says prognostically, there is "always a considerable class of paupers which she cannot get rid of." The "state," he says in quite a down-to-earth way, does not care. It "locks these people up in prison or sends them to penal settlements," and it converts "people without work into people without morals." That conclusion echoes the "Letters" from four years earlier, but since it is

written as if from the future, its real import for German readers of the *Rheinische Zeitung* is different. The article is intended to be prophetic. Young Friedrich was time-travelling.

Bi-national Blockbuster

Barely two years later, just turning twenty-four, Engels embarked on a full-length book to be published under his own name, a distinct rarity in his youthful career. At this point his authorial signature is a first, unique in a work written by him for publication across the German states and statelets. In this case he was contracted to a publisher in Leipzig in the Kingdom of Saxony, where censorship and political conditions were sometimes easier than in Prussia. And it is noteworthy in that Engels wrote it up while staying at home with the family in Barmen.

The book-length volume, *Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England* ("The Condition of the Working-class in England") is sub-titled "From personal observation," as the "Letters from Wuppertal" evidently were done in practice. But the author also adds that he is writing from "authentic sources." This marks a distinct advance in persuasive discourse over hearsay journalism and uncorroborated eyewitness factuality. Engels finished the manuscript in the spring of 1845, and, dispatching it to the publishers, he left town for Brussels. He was off abroad to join a coterie of literary radicals who had variously decamped there to escape the threats and frustrations of neo-medieval repression in Prussia. The book appeared in the summer.

The dedicatory preface, "To the working-classes of Great Britain," is remarkable, not just for being written in English but for the evidently heartfelt framing of his observational methodology. As there were numerous émigré Germans in England, possibly the heavyweight but highly political German-language work could be a channel for communicating the message cross-culturally between German and English workers. Engels evidently intended a wider circulation for his English-language mini-manifesto, since rhetorically it is much more in that vein that the usual sort of preface. In the conventional German-language preface, he explains rather more soberly to readers why they should read the body of the book.

Addressing the working men of Great Britain, Engels presents his book as a picture of their "sufferings and struggles" so that his "German Countrymen" will have a "faithful picture" of their condition. The seriousness of his intentions, he says, can be seen in his use of "official and

non-official documents," a discursive practice that readers today would recognize. Indeed we would consider this kind of sourcing and validation essential in a book-length project, even one authored by a jobbing journalist.

However, the methodological and rhetorical distinction that Engels draws next then contrasts print-sources with personal experiences, rather in the manner of modern auto-ethnography. He writes that he isn't satisfied with a "mere *abstract* knowledge of my subject."[46] In the first person he says: "I wanted to see you in your own homes, to observe you in your every-day life, to chat with you on your condition and grievances, to witness your struggles against the social and political powers of your oppressors."

This experiential knowledge, Engels relates, also works the opposite way around politically. Alluding to his experiences of dinner parties, port wine, and champagne among the propertied well-off, which his working-class readership would not have had, he draws from his "ample opportunity to watch the middle-classes" in order to justify his conclusion: "you [British workers] are right, perfectly right in expecting no support whatever from them." There follows a tirade of rhetorical questions exposing the hypocrisy of the comfortable classes, reprising the *exposé* of Wuppertal smugness, though without the element of anti-pietist critique. That element is transposed by Engels to English middle-class indifference even to the "half dozen commissions of enquiry." These sources, he avers, detail "the indirect trade in human flesh" that he sees in the factory system. This was documented, he explains, in the "blue books" published by the factory inspectorate. Noting that those works are not particularly readable, the task of "informing the civilised world" of this degradation in an easily understood form has been left to a "foreigner."

While Engels's "pitch" for himself is perhaps less than fair to the northern and metropolitan journalism, with Chartist and socialist editorial missions, it does signal an ambition to address the situation in a weighty volume. His evident intention was to go beyond the news and reflections of the day to something much more synoptic and—in methodological terms—eclectic.

For German-language readers the genre of the book is something aligned to "dark tourism," that is, travel writing that takes the reader/traveler somewhere shocking. And as Engels says, for English-language readers it's a wake-up call, not just to address appalling conditions that they might otherwise assume were ever-present or merely transitory.

Under those assumptions, doing nothing would suffice. Rather it is made clear by Engels that the English should consider the situation a national disgrace requiring transformative political action by the state. He could play the card of nation-state patriotism there because Great Britain—unlike the German states and state-lets—was actually a United Kingdom (of Great Britain and Ireland). German readers would know that their situation was not only less industrialized but also insufficiently nationalized, given the medievalisms to which they were subject.

But again Engels is having this two ways and using himself rhetorically as a trope: "No working man in England—nor in France either, by-the-by—ever treated me as a foreigner." He then identifies "human progress" with generic humanity across national and linguistic borders, whereas "that blasting curse national prejudice and national pride … means nothing but *wholesale selfishness*."[47] He thus recalls his critique of the smug, middle-class "money-monger" but in class contraposition to the "working man," and himself. Both are both nationally specific in their different contexts, and generically human in relation to situation and sentiment.[48]

Rhetorically, Engels is navigating what was at the time—and arguably still is—an important structural-political and personal-emotional contradiction, and looking to a possible resolution. National unification, an opposition to the anti-modern medievalisms, located in reactionary bastions of autocracy east of the Rhine, was for him—and indeed for anyone since—a requisite for entering industrialized modernity. But that development, as he notes, promotes prejudice, discrimination, rivalry and conflict. It also promotes regimes through which wealthy but modernized elites exclude others from having any power—or very much power—over economic and political life. Since Engels's passionate address there have been any number of similar rhetorical and sometimes institutional or proto-institutional resolutions, more or less to do with popular sovereignty and universal suffrage, only somewhat updated.

Engels's German-language preface to his book draws a somewhat different methodological and rhetorical contrast, saying that the author had intended the work to be a single chapter in a comprehensive, and presumably very weighty and impressive, "social history of England." However, the importance of the subject, so Engels explains, impelled him to investigate it separately. The rather clever logic of equivalence—his intended work as a weighty historical study—and of difference—pointing to a pressing political immediacy—effectively works both ways to interest his audience and validate his views. The problem, as he presciently explains, is to

avoid creating the same "wretched conditions" in the German states as already obtained in England. His work attests this from the "facts concerning this situation" that he will be presenting. The "disturbances" of the preceding summer of 1844 in Silesia and Bohemia—where there were working-class riots, machine-breaking, armed clashes, and so on—were merely a foretaste. And rather than overseas, they were well within "the German lands."

The personal input to the study is deftly handled: "Twenty-one months I had the opportunity to become acquainted with the English proletariat," so as to "supplement" the use of "authentic sources." This was rather the reverse of the pitch he was making to the working men of Britain. Possibly this experiential element is somewhat downplayed here because the idea of a middle-class man sullying his respectability, by consorting openly and intimately with workers, was well into a zone of taboo-laden weirdness. Both the understanding of social class-barriers as a structural phenomenon, and the determination to negotiate and mitigate those impediments to liberalizing, democratizing, industrializing progress, are remarkable and experiential. The "Letters from Wuppertal" show evidence of passer-by observations, whereas here after five years of trans-national, trans-cultural, and transgressive personal experiences, we see a much more intense engagement with the social conditions through which people are living their lives.

The final remarks in this preface are methodological and justificatory. The first comment relates to nomenclature: *Mittelklasse* reflects the English usage "middle class," or—as Engels notes—"middle classes, as is said almost always." The "possessing class," or *bourgeoisie* as in French terminology, is the class through which "public opinion" is manifested directly as political power in Britain and France, but only indirectly in the German states and state-lets. Obversely the propertyless working-class are *Arbeiter*, working-men or the proletariat, a term originating in Roman history and adopted into modern French, hence a very recent loan-word in German.

The other comment relates very deftly to the politics of his source material, saying that he preferred "Liberal" critical sources so as to *épater les bourgeois*, but Tory or Chartist partisan sources (thus of the political right and left) "when I could confirm their correctness from personal observation." Or, he adds, when I was "convinced of the truthfulness of the facts quoted because of the personal or literary reputation of the authorities referred to." Liberal sources would stem from radical intellectuals and thus be biased toward corroborated factuality in Engels's

estimation. Tory or Chartist sources, by contrast, would necessarily be *parti pris* to a set of programmatic policies, pro- and conversely anti- the *status quo* in terms of political power.

While there may be any amount of room for criticism that Engels has erred here and there, there seems little reason not to recognize the admirable academic clarity. It seems reasonable to assume that any universities anywhere at the time would not have been able to cope at all with either the project of surveying working-class conditions, even as social history or human geography, or the decidedly unphilosophical, and indeed anti-philosophical, methodology used here. "German theoreticians," Engels writes, know "much too little of the real world to be driven directly by the real relations to reforms of this 'bad reality.'"[49] This was a sideswipe at Young Hegelian philosophizing through which moralized "realities" were constructed and debated. And indeed Engels is offering his readers a back-handed endorsement of English practical-minded factuality, even if it is lacking in vision and smug with indifference.

In a similarly double-handed move, Engels acknowledged that his work would have shortcomings: "I may be proved wrong in some particular of no importance." But he offers compensation in its comprehensive nature, since he covers agricultural as well as industrial workers. Moreover, he says, its "far-reaching assumptions"—an allusion to Germanic thinking about human history and moral progress—offer a perspective that his readers wouldn't get from the English-language source material.

These two prefaces capture rhetorically the two audiences that Engels seeks to engage: the English working-classes, who were on the move in the Chartist and trades union movements, and the German propertied classes, who—in his eyes—were at best uninformed about their future and fate in the wider world, and were at worst determined to ignore any amount of degradation and misery already present in their local communities, or creeping steadily in that direction.

The historical opening chapters to Engels's *Condition* are necessarily written up from published sources in English history and landscape geography, after which the reader journeys to "The Great Towns," principally London and Manchester. This is where personal observation comes convincingly into its own. On the one hand, the author-observer gives us a panorama of the port of London, rather reminiscent of his earlier travelogue to the port of Bremerhaven, but much vaster and more significant: giant docks, thousands of vessels, countless ships, hundreds of steamers. "A man cannot collect himself but is lost in the marvel of England's greatness."

But how great is it? Londoners there have "been forced to sacrifice the best qualities of their human nature," treating each other with brutal indifference, an unfeeling isolation in private interest, shamelessly barefaced and self-conscious. The "only agreement is a tacit one, that each keep to his own side of the pavement." That is clearly observational. The following is experiential: "people regard each other only as useful objects." Here his further comment is abstractly philosophical: mankind is dissolved "into monads, of which each one has a separate principle," there is a "social war, the war of each against all," and "the stronger treads the weaker under foot."

Of course, these were commonplaces, at least in liberalizing circles, rather than philosophical references or philosophizing. But then that was the point—ready intelligibility and effective persuasion. The message was that, irrespective of class and rank, in these crowds, all "are human beings with the same qualities and powers, and with the same interest in being happy."[50] Set against the hierarchical medievalisms of the German states and state-lets, this is an incendiary notion of equalization, and an abolition of "birth" and "rank" and thus of the whole social "order."

Moving to more "detailed investigation," Engels's generalized descriptions are grounded in eyewitness observations rather unlikely to have come into the text in any other way: "Further, the streets serve as drying grounds in fine weather; lines are stretched across from house to house, and hung with wet clothing." Sometimes observation and citation work in tandem. Engels identifies Portman Square in London's West End as "very respectable," but he picks up, by report, a coroner's inquest that illustrates the close proximity of rich and wretched in residential districts. From there he moves on to similar juxtapositions recorded in the *Journal of the Statistical Society* (only recently founded in 1838). In another narrative and observational leap, we "follow the English officials, who occasionally stray thither, into one or two of these working-men's homes."[51] Unlike Engels's technicolor accounts, though, official observations were coded and categorized into statistics. Engels makes them both work together.

