Editor's Introduction

THE LIFE AND ITS RECEPTION

When Thomas Carlyle died early in 1881 at the age of eighty-five, it was known that James Anthony Froude had begun work on a life of him. The subject was perhaps the most famous Victorian, his biographer a historian and man of letters in his own right, then in his sixties, with an impressive body of work behind him. "The greatest master of English prose within our generation," Frederic Harrison observed, "entrusted the story of his life to one of the most skilful of living writers." Froude, born in 1818, had the advantage of having known both Carlyles since 1849, intimately since 1861. On ethical questions and on contemporary issues, his opinions often verged so close to Carlyle's as to be indistinguishable; indeed, Carlyle had in large measure formed them. Presumably Froude could have directed questions about the biography to Carlyle himself until his death, and it appears likely that on at least several occasions he did so. Known to be Carlyle's intimate in his later years and his chosen biographer, Froude could also ask Carlyle's friends to let him examine their correspondence with the Sage of Chelsea or to reminisce about him. Little was refused him. It would hardly have mattered if it had been. Froude had more than enough to do with the hoard of personal papers—letters, a private journal, reminiscences about himself and his contemporaries—that Carlyle left at his disposal with virtually complete freedom to use as he wished. Few biographers have ever had so much manuscript material by, or relating to, their subjects;
certainly it is difficult to imagine a biographer in a better position than Froude when he began his task. But the situation did not remain unclouded for long.

Three weeks after Carlyle's death on 5 February, Froude published the *Reminiscences*, Carlyle's account of his early years, which included candid assessments of contemporaries, unexpected revelations about his personal life, and frequent expressions of his belief that he was largely responsible for the unhappiness and frustration of his wife, Jane. The clear implication was that he had treated her harshly. The public was stunned. When the first two volumes of Froude's biography appeared the next spring, those looking for further revelations about Carlyle were not disappointed. Frederic Harrison voiced the unease of many:

> The biographies and autobiographies, the unroofing of his home and the unveiling of his hearth, the letters, journals, and recorded sayings are intensely interesting. But they have told us things that we would rather not have heard. Those who loved him and those who loved her have been shocked, amazed, ashamed, in turn. Those who love good men and good women, those who honour great intellects, those who reverence human nature, have been wounded to the heart. Foul odours, as from a charnel-house, have been suddenly opened on us. . . .

By treating his subject as a human being to be understood rather than as an idol to be worshipped, as a human being at times irascible and at times petty, Froude flung himself against the mainstream of Victorian biography, which valued reverence for the departed one more than it did honesty about his failings. Yet if Froude found much to censure in Carlyle's personal life, he recognized that in its moral worth and its dedication to the ideal it was a life worthy of emulation. He sincerely believed that the not always edifying details of the life humanized, rather than abased, the revered sage. "If he was to be known at all," Froude said in his Preface, "he chose to be known as he was, with his angularities, his sharp speeches, his special peculiarities, meritorious or unmeritorious, precisely as they had actually been." Set against the standard of eternal truth, Carlyle would arise not unblemished but greater than ever because fallible and human. "The sharpest scrutiny is the condition of enduring fame," Froude wrote in the biography
(322), and he gave Carlyle the scrutiny in order to ensure the fame. Carlyle, he believed, had less to hide than any other man. No Victorian thought to accuse Froude of hero worship, yet the impression we receive from perusing the biography today is that he wished to represent the life of a hero—"the Hero as Man of Letters"—for his own and later generations.

Opinion split almost immediately regarding the degree of truth in Froude's portraits of the Carlyles. In the early 1880s and for many years afterward, the eminent of the day expressed their opinions. Some contemporaries—Tennyson, W. E. H. Lecky, Mrs. Oliphant, Julia Wedgwood, Richard Garnett, Carlyle's nephew and niece Alexander and Mary Aitken Carlyle—disapproved of Froude's exposing what they felt to be the sanctities of the Carlyles' private life. Others—Ruskin, Edward Fitzgerald, Sir James Stephen, John Skelton, two of Carlyle's three surviving sisters, and his surviving brother—defended Froude, praising the biography for capturing the essential truth of Carlyle's character and of his relationship with his wife. Froude worked on despite the furor, facing, in addition to many hostile comments in the press, the possibility of a lawsuit by Alexander and Mary Carlyle. After he completed the final two volumes of the biography in 1884, he was near exhaustion. "I have had so much work on it, with strain of mind and body," he wrote George Bentley. The next year he told a friend of the effects of his ordeal:

My long anxious work over Carlyle had done me up and I wanted to have my mind swept clear of the whole thing. It has been hanging like a nightmare over me for eleven years. I am myself satisfied that I have told the whole truth, and yet have left people more affectionately interested in Carlyle than they were, and with an even raised respect for his intellect and character.

In the decade of life left to him, Froude was often reminded that many of his readers came away from the biography upset by the unexpected candor of his portrayal. Not even his death in 1894 stopped the controversy that the biography had spawned; at various times in the subsequent decades, Froude's detractors revived it with increased acrimony. Even today its echoes can still be heard.

Most distinguished Victorians were the subjects after
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their deaths of commemorative biographies, biographies that Lytton Strachey called in 1918 “those two fat volumes . . . with their ill-digested masses of material, their slipshod style, their tone of tedious panegyric, their lamentable lack of selection, of detachment, of design.” These memorial volumes are now unread by the general public and consulted by scholars only for the documents they contain. Froude’s life of Carlyle contravenes in almost every respect Strachey’s reprimand. The biographer thoroughly grasped his own times in their cultural, social, and religious dimensions; he interwove in a masterly way the main strands of Carlyle’s life with those of contemporary English society; he synthesized brilliantly Carlyle’s books, his intellectual development, and the impact that his writings had on successive generations of Victorians; he had an understanding of psychology unusually subtle among nineteenth-century biographers, and he feared less to offend his contemporaries through honesty than any of them; he wrote clearly, yet with force and elegance; and he knew how to select the details of a life that cumulatively form a living portrait. Born twenty-three years later than Carlyle, Froude lived through much of the Victorian era himself and had known personally many of the figures he mentioned. Most of all, he had the gift of endowing with life whatever he touched. The most essential quality in a historian was imagination, he once told Tennyson, and this quality everywhere informs the movement of his narrative. His recreation of the lives of the Carlyles remains not only the most illuminating book about them but the most vibrant affirmation of Carlyle as a commanding intellectual force in Victorian England.

BIOGRAPHY AS DRAMATIC PORTRAITURE

Froude believed that the most difficult challenge for the biographer was to penetrate the surface of his subject. Asked in 1889 to write a biographical sketch of Disraeli, he told Lady Derby that his “difficulty [was] to find out the real man that lay behind the Sphinx-like affectations.” The next year (having written the study) he told Stuart J. Reid, “It is worse than useless to attempt the biography of
a man unless you know, or think you know, what his inner nature was.” Although at Carlyle’s death many Englishmen revered the man as much as they admired the writings, few suspected the complexity of the “real man,” the mysteries of his “inner nature.” Throughout the biography Froude attempted to tell them why he wrote thus of Carlyle.

“History is the account of the actions of men,” Froude wrote in the life; “and in ‘actions’ are comprehended the thoughts, opinions, motives, impulses of the actors and of the circumstances in which their work was executed. The actions without the motives are nothing, for they may be interpreted in many ways, and can only be understood in their causes” (539). Froude understood “action” in an Aristotelian sense: action expresses the totality of man’s involvement, intellectual as well as physical, with his environment. Action thus understood is more than the sum of a man’s deeds or the events in which he participates, and constitutes as much the motivations and the mental processes as it does the deeds themselves. For Froude the preeminent historian of humanity was Shakespeare. Shakespeare’s plays could teach the modern historian to present his characters—and to let them reveal their inner selves—through action. Froude’s insistence that we must seize history through drama may strike us today as an awkward, even false, analogy; yet analyzing the actions of men within a dramatic context enabled him to probe their motivations as much as the events in which they took part.

“To say that the characters of men cannot be thus completely known,” Froude continues, “that their inner nature is beyond our reach, that the dramatic portraiture of things is only possible to poetry, is to say that history ought not to be written, for the inner nature of the persons of whom it speaks is the essential thing about them.” The historian must make a greater effort than the dramatist “to penetrate really into the hearts and souls of men,” to capture a man’s inner nature, “for all is required which is required of the dramatist, with the obligation to truth of ascertained fact besides” (539-40).