Our author then develops something of a travel-writing formula, taking readers to Dublin Bay ("compared by the Irish with the Bay of Naples"—semi-ironically here, of course); Edinburgh ("the modern Athens"); then Liverpool, Bristol, Nottingham, and Glasgow. Engels quotes published source material, but suggests to the reader that "we shall have more to say when we come to Manchester."[52]

When Engels and his readers arrive at the towns surrounding the "central city" of south Lancashire, the "classic soil" of English manufacture, observational detail in the narrative becomes explicit. Taking us into Stockport, Engels says, "I do not remember to have seen so many cellars used as dwellings in any other town of this district." And in Ashton-under-Lyne, he says that he saw "streets in which cottages are getting bad, where the bricks in the house-corners are no longer firm but shift about, in which the walls have cracks and will not hold the chalk whitewash inside."[53]

In these discussions Engels includes his own line-drawings that illustrate the disorderly, irrational, unplanned patterns of development in Manchester Old Town; the construction of airless "courts" in among buildings that were built in regular lines; purpose-built back-to-back dwellings; even cost-cutting methods of shoddy brickwork; and his own detailed guide-map of districts, artery-like thoroughfares, canals, rivers, and railways.[54]

But all is not squalor. For contrast we are toured round to see "fine large gardens with superb villa-like houses in their midst." These are built usually in the Elizabethan, that is, mock Tudor style, which, Engels says, "is to the Gothic precisely what the Anglican Church is to the Apostolic Roman Catholic."[55] Today's readers, and possibly just a few in Engels's time, will be reminded of the churches picked out and aesthetically evaluated in young Friedrich's prelude to the nitty-gritty of Wupper Valley factory life. What the twin town didn't have, and Manchester did, was an elegant shopping district. Engels's *flaneur*-like perambulation does quite well as a guide to today's city center: "Market Street running south-east from the Exchange; at first brilliant shops of the best sort, with counting-houses or warehouses above; in the continuation, Piccadilly, immense hotels and warehouses." But what interests Engels particularly, and what his observational sensibility looks out for, is hypocrisy. But this time it is in the built environment, rather than just in speech or attitude.

"The town is peculiarly built," Engels writes, "so that a person may live in it for years, and go in and out daily without coming into contact with a working-people's quarter or even with workers." The working people's quarters are either "sharply separated" from sections "reserved for the middle class," or concealed among higher-class dwellings and shops, as he describes a virtual perambulation. The "upper and middle bourgeoisie" live outside the "girdle" of working-class quarters in "regular streets" or "breezy heights." Omnibus routes—lined with shops—keep squalor out of sight. "And the finest part of the arrangement"—Engels as the scourge

of hypocrisy again—"is this, that the members of this money aristocracy can take the shortest road through the middle of all the labouring districts to their places of business." They can do this "without ever seeing that they are in the midst of the grimy misery that lurks to the right and the left."[56]

Analytically, the striking thing about this narration is that—with emphasis—Engels makes the reader understand that, "Everything which here arouses horror and indignation is of recent origin, [and] belongs to the *industrial epoch*." This latter brought squalor and degradation intermittently to the Wupper Valley, as we recall from his "Letters." But here the buildings, whether old or new, are adapted or erected according to one principle: "*no hole is so bad but that some poor creature must take it who can pay for nothing better*."[57]

Engels relates, presumably from conversations, that "the people of Manchester emphasize the fact that whenever anyone mentions to them the frightful condition of this Hell on Earth," that this refers only to *Old* Town. He notes that this supposed comparison doesn't prove anything good in the first place. And in the second place—taking the reader to the New Town, "known as Irish Town"—he says that conditions are the same or worse. And indeed the streets and buildings there were purpose-built.

But—in a characteristic rhetorical question—Engels asks, did "landowners" or "the municipality" prevent this or improve on it? He reports to the reader that "on re-reading my description, I am forced to admit" that it is not exaggerated. He says that it is "far from black enough to convey a true impression of the filth, ruin and uninhabitableness, the defiance of all considerations of cleanliness, ventilation, and health," which characterize this district. He takes "Irish town" to be a synecdoche, existing in "the heart of the second city of England, the first manufacturing city of the world," for the wider consequences of industrialization.[58]

As noted above there is a considerable amount of young Friedrich in play in the volume that is taken to be his masterwork. Like the earlier "Letters from Wuppertal," it attracted notice and notoriety at the time in the German-language press but also much more widely and eastward to tsarist Russia. A review of a foreign-language work on such a faraway place, and on such a recondite subject as industrialization, could pass the harshly strict but rather literal-minded censorships of the time. Those with an interest in utopian or visionary schemes for social reform or renewal noted the political endorsement in the work, though with some puzzlement: the book is profoundly negative in a minatory manner. Watch out! Or this will happen to you!

A scheme to organize society in some other way is not in the text; the closest that the author gets to such a transformative vision is the lengthy chapter on labor movements, Chartism, and socialism. For Engels the Chartists are indifferent to the essentially class-character of their movement—which was for universal (male) suffrage and parliamentary reform. In that way, and in Engels's view, they would miss the "knife and fork" question posed by industrial precarity and working-class suffering. As a political critic, he explains that socialists are dogmatic in their principles and so miss the progressive character of industrial development and working-class immiseration. True "proletarian socialism" must pass through Chartism, he says, "purified of its bourgeois elements," thus arriving at a "union."

Engels reports a "prevailing absence of religion among working-man." One wonders about projection here, given young Friedrich's rejection of small-town cultural and intellectual suffocation under narrow-minded fundamentalist pastors. He describes a war of reading rooms, almost, recalling his own self-education, for which he relied on local institutes and other rudimentary resources accessible to the literate. His comments on middle-class efforts to secure the local "Mechanics' Institutes" from "proletarian influences," by promoting workers' education in natural sciences and political economy, gets a sharp, probably experiential critique: "all education [there] is tame … subservient to the ruling politics and religion … a constant sermon upon quiet obedience, passivity and resignation to … fate."[59]

This is not so much projection as identification: young Friedrich's disdain for the local pietism of the Wupper Valley arising in the "working-man" of Manchester, who wants a "solid education." Among the recommended highlights for Mancunian auto-didacts are Strauss's forensically deconstructive *Life of Jesus* (just published in English translation by Marianne Evans/George Eliot in 1842); Enlightenment classics of French materialist philosophy in English translation (as advertised in the Owenite socialist press); along with glowing recommendations for Shelley—"the genius, the prophet," and for Byron—with "his bitter satire upon our existing society." The thrill of clandestine reading of romantic radicals is still very fresh in the young man's mind.

Back in schoolboy Barmen days, or even as man-about-town in Bremen, young Friedrich did not have Chartism and the labor movement as experiential realities, other than filtered and censored news reports sent in

from a very different kind of society. The political mix that we see in his large-scale post-Manchester work of 1844–1845 is eclectic. The now sharply focused progressive politics of Chartism-*cum*-socialism is easily traceable, on the one hand, to the English-language radical press, and, on the other hand, to the utopianism of a very few clandestine German activists. Those latter ideas were probably absorbed in conversations at the *Rheinische Zeitung* editorial collective when Engels passed through Cologne twice in 1842, and again visiting exiles in Paris in 1844, rather than in solitary textual study. Possibly, the presence of proto-socialists at the otherwise hard-headed, business-minded paper was an index of middle-class frustration with stifling authoritarianism and anti-modern conservatism of the provincial and monarchical authorities. Engels's participation in—not simple absorption of—this heady and rather desperate politics will be considered in the next chapter.

Engels's politics—not just his published work—stands out from his *confrères* and *compères* in two ways: it is thoroughly—by experience and observation—rooted in Wupper Valley factory work, and it is multi-genre and innovative. His debut book presents a deftly handled mixed-media text, multi-layered with rhetorical devices, narrative strategies, and awareness of cross-class and cross-national audiences. Probably many readers of German could cope with the latter realm of verbal fireworks, but almost no one, in English or German, could really connect with his critique of industrial modernity. This was because it nowhere expounds religious or utopian visions, which were a readily intelligible genre at the time. Nor does it presume that liberalizing democracy will itself resolve modern poverty through progressive reform. Thus it touched dangerously on revolutionary treason. His writing balances the human touch of observation, even if not his own, with the geographer's overview of physical systems of production and distribution, and the political economists' parsing of society into working-class producers and middle-class consumers. Class-conscious urban geography is to some extent his invention, though he rarely gets the credit. As a journalist and auto-didact, he had little chance to take off in such an intellectualizing and academically minded mode at the time, even if he had wanted to.

Engels's vocational ambitions lay elsewhere, namely in political agitation, albeit pursued in what seem now to be unlikely ways, in unlikely venues, and from unlikely circumstances.

Notes

1. MEGA I/3:738–9.
2. CW2:99–100.
3. CW2:116–17.
4. CW2:117.
5. MEGA I/3:741.
6. CW2:9–10.
7. CW2:10
8. CW2:10
9. CW2:7–8.
10. CW2:8.
11. CW2:572–4.
12. CW2:8.
13. CW2:8.
14. CW2:11.
15. CW2:11.
16. CW2:425.
17. CW2:14.
18. CW2:14.
19. MEGA I/3:743.
20. CW2:16.
21. CW2:16.
22. CW2:17.
23. CW2:18.
24. CW2:18–19.
25. CW2:19.
26. CW2:19.
27. CW2:19–20.
28. CW2: 20, 592 n. 16; emphasis in original.
29. CW2:20.
30. CW2:20–1.
31. MEGA I/3:740.
32. CW2:21.
33. CW2:22–23.
34. CW2:100.
35. CW2:24–25.
36. CW2:23.
37. CW2:446.
38. Gareth Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx: Greatness and Illusion* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2016), pp. 104–11.
39. CW2:368–9.

40. CW2:368–9.
41. CW2:368–9.
42. CW2:375.
43. CW2:378–9.
44. CW2:378–9.
45. CW2:379.
46. CW4:297; emphasis in original.
47. CW4:298; emphasis in original.
48. CW4:297.
49. CW4:303–4.
50. CW4:328–9.
51. CW4:334.
52. CW4:337–44.
53. CW4:340.
54. CW4:350–9.
55. CW4:346–7.
56. CW4:348.
57. CW4:355; emphasis in original.
58. CW4:354–5.
59. CW4:526–7.

CHAPTER 4

Vocation

Abstract Taking vocation as a theme, this chapter shows how Engels made extraordinary use of his military service in Berlin by attending university lectures. He reported for nationally circulated media on the Prussian government's appointment of a conservative philosopher, Schelling, to suppress liberal ideas, sometimes coded in Hegelian philosophy. Engels authored an anonymous pamphlet of hilarious but cleverly complex parody of these attempts at repression. Leaving Berlin he made contact with communism/socialism at the offices of a liberal paper in Cologne. With those ideas, and in that activist context, he found his vocation. His critical review of political economy, written from English-language sources, was accepted by that editorial collective, then co-resident in Paris. After their relocation to Brussels, Engels left his hometown to join them and to pursue a jointly authored political satire. This was published in 1845 as the work of Engels and Marx, in that order.

Keywords Idealism • Hegel • Schelling • Parody • Political economy • Atheism

In the spring of 1841, aged just twenty, young Friedrich Engels faced the problem of military obligation. Returning to Barmen from his stint with the traders and shipping agents of Bremen, he "unsettled" into life at home by making holiday plans. And then he headed off into "wanderings"

T. Carver, *Engels before Marx*, Marx, Engels, and Marxisms,
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over the Alps into Italy during the summer. Characteristically, he recorded his observations in suitably literary travel writing for the *Athenäum*, another of the progressive literary periodicals of the time, moving around—this one from Nuremberg to Berlin—to keep up with publishers, backers, and the localized censorship. Though he didn't know it, this was his farewell to the emotional romance of landscapes. In its conventionality it was certainly very different in content from his tour of the Wupper Valley, detailed in the "Letters" of his publishing debut in the *Telegraph* two years earlier, and the inverse in terms of tone: "So I continued through the green vineyard country, the vines climbing over arbours and into the tops of mulberry trees." Effusively he writes: "the warm air of Italy breathed upon me ever more mildly, the magic of a land never known but long dreamed of sent a sweet thrill through me … I fell blissfully asleep."[1]

These lines of longing for "the south" were an evocation of Goethe's waif-like Mignon, the "beloved" in the novel *Wilhelm Meister*, the title character of which is a young merchant. Her song, very famous in many musical settings, among them Beethoven's and Schubert's, begins *Kennst du das Land?* ("Do you know the land …?"). This familiar trope—of sunny southern lands where lemon-trees blossom—would appeal to readers, and no doubt reflects Engels's feelings quite genuinely. It certainly seems parody- and sarcasm-free, yet progressive politically only—as we have seen so far—in a somewhat metaphorical and derivative way. Censors could take it at face value, but some readers could connect the dots between the heady wildness of nature's bounty, the authenticity of the country-folk encountered, and the egalitarian absence of overt hierarchy and political medievalism. Indeed Engels views seven mountain peaks in Switzerland, named after electors of the Holy Roman Empire, a bastion of very early medievalism in a modernizing world. That highly conservative political structure had only recently been dissolved in 1808 by Napoleon's sweeping wars of revolution. Engels was inspired to make a thinly coded swipe at the still ossified successor states and state-lets of the "German lands." Current rulers there, by his implication, are just as "undisturbed by the shouting and jostling of the people," as are the lofty mountains in the distance. But in that way the rulers in the German states and state-lets are failing to get the message that authoritarian, autocratic rule is a relic of the past, and indeed that it is now under existential threat.[2]

These holiday ramblings and writerly reflections probably have something to do with an imaginative escape from obligations imposed by the Engels family patriarchy and by the Kingdom of Prussia. A plan to secure exemption from military service wasn't successful, and to avoid conscription at the king's pleasure, young Friedrich volunteered for the Royal Artillery. He was posted to the capital, Berlin, in the "2nd Guards Regiment of Mudlarks," as he denominated his outfit in a letter to his sister Marie.[3] Mercifully, he was not housed in barracks but in private lodgings, with a "Rhinelandish restaurant" nearby.[4]

Becoming a Berliner

The post-Bremen alpine holiday contrasts markedly with army-service on the flat plains of Brandenburg and in a city with its origins in military repression rather than in sea-going trade. So there would seem to be little for Engels to do in either form of education that he had been pursuing so far: learning the ropes for international business and commercial enterprise, and studying the business of writing for progressive periodicals fostering discontent. What happened in Berlin seems extraordinary now, though if we look back to young Friedrich's university-style reading lists and seminar-tutor correspondence, his activities there begin to make sense. Military training seems to have occupied even less of his time there than did those long days copying accounts at the Bremen trading house. And some of his avocations were much the same: visits to the opera, theater, and concerts, with a first-hand account of "Lisztomania." He writes to his sister that the famous pianist's playing was accompanied by female swooning and obvious obsession. The letter includes one of his own sketches of the celebrity cult-figure.[5]

But something in Berlin was quite different. Instead of a "virtual" university, as in Bremen days—and more in his own head than, so it appears, in the heads of his correspondents—he had a real one to hand. As is still the custom, major universities sometimes schedule high-profile public lectures, on occasion a series for distinguished professors. Engels simply walked into one that was known in advance to be controversial within the educated opinion of the time, given that, from the rulers' perspective, public opinion of any other kind simply didn't exist. Officially, he seems to have been an unmatriculated student, perhaps something like a registered auditor, someone admitted to the premises but not eligible to take a degree. In correspondence at the end of his year's service, he commented

quite honestly—to the editor of the progressive *Deutsche Jahrbücher*, then published from Dresden in Saxony: "I am not a Doctor [of Philosophy] and cannot ever become one. I am only a merchant and a Royal Prussian artillerist."[6]

Perhaps less common in the Anglophone world today is the idea that a government would make (and un-make) university appointments for specifically political purposes, though of course in many parts of the world the practice is quite familiar. And perhaps it seems even odder that the professorship and subject in question were rooted in quite abstract doctrines and debates. These concerned the nature of knowledge as both experience and ideas, bodily sensation, and mental reflection. Perhaps it is somewhat more familiar that the crux of the matter lay in reinforcing the fundamentalist orthodoxies of confessional Christianity. The imbrication of educational curricula and collegiate institutions with religious denominations and hierarchies is established in many places and strongly protected today. The official politics of Engels's time—everywhere in Europe—maintained a secularity, that is a line between authorities of church and state, that discouraged skepticism on both counts: doubters and critics of either were atheists and rebels, thus enemies to both. In ruling opinion, faith in doctrinal Christianity and obedience to Christian rulers coincided. Measures were taken against those whose philosophizing did not accord with the latitude officially allowed in formulating, interpreting, and enforcing Christian doctrine and religious conformity.

From the German-speaking perspective, the great philosophers of the age—Immanuel Kant, Hegel, J.G. Fichte—were an important cultural institution, superior to those of the traditional great-power rivals in modern learning: France and England. Hegel had died a decade earlier, in 1831, and his university-based disciples were busy collecting, publishing, and debating his legacy. On the one hand, his idealist philosophy was not explicitly a threat to Christian belief. But then, on the other hand, it did not discuss truth, knowledge, and human experience in explicitly Christian terms. This significant lacuna was an open door. But was it a door to enlightenment over and beyond the mysteries and absurdities evident in the Bible and in Christian doctrine? Or was it a door to a hell of political anarchy and amoral atheism? This latter inversion had actually and notoriously occurred during the Cult of Reason that had dissolved Christianity intellectually, ceremonially, and institutionally during the French Revolution only a few decades earlier, and just over the Prussian border. Hegelian philosophy is famously, and somewhat deliberately, quite

difficult, even for German readers. It is thus challenging for anyone to grasp as intensely political in itself, and as an intensely controversial mode of politicization. Engels put himself right into the thick of it.

As professor of philosophy, and as a rival in philosophical idealism to Hegel's version—itself a revisioning of Kant's critiques of pure reason, practical reason, and judgment—Professor F.W.J. Schelling was "translated" by royal command from his chair at Munich to the prestigious and politicized Academy at Berlin. He was given a specific brief to reconcile modern learning and methodological skepticism with the mysteries and doctrines of Christian orthodoxy, as approved by established states and churches. The task was political, the resolution intellectual, and the target groups were students, writers, periodicals, and cultured opinion generally. What ensued was rather predictably an escalation in the ongoing but coded polemics that could be winkled through the censors, or published from abroad and then smuggled into the German states and state-lets.

Of course, the battles between faith and reason, rationality and mysticism, had been around for centuries. But in the 1830s the conjunction was between scientific approaches to history, including Strauss's notorious investigation into the historical existence of Jesus, and highly abstract philosophizing about truth, founded on Hegelian premises derived in complete independence from Christian theology. This conjunction was an explosive charge in politics itself and in public life (limited as it was), rather than in compartmentalized realms of academic study that were intellectually remote and safely unpoliticized.

For the young Engels, then, this kind of coded political disputation was quite a familiar milieu. Earlier in the spring he had written from Bremen to his schoolfriend Friedrich Graber, wanting to move his university-style study-group along: "Strauss has not compromised himself in the slightest," provocatively defending the already notorious former academic, but in a carefully judged and circuitously constructed way. This was so because "he still believed—as his *Das Leben Jesu* [*Life of Jesus*] indicates—that dogmatism would not be harmed by his opinions." In that case he could have read a "'System of Orthodox Theology' in the same way as many an Orthodox Christian reads a 'System of Hegelian Philosophy.'"[7] Engels is thus recommending an anagogical reading, both ways round, that transcends the literal, historical, and metaphorical readings of a text. Instead of taking a text straightforwardly, an anagogical reading finds mystical or spiritual significance over and beyond even notions of contradiction and consistency. Thus a *faux*-Strauss could have read orthodox Christian

doctrine as implying the reason and rationality revealed by Hegel in his philosophical system; and conversely a *faux*-Christian could read Hegelian philosophy as expressive of the revealed truths and doctrinal mysteries of Christianity.

Engels was certainly well versed in church politics and religious dogmatics, indeed from childhood. Moreover, he was well up to speed with "free thinking" progressive views that could only arise from intuitive skepticism and emotional restlessness. His literary efforts and overviews, from published reviews and private correspondence, show how bold he was in making his mark in this realm as a teenager, and how much attention he could attract in unpromising provincial settings and thus in metropolitan centers of culture. What was missing was sustained intellectual engagement.

Writing from Bremen for the *Telegraph*, Engels had previously commented on the circumstances through which "the otherwise so pious people of Bremen" had prohibited "the Elberfeld zealot, *F.W. Krummacher*" from preaching again in their church. In Engels's view, what had incensed the local congregation was the pastor's ludicrous fancying of himself as "higher and wiser than Kant, Hegel, Strauss, etc."[8] Lectures at Berlin University, and otherwise no doubt boring company in the barracks, provided him with the golden opportunity to up his political game, engaging on the ground with the latest philosophico-theologico controversies as they unfolded in real time. He moved his writing from literature and the arts to philosophy and—in a sense—science. This was understood within German culture of the time as *Wissenschaft*, a rational, systematic, logical presentation of knowledge—about anything. Idealist philosophy, after Kant, was itself a model of *wissenschaftlich* investigation and demonstration.

Learning by doing was, of course, young Friedrich's *metier*, and doing for him was, of course, writing. Schelling's much heralded lectures—putting Hegel to rights, and thus heading off any radicalizing, too-progressive Young Hegelian readings, clandestine publications, and café-carousing—began in mid-November 1841. "Schelling on Hegel," by "Friedrich Oswald" appeared in the *Telegraph* in December as Engels turned twenty-one.

The first article, of a pair of dispatches, very competently sets the scene physically, intellectually, and of course politically, even philosophically, with quite an element of dramatic build-up. Engels locates "the battle for dominion over German public opinion in politics and religion" in "Lecture Hall No. 6" at the University in Berlin. This is where "the power of mind over the world" will be demonstrated, *mit Sturm und Drang*, in the

outcome of philosophical confrontation. Reference to "the power of mind over the world" was a clear allusion to the pretty much unrivaled dominance of philosophical idealism in German intellectual life. Idealism, in the philosophical sense, is the view that what we know of the world, and indeed what we are able to know of it, is traceable to, and exists purely within, the realm of ideas. Ideas were variously considered to be unalterable concepts within mind as a human potential, or to be an ongoing realization or actualization, even historicization or materialization, of "Reason." In that latter, Hegelian-way ideas gain some neo-spiritual, quasi-theological kind of "being" unencumbered by human minds or brains or bodies.

What is happening in Berlin, Engels relates, is that the critics of Hegel, basing themselves in theology, have been pushed aside by a big gun, namely the philosopher Schelling. He and Hegel, the greatest philosopher of modern times, Engels explains, were once roommates at university. But in his view, Schelling had been "intellectually dead for three decades." Hence, the zone of confrontation about the dead Hegel has moved from debates among his disciples to a full-on frontal assault on him by Schelling, his old rival. Schelling has come back from the dead, as it were, "claiming for himself the full power and authority of life."[9] Engels's double inversion—actual death versus intellectual death, philosophical life-after-death versus intellectual resurrection of a dead philosophy—balances descriptive truth with ascriptive judgment.

Engels gives his audience a colorful view of the "notables of the university" in their reserved seats near the rostrum, and of the multi-cultural, polyglot audience seated in rows. Seated there himself he overhears speech in "German, French, English, Hungarian, Polish, Russian, modern Greek and Turkish." This is pretty much the list of languages that he had tackled—at least to some degree—in Bremen. In *faux*-observational mode he also sees the military present: "a grey-bearded staff officer and next to him, quite unembarrassed, a volunteer"—obviously himself. So he is an eyewitness present in the room but also witnessing himself from an impersonal out-of-body perspective.