The historian thus becomes a kind of superior dramatist, bound as much to the truths of “ascertained fact” as to the truths of the imagination; but what constitutes histori-
cal accuracy was no less a debatable subject then than now. The “facts,” Froude claimed, could be arranged to support virtually any position that the historian wished to maintain. For history to come alive, to transcend the facts, the historian must sift, select, arrange, and inevitably transform the material at hand. All history is distortion, to a greater or lesser degree. Yet certain distortions, given the powerful imagination of their creator, are more convincing and real than others. Froude made up his portrait of Carlyle with the details that he thought revealed the man. He did not believe in unimpassioned objectivity in biography; “impartiality,” he once said, “is but another name for an unworthy indifference.” Nor did he claim to tell all. Although he told much, he did not include in his biography all the information available to him; rather, he chose that which enabled him to form, by selection and analogy, a living resemblance to the Carlyle he had known.

Froude wished to reveal in his biography the sources of Carlyle’s greatness and to give his contemporaries a true notion of Carlyle’s importance for Victorian England. Yet he did not wish to efface the warts in the portrait that he drew of Carlyle’s character and personal life. Thus he wrote a biography designed, as he recognized, more for posterity than for his contemporaries. The light of moral strengths blended with the shadow of personal failings to make a rich, many-hued portrait, frank yet penetrating, but one that was to draw down on Froude the wrath of those unprepared for, and unused to, candor in biography. Yet for all the candor and the many years he had to puzzle over Carlyle’s “inner nature,” he never seems to have been quite certain that he had seized it. His correspondence with Ruskin, recently published, suggests that doubts remained even after he had completed the biography.

I preferred not to attempt to describe (directly) C’s character. I preferred to let it appear in the story and in his own clear letters.— Indeed I do not know that I could have described it. . . . He was not selfish, not consciously or deliberately selfish, not selfish at all in the ordinary sense but he required everything to be sacrificed to his convenience. He was intensely occupied with his work & with “the message” which he had to deliver—He never considered those he lived with in the smaller things of every day
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In his effort to fathom the elusive “something” in Carlyle’s being—a being that in its complexity must surely rival Johnson’s or Byron’s—Froude drew upon all the ability he possessed to write the work that he justly regarded as his most important. He himself recognized that “of all that I have written little has any permanent value, except Carlyle’s life.”

One of Froude’s distinctions is that he wrote perhaps the only nineteenth-century English biography to imply—in Victorian England he could do no more than imply—the importance of sex in marriage. In Froude’s view both Carlyle and Jane Carlyle would have been happier not married to each other. He said it boldly and he said it often. To a reader today such an assertion about a relationship between two people may seem harmless enough, but the Victorians did not lightly condone attacks on marriage. “The criticism of the book,” wrote Isaac W. Dyer, Carlyle’s bibliographer, in 1928, “is much more drastic than failure properly to distribute material or draw a pen portrait satisfactory to Carlyle’s friends. Mr. Froude is charged with actual misrepresentation. The main issue between Froude and the Carlyleans is his treatment of the relations between Carlyle and his wife. This is the nub of the Carlyle-Froude controversy.” That Froude dared to say what he did, especially in regard to such a well-known couple, scandalized many. A biographer’s psychological understanding of his subject can always be challenged; and when we have two beings as enigmatic and contradictory as Thomas and Jane Carlyle, the possibilities for misinterpretation of evidence increase proportionately. Yet Froude presents not only a convincing but also a fundamentally sound interpretation of the Carlyles, their courtship, their marriage, and their existence together. He remains by far the most intelligent biographer that they have had, psychologically the most acute; he also had the inestimable advantage of knowing both of them better than did any other biographer. His interpretation of their lives needs qualification, modification even, but no apology.
Froude began his career as a novelist, and critics have observed that his interest in the techniques of fiction and his penchant for dramatic contrasts continued into his histories and biographies. His first important work was an autobiographical novel, The Nemesis of Faith (1849). When the young Moncure D. Conway read it in the early 1850s, he thought—as did others at the time—that Froude might be the "coming man" in the area of fiction. "Every work Froude thereafter wrote," Conway concluded, "is suffused with the imaginative genius which bequeathed to us this marvellous Nemesis of Faith." Froude's mature work does indeed bear the imprint of his early interest in fiction. Learning from his apprenticeship as a novelist, he was able in the biography to use dramatic techniques and models both to heighten narrative impact, and, more importantly, to make implications regarding the married lives of the Carlyles that he could not make directly. "The facts must be delineated first with the clearness and fulness which we demand in an epic poem or a tragedy," he wrote in the biography. "We must have the real thing before we can have a science of a thing" (541). Epic and tragedy provided, in Froude's view, the best models for the literary artist seeking to represent "the real thing" in biography. In writing of the Carlyles, the works that proved most instructive to him were the Faerie Queene and, especially, the Greek tragedies centering upon Oedipus and Iphigenia. Whereas Froude used the Faerie Queene solely to simulate the Carlyles' friendship with Lord and Lady Ashburton, Greek tragedy served him to represent the Carlyles themselves.

OEDIPUS AND IPHIGENIA

Greek tragedy played a crucial role in shaping Froude's eventual perspective on the Carlyles. During his childhood he had made an intense, if sporadic, study of the tragedians. Not only were the Greeks his first love, but they remained his favorite reading throughout life. He read the classics habitually, with ease and with pleasure, and he often referred to them in his writings. Conway, in his introduction to The Nemesis of Faith, had noted that "the depth and intensity
of the Greek drama pervade his work." Froude's knowledge of Greek tragedy finds expression in his biography of Carlyle, I suggest, in at least two ways: first, he introduced the device of the Greek chorus to allow him to comment obliquely on the events he described; second, he consciously drew his portraits of Thomas Carlyle and Jane Welsh after models in Greek drama, Carlyle after Oedipus, Jane Carlyle after Iphigenia.

Several times in his first volume, Froude refers to himself as a chorus commenting on—and to an extent participating in—a fateful series of events. The intertwined lives of the Carlyles he perceived as a personal drama that in its intensity approached Greek tragedy. As their biographer he took upon himself the role of a chorus observing this tragedy. Froude openly introduces himself as the "chorus" in the "long drama" of the courtship (170, 199) after quoting from Carlyle's letter to Jane Welsh of 20 January 1825. This letter he views as the turning point in Carlyle's largely epistolary wooing of Miss Welsh. First, he gives extracts from her letter to Carlyle of 13 January 1825. She had written, "I love you . . . but I am not in love with you—that is to say—my love for you is not a passion which overclouds my judgement; . . . it is a simple, honest, serene affection, made up of admiration and sympathy." Carlyle's reply of 20 January carefully refutes all her arguments against marriage. In it he reaffirms his love and asks a "noble being" to consent "to unite . . . her judgement, her patience, prudence, her true affection, to mine." After quoting extensively from these letters, Froude writes: "The functions of a biographer are, like the functions of a Greek chorus, occasionally at the important moments to throw in some moral remarks which seem to fit the situation" (170). The words he thought appropriate to insert at this fateful moment in both their lives are these: "The chorus would remark, perhaps, on the subtle forms of self-deception to which the human heart is liable, of the momentous nature of marriage. . . . Self-sacrifice it might say was a noble thing. But a sacrifice which one person might properly make, the other might have no reasonable right to ask or to allow" (ibid.). In writing this, he obviously has in mind Miss Welsh's answer of nine days later. It reveals that Carlyle's arguments had made
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an impression upon her, for she confessed: "Not many months ago, I would have said it was impossible I should ever be your wife; at present I consider this the most probable destiny for me." A year and a half later she told Carlyle that she had considered herself his "affianced wife" from this time forward. Froude, strongly influenced by Geraldine Jewsbury, had come to the conclusion that Carlyle "was one of those persons who ought not to have married." Yet he could not say why openly. A mask was needed, and the device of the Greek chorus came conveniently to mind.

However seriously Froude intended this analogy of himself to the chorus in Greek tragedy—and he unquestionably intended his readers to take it seriously—he also maintained it on an ironic level. Such allusions Froude regularly introduces tongue in cheek. For example, six months before their marriage, Carlyle informed a startled Jane that in domestic matters "the Man should bear rule in the house and not the Woman. This is an eternal axiom, the Law of Nature [herself which no mortal departs from unpunished]" (195). Froude, in his role of detached observer, rumbles, "The Greek chorus would have shaken its head ominously, and uttered its musical cautions, over the temper displayed in this letter" (ibid.). The tonal effect that Froude achieves here is complex, difficult to describe accurately, but important for the reader to be aware of in catching the "ironic" Froude. Why, we ask, does he handle so unquestionably serious a matter as the Carlyles' relationship with one another in such a self-protective manner? Does his doing so imply doubts on his part about Carlyle as a prophet or about his "message"? Hardly, for the evidence is strong that Froude never wavered in his respect for Carlyle's intellectual positions. But his adopting the role of a Greek chorus does suggest something about his sense of his relationship to Carlyle the man, a relationship that never became one of complete ease. Irony implies perspective, and perspective was what he desperately tried to attain on the person who, as he admitted in the biography, had brought him out of the wilderness and whose maxims he never questioned. By adopting an ironic stance that undercut Carlyle, Froude in effect asserted the integrity of his own being. Only through irony could he distance himself from the man he genuinely
revered and thus assert a measure of the independence that he never allowed himself during Carlyle’s lifetime.

This ironic stance, expressed through the Greek chorus but in other ways as well, also indicates that Froude sensed that his readers in the 1880s might have their doubts about the sage of yesteryear. Carlyle was now dead; times were rapidly changing and, in Froude’s view, hurtling toward perdition; and the new generation was less interested in moral heroes, perhaps skeptical of the virtues that Carlyle advocated and exemplified. An altogether straightforward narrative of a life whose major components Froude believed to be of unblemished integrity would have brought smiles to the generation of Oscar Wilde, as such lives did later to that of Strachey.

Carlyle had said in his Journal that no one could write a biography of him because no one could understand the mystery that enveloped his life. But if Carlyle could never be completely understood, his life at least had analogies with figures of the past. Froude sought in these analogies clues that would help him unravel Carlyle’s enigmatic personality. In this search he had help from Carlyle, who often spoke of himself as a being set apart from others. Carlyle’s favorite image of himself was as a prophet alone in the desert, his spirit unbowed, his message of dire import unheeded or misunderstood by an indifferent world. He refers to himself as “Ishmael . . . cast forth into the Desart, with bow and quiver in his coat of wild skins”; and at one point Froude dutifully finds Carlyle “fated to be an Ishmaelite” (328). At other times Carlyle saw himself as Isaiah, as John the Baptist, as Saint John on Patmos, as Saint Anthony, as “the poor Arab,” as a “Bedouin,” or even as Faust. Froude often returns in his biography to the comparison with a prophet isolated, viewing Carlyle alternatively as Isaiah or Jeremiah, once, elsewhere, as “Athanasius contra mundum.” At the time of Carlyle’s marriage, speaking of his search for spiritual truth, Froude notes ironically that “apostles in St. Paul’s opinion were better unwedded” (170). Later he compares him explicitly to the apostle to the gentiles (571). He does not restrict himself, however, to biblical figures: he draws analogies with Prometheus, the medieval “knight errant,” Owen Glen-
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dower, Dante, Don Quixote, and to personages of classical mythology and Renaissance epic. In an unpublished letter he observes of Carlyle that "Nature meant him for a Norse skald." Elsewhere, he compares him to Socrates and Goethe. A few instances suffice to demonstrate Froude's analogical bent. Speaking of Carlyle's failure to dispel his wife's suspicions concerning his relationship with Lady Ashburton, Froude writes that "Carlyle in such matters had no more skill than the Knight of La Mancha would have had" (449). In My Relations with Carlyle, a defense of his procedures in writing the biography that he prepared for possible use after his death, Froude refers to Carlyle's correspondence with Lady Ashburton as "masses of extravagant letters... to the great lady as ecstatic as Don Quixote's to Dulcinea." To suggest Carlyle's slavish devotion to her, he draws upon Tasso's Gerusalemme Liberata and classical mythology: "Rinaldo in the bower of Armida or Hercules spinning silks for Omphale." Carlyle's character and acts, in Froude's view, might be suggested by any or all of these analogies to figures of the past. He puts Carlyle into a number of roles, none permanently, but none without relevance to the complexity of Carlyle's character. No one role by itself "explained" him, none could encompass the uniqueness of his being, but all helped at one time or another illuminate different aspects of his character.

Yet no analogy left Froude certain that he had really seized the mystery. "There is something demonic both in him and her which will never be adequately understood," he says at one point. Before Jane Carlyle's death in 1866, Carlyle had seemed to Froude a man "apart from the rest of the world, with the mask of destiny upon him, to whom one could not feel exactly as towards a brother mortal." His sense of mission put inseparable barriers between himself and other men. But Jane Carlyle's death changed both Carlyle and Froude's relationship to him. He saw Carlyle not only more often but in a different perspective. Carlyle undertook a repentance for what he felt to be his grave failings toward her in life. It was "a repentance so deep and passionate" that it "showed that the real nature was as beautiful as his intellect had been magnificent. He was still liable to his fits of temper. He was scornful
and overbearing and wilful; but it had become possible to love him—indeed, impossible not to love him.” Equally dramatic and far-reaching was the change in Froude's sense of his relationship to Carlyle. From awe before a revered mentor, he moved to an awareness of Carlyle as a tormented human who felt that he had sinned greatly but who was now conscious of his sin and was prepared to make ample and extended atonement for it. And if “the remorse was needed,” Froude observed, the “expiation” was “so frank and so complete that it washed the stain away.”

References to the lives of the Carlyles singly or together as participants in a tragedy appear frequently in Froude's writings about them. Not until 1871, however, when Carlyle gave Froude the material that constituted the letters and memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle and his reminiscences of her life, did the dimensions of the mystery—the “something demonic” in both Carlyles—begin to come clearly into focus. He read the documents left him, he wrote in My Relations with Carlyle, “and then for the first time I realised what a tragedy the life in Cheyne Row had been—a tragedy as stern and real as the story of Oedipus.” In the anguished weeks before he wrote My Relations with Carlyle, he voiced the dilemma of his recognition in the privacy of his journal. The description of Carlyle given there applies as much to Oedipus:

What, in the name of truth, ought I to have done? It was a tragedy, as truly and as terribly as Oedipus; nor was the character altogether unlike. His [Carlyle's] character, when he was himself, was noble and generous; but he had absolutely no control over himself. He was wayward and violent, and perhaps at bottom believed himself a peculiar man who had a dispensation to have things his own way.

In his effort to penetrate Carlyle's inner nature, Froude found at its heart a paradox, a paradox whose explanation lay in the mysterious figure of Oedipus. The indefinable "something demonic" in Carlyle led Froude to view him as a reincarnation of Sophocles' hero: his character was as complex, irrational, and mysterious as that of the Theban king. Carlyle, like Oedipus before him, exemplified the insoluble riddle of man's nature.

Oedipus the King and Oedipus at Colonus, then, pro-
vided Froude with his surest clues to understanding Carlyle. This revelation did not come until he had known Carlyle more than two decades. Only in *My Relations with Carlyle* and in his journal (neither intended for publication) does he draw the intriguing parallel between Oedipus and Carlyle; he does not mention Oedipus in the biography. But there, sometimes ironically, sometimes seriously, Froude speaks of the Fates "doing their very worst to Carlyle" (242). Carlyle became for him a man who wrestled with the Fates: only the Greek conception of the doomed tragic hero met the measure of his greatness. Before 1866, his career recently crowned by the publication of the final volumes of *Frederick the Great*, Carlyle looms as the mighty hero of *Oedipus the King*; after 1866, his life broken by Jane Carlyle's death, he becomes the tragic wanderer seeking salvation of *Oedipus at Colonus*.