Engels perceives and paints the audience as assembled by chance, and seated irrespective of rank—other than with respect to doctors of the university—which was not the characteristic mode of public seating elsewhere. In other places the orders of aristocratic and civic status would be observed, and, as he says, in a mode of *faux*-naïvété, his unembarrassed volunteer would not anywhere else be seated, without due reverence, next

to such a "high ranking superior."[10] This egalitarianism of the space, though not complete, invokes an ideal world even in present practice, one within which the old orders of birth-rank, aristocratic privilege, and monarchical authority have been expunged.

Engels's second article offers a *précis* of Schelling's supposedly new and superior "positive" philosophy, itself an update of his earlier, supposedly imperfectly developed views. Of course, as Engels paraphrases the philosopher, those views were always correct, at whatever stage, but were then overshadowed—unfairly in Schelling's spiteful account—by Hegel's fame and success. In that way as a journalist Engels engages readers with personalization of an otherwise remote-sounding and hard-to-follow philosophical dispute. But ultimately he has to guide readers through the politics of the situation, and indeed to make sure that they are reading him in that kind of way.

Political engagement is very much to the fore in Engels's article. As a loyal Hegelian, of the progressive "Left" way of reading these difficult works, he defends "the right of reason to enter into existence, to dominate being!" Whereas, he writes, Schelling has "deserted freedom" decisively.[11] But in discussing the controversies over the concepts of "identity" and "the absolute," Engels skates lightly over the surface, whereas sarcasm—and an *exposé* of plagiarism and pretentiousness—does the heavy lifting.[12] But then in the necessarily coded way that politics could be discussed at all, some readers, at least, would look to those turns of expression in order to see what was really going on.

At this point Engels's ambitions as a political agent took a decisive leap. He moved from the realm of *parti pris* but literary periodicals to independent publication as an autonomous, but of course pseudonymous pamphleteer. Rather than continue with his articles in the *Telegraph*, he chose a stand-alone, slim volume format. The upshot of this was that "Friedrich Oswald" became an author that booksellers could recognize, and that journals could then review. Indeed some such reviews of his pamphlet were constructed as a featured sequence.

After publication Engels explained to the editor of the *Deutsche Jahrbücher* why his highly successful pamphlet publication hadn't gone as articles-in-series to that leading Young Hegelian periodical. That publication was formerly the *Hallische Jahrbücher*, originating in 1838, then repressed by the Prussian censorship, and subsequently removed by the editor in mid-1841 to Leipzig: "Why didn't I send *Schelling und die Offenbarung* ("Schelling and Revelation") to the *Jahrbücher*?" Engels asks

rhetorically. He gives three reasons. Firstly, because "what I had in mind was a book of between 5 and 6 folios [80 to 96 pages] and this was cut down to 3½ folios [55 pages in final print] in the course of my negotiations with the publishers." And secondly, because "up to then the *Jahrbücher* had been a little reserved about Schelling," that is, not completely against the antique upstart. And thirdly, because "people here [in Berlin] advised against attacking Schelling in a journal and told me rather to put out a pamphlet."[13] We don't know who those advisors were, but clearly young Friedrich now had partners-in-politics to hand.

Whether the financial investment and risk was entirely the publisher's, or entirely the author's, or an apportionment between the parties by contract, we don't know, but research into the reception of the pamphlet has been meticulous.[14] The youthful "Left" Hegelians were astutely on-side with it, publishing an editorial review in the *Deutsche Jahrbücher*. Most other papers were appreciative of the reportage on the lectures, if not always on board with Hegelian revolutions of any kind, or indeed any revolutions in thought at all. As one would expect, and no doubt also Engels's expectation at time, the *Evangelische Kirchenzeitung* was minatory on the whole subject.

The pamphlet was published in the latter half of March 1842, and by May the publishers were advertising for return of any unsold copies so that they could meet the heavy demand. And they repeated the call in June and July. The senior Hegelian disciple, and an editor of Hegel's complete works, Karl Ludwig Michelet, quoted Engels in print and praised his rendition of Schelling's views, as did the conservative Hegelian philosophy professor Philipp Marheinicke, evidently and perhaps unexpectedly finding little to quibble with.[15] Or perhaps the political significance of the confrontation eclipsed the academic norm of fault-finding. The contribution of the pamphlet to ever-present controversies concerning philosophical truth and Christian doctrine was noted outside the German states and state-lets, as well, and as far afield as Russia.[16]

What this publishing event shows is that young Friedrich—still only twenty-one—had elevated himself intellectually and politically—albeit anonymously and pseudonymously—well into the "educated public." And he was also managing his timing and medium with the commercial skills that one would expect. Or in other words, he had confirmed his vocation.

Even though young Friedrich's immediate financial and domestic support was courtesy of the Prussian royal treasury, he had managed to join

up with a radical and radicalizing "scene." This was apparently with like-minded and similarly youthful types in and around the university. While this situation occurred through various somewhat accidental or fortuitous events and eventualities, and while there is no evidence that this was anything like a planned outcome, it was certainly—at the time and in retrospect—an arrival. Or in other words, it isn't clear what else there was for a progressive, free-thinking, ambitious, hard-working, talented, and aspiring young man to do.

Young Friedrich was not the only one, as he had evidently been in Bremen—or as he portrayed his situation, anyway. Having on-site associates, rather than friends and colleagues by post, was quite a different set-up. Working in a political collective was also constitutive of his vocation. Because his writing was politicking, he didn't do it alone, even if the written thoughts were solely his. This is where authorship merges with agitation.

Notably the subtitle of *Schelling and Revelation* is: *Critique* [*Kritik*] *of the Latest Attempt of Reaction Against the Free Philosophy*. The key word there is *Kritik*, echoing of course Kant's magisterial critiques. It also echoes the "official" or "Old" Hegelian journal *Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik*. Engels was invoking the methods of professional and indeed semi-deified philosophers. This is quite a bold claim from a school-leaver auto-didact.

The content of the pamphlet goes with a swing, if in somewhat overblown imagery. Clearly, though, this diction doesn't seem to have upset either the Young Hegelian readership, or the more conservative Old Hegelians. Both regarded Schelling's pretentiousness—and the political pretensions about him—as a repellent revenge from a former colleague, and another instance of unwelcome state interference. From this joint "Old" and "Young" Hegelian perspective, Schelling was an evident epigone, ludicrously setting himself up as a philosophical giant. Hegel himself—from both "Left" and "Right" perspectives—had only gained in stature since his death, evidenced in the published volumes of his collected works.

Hence Engels references both the *Deutsche Jahrbücher* and the *Athenäum* on his opening page: "Was there not a silence in the land as if the Holy Ghost was about to descend, as if God Himself wished to speak out of the clouds?" In this *faux*-dramatization Schelling's philosophical/theological adherents, self-styled "Positives"—so-called after his transformative philosophy—would witness "the fall of Hegelianism, the death of

all atheists and non-Christians" by Easter 1842. But—framing his introduction with his conclusion—Engels says, "Everything has turned out differently" because "Schelling has left almost all his hearers dissatisfied."[17]

Engels's narrative account of the Schelling—Hegel conjunction and confrontation reads very smoothly for initiate and novice alike. It allows those who were anti-Left-Hegelian, or anti-Right-Hegelian, to follow historical factuality with reasonable agreement, and the same for those who despised any and all Hegelians as such. "Revelation" emerges here with a double-meaning: both the revealed truths of Christian revelation (which Schelling promised to reconcile "positively" with idealist philosophizing) and the promised revelation from Schelling (which was hyped in the press and by word-of-mouth). Such revelations were presumed to explain the philosopher's emergence from thirty years of relative silence—something sharply dismissed by Engels as "lassitude."[18]

The analytical and philosophical *exposé* that Engels launches against Schelling's "revelation" in his lectures very largely reprises the content of the articles he had already done for the *Telegraph*. It shows off his pretty much intuitive and therefore accessible skills in filleting out foolishness and flannel from primary source material. In this case he was working from the transcriptions of Schelling's lectures that he had taken himself. The text also suggests close study of Strauss, Ludwig Feuerbach, and other philosophers, such as Baruch de Spinoza and Kant, who turn up from time to time. But they are "flagged," one might say, rather as they might be briefly touched on in intellectual journalism.

The follow-up pamphlet, or perhaps rather the companion—since composition appears to have taken place about the same time—is not a critique, voiced directly, if with considerable rhetorical skill—by an observer journalist, but a parody. Thus the genre, indeed the trope, is radically different. *Schelling and Revelation*, for all Engels's rhetorical bravura and judgmental conclusions, is fundamentally a serious exposition authored by someone who—for most readers anyway—clearly knows his stuff. And most readers interested in these central political issues of the time—reason and faith as routes to certain knowledge—might not want any more "straight," if convoluted expositions of idealist abstractions. Hegel and Hegelians, and Schelling's proposed "positive" and transformational successor, needed another kind of treatment altogether.

Engels, from teenage years the adroit operator and prankster—sought out a publisher of pietist tracts, no doubt surprising them with a pietist submission *supporting* Schelling, rather than condemning him. After all

Schelling was well known to be have been a colleague of Hegel and fellow-expositor of Hegelianism, even if in the latest variant. Any philosophy, other than theologically based dogmatics, was of course anathema from the pietist perspective, rooted as it was in biblical studies and bigoted sectarianism. The publishers took the bait, and snapped it up, publishing the pamphlet in early April, only weeks after its predecessor. This anonymous work was somewhat shorter than the previous one, but still at forty-three pages an independent volume with a—for the time—catchy title: *Schelling, Philosoph in Christo, oder die Verklärung der Weltweisheit zur Gottesweisheit* ("Schelling, Philosopher in Christ, or The Transfiguration of Worldly Wisdom into Divine Wisdom"). It was helpfully subtitled to catch a market that was distinctly alternative to the metropolitan educated public of the time: *For Believing Christians Who Do Not Know the Language of Philosophy*.

Engels's first pamphlet, "Schelling and Revelation," had referenced Bruno Bauer's parodic satire *Die Posaune des jüngsten Gerichts über Hegel den Atheisten und Antichristen: Ein Ultimatum* ("The Trumpet of the Last Judgement against Hegel the Atheist and Anti-Christ: An Ultimatum"). This was published in Saxon Leipzig in October 1841, just before the start of Schelling's lectures. Engels's second pamphlet, "Schelling, Philosopher in Christ," was possibly his effort to rival an established Young Hegelian. Indeed Bauer was the most senior of the recent university victims of Prussian repression. Possibly he was hiding his professorial identity in a somewhat under-the-radar but popular genre far removed from academic critique.

In the "The Last Trumpet" Bauer's own radical reading of Hegel—as the harbinger of atheism and anti-Christ—is put across anonymously and rhetorically as the work of an enraged pietist pastor, preaching dogmatic truths against the irreligious and un-Christian implications of Hegelian philosophizing. Engels's strategy was similarly satirical and parodic, but reversed and doubled-down. Engels has a believing Christian *defend* Schelling's "positive" version of Hegelianism as consistent with Christian fundamentalism. He thus exposes the nonsensical character of Schelling's reasoning and credulity by aligning him with such a nonsensical and credulous defender. The parodic form—and clever placement for publication—recalls the eighteen-year-old's poetic satire "To the Enemies," ridiculing nonsensical editorializing in a local Bremen paper.

Young Friedrich could no doubt do pietist sermonizing in his sleep, but the rhetorical constructions through which the substantial pamphlet works

to gain credibility are very skilled. No doubt at least some pietistic believers were not fooled, though evidently the publisher was. To keep even the credulous interested and on-side Engels uses double- and triple-voicing.

Engels's pietist opens with the obvious biblical scenario, the miraculous Damascene conversion of Paul, "who also, before he was converted, went and made havoc of the churches and breathed out threat and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord."[19] The Lord's mercy and the Saviour's grace, says the pietist, have enlightened Schelling, "who at the beginning of the century, with his friend of that time, the notorious Hegel, laid the foundations of that vile worldly wisdom," namely philosophy. How miraculous is it that an "ungodly" and "blasphemous" philosopher has found God!