Why Froude does not mention Oedipus in the biography must remain a mystery. He may have felt that, unless elaborated, the comparison would have confused rather than enlightened, or he may not have been fully conscious of it as he wrote Carlyle's life. Both couplings of Carlyle with Oedipus occur after he had completed the biography, although that in *My Relations with Carlyle* clearly implies that he first perceived Carlyle as an Oedipean figure when he read the reminiscence of Jane Carlyle in the early 1870s. And in the life itself Froude describes Carlyle's recognition of what he had done in language recalling Oedipus's experience: "There broke upon him in his late years, like a flash of lightning from heaven, the terrible revelation that he had sacrificed his wife's health and happiness in his absorption in his work; that he had been oblivious of his most obvious obligations, and had been negligent, inconsiderate, and selfish. The fault was grave and the remorse agonising" (316). Froude's linking the two names in the passages quoted earlier, as well as in the implied comparison above, does not signify that he intended the analogy between Oedipus and Carlyle to be total or exact. Rather, he clearly demarcated the grounds of comparison. Each had an overwhelming, impetuous character and a mysterious secret; each endured a terrible personal catastrophe followed by a sudden, painful realization of sin; finally,
each underwent a subsequent, if incomplete, change of personality in old age. We need not carry parallels further, for if we do, they become strained. Setting up an analogy between Oedipus and Carlyle enabled Froude to grasp something of the complexity of Carlyle’s being without distorting it beyond recognizable dimensions. In understanding how Froude perceived Oedipus, we begin to understand how he perceived Carlyle.

In his essay “England’s Forgotten Worthies” (1852), Froude expresses a view of old age that directly parallels his consideration of Carlyle as a modern Oedipus. He describes two kinds of old age. One he compares to “the slow-dropping mellow autumn of a rich glorious summer” and finds that “in the old man, nature has fulfilled her work.” Such an old age, he concludes, “is beautiful, but not the most beautiful.” Unqualified admiration he reserves for a nobler level of existence: “There is another life, hard, rough, and thorny, trodden with bleeding feet and aching brow; the life of which the cross is the symbol; a battle which no peace follows, this side the grave; . . . this is the highest life of man. Look back along the great names of history; there is none whose life has been other than this.” Although he refers to England’s “forgotten worthies” of the sixteenth century, Froude intends his words to apply to “the great names of history.” Elsewhere he writes that “the Greeks thought that the highest knowledge could be obtained only through pain and mortification.” Oedipus knew both in abundance in his declining years. So did Carlyle.

No one else, not even Ruskin, took up Carlyle’s opinions concerning man and society with the fervor and strong conviction of Froude. He envisioned Carlyle as a man who by sheer force of character dominated his contemporaries, whose gospel was needed to guide a troubled England, and whose vision of society would be vindicated a hundred years hence. Then in 1866 he saw a personal tragedy of immense proportions strike his hero. Carlyle was metamorphosed. To be sure, traits of the old Carlyle remained. He was still proud, domineering, at times rude and unthinking in personal relationships; but he now revealed depths of sorrow and repentance for his harsh treatment of Jane Carlyle that
only a person of heroic dimensions could draw upon. Thus, in alluding to Oedipus as he grapples with the paradoxes of Carlyle's character, Froude insinuates that Oedipus's strange career can in meaningful ways illuminate Carlyle's.

Nineteenth-century critics of drama, from Coleridge and Hazlitt at one end of the century to A. C. Bradley at the other, tended to focus on character and to judge it on ethical grounds. In the *Poetics* Aristotle postulated the concept of *hamartia*, the flaw, "great or small, moral or intellectual, without which the hero would not have fallen nor his character been a tragic one. . . . Aristotelian hamartia is not any shortcoming which may be found in a suffering hero; it is the defect which makes his character tragically imperfect."  

Aristotle's concept of the tragic flaw fitted well into the Victorian tradition of analyzing character from ethical premises and guided interpretation of *Oedipus the King* into the twentieth century. Froude would have been familiar with it; most probably he would have endorsed it, as he would have endorsed the tragic pattern of life upon which the play insists. He would have agreed with many readers of Aristotle that in Oedipus's case his tragic flaw was *hubris*, or excessive pride, and that it led directly to his fall. Thus he envisaged a Carlyle possessed of *hubris*, sovereignly independent, inconsiderate of others' feelings, yet a great man. "Carlyle was Carlyle—proud as Lucifer before he fell," he wrote. Interpreting for his own purposes Aristotle's observations on Oedipus, Froude saw Carlyle undergoing a fundamental experience of "recognition" and "reversal." "Recognition," wrote Aristotle, "as the name indicates, is a change from ignorance to knowledge. . . . 'Reversal of the situation' is a change by which the action veers round to its opposite. . . . The best form of recognition is coincident with a reversal of the situation, as in the *Oedipus*." For Froude, Carlyle underwent an experience of Aristotelian recognition—a moment of intense vision following a lifetime of blindness; it coincided with a reversal, after which he sought to understand his life in the light of the revelatory experience. Carlyle's moment of vision was, in Froude's view, the realization that he had mistreated his wife. The regeneration of the fallen hero, which took place for Oedipus in the *Colonus*, took place for Carlyle in the prolonged
suffering and repentance of the years following Jane Carlyle's death.

Oedipus thus becomes the key to the riddle of Carlyle's character in Froude's biography. Once we recognize that Oedipus provides the lineaments of Froude's portrait of Carlyle, we perceive more clearly why Carlyle emerges as a tragic figure in the life; and, in turn, we can assess more surely the validity of Froude's interpretation of his character.

Jane Welsh Carlyle also plays a major role in Froude's biography. Of her he wrote to a correspondent: "She is my special legacy." Carlyle's reminiscence of his wife was, in Froude's view, "as sternly tragic, as profoundly pathetic as the great Theban drama." But in viewing her life, he usually subsumes the Oedipus myth within another. In My Relations with Carlyle, he refers to the married life of the Carlyles as a "singular and tragical story"; to Ruskin he writes: "Her life was a tragedy." The representation of Jane Welsh Carlyle as a tragic heroine, established in the first volume of the biography, carries over into the next three. Although Froude never specifically mentions that he had a model in mind for Jane Welsh, one heroine of Greek tragedy often hovered in his imagination as he wrote of her. She is Iphigenia, daughter of Agamemnon and a personage about whom Froude had thought long and hard.

Iphigenia is referred to only once in the biography, and then not by name. But the timing of the reference is crucial. In his first authorial (or choric) comment after narrating Jane's marriage to Carlyle on 17 October 1826, Froude writes: "The victory was won, but, as of old in Aulis, not without a victim" (201). It was a victory, for the life of the Carlyles together was a triumphant achievement of the human spirit. This Froude never denied. But the price of victory for Jane Carlyle was, in his view, undeservedly high. There was indeed a victim. "What was he, and what was his father's house," Froude had asked during the courtship, "that she should sacrifice herself for him?" (182). Before the courtship was over, he had answered this question unhesitatingly: "Men may sacrifice themselves, if they please, to imagined high duties and ambitions, but
they have no right to marry wives and sacrifice them’” (193).

From his essay “Sea Studies,” written in 1874, we observe that Froude had pondered the meaning of Iphigenia for his own time.48 The conception of her character, which he found in Euripides and analyzes in this essay, fascinated him. Despite its title the essay is largely a study of Iphigenia as the incarnation of duty. Froude prized this virtue above all others and believed it to be the guiding principle behind Jane Carlyle’s existence with her husband. As she moved toward the inevitable marriage, he looked ahead to the life that followed: “The stern and powerful sense of duty in these two remarkable persons held them true through a long and trying life together to the course of elevated action which they had both set before themselves. . . . Her character was braced by the contact with him, and through the incessant self-denial which the determination that he should do his very best inevitably exacted of her” (172). And during Jane Carlyle’s later years, Froude found “the sense of duty acting as perpetual curb to her impatience” (452). Iphigenia’s behavior under duress he thought exemplary of the duty and self-sacrifice that humanity needs, and he drew upon it in dramatizing Jane Carlyle’s character and ordeal. In the guise of Iphigenia, she became both an individual and a representative heroine.