The pietist preacher then voices Schelling as a Christian convert, preaching rather crazily in the lecture hall to "the believers," who of course would not have been physically present: Schelling himself calls from the rostrum: "Come and see, and praise the mercy which the Lord has done to me!"[20] In Engels's hands, however, the "converted" Schelling hasn't suddenly switched on Christianity in order to switch off philosophy, and thus be personally "saved." The pietist explains that Schelling has been chosen because he's a philosopher and therefore "familiar with the wisdom of this world," someone "best suited to refute the proud and haughty philosophers."[21] He will offer "a rescuing hand to draw them up to the light," but it will be hard work because the philosophers are victims to "the lusts of this world and the devil of their own pride." If they "shut their ears" and "are not converted now, it is their fault alone." The pietist declares that Schelling "has shown them how weak and vain is human reason."[22]

In a daring reversal Engels's pietist preacher then turns into a *faux*-philosopher of critique, saying, "Schelling cannot quite get rid of his old, perverse wisdom." However, with sufficient pride in "Him," that is, God, any "pride in his [Schelling's] former philosophy" can be put to godly use. Schelling's "whole lengthy system of so-called negative philosophy" will demonstrate, "as clearly as daylight," says the pietist, that "reason is altogether unfit to cognise truth," least of all the Gospel truths of "God and the mysteries of Christianity."[23] In the lectures Shelling's "positive" transformation of philosophy was built up from—as he saw it—a basis of Hegelian "negative" critique. Engels's parody took aim at them both.

The proper pietist conclusion, so the pamphlet says, is "to work in earnest with Schelling, and cast reason out of Christianity, into paganism,"

even using the wicked methods of philosophy against itself. Paganism, in the form of classical learning and modern rationalism, sets "reason upon the throne of God, like that whore of old in the gory days of the French Revolution." Schelling does God's work, however, when he "humiliates reason instead of allowing it any measure of presumption." This is no easy task, but the pietist's version of Schelling is up to it: "to crucify reason is harder," the pietist says, "and therefore more, than to crucify the flesh." So what Schelling is really saying to philosophers, we learn from Engels's pietist, is this: "either let your reason surrender to faith or go over to the left side." On the left side are the goats, so "there you are in your place!" The "left" side, then, is what "the worst of these self-worshippers call themselves," the pietist notes. This is an in-joke reference to the "Left" wing of the Young Hegelians. It covertly identifies the anonymous author, from the dogmatically Christian and of course Engels family point of view, with the worst of the worst among the un-Christian philosophers of atheism.[24] But the joke only works if the reader already knows the lingo and sympathizes with the politics.

The trope of the humbled penitent takes a personificatory turn here, namely reason itself "shows the desire to accept salvation." This is what happens in Schelling's positive philosophy, so the pietist claims. Schelling "says that this philosophy is only for the willing and the wise," and shows that it "finds its proof in revelation." Or in other words, "this thing is not a real philosophy at all," but this name has only been chosen "for the sake of the worldly wise." Thus Schelling's negative philosophy humiliates reason, and his positive philosophy isn't really a philosophy. From the "logical" pietist perspective, this conclusion is *Q.E.D. Ergo* from the Hegelian "philosophico-politico" perspective Schelling is an obscurantist reactionary.

Thus Engels himself is proving that both of Schelling's philosophies—negative and positive—aren't credible as philosophies at all, or even a use of reason itself. Rather these two philosophies reduce—via this inverted critical *exposé*—to blind faith, which requires the exclusion of reason. Or in other words, there can be no reasonable compromise between reason and faith because faith itself corrupts reason and therefore truth. Moreover, this corruption is political because it reverts to medievalism: "Schelling has brought back the good old times," crows Engels's pietist preacher, "when reason surrenders to faith" and "worldly wisdom" becomes "the handmaid of theology."[25]

But what then of the Christianity that our "converted" philosopher is expounding? Engels turns the tables on his pietist by using him to endorse what Schelling, "the dear man," recounts in his lectures. These tell us what the Bible truly says, and therefore what true Christians necessarily believe. This lengthy episode plays on the variety of pietist preachers that Engels had experienced in Barmen and Elberfeld, where they were at war with one another over ever-odder interpretations of biblical texts. These quite heated and emotionally fraught disputations allegedly proved the truths of Christian dogma, triumphing via faith over any and all skepticisms and skeptics.

By voicing agreement with Schelling's free-running interpretations of biblical passages, Engels's pietist parodies the indeterminate but dogmatic discourse of tendentious preaching—which of course Schelling, in the lectures, was constructing for his audience as philosophizing of the highest order. Worse still for Schelling, the preacher presents these reconstructions of Christian beliefs as easily arrived at "simply and literally," and without "erudition."[26] Thus anyone who might think that Schelling was qualified at all to reconcile Christianity with philosophy would be driven to admit that his ignorance of the former would never do that job for the latter. That goal, of course, was what the monarchy had in mind by sending Schelling to Berlin in the first place.

And to top this off, Engels has his pietist endorse Schelling's reconciliation of a very old *aporia*: all along God was working through paganism, as in Sybilline prophecies that really foretold the coming of Christ. How else could pagans have so easily recognized the Gospels of Christianity? God had led them "gradually and without [their] noticing it through all stages of idolatry to the worship of the true Christ."[27] Or indeed, the pietist reasons, if pagans had really been so far outside God's "protection and guidance," and so much "in the power of the evil enemy," would not God "have had to exterminate them without hesitation"? After all—and here we have a glimpse of young Friedrich's wilder fantasies—would not then "all the shameful lusts and unnatural desires, the sins of the flesh and other sins," to include "murder, adultery, fornication, thieving, roguery, unchastity," have cried up to high heaven for violent intervention and divine retribution?[28]

While pietists of the time might have squirmed a bit at seeing their characteristic way with scripture sent up in such a farrago of unwelcome and blasphemous "truths," the satire here is aimed at credulous philosophers who could be caught out endorsing, by inattention or default, such

nonsensical Christian dogmatics. Letting Schelling get away with this in their own lecture hall was surely damning the university notables for sitting through it, and the government for founding its authority on biblical exegetics.

Returning to the trope of Schelling as the converted apostle Paul, Engels' pietist re-runs the disputation between the preacher-to-the-gentiles and the Athenian philosophers, stoics, and epicureans. He quotes Acts 17:16, and comments that in Berlin history was repeating itself. If Schelling were to look around at Berlin, he would see it just as St. Paul saw Athens: the city of "brilliance and glamour and earthly splendour." "Yes, indeed," the pietist preaches, "Athens, full of proud worldly-wise men who rack their brains over Being and Nothing and other stale things," that is, Hegelian philosophy. Such men "have long finished with God and the world." They "laugh at the word of humility and poverty of spirit," misunderstanding it "as a folly and curiosity of past times."[29] This is obviously where Engels the pamphleteer locates Christianity as the locus of medievalism.

And in modern Berlin our pietist shows us what Engels really enjoys. The "new Athenians," the pietist says, are in the "coffee-houses and pastry shops." They run after newspapers, "while the Bible lies at home gathering dust"—exactly as Engels would wish. And in Berlin, "the brood of vipers and beer-hall orators" are Engels's ideal associates, precisely because pietists denounce them for "interfering most loudly in the government," instead of "leaving unto the King what is the King's." This politicking is Engels's vocational calling.

The most over-the-top conclusion that Engels's pietist draws from that "true" interpretation of Schelling's lectures is that pietist Protestants have "much to learn" from the Catholic Church, which they have mistakenly "despised and disparaged." And "in many respects," Schelling—the now inverted pietist philosopher and preacher—declares quite scandalously that the Catholic Church is "closer to the Scriptures" than we are.

At peroration Engels's preacher goes into Revelation mode, calling for a unified Christian "Church of John" to fight against the "common foes of Christendom." In these "last days," there are only "Christians and Anti-Christians." Again we hear about "the dreadful French Revolution," after which a "wholly new, devilish spirit has entered a great part of mankind," and "godlessness raises its insolent head." The "worst pagans" are the arch-enemies, with their "enjoyments of the flesh, with feasting, boozing and whoring." Even "the abominable mockeries of a Voltaire are

child's play compared with the horrible earnestness and the deliberate blasphemy of these seducers." Quoting Revelation 3:5 and 3:11, Engels's angry pietist calls down God's wrath, and the might of Christian armies, on rationalists and free-thinkers—such as Engels himself.

It is hard to think what has escaped Engels's high-spirited but scornfully intense attack on Schelling. He targets both those who bought into Schelling's nonsensical reconciliation between Christian faith and idealist philosophy, and those lukewarm skeptics who were failing to give up on faith entirely and thus on the Christian monarchical state. Even a scrap of faith gives credence to the intellectual peril of unreason and the political abyss of obscurantism.

To do all this Engels had to manipulate his narrator through a complicated series of burlesques so as to keep credulous readers on board, and those in-the-know increasingly amused. The Left Hegelian view from which the whole thing was written, and within which it only makes sense, is briefly noticed—the damned of the damned—along the way. Engels's somewhat-"with-it" reader, who sympathizes with some form of Hegelian idealism and grasps that the pietism was parodic, would have to work a bit to discover exactly what the real "Left Hegelian" message was. And in that way they might then really learn something. Bauer's monotonic and full-on critique, by comparison, appears rhetorically unsubtle and preachily counterproductive.

On the surface the pamphlet now is a hard-to-follow and rather heavy-handed *jeu d'esprit* marking a debate long gone. But looked at rather more historically, today's readers can appreciate many of the headline resonances now with church–state controversies, and thus with the politics of secularism in relation to religious faith. Looked at technically in terms of rhetorical devices and hermeneutic hooks, the work is masterful. And it was dashed off, and apparently without commission, by a twenty-one-year-old bunking off the parades, drills, exercises, and, as he said to his sister, "some impossible piece" of daily nonsense involved in being a soldier. Engels evaded some of this by reporting in sick, and then taking a stroll, balancing the slight risks of getting caught with his *flaneur*-like enjoyment of central Berlin. Evidently, though, he was also at work on his pamphleteering, unmentioned and unmentionable in family-female correspondence.[30]

The leading Left Hegelian and editor of the *Deutsche Jahrbücher*, Arnold Ruge, greeted Engels's work, along with that of the university "Doctor" Bruno Bauer, as a rebirth of Aristophanic comedy out of idealist rationalism.[31] Engels was now a member of the club.

New Location, New Outlook, New Studies

After finishing his military service in October 1842 Engels took his vocation to Manchester. The vocation was a choice, whereas the work there was not. Pursuing the vocation in such a different political and cultural setting was a challenge, whereas changing languages was not. But then as a foreigner, with connections only back to the German states and statelets, how would this work?

Now turning twenty-two Engels had—since he was eighteen—been developing journalistic connections, and therefore opportunities, at the metropolitan level. This was despite his lack of qualifications, and his lack of university or other literary connections. Indeed his anonymity, presumably from publishers as well as from readers, was an advantage in that respect, given his age. As an entrepreneur of talents, and of his chances, he had been increasingly successful up to the point of independent publication as a pamphleteer. In that mode he was a serious, and a scurrilous, mystery-author.

Presumably, Engels's posting to another firm—Ermen and Engels cotton spinners and textile merchants in Salford, and to another trade—factory-mill management and finance, with clear family connections, was time-limited, as had been the case at Bremen. Outside office time, or maybe even inside it, he could have devoted himself to study, which—so he wrote to Ruge—had been his intention in late July. "I have decided," Engels writes, "to abandon all literary work for a while in order to devote more time to studying." The reasons for this are fairly plain, he says: "I am young and self-taught in philosophy." This includes learning "enough to form my own viewpoint," and, "when necessary, defending it." But this is not enough "to be able to work for it with success and in the proper way." He concludes: "I hope to be able to satisfy these demands once I start writing again – and under my own name."