Froude wrote his life of Carlyle near the end of an era that had seen countless women, from working-class girls in their teens to higher-born maidens of every age, sacrificed to male dominance or to male pleasure. If the figure of Iphigenia appears frequently in Victorian literature, it is more than still another instance of the pervasive influence of classical mythology: it is because she symbolizes the condition of many Victorian women. She appears in poetry—Browning’s Pompilia, for example—but it is in a cluster of major novels written in the decades before the publication of Froude’s biography that Iphigenia comes into her own. With her behavior being the classic representation of duty under duress, self-sacrifice became a major theme in Victorian fiction. Dickens conceived of a host of self-denying heroines, Florence Dombey, Amy Dorrit, and Louisa Gradgrind being among the most conspicuous of
those women who submit meekly to paternal authority; George Eliot, from her earliest attempts in fiction to her culminating portrait in *Middlemarch* of Dorothea Brooke sacrificing herself for a surrogate father, agonized over heroines who find it difficult continually to endure, be silent, and suffocate; Thackeray in *Vanity Fair* had "a cheerful brass group of the sacrifice of Iphigenia" in the house of old Osborne who wishes to use his children for monetary gain; Trollope turned to Iphigenia, playfully with Eleanor Harding in *The Warden*, seriously with Emily Lopez's purposeless sacrifice in *The Prime Minister*, to explore conflicts of motive within his heroines; Henry James drew upon residual associations with Iphigenia in *The Portrait of a Lady*, where Isabel Archer rebels against her unidentified urges, her destructive frustrations, and standards of value she considers false—only to submit and conform; but it was George Meredith, with his startlingly modern psychology, who composed upon the Iphigenia theme with greatest sophistication. In *The Egoist* Clara Middleton rapidly becomes aware that it is her fate to be sacrificed by her father and by force of circumstances to Sir Willoughby Patterne. Dr. Middleton, seeing his daughter looking at Sirius, remarks that "it was the star observed by King Agamemnon before the sacrifice in Aulis. You were thinking of that? But, my love, my Iphigenia, you have not a father who will insist on sacrificing you." Alas, she has. Only her determination, coupled with timely aid from the man she does love, enables her to escape becoming a most unwilling Iphigenia. The unusualness of her rebellion against paternal authority, and against the artificial codes of conduct that threaten to envelop her, underlines the sad reality that in Victorian society Iphigenia's behavior was the norm against which women were judged. The implications of Froude's reference to "Aulis," coming where it does in the biography, would have been immediately picked up by alert contemporary readers.

Victorian writers defined the genres—history, epic, poetry, novel, drama—less rigidly than later writers; each genre drew upon others for enrichment. Whereas historians such as Macaulay and Carlyle announced their histories in tones that indicated epic intent, novelists such as Thackeray
and Dickens used history to give their novels realistic depth. The Victorian novel benefited from this mixing of genres, and as with the novel, so with biography—at least a biography written by a former (and future) novelist, a sometime poet and fabulist, and a historian who designed his major work, The History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada, upon epic models. Froude’s life of Carlyle is impressive as a work of literary art, not because its author wrote other biographies, but because his wide experience in literature led him to conceive biography as a form of literature related to and drawing upon other forms. Froude understood history (and thus biography) to be a form of drama, he allowed preconceptions absorbed from Greek tragedy to determine the manner in which events are shaped, he let his characters reveal themselves with the skill of a dramatist. When he turned to the figure of Iphigenia in Euripides to seize the essence of Jane Carlyle, he quite naturally thought to endow that characterization with some of the force and elemental power of classical tragedy.

Euripides’ vision of life was close to Froude’s own, or so Froude believed. The crisis of later Victorian England—social, political, religious, moral—reflected a loss of belief in values, a loss that Euripides had experienced in Athens during the extended trauma of the Peloponnesian War and its sordid aftermath. Froude, by nature a pessimist, regarded himself as a latter day Euripides, interpreting his age and upholding ideals of duty and self-sacrifice in times when, he felt, many valued them little or not at all. Of all the defeated and helpless victims in Euripides, it is Iphigenia whom he viewed as the key to understanding the human dilemma.

“Every act of man which can be called good is an act of sacrifice.” So Froude prefaced his discussion of Iphigenia in “Sea Studies.” It was “an act which the doer of it would have left undone had he not preferred some other person’s benefit to his own.” Fundamental to human life, in Froude’s view, was “the obligation to sacrifice self.” Sacrifice is the first element of religion,” and, as Froude had written in his unfinished autobiography, “religion meant essentially ‘doing our duty.’ It was not to be itself an
object of thought but a guide to action.” All his life he held to this position. Froude’s views on self-sacrifice, though they receive their most elaborate expansion in “Sea Studies,” emerge in a number of his other writings. “The essence of true nobility,” he wrote in an essay entitled “The Science of History” (1864), “is neglect of self. Let the thought of self pass in, and the beauty of a great action is gone—like the bloom from a soiled flower.” The special distinction of the Greeks, he argued in a Fraser’s piece, was that they realized “that all that was most excellent in human society was bought by the sacrifice of the few good to the many worthless.” Only if we recognize the pervasiveness of this belief in self-sacrifice in Froude’s thought will we grasp why he understood Jane Welsh Carlyle’s life as a self-willed tragedy of devotion, a sacrifice not for the “many worthless” but for a man in whose greatness her belief never wavered.

It can hardly surprise us that Froude considered the sacrifice of Iphigenia to be a central event in human history. It and the Old Testament story of Jephthah’s daughter, he believed, “prepared the way in the end for the reception of the doctrine of the Christian Atonement,” for each prefigured the ultimate victim—Christ. Iphigenia’s path of devotion to an ideal beyond herself was one that others must follow if they were to develop the noble qualities in their own natures. We need not consider Froude’s discussion of Iphigenia in the plays of Euripides, but simply note the chief result of his study: that her selfless sacrifice came to hold immense symbolic import in his thought.

Froude’s conception of Iphigenia owes something to Goethe as well as to Euripides; he would have know Iphigenia auf Tauris since the 1840s, when he studied Goethe intensely and translated his Elective Affinities. In this play Goethe depicted the ennobling and beautiful potential of woman and the excellence of pure human charity. The ideal of inner spiritual harmony and total abnegation that Iphigenia represented in ancient times incarnated what became a central theme for Goethe and one that he believed needed to be resurrected in the present. In her opening monologue Iphigenia laments: “How circumscribed is woman’s happiness! / To be submissive even to a coarse hus-
band / Is her duty and comfort.” Yet her sense of her “duty and comfort” enabled her to meet with unflinching determination the ordeal that lay before her, as in Froude’s view it enabled Jane Carlyle to meet hers, first in becoming Carlyle’s wife, then as a martyr (self-conscious and often complaining, be it admitted) to duty and self-denial.

Until 1880 Froude felt that he could not be truthful about the Carlyles’ marriage, but by 27 June of that year he had already written the entire first volume and three-fourths of the second (285). Thus he wrote nearly all of the first half of his biography under a conception of biographical responsibility quite different from that which governed the remainder. As Froude specifically states that he did not go back to the first volume to revise his narrative of the Carlyles’ courtship and marriage, it seems reasonable to assume that in the final two volumes his portrayal of their relationship would be more direct and frank—as indeed it is. But in the earlier volumes it was only through suggestion and allusion that he could present what he considered to be the “tragedy” of Jane’s marriage to Carlyle.

If Froude’s relationship to Carlyle gradually emerges over the course of his narrative, our sense of him in relation to Jane Carlyle remains obscure. He saw her frequently, we must remember, only from the time he moved to London in 1861 until her death five years later, thus during a period of failing health and intense pain. Undoubtedly, his view of her as a long-suffering heroine, a modern Iphigenia, had subconsciously been formed during her lifetime, even if it did not crystallize until he read her correspondence in the 1870s. There he encountered a Jane Carlyle who had been as faithful to her father, John Welsh, as Iphigenia had been to hers, dutiful and obediently loving in life, reverent to his memory after death, and after her own death resting with him in the same tomb. But her devotion to John Welsh is insufficient in itself to explain the pervasive tenderness and sympathy with which Froude viewed her. Jane Carlyle liked to feel herself admired by younger men, and Froude, who genuinely appreciated her abilities, responded warmly to an intelligent woman less than twenty years older who treated him kindly. This attachment, which may be explained in Freudian terms but need not be,
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helps explain the distortion that crept into his portrayal of her, a distortion that had its roots in his distant past. Froude's childhood had been a Victorian nightmare. As a boy he had suffered from lack of love. His mother had died when he was two, his father was elderly and domineering, his admired but cruel elder brother Hurrell a bully, his school existence one disaster after another. We know little of these formative experiences, less about the love crisis of his young manhood, less still about the effect it had upon his later life. It is amazing that he came out of such an emotionally deprived childhood and adolescence as well adjusted as he was. Jane Carlyle does not impress one as a motherly figure, yet she evidently made Froude welcome at Cheyne Row. That welcome led him, when he came to interweave her life with that of her husband, to take her part in the frequent domestic quarrels he felt compelled to recount and led him also to see her fate within a context provided by the classical heroine he most admired. In important ways, of course, Froude's view of Jane Carlyle is naive and sentimental. If she was a suffering Iphigenia, she was also an acclaimed hostess known for her brilliant conversation, her even more brilliant letters, looked up to by a circle of admiring friends, male and female. That Carlyle made it possible for her to live an exceptionally rich life Froude does not deny (e.g., 172), but he does not stress it sufficiently. One further reason why he did not remains to be mentioned.

Froude understood the passage in Carlyle's Journal in which he exclaims that no one will ever fathom his life in the light of conversations and correspondence with Geraldine Jewsbury alleging Carlyle's sexual impotence. She told him Carlyle was incapacitated for marriage. "I was not unprepared to hear this," Froude wrote Ruskin in 1886,

for I had gathered as much from one of his letters. He says also in his Journal that there was a secret about his life unknown to his dearest friends.— Afterwards when Geraldine was in her last illness when she knew that she was dying, and had no more to do with idle gossip, she repeated this and gave me long & really terrible accounts of the life in Cheyne Row. . . . Here was the especial sting of the Lady Ashburton business for companionship was all that he had to give & this was transferred—.61

Believing this and yet not able to say so directly, Froude
sought to present his case partly through the device of the Greek chorus, partly through a hero of Oedipian complexity (and one deeply attached to his mother), and partly through use of the Iphigenia myth. Once Jane Carlyle had made her "sacrifice," nothing more could avail. Froude closes his account of her courtship and marriage thus: "I well remember the bright assenting laugh with which she once responded to some words of mine when the propriety was being discussed of relaxing the marriage laws. I had said that the true way to look at marriage was as a discipline of character" (203).

"For history to be written with the complete form of a drama," Froude wrote in "The Science of History,"

doubtless is impossible; but there are periods, and these the periods, for the most part, of greatest interest to mankind, the history of which may be so written that the actors shall reveal their characters in their own words; where mind can be seen matched against mind, and the great passions of the epoch not simply be described as existing, but be exhibited at their white heat in the souls and hearts possessed by them. There are all the elements of drama—drama of the highest order—where the huge forces of the times are as the Grecian destiny.

He believed, as we have noted, that "the inner nature of the persons of whom [history] speaks is the essential thing about them" (540). Froude had long observed that Carlyle presented his characters as participants in a drama. "Dramatists, novelists have drawn characters with similar vividness," he wrote, "but it is the inimitable distinction of Carlyle to have painted actual persons with as much life in them as novelists have given to their own inventions, to which they might ascribe what traits they pleased" (542). The writing of dramatic history that was also true history posed a challenge to the literary artist.

In examining Froude's life of Carlyle, one should give due weight to its literary and quasi-mythic sources of inspiration. They are the work's strength and simultaneously its weakness. Precisely because Froude was a literary artist he could, like Carlyle himself, take the raw material of the Carlyles' lives and shape it into a literary work. For the same reason he could leave out the countervailing testimony
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(as he did in writing his histories) in order to throw his thesis into bolder relief. "My own difficulties," he wrote a correspondent about the biography, "have arisen rather from the excess of material than the absence of it." To transform chaos into cosmos, Froude chose from Greek tragedy dramatic models that gave shape and force to the tale he had to tell, but unfortunately curtailed, in some measure, the complex randomness and freedom of experience.

Tragedy, as practiced by the Greeks, is a relatively pure and concentrated form of art. Life's myriad complexity is distilled in it to an irreducible essence. Characters are shaped, situations are presented, to realize a dynamic interaction between character and situation upon which the dramatist focuses intently. In Froude's case his desire to shape his characters rendered them dramatically vivid, but his artistic technique, given that he was dealing not with legends but with real persons, inevitably led to distortion. In Froude we have always to balance the gain in dramatic intensity against the distortion. Thus the concentration and purity of line attained come at the price of heterogeneity. The horizons of the Carlylean world shrink enormously as the sprawling novel of their lives converges into a play by Sophocles or Racine.

It is perhaps unfortunate that to depict the lives of the Carlyles Froude did not choose as his model Shakespearean drama. Its multifaceted understanding of humanity in the form of numerous highly individualized characters would have better captured the heterogeneity of the Carlyles and their circle. And yet adopting Shakespearean drama as a model might have resulted in the biography never being written, since it would have required an extraordinary effort of mind to have recreated the Carlyles, their friends, and their age within manageable proportions. The purer form of Greek tragedy, with its sternness and inexorability, its few strong characters locked together under the aegis of a "Grecian destiny," did restrict Froude in limning his portraits, but it also allowed him to shape those portraits out of the overwhelming mass of materials he was confronted with. If the result is a somber work, one that usually fails to recognize the moments of sunshine in the lives of the Carlyles, it is also a work of stark dramatic power.

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Critics have leveled many charges against Froude's achievement. Besides accusing him of misinterpreting the relationship between the Carlyles, they have asserted that he lacked a sense of humor (thus making insufficient allowance for Carlyle's own), that his mood was "too uniformly like that of a man driving a hearse," that he misunderstood Carlyle's religious position, that he misjudged Carlyle because he was an Englishman and Carlyle a Scot, that he was inaccurate, and that he even went so far as to distort evidence consciously. Although these charges are by and large unfair to Froude, this is not the place for a detailed consideration of them, especially as they have been dealt with, for the most part adequately, in Dunn's *Froude and Carlyle* and in the Sharples dissertation. Dunn, however, omits from consideration one area in which Froude falls down badly and that relates directly to his treatment of the Carlyles—namely, Carlyle's capacity for friendship. He enjoyed a number of close friendships and a wide circle of acquaintances all his life, yet one would hardly guess from Froude's narrative that Carlyle was a social and, often enough, a convivial being. By narrowing his focus to the relationship between the pair, Froude neglects the friendships, the depth and endurance of other personal ties. We miss the humor, Jane's as well as Carlyle's; we miss the avalanche of Carlyle's conversation, the tartness of Jane's as she brings her husband smartly to heel. We are not made as aware as we should be why the Carlyles' home was an intellectual mecca for Victorian England.

In defense of Froude's slighting this side of Carlyle's character, we must remember that he did not meet Carlyle until 1849, when Carlyle was fifty-three, and that he did not get to know him well until 1861, when Carlyle was sixty-five. He thus knew personally and intimately only the older Carlyle, the Sage of Chelsea. For the earlier Carlyle he relied on the mass of correspondence left to him for his use, and above all, it would seem, on the Journal. Doing so kept his narrative close to primary sources but also led to distortions in emphasis. Carlyle had a gift for exaggeration, a capacity in discussing ordinary matters to plumb the depths of pathos, and he frequently indulged himself. Instead of discounting this tendency in Carlyle, Froude interpreted too
litrally what he read in the correspondence and elsewhere.\textsuperscript{67} He also failed to take into account that after Carlyle married Jane Welsh they corresponded only when apart. Their letters indeed show that they could quarrel, but they also show that each had an extraordinarily deep trust and belief in the other. Because the day-to-day harmony that probably was theirs during much of their lives rarely emerges in the correspondence, it consequently does not often find its way into Froude's account. The biography becomes a requiem for a marriage. We rarely sense in Froude's pages that Carlyle had a deep love for his wife and that it was fully reciprocated.

Froude's portraits of the Carlyles came into being not because he was inaccurate, or misrepresented the evidence, or had a jaundiced mind, or bore them deliberate malice, but because he had strong artistic and dramatic instincts. What Harold Nicolson has called the "momentary ardour of his imagination"\textsuperscript{68} occasionally overburdened his emphases and unbalanced his sense of proportion. Froude the artist betrayed Froude the biographer. He became trapped by the interpretation he had developed. His dramatic imagination became so enamored of the portrait he was painting that, more or less unconsciously, its traits assumed for him the features of reality. Inevitably, this artistic technique led him to falsify, to a degree, the life of his characters. Although his portraits of the Carlyles still largely retain their validity, the models that inspired them—Oedipus and Iphigenia as well as the other heroes of literature and life—in part predetermine their contours. Yet these same models give his portraits intense psychological life and, in the case of Carlyle as Oedipus and Jane Welsh Carlyle as Iphigenia, a distinct tragic reverberation. The vitality of this life nearly a hundred years after the publication of the biography indicates that Froude's portraits will continue to influence our conception of the Carlyles.