Those remarks represent something of a vocational declaration of independence, and of age of majority in relation to his family's expectations of obedience. Exactly how this was to interact with being "fully occupied with business matters" after leaving Berlin is not explained in the letter. This is even more tantalizing, given the concluding plan for further publications in connection with Ruge's Left Hegelian journal and networks: "When I return home to the Rhineland in October I hope to be able to meet you in Dresden and to discuss this with you further." In that statement "this" refers to Engels's stated desire "to work fruitfully and

effectively for progress and to participate actively in the movement of the century." To that end he regards it "as my duty to acquire by study" what he was not born with, and so add to "my natural capacities."[32]

The goal here is clearly to work with others for political change, though exactly what that change was meant to be isn't spelled out but presumably understood mutually. The police were not above reading private correspondence, and Ruge in particular would warrant discretion from a correspondent. Moving to Manchester put fears of that sort pretty much to the side, though as a foreigner, Engels could have been subject to harassment or deportation. In those days this treatment was sometimes obtained by a foreign state, such as Prussia, as a matter of diplomatic and possibly royal courtesy. The challenge for Engels in Manchester—as he was coming up to twenty-two—was to find what "the movement of the century" meant in such a different social, economic, legal, and political context. He needed to work out what to study in order to make an effective contribution, and to find suitable opportunities to put these ambitions into effect.

In writing to Ruge, Engels might have been assuming that his studies would be philosophical so as to contribute at the highest level envisaged within the Left Hegelian network. However, this somewhat begs the question as to how many people, even intellectuals, that form of writing was actually persuading. And it also raises the issue as to what exactly it was persuading them of—other than increasing disaffection with the monarchical authoritarianism and religious obscurantism of the German states and state-lets.

But in leaving Berlin for Barmen, and Barmen for England, as we have previously noted, Engels visited the offices of the *Rheinische Zeitung* where Left Hegelian disaffections had—for some, evidently—taken a socialist/communist turn, particularly given the participation of Moses Hess. Hess had acquired considerable knowledge of socialist/communist theorizing in Paris in the 1830s, and had just published *Die Europäische Triarchie* ("The European Triarchy") in 1841. The book was certainly influential, as was Hess personally, though we have only his later recollections of Engels to go on.

Hess's political line relied on the idealist or "speculative" framework, interpreting history and historical change as a march of progressive ideas worked out socially through intellectual, or at least intellectualizable, means. And since the French Revolution, this historical process was occurring through massed popular forces. In an idealist but crypto-religious and quasi-Hegelian sense, England, France, and Germany would each play a

part in the coming world-historical drama of human transformation. The social question of class relations—becoming acute in relation to industrialized impoverishment—would figure as the problem to be resolved. The dramatic resolution—as a number of previous and often utopian thinkers had suggested—would be through some form of communal, that is, collectively managed property relations and social institutions. That kind of theorization is a political turn for Engels, taken in self-education, and evidently some study and discussion at and around the newspaper offices in Cologne. Engels could not have obtained that outlook with Ruge in Dresden, or indeed in Berlin with *Die Freien* ("The Free"), as some self-styled Left Hegelians identified themselves.

Engels's articles, written from London and Manchester in late 1842, reflected this political development in taking the "social question" as central, rather than focusing on political principles and institutions as such. Writing for the *Rheinische Zeitung* about the "Internal Crises" in England, he concludes his review of politics, constructed from within conventionally English analytical terms, by saying that the "revolution is inevitable for England, but … the revolution will be social, not political."[33]

At that point in the record there is something of a gap. Engels's next articles seem to have been written in May 1843, so there is almost six months in question, looking back to the *Rheinische Zeitung* articles of early December 1842. The "Letters from London" (though presumably Engels was resident in Manchester, at least some of the time) appeared in the *Schweizerischer Republikaner* ("The Swiss Republican"). This was a progressive paper published in Zürich, where *émigré* publications—aimed at over-the-border audiences—were tolerated, though on sufferance. Partly due to the medium, but perhaps due to private or collective study, the references to socialism are much more explicit and programmatic, if otherwise unreferenced.

Engels relates to his readers that in England socialism "does not form a closed political party, but on the whole derives its strength in the working men, the proletarians." The latter, French term was in vogue in socialist/communist discourse, and Germanized as *die Proletarier*. Engels's socialism, while focused on social transformation in an industrialized, or at least industrializing setting, has a recognizable relation to Hess's triarchy of nations, that is, England as a United Kingdom, France as a unified state, and of course the un-unified Germans. Historically, they were still behind the curve of "inevitable"—as Hess and others foretold—world-historical progress.

Rather strangely, in Engels's view, socialism in England is strongest among "the more 'uneducated'" in the "usual sense of the word," a circumstance highlighting the studied indifference and complacency of the English middle or commercial classes, as we have previously noted from his initial articles written shortly after arrival. France appears here as the works of "Rousseau, Voltaire, Holbach, etc." but read in English translation by the lower classes, so Engels says, unlike the "respectable" classes who read Byron and Shelley. German universities, so he judges, with some justification, are "gold" compared to English ones. But the supposedly educated English do not produce works of theology, by which he means historical and anthropological critiques of Christianity. Strauss is specifically mentioned, and Feuerbach's *Das Wesen des Christentums* ("The Essence of Christianity") is alluded to by implication. The latter, just published in 1841, argued that religion as such has an anthropological explanation in human fear and comforting projections, thus compounding the already scandalous philosophical critique of Christian dogmatics and faith-driven credulity.

Quite a lot of Engels's summaries and reportage concerning socialism/communism is actually comparative: "The English Socialists are far more principled and practical than the French." And, the "founder of the socialist movement [in Britain], [Robert] Owen, writes in his numerous booklets like a German philosopher, i.e. very badly," though "his views are comprehensive … and all his writings teem with outbursts of rage against the theologians, lawyers and doctors." He was the founder-editor of *The New Moral World and Gazette of the Rational Society*, published from 1834. Engels relates that "every Englishman subscribes to *his* newspaper, helps *his* leaders to pay fines, pays for *his* chapel or hall, attends *his* meetings." But not all the reportage derives from printed sources including the "exposition of communist principles in penny and twopenny pamphlets and in the journals."[34] "The Socialists" in England, Engels tells his German-speaking readers, "did an incredible amount to educate the working classes." One hears "the most ordinary workers speaking with a clear understanding on political, religious and social affairs." Their lecturers, he notes with much approval, proceed in a thoroughly factual discourse and reject religion, either theoretically as "*complete* atheists," or—which interests him particularly—as "*practical* atheists."[35]

Yet, Engels seems unpuzzled by the imbrication of socialist meetings with church service accoutrements. Socialist meetings, he says, "partly resemble church gatherings: in the gallery a choir accompanied by an

orchestra sings social hymns." These consist of "semi-religious or wholly religious melodies with communist words," during which the audience stands. Lecturers, however, do not robe-up in a priestly way, but appear in ordinary clothes and speak sitting down. And the occasion is not without a display of the "superabundant humour through which the English intellect expresses itself."[36]

However, readers today should note that even now drawing a sharp line between religious and secular events, or between enthusiastic religiosity and intellectual fervor, isn't that easy. And in any case, all public culture at the time was imbricated with Christian ceremonies and sentiments. Engels recounts at length, though, a Christians versus socialists dispute over a public space—a meeting hall in Bristol—that resulted in fisticuffs and arrests.[37]

And then to France, with our specialist correspondent, who explains that English socialists "are very little acquainted with the social movement going on in different parts of the continent." His news is that there are "more than half a million of Communists in France," not taking into account the "other less radical Social reformers." And there are "communist associations in every part of Switzerland," from where they send forth "missionaries to Italy, Germany, and even Hungary."

By the autumn of 1843 Engels is working on his debut in the English press, for the Owenite *New Moral World*.[38] There he introduces Hess's European triarchy—though understandably not Hess or his German-language book—as a framework for understanding the "Progress of Social Reform," the title of the article. German philosophy, he states, "has at last settled upon Communism."[39] "Germans," he says, "became Communists *philosophically*," whereas the French arrived there "*politically*, by first asking for political liberty and equality." And the English—so they should understand—"came to the conclusion *practically*, by the rapid increase of misery, demoralisation, and pauperism in their own country."[40]

Engels's analytical structure is certainly of the German-philosophical variety, a product of his auto-didactic (as he himself says) interest in political change. This was, as we have seen, culturally absorbed through the coded, highly intellectualized, and thoroughly Hegelianized interchanges of the educated public. Historical factuality and developmental tendencies appear as instances of idealized Reason working its way through humanity, taken as a supposed whole. Self-evidently, though, to the most progressive and radical intellectuals of the time, it will be led by the eponymously Eurocentric triarchy. Engels writes that the development of "the public

mind in France" shows clearly "what the future of the English Chartists must be."[41]

One could suggest that this thought might not go down well with English readers, but then at the time some radicalized readers in England were not just enthralled with French revolutionary thought, as Engels mentions, but with French revolutionary *actions* from 1789 through to 1830. To say so out loud—never mind put into print—was of course asking for trouble. Engels portrays the radical thinking and revolutionary actions as all part of the same thing, even if most of the thinkers—though not all—were just that, rather than activists and rebels.

In a textbook or primer-type run-through Engels gives a critical account of French thinking from Henri de Saint-Simon to Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the former proposing—some twenty years earlier—a utopian reorganization of society along technocratic principles derived from modern industry, and the latter launching political anarchism with the very recent publication in 1840 of his tract *Qu'est-ce que la propriété*? ("What Is Property?"*)*. Engels notes his own general reservations to socialisms/communisms that rely on secret societies and republics-instituted by-force. Yet—within his historicizing framework—he explains that in France this hyper-politicization could not be otherwise, given the experiences of the revolution. Hence even small-scale communitarian experiments challenging the traditional structures of authority would necessarily be suppressed by hyper-sensitive governmental authorities.[42]

In similar narrative fashion Engels then turns to Germany, that is, *Deutschland* or "the German lands," in their disunited and fissiparous states and state-lets. There, he notes, "there is comparatively little manufacturing industry," and the "mass of the working classes is made up by handicraftsmen." The "progress of social reform" is then traced to migratory contacts with Parisian workers and French literatures, communicated from the comparative over-the-border safety of Switzerland. Even in Zürich the organization of "Singing Clubs" (*Singverein*), as noted in Chap. 2, invited snooping and suppression. The future for German socialism, as he prognosticates, must lie in philosophy, at which—in his view—Germans have excelled all others. And through that medium they could—as we have learned—work their way variously through progressive ideas. So in the triarchical framework they would be contributing something distinctive and crucial to European, that is, human civilization.

Starting with Kant, Engels arrives swiftly at Hegel's philosophical system, the most comprehensive "ever since man began to think." It

"appeared quite unassailable from without," but could only be overthrown from within, "by those who were Hegelians themselves." After that he takes readers at a clip through Strauss and Feuerbach and on to "The Young Hegelians of 1842" as "Atheists and Republicans." Here we see Engels reflecting on his career, milieu, and vocation: "we provided all the liberal papers with the necessary matter, and by this means made them our organs; we inundated the country with pamphlets, and soon governed public opinion." The *Rheinische Zeitung* ("Rhenish Gazette" in Engels's translation) had published some communist articles, and indeed communism "was such a *necessary* consequence of New Hegelian philosophy" that "no opposition" (either officially repressive or liberally compromising) could "keep it down." Engels names his communists, chiefly those associates of the "now suppressed" (in March 1843) "Rhenish Gazette": Dr. Hess, Dr. Ruge, Dr. Marx, George Herwegh "the poet" (and Engels's sometime Barmen associate).

Wrapping up, Engels is then rather dismissive of French socialists, assisting "us in the first stages only of our development," and warmly equalizing the English with his philosophical Germans: "Although our fundamental principles give us a broader base," yet "upon the facts of the present state of society, we find that English socialists are a long way before us."[43]

England, we learned in the earlier "Letters from London"—in what seems to have been his first mention of the subject—is the "home of political economy."[44] While we have no direct evidence, it is tempting to fill in the missing five months or so between that publication in May 1843, and the preceding quite descriptive articles sent to the *Rheinische Zeitung* the preceding December, with a study not evidently anticipated when Engels wrote to Ruge in the summer prior to departing for Manchester. Presumably then, his plan was to continue his studies—as one would in the German states and state-lets—in philosophy.

Changing location, such as moving from Barmen to Manchester, doesn't of course in itself change anyone's mind. Though in retrospect, and knowing what we know, a studious turn from Hegelian philosophy to political economy seems an obvious move to make. We know from testimony two years later that Engels was well acquainted with Chetham's Library in Manchester. And in any case, as we know from his history back to early years in Bremen, and schoolboy days before then, that he was quite adept at following his curiosity to practical fulfillment via lending libraries and reading rooms, social networking, and personal conversations.

The "striking economic tracts of the Socialists and partly also of the Chartists," Engels says, "are thrown aside with contempt by the middle classes," and "find readers only among the lower classes." This of course is the opposite of assimilation, where one would expect a foreigner, such as Engels, to keep to his fellow Germans, or to assimilate to the local middle classes, but certainly not as a foreigner to the local lower classes. While crossing a linguistic and cultural barrier within one's class would be difficult, crossing the class barrier would be breaking a constitutive taboo.

In Engels's narration there is of course an element of believing what one wants to believe, and evident questions to be asked about the working-class readership that he is claiming as fact. And his evident distaste for a middle-class life of commercial narrow-mindedness echoes his experiences in Barmen and Bremen. Interestingly, though, he doesn't pick up on religious repression in the English context, no doubt due to the absence of family in his overseas life, which is where he would most likely encounter it. In any case, the atmosphere in terms of religious politics was somewhat less charged in England than in the German states and state-lets. The Catholic Emancipation Act passed by Parliament in 1829 had restored civil rights to Catholics within the Christian state. The Protestant-Catholic theology-wars of toleration had thus abated, compared with the political pressures of pietism and Catholicism, particularly in Protestant Prussia. In any case partisan politics in Britain was a matter for the reading public, and even including the less literate, given the Chartist agitation that had been on the move since 1838. Just then its popularity was at its height, campaigning for suffrage reform in the still under-represented industrial cities and towns.

Here we encounter evidence of library work. Engels complains that the theories of Adam Smith and Thomas Malthus have been subjected by the political classes in England to their selfish interests. He sees this in the hypocritical and inconsistent partisan politics, particularly that of present-day Tories. They "had pushed free trade to the insane conclusions of the Malthusian theory of population," but had "produced nothing but a new, more civilised form of the old monopoly system." Thus they had "once more arrived at Malthus' conclusions." Those passages mark Engels's debut as a German-speaking, but English-educated, political economist.

Reversing the flow of ideas, and upgrading his content substantially, Engels took what he had been learning in Manchester back to his German communists, then regrouping themselves in Paris under Ruge's experienced leadership. But rather than producing further enlightenment on the

facts of English social conditions, his tack was to summarize English (though more properly British, to include the Scots) political economy. He did this, tendentiously as a communist, but very skilfully.

At the time political economy, as a French and British science of national economic policy, was not unknown in German intellectual circles, but was rather in the process of reception. The chief authority on the subject was Friedrich List, a liberal-minded political writer who supported—against adherents to localized medievalisms—a German customs union or *Zollverein*, and thus free-trade within a national state framework. In the autumn of 1841 he was offered the founding editorship of the *Rheinische Zeitung* by its business-minded backers but declined, as did others. So the inaugural editor from 1 January 1842 was Moses Hess, the communist/socialist utopian visionary.

Hence as his Manchester experiences developed, and his autodidacticism pushed forward, Engels saw his chance. His *Umrisse zu einer Kritik der Nationalökonomie* ("Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy") necessarily alluded to List's *Das nationale System der politischen Ökonomie* ("National System of Political Economy"), though in two ways: by subject-matter, and then by philosophical/*wissenschaftlich* critique. *Kritik* in the title signaled this familiar Germanic approach.

Of course what Engels's title didn't say was that it was a communist critique, set cross-nationally within the framework of the "Progress" article reviewed above, which had been drafted about the same time. While not a topical, independent pamphlet—as with the anti-Schelling critical reportage and parodic burlesque from his Berlin days—the "Outlines" piece is drafted as an essay, evidently for inclusion in a communist publication. His communists-in-exile were planning to revitalize the *Deutsche Jahrbücher*, Ruge's peripatetic medium for periodical publication of progressive ideas, even sometimes *the* most progressive ideas to be had, originating in Halle as far back as 1838.

What emerged from Ruge's current collective was a cross-national effort, merging German with French thinking on socialism/communism, not least because they had relocated from Cologne to Paris. Thus—so they hoped—they would escape censorship and repression, and in any case tap into the latest intellectual developments in France. Engels's characterization of Continental socialism/communism fits this narrative quite well, not least because the group had no obvious experience with progressive, communist/socialist, and—in his account—largely working-class organization and agitation in France and England.

Engels was not unaware of the apparent contradiction involved in identifying a triarchical unification of communists under the overarching principles of German intellectuals. "It will appear very singular to Englishmen," he admits, "that a party which aims at the destruction of private property" is "chiefly made up by those who have property." And yet, he says, "this is the case in Germany [i.e. "German lands"]."[45] But then his vision was that of convincing the business-minded, propertied middle-class that communism/socialism was an ongoing world-historical development. Ultimately, it would be in their interests as social and political agents, as well as attractive intellectually, because it was founded on first principles and undeniable conclusions. And finally, it would be both culturally familiar and internationally distinct as Germanic.

An appropriation of English experience was in order, though less of the practical sort among the workers, and more of the intellectualized sort already developed in the British and French contexts, where the major figures were Adam Smith and J.B. Say. These were indeed objects of List's critique of 1841, and Engels's essay—in which List makes a brief appearance—was clearly intended to supplant his liberal economics with something that was better because it was not German-centric but still distinctively philosophical.[46] Engels's essay was dispatched to the newly advertised *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*, intended for Ruge and Marx as editors. The co-editorship was ordered in that way, given Ruge's much longer and far more successful experiences in the role.

Engels's opening shot in his "Outlines" was not merely a forthright, indeed outrageous expression of communism/socialism—probably echoing the lectures he had heard in Manchester from socialist agitators and organizers—but also a direct swipe at List's advocacy of nation-state-centric mercantilism: "Political economy came into being as … a developed system of licensed fraud … born of the merchants' mutual envy and greed … The nations faced each other like misers … eyeing his neighbours with envy and distrust."[47] Some of Engels's discussion draws on his export-import experiences in Bremen, but projected into British geo-politics: "The art of the economists, therefore, consisted in ensuring that at the end of each year exports should show a favourable balance over imports; and for the sake of this ridiculous illusion thousands of men have been slaughtered!"[48]

Directly after that we enter the world of Hegelian historicized critique: the eighteenth century had revolutionized economics, but—as with all eighteenth-century revolutions—this one was "one-sided and bogged

down in antitheses." Moreover, as with Schelling-style compromises and subterfuges, the modern "system of free trade," based on Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, "reveals itself"—via Engels's analytical and critical skills—as hypocritical, inconsistent, and immoral.

What Engels is proposing is a transcendence of the terms through which private property, and thus economics, is understood. The theory of private property will need to "leave the purely empirical path of merely objective inquiry" and thus "acquire a more scientific [*wissenschaftlich*, i.e. Young Hegelian] character." This re-theorization will thus "transfer the matter to a universally human sphere."[49]

The reception of economic debate into Young Hegelian radicalism is made easy for Engels's readers, as he quickly reprises some eight years of progressive-radical theorization, within which he had been an enthusiastic student and—in various stages—successful participant: "Just as theology must either regress to blind faith or progress towards free philosophy," he writes, "free trade must produce the restoration of monopolies on the one hand and the abolition of private property on the other."[50] Moreover, he concludes, the nearer to his own time these modern economists are, "the further they depart from honesty" and the more they descend to sophistry: [David] Ricardo is "more guilty than *Adam Smith*, and [John Ramsay] *McCulloch* and [James] *Mill* more guilty than *Ricardo*."[51] These were not familiar names in either German or French political theorizing and activisms of the time, which were necessarily clandestine.

Engels's lead-in to detailed discussion, or rather textbook-style lecturing, is here: "The only positive advance which liberal economics has made," he avers, is "the elaboration of the laws of private property." These have not been fully worked out and clearly expressed, hence his critique. He says that in "a question of deciding which is the shortest road to wealth," the political economists "have right on their side." What they don't do, and what he promises to do, is to "uncover the contradiction introduced by the free-trade system." Engels previews this by explaining that political economists are writing from the perspective of consumers, rather than producers. From that vantage point, they have "proclaimed trade to be a bond of friendship and union among nations as among individuals." But in contrast to this "sham philanthropy," the premises of political economy, founded in private property, reassert themselves in the facts of industrialization: Malthusian population theory and the "modern slavery" of the factory system.[52]

The project in the "Outlines" is to dispel the fog of obfuscation, hypocritical self-interest, and moralizing displacement that underlies the theorizations of political economy, and the practicalities through which industrialization takes place. To do that Engels examines "the basic categories"—they are as "right" as they are "contradictory," he says. Yet, they are consequential for his readers, and, as he predicts, for humanity.[53] Pithily he rejects the previous framing terms for the science: national wealth (as in mercantilism), national economy (as with List's liberal but still nationalist economics), even political or public economy. In a snappy summary he re-christens the whole study "private economy" because "its public connections exist only for the sake of private property."[54]

The "Outlines" then take the reader through this modern politico-economic study, category-by-category: trade, value, rent, capital, wages. Engels concludes, *pro tem*, that we have "two elements of production in operation." These are "nature and man, with man again active physically and mentally." Human activity, in turn, is "dissolved into labour and capital." Private property fragments "each of these of these elements." In other words, he concludes, "because private property isolates everyone in his own crude solitariness," and "because, nevertheless, everyone has the same interest as his neighbour, one landowner stands antagonistically confronted by another, one capitalist by another, one worker by another."[55] So in "this discord of identical interests" is "consummated the immorality of mankind's condition hitherto." And this consummation is competition. Competition presupposes its opposite, monopoly, which is constituted through private property, because only from that basis can it exist. "What a pitiful half-measure, therefore, to attack the small monopolies, and to leave untouched the basic monopoly!"[56]

After that Engels takes up demand, supply, and prices. This descriptive account, and moralized critique, derive from his commercial experiences in Bremen and Manchester, and do not sound particularly strange today: "The speculator always counts on disasters … He utilises everything," even disasters and catastrophes. Thus "immorality's culminating point is the speculation on the Stock Exchange" because that is where "mankind is demoted to a means of gratifying the avarice of the calculating or gambling speculator." And let not the honest "respectable" merchant rise above the gambling on the Stock Exchange, Engels orates—ever the one to pounce on self-serving hypocrisies—he "is as bad as the speculators in stocks and shares."[57]

In common with the political economics of the day, Engels writes that the competitive system of commodity production will result in periodic crises of over-production and under-consumption. In that case some people will starve amidst unsold, stockpiled goods and underused productive capacity, while others will get richer or maintain their wealth by taking advantage of scarcity. This inhuman situation, he writes, will not be resolved through policies designed to reduce the working and consuming populations, as Malthusians were recommending. Those ideas were then current as the nostrum for curing poverty, and so topically of interest to Engels's readership.

But there are also chords in Engels's text with more contemporary appeal. He writes a litany: "No capital can stand the competition of another if it is not brought to the highest pitch of activity." "No piece of land can be profitably cultivated if it does not continuously increase its productivity." "No worker can hold his own against his competitors if he does not devote all his energy to labour." "No one at all who enters into the struggle of competition can weather it." His conclusion is that survival in this realm of inhuman competition defeats "every truly human purpose."[58]

Engels then promises his readers a tour through the British factory system at present and a historical account of its development, obviously intended to forewarn his German readers of their fate. And—as is evident from his comments over the years—he aims to anticipate and prevent the social catastrophes that will arise within circumstances already present.

Rather unsurprisingly, the editors of the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* accepted Engels's essay. The junior co-editor, in particular, Dr. Marx, was electrified. He immediately drafted a "Summary" of Engels's critique, following closely his presentation of the economic categories.[59] When Engels passed through Paris on his return from his posting in Manchester to the family HQ in Barmen, he called again to revisit the former *Rheinische Zeitung* collective, and continue his connection with Ruge and the successor to the legendary—for Young Hegelians anyway—*Hallische* then *Deutsche Jahrbücher*.