\textbf{THE VISION OF THE HEROIC}

Study of Froude's artistic techniques has shown us how his portraits of the Carlyles came into being, but it has not told us why. What in Froude's own psychology led him to this tragic vision of life? The beginnings of an answer to this
question obviously lie deep within his paradoxical, enigmatic nature. In order to explore that nature, we must first turn to the greatest of all biographies in English—Boswell's *Life of Johnson*.

The *Life of Johnson* looms on the horizon of English biography in the nineteenth century like a colossus. Froude was aware of it as a model—here to be followed, there to be avoided. On the whole, he maintained his distance. Rarely does he portray Carlyle, as Boswell does Johnson, through character-revealing anecdote or conversation. "In representing Carlyle's thoughts on men and things, I have confined myself as much as possible to his own words in his journals and letters," he wrote in the biography. "To report correctly the language of conversations, especially when extended over a wide period, is almost an impossibility. The listener, in spite of himself, adds something of his own in colour, form, or substance" (630).69

But in one crucial dimension of the biographer's role Boswell and Froude are alike: they regarded their subjects from perspectives remarkably similar, since each thought of himself as recording the deeds of a hero who towered far above himself and the age. Boswell obviously does not wish to convey the impression that he stands on a par with Johnson; Froude writes that he looked upon Carlyle "with admiration too complete for pleasant social relationship."70 Although he became more intimate with the Sage after the death of Jane Carlyle, contemporaries noted that even then he never took issue with his statements or ventured to contradict him. "The relation between Carlyle and Froude was not what I should describe as friendship," wrote Moncure D. Conway, who knew both well; "it was too strictly intellectual for that. I have often listened to their conversation, and in no instance do I remember Froude's grappling with Carlyle even on a small point."71 If we understand friendship to imply a relationship in which each partner rests on approximately equal footing with the other, neither Boswell nor Froude achieved this kind of friendship with his subject. In all fairness, perhaps neither wished to. What then, we ask, was the relationship each developed?

A *roseau pensant* vibrating in the winds of religious controversy that swept through Oxford in the early 1840s, Froude seized upon Carlyle's doctrines—in particular, his
belief in the need for dominating heroes—and with them remade his life. Carlyle became for him a fixed point in the whirl of flux, the star in the firmament by which he could guide himself through the shoals of doubt and despair. In an era when nearly everyone sought heroes, Froude was one of the fortunate few who had the satisfaction of seeing his ideal realized in life. “I had, however, from the time when I became acquainted with his writings,” he wrote of Carlyle in the biography, “looked on him as my own guide and master—so absolutely that I could have said: ‘errare malo cum Platone . . . quam cum istis vera sentire’” (532). Froude was fond of repeating to himself a line adapted from Goethe: “Mit deinem Meister zu irren ist dein Gewinn” (ibid.). His fidelity was total and, once established, never broken. Boswell, too, clung in Johnson to an ideal hero. “I looked at him,” he wrote unabashedly in the Tour to the Hebrides, “as a man whose head is turning at sea looks at a rock or any fixed object.” Boswell chose Johnson, as Donald A. Stauffer has insisted, “because Johnson was a part of himself, the ideal part.” For this same reason Froude chose Carlyle. For each biographer his hero was his “rock,” ultimately his savior.

William C. Dowling, in a recent study of the Boswellian hero, has pointed out the significance of the hero within Boswell’s personal life and creative vision. Although Froude does not figure in the study, Dowling’s analysis of Boswell’s conception of the hero applies largely to Froude’s conception of Carlyle. Dowling considers, as well as the life, the Tour to Corsica and the Tour to the Hebrides. These earlier works “are usually classified as travel books,” he observes,

but both are really books about heroes, men who represent what Carlyle called “superior natures,” and whose moral nature Boswell found a matter of considerable fascination. When the three narratives are taken together, a striking conclusion begins to emerge: behind Boswell’s portrayal of Paoli and his two portrayals of Johnson there lies a single conception of heroic character, one which reaches beyond the particular narrative situation to a final vision of man’s dilemma in the modern world.

“Boswell’s great subject,” in Dowling’s view, “is the hero in an unheroic world.”

In developing a complicated appeal to the conventions of heroic
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literature and to a certain myth of the heroic past, each of his narratives also dramatizes the character of an age which has placed men like Johnson and Paoli in spiritual isolation. . . . The hero in a world where heroism is possible exists within a community of shared belief, for his personality and his actions always give expression to certain values which, taken together, sustain the society from which he has emerged. His role is thus ultimately symbolic. . . . When a society feels itself to be disintegrating, there is thus a nostalgia for heroes which is also a nostalgia for the community of shared belief.80

Johnson towers above his contemporaries as he towers above his age, "but not until the Life, where the disparity between hero and society is so radical as to become a metaphor of spiritual isolation, do its tragic implications emerge."81 "Yet the Life also gives us a hero who, in his moral and intellectual nature, is superior to such a world."82 In incident after incident,

we perceive his resemblance to the noble protagonists of epic and tragedy. . . . The Life is partly the story of Johnson's heroic resistance to these individual forces of moral anarchy, of course, but its larger theme concerns the cost of such resistance to mind and soul. . . . The affinity of the Life with formal tragedy lies in the story of Johnson's personal struggle and the concept of spiritual isolation which lies behind it. . . . From the beginning, Boswell's conception of the hero contained a potential for tragedy, but only in the Life does he emerge as a genuinely tragic figure.85

Carlyle, in Froude's narrative, also emerges as a genuinely tragic figure. In writing the life Froude called upon his greatest strength as a historian—his sense of the tragic. Believing that the Carlyles' life together was one of unutterable sadness, he wrote a history of it that is at its deepest level a tragedy and that moves us by its tragic power. Its author consciously intends his narrative to carry the symbolic truth and resonance of tragedy. Thus when Froude claims that history appeals to the "higher emotion,"84 he means, in effect, the tragic emotions. Goethe and the German Romantics perceived that the Gothic cathedrals, like the works of nature, possessed "inner form," a form evolved from within, not imposed from without. A biography in outward appearance, Froude's life of Carlyle is, in its "inner form," a tragedy. Carlyle's existence, in Froude's view, "was as noble as his writings and
may well stand as an example of integrity & simplicity to all English men of letters[.] We sorely need an example of this kind for our profession tends to vanity and is not a wholesome one."85 He meant his readers to feel the emotions of pity and fear, to value his presentation of Carlyle as a moral exemplum, and to close his book with a vision of the heroic life for their own troubled times.

"In the epic," Dowling argues, "because it is the earliest literary form, we see the relationship between the hero and society as a paradigm of unified concern. . . . Tragedy, on the other hand, is usually about the breakdown of this relationship."86 Given Froude's tragic sense of life and his pessimism regarding the future of English society, tragedy was the inevitable form in which to record both the destiny of Carlyle and the decline of that society. Earlier in his career he had written a work that he justly intended his readers to regard as an epic—the twelve-volume History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada. It chronicles the birth of a young, vigorous England. But even before he published his first volumes in 1856 he knew that "this once noble England," as he spoke of it in an early essay, existed no longer.87 If epic was appropriate for a new state in its struggles to achieve greatness, tragedy was appropriate to record the decline of that state. In his two greatest works, Froude hymned its rise and its fall. Yet he believed, as Carlyle did, in the eventual phoenix-like rebirth of England at some indefinite time in the future. Carlyle's prophetic vision would again guide Englishmen, and through his biography Froude meant future generations to partake of that vision. In no contemporary biographies, he had said as early as 1850, did he find that "the ideal tendencies of this age can be discerned in their true form; not one, or hardly any one, which we could place in a young man's hands, with such warm confidence as would let us say of it—'Read that; there is a man—such a man as you ought to be.' "88 Thirty years later Froude thought he was writing such a life.