In conversations there it seems that Marx took the initiative in proposing a collaboration between the two. His plan was for a polemical attack on the "critical critics," who—within these Young Hegelian circles—were for him insufficiently radical. Their political confusions followed from their philosophical confusions, and their failure to take Feuerbach's critique of religion generally, and the concomitant attack on Christianity, in

particular, to the logical and thoroughly political conclusion of atheism. Engels kicked off with three chapters, followed by a fourth with separately authored sections.

After that, and with Engels absent, having gone back home to Barmen, Marx's able pen ran away with the remainder of the planned pamphlet, and made it into an overlength-book. In correspondence Engels complained that he was rather nonplussed by this. However, it is clear from the title page that he was the lead author, as was certainly right by reputation and experience. Marx was miles behind: just a couple of dozen genuinely published items, mostly in his own newspaper, and all quite brief, nothing even so long as a pamphlet.

The modern editions of collected works pad out this period in Marx's list of works with posthumously published manuscript materials, so the contrast is less obvious. And these editions also generally disguise the lead-author situation by presenting *The Holy Family* as a book by "Marx and Engels." This minor falsification follows teleologically from a much later narrative about the originary and enduring character of their partnership. Engels was certainly unaware of this narrative at the time, because everyone else was, too.

Notes

1. CW2:180.
2. CW2:175.
3. CW2:538.
4. CW2:538.
5. CW2:538, 541.
6. CW2:543.
7. CW2:527.
8. CW2:122.
9. CW2:181.
10. CW2:182.
11. CW2:185, 186.
12. CW2:184–7.
13. CW2:543.
14. MEGA I/3:950–1.
15. MEGA I/3:950.
16. MEGA I/3:951.
17. CW2:191, 192.
18. CW2:199.

19. CW2:243.
20. CW2:243–4.
21. CW2:244.
22. CW2:244.
23. CW2:248.
24. CW2:249.
25. CW2:250.
26. CW2:253.
27. CW2:252.
28. CW2:252.
29. CW2:259.
30. CW2:547.
31. MEGA I/3:968.
32. CW2:545–6.
33. CW2:374.
34. CW3:386; emphasis in original.
35. CW3:386; emphasis in original.
36. CW3:387.
37. CW3:386–7.
38. MEGA I/3:1129.
39. CW3:392.
40. CW3:392–3; emphasis in original.
41. CW3:393.
42. CW3:393–8.
43. CW3:401–7.
44. CW3:379–80.
45. CW3:407.
46. CW3:421.
47. CW3:418.
48. CW3:419.
49. CW3:420.
50. CW3:421.
51. CW3:420; emphasis in original.
52. CW3:419–20.
53. CW3:420–1.
54. CW3:421–2.
55. CW3:432.
56. CW3:432–3.
57. CW3:434–5.
58. CW3:435.
59. CW3:375–6.

CHAPTER 5

Reflections: In My End Is My Beginning …

Abstract These concluding reflections return to the originary conjunction of imagination with vocation. At sixteen young Friedrich published a novella, in German translation from a French version of the English text. The author was Caroline Norton, then a leading campaigner to reform factory work and eliminate child labor. She was also the leading figure in an internationally reported scandal in which the then prime minister was named. It is unlikely that Engels chose, or was given, this text in ignorance of the liberalizing politics it portended. At twenty-four, during Engels's final months back home, his correspondence with Marx is deferential, though he himself at the time was much more widely published, far more experienced as an activist, and intellectually well in advance as a student and critic of political economy and industrial capitalism. Engels's new, subordinating life began by taking Marx to Manchester for a "study trip."

Keywords Caroline Norton • Feminism • Satire • Activism

Young Friedrich's first actual published work—as preserved—dates from June 1837, when he was just sixteen, though about to leave school later that year. However, it is not his own authorial thoughts but a pseudonymous translation, signed "F.E." There are five full points after the "E," so the attribution is taken to be very credible *Die brasilianische Braut* ("The Brazilian Bride"), a novella by "Miss Norton," was published in a local

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literary magazine, and at first glance it might appear an unremarkable instance of romantic exoticism, possibly tinged with eroticism. The tale is on contemporary adult themes of marriage, desertion, and female unhappiness, rather unlike the boyish interests in wild Bedouins and piratical adventures. But perhaps this is the originary conjunction of imagination with vocation.

The work also poses some interesting questions about observation, namely just how much of adult, and indeed international, politics was young Friedrich able to observe? And with what sources, given the picture he paints of local philistinism and fundamentalist repression? His school report says that he was good at languages. Another translation—the first published work to appear under his own name, though obviously not using his own ideas—appeared in 1840 when he was nineteen. That rendition was of a Spanish poem celebrating the invention of printing, and was done for an album of literary pieces commemorating the 400th anniversary of Gutenberg's press, an event widely celebrated in the German states and state-lets.

The situation with respect to Caroline Norton's novella was rather less safe altogether. Possibly there is a schoolmasterly connection here, an exercise in turning a French translation (now lost) into German, though for that purpose it seems an odd choice. Perhaps the choice—whether Friedrich's or a liberal master's—turned on the politics through which the novelist constructed the story as one of tyrannous spousal desertion and female purity unjustly besmirched.

The liberalizing politics that pitted female rights against patriarchal legality, and indeed Christian family values, hit the international news in the 1830s, apparently even in Wuppertal. Part of the lady's fame was in her fictional works, circulating in Continental translations, and in her poems and letters of the 1830s on social reform, particularly relating to female and child labor in factory work. But her notoriety derived from the legal action brought by her husband, George Norton, a prominent London barrister and brother of a baron, against the prime minister of the day, Lord Melbourne. The action was for seduction, clearly his weapon in the ongoing and highly public quarreling over their marital breakdown, well known to have been caused by Norton's violent drunkenness, professional incompetence, and financial profligacy (with his wife's money, which was, under the laws of the time, entirely his own). Caroline fought back with upper-class publicity, testifying to the injustice and inhumanity of her situation, and emphasizing her plight as a mother. Her husband had

indisputable legal custody of her three young sons, and had sequestered them from her. At the time that Engels was doing the translation, the scandal was on the boil.

Engels's work in this number of the *Wupperthaler Lesekreis* ("Wuppertal Reading Circle") has only recently come to light, though it is banished as a translation from the chronological listing in the definitive edition of the collected works. It is thus doubly disregarded: as schoolboy juvenilia, and as not his own thoughts. But it seems unlikely that he was completely unaware of the scandal, as well as of the liberalizing campaigns conducted abroad. Indeed this was taking place under the British constitutional monarchy, which worked within some limited principles of popular sovereignty, rather than within the monarchical medievalisms of authoritarian rule. So it seems likely that some observation over and beyond school, family, church, and state was at work.

There is, though, no particularly good argument that young Friedrich was any kind of feminist—given his rather dismissive remarks and even cartoon drawings of the period. But injustice and inhumanity, conceptualized on the rationalist model, and set deliberately outside the confines of Christianity, seem to have excited him from very early youth, and spurred him on to make his clandestine contributions to enlightenment.

Lost Youth

Here in conclusion we turn now to the twilight of young Friedrich's life before settling into the activist collectives, and various publicity strategies, through which communists/socialists of the day were operating. Evidently, while writing up his book manuscript back home in Barmen, he anticipated revisiting the communist/socialist "cell" centered on the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* and *Vorwärts!* ("Forward!"). The latter was a twice-weekly "German Newspaper in Paris," published from January 1844 till its suppression later the same year, so journalistic opportunities beckoned.

Engels wrote to Marx, during this time, and for the first time, so far as we know. Essentially, he writes a "Letter from Wuppertal," revisiting the hometown and assessing its progress to communism/socialism in glowing terms. He names various old schoolfriends, relations, and locals as adherents, sometimes in codes to protect their identities. But the atmosphere of repression is quite pervasive, especially in relation to the risks involved in private correspondence: "My brother is at present a soldier in Cologne

and, so long as he remains above suspicion, will provide a good address to which letters for Hess, etc., may be sent."[1] Rather similarly he gives instructions for copies of *Vorwärts!* to be sent to various recipients via booksellers "under sealed cover."[2] And he instructs Marx, "If this letter reaches you safely and unopened, send your reply under sealed cover to F.W. Strücker and Co. [booksellers], Elberfeld, with the address written in as commercial a hand as possible." "I shall be curious to know," he writes, "whether the postal sleuth-hounds are deceived by the ladylike appearance of this letter."[3]

About local politics in the broader sense, though necessarily quite "micro-," he says of his acquaintance, "these fellows have really begun to revolutionise their family lives and lecture their elders whenever these try to come the aristocrat over the servants or workmen – and that's saying a great deal in patriarchal Elberfeld." Moreover, he observes, "Social manners have become more civilised, and participation in politics, in the opposition, is widespread." The place is rapidly reflecting the "level of civilisation" that he had encountered in Manchester: "new districts have been added to the towns, entire woods have been grubbed up, and the level of civilisation throughout the region is indeed above rather than below that in Germany," that is, "the German lands." He inspires himself (and his correspondent, Marx) with the idea that the "wild, hot-blooded dyers and bleachers will get on the move" and will "protest, through communism, in their general capacity as *human beings*."[4]

From the local pastorate Engels looks forward, with evident anticipation, to a clerical "philippic against communism," obviously a useful point of political escalation.[5] And with further letters from Barmen on into 1845—Engels having just turned twenty-four—we get much the same reportage of communist/socialist agitation and ideas for publication, taking in quite a number of associates, or planned associates, in various locations in Switzerland and in the German states and state-lets.

But by early April Engels was quite fed up with small town agitation and repression. Having dispatched his book manuscript to Leipzig, he exited Wuppertal to revisit Marx, his co-author, and to join the communist/socialist collective, now relocated to Brussels after political expulsions from France. For a time Engels was their agent abroad in Paris, since he hadn't been expelled, and he functioned as on-the-ground communist/socialist agitator among the numerous Germans in the workshops there. Notably, he took Marx away from Brussels for a six-week "study trip" to Manchester in July and August, where he was evidently tutored in political

economy, and in the English required to read the best works on the subject. No doubt he was also the expert guide to the wonders and horrors of industrialization and commercial development.

But we have already had a sign that young Friedrich is "disappearing" himself into the shadow of the more dominating intellect, though far less successful writer, in terms of publications and reputation. Marx was also a far less ambitious agitator, in terms of writing accessibly for a wide readership and speechifying at meetings and informal gatherings. Writing to Marx in a letter dated 22 February–7 March 1845, Engels exclaims from Barmen: "*The Critical Criticism* has still not arrived!" This is the pamphlet that they had agreed—during his stay in Paris in the late summer of 1844—to publish together, though evidently not to write together. They were each contributing separately authored and signed chapter sections. Engels continues: "Its new title, *Die heilige Familie* ("The Holy Family"), will probably get me into hot water with my pious and already highly incensed parent, though you, of course, could not have known that."

That remark seems unduly deferential. After all, Marx could surely have known or guessed what the family consequences would be for his co-author in a repressively Christian state and locality, even if some enlightened members of his own family circle would have found such blasphemy amusingly inconsequential. Engels then says, "I see from the announcement that you have put my name first." That seems, again, deferential and *faux*-naïf—for Marx, the reasoning would have been obvious.

"Why?" Engels asks. "I contributed practically nothing to it and anyone can identify your style."[6] Marx had indeed run away with the project, and Engels is giving him license to do so, and to take the lead. Others departed Marx's company, in one way or another, and quite a few after the collective spills and mishaps of 1846.

Engels did not.

Aufwiedersehen dem Jüngling. Farewell to Engels before Marx.

Notes

1. CW38: 5.
2. CW38. 5–6.
3. CW38: 6.
4. CW38: 4–5; emphasis in original.
5. CW 38: 5
6. CW38: 25.

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