Dowling speaks of "an internal dramatic principle" at work in the Life of Johnson that results from the conflict between the hero and the age. "This principle of tension" becomes "in Boswell . . . a highly serious metaphor for the moral isolation of an actual great man."89 The hero exists
in an antipathetic world, and he resists as best he can the influence of that world. Boswell thinks of his Life in terms of Homeric epic and invokes Plutarch as his model; Froude compares Carlyle to great figures of the past—Isaiah and Jeremiah, Dante and Faust—and introduces the controlling model of Greek tragedy. Each biographer evokes a sense of his hero under siege by the proponents of his own age.

Samuel Johnson, needing a core of stability in a changing world, resolutely held fast to Christian orthodoxy in spite of nagging doubts. "His elevated wish for more and more evidence for spirit," as Boswell writes, "in opposition to the groveling belief of materialism" becomes a pervasive theme in his Life of Johnson. It takes many forms: his denunciations of Hume, Adam Smith, and Gibbon; his bursting forth, "'Subordination is sadly broken down in this age'"; his lament that his age had "so little truth"; and finally, his desperate cry, "I have lived to see things all as bad as they can be."

One of the strengths of Froude's life of Carlyle, as of Boswell's life of Johnson, lies in the depiction of the movement of the hero's life against the times. Froude develops an internal tension similar to Boswell's as he portrays Carlyle in conflict with contemporary mores. The young Carlyle is set apart from his family to receive a university education; he revolts against their wish that he become a minister; he is repelled by university life and the materialistic society he finds in Edinburgh; he confronts the literary lions of London in 1824 only to heap scorn upon them; he visits Paris the same year only to excoriate French society; he cannot find an audience for his early essays or for Sartor Resartus; he resists the Whiggism of Jeffrey and the utilitarianism of Mill; he determines to express his own thoughts in his own way, indifferent that many find his style rebarbative; he takes upon himself the mantle of a prophet seemingly careless if few heed him. In his long life he remains resolutely himself, steadfast in his beliefs and values as the world swirls by him. "The strongest man can but retard the current partially and for a short hour," Carlyle had written of Johnson, and Froude viewed Carlyle vigorously reacting to an age he found increasingly alien. Like the heroes of old to which he is compared, he
drew strength from his combat with its corrupting influences. His tragic nature set him both apart from and against his times.

The Carlyle of Froude’s biography becomes one of the last great manifestations of Victorian England’s need for hero worship. Addicted as Froude was to pessimism, he found relief from contemplating the present by immersing himself in heroic ages of history. “Far off he seemed though very near at hand,” wrote one observer of Froude in the 1880s. It is tempting to speculate that in these moments he relived the past. With his pessimism went a belief in human greatness exemplified by the heroes of old. The deeper the pessimism became, the greater the need to plumb the past for redeeming heroes. We might characterize him as a pragmatic visionary.

Reading the Greek tragedians as a youth probably gave support to a tragic sense of life that may have been born with the man. By the 1840s a miserable adolescence and a disastrous experience in love had reinforced this perspective. Oxford deepened his pessimism. The controversial *Nemesis of Faith* he intended as a tragedy. In letters Froude bewails the chaos and confusion around him. To Clough in 1852 he speaks of “these unheroic times.” Two years later he expresses to Max Müller his fatalism and his belief in self-abnegation:

I do not share your feeling that suffering is proportional always to what we deserve. There is a use of suffering beyond the punishing our faults. I never knew of a really noble minded person from “the man of sorrows” down to Shakespear & Luther who had not a sad heart[]. It is good to desire happiness for ourselves but it is better to put off ourselves altogether, to accept what God sends & use it as best we can. . . . The second best men He does seem to me to make happy here. The best of all pass again into “the Shadow of death” even because they are the best.

Froude had a “sad heart” himself, and he valued Carlyle for his. Suffering became a good in itself. We discern here the germ of his thinking about Iphigenia, in which she and her fate become a model for the best of suffering mankind to emulate. These are, to be sure, remarkably somber thoughts for a man still young. “Alas I am past forty,” he wrote to Clough in 1858, “—and the best part of such years as may remain will have to pass not in pleasant imagina-
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tions but in the treadmill of mere work.— What is the good of it when it is done— The doing it is an enjoyment of a kind certainly because I take an interest in the thing.”

During the years Froude toiled over his biography of Carlyle the shadows grew deeper still. By the early 1880s "the disintegration of opinion" had become "so rapid that wise men and foolish are equally ignorant where the close of this waning century will find us." Hostile attacks in the press, the possibility of a lawsuit with Alexander and Mary Carlyle, the deaths of several slightly older contemporaries, his awareness, above all, of the gradual collapse of the mid-Victorian ethos—all tended to increase his dejection. "Rule and precedent have no longer an existence," he wrote to Tupper two weeks before Carlyle died, "and the Church like all is dissolving into Chaos." Carlyle’s death affected him greatly. "You will understand me I am sure," he wrote William Smith the day after Carlyle died, "when I tell you that I cannot drive out for some little time—Carlyle has been to me for 30 years past a father buttress friend teacher—everything. . . . Of course I knew what was coming, but now when it has come the weight of what I have lost makes itself felt as what it really is." The biography became, as we know, his In Memoriam. Several months later, to Milnes, he laments the death of another of those who had wrestled with problems of faith and doubt: "Alas for Stanley! Abiit ad plures [thus go they all]— The other place is rapidly absorbing all those whom we knew & valued most. . . . The next generation may be as good, (better for all that I know) but I cannot fit myself into the ways of theirs.— Carlyle Spedding Stanley, all within a few months gone— C. had a vague hope that there might be a something beyond. Spedding distinctly none. Stanley I cannot say.” Carlyle, too, had often met the world in a hostile and despairing mood, especially after the failure of the 1848 revolutions. By the 1860s when Froude came to know him well he had settled into a weary sadness. With Froude, less buoyant by nature, the hostility and despair appeared earlier, and the gloom, once there, rarely lifted.

If Froude wrote his biography of Carlyle for a later generation, he also had in mind the one then alive. Carlyle's
message might not find vindication for a hundred years, but his contemporaries needed some reassurance to relieve the despair Froude believed they felt before the course of events. Many years as editor of Fraser's, many more as a professional man of letters writing for the periodical press, had taught Froude the importance of keeping before his readers' eyes present-day issues. He studs his narrative of the Carlyles with references to the burning religious and political questions of the day, to the perpetual problem of Ireland, to the rise (and virtues) of modern Germany, to the activities of such veterans as Gladstone and W. E. Forster. The times were unsettled, were indeed getting worse, and to those as pessimistic as he was about them, Froude held up Carlyle as a model of integrity and heroism. Here, at least, was a man who had not compromised himself with the age.

Froude is not alone of his generation in voicing disillusionment. Others at this time felt troubled by the present and feared what the future might bring. To take examples almost at random, Trollope thought he lived "in an age that was then surrendering itself to quick perdition" and shuddered before "the horrors of the present day"; Max Müller, in the year of Carlyle's death, found it "difficult to have patience with this life" and felt "more and more solitary—frightened almost when I see how I stand alone in my opinions and judgments"; and James Bryce a few years later drew ominous parallels between the British Empire and the Empire of the Augustan settlement. The life of Carlyle was only part of a larger concern that Froude felt for his own society, particularly for its religious and political health, that found expression in other writings. As he toiled over Carlyle's biography, he turned also to write short lives of Bunyan and Luther (1880, 1883), viewing them as religious heroes standing, as Carlyle stood, above the decay and licentiousness of their times. A few years earlier he had turned to Caesar, whose biography he published in 1879; like his life of Carlyle, it too was intended in part as a tract for the times, for Froude explored in it the great man theme in the political sphere and held up to the present generation the possibility
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of enlightened Caesarism. A letter Froude sent to Lord Lyttleton at this time indicates the despairing mood in which he contemplated England's future:

I used to think that some "Caesar" might arise out of it all—But a Caesar is possible only after a civil war, and the materials don't exist for a civil war[.] The aggressive power of Democracy is infinitely less strong now than it was 50 years ago. But the resisting power has diminished even more in proportion. What we are now witnessing is the universal precipitation of atoms which have lost all coherence.—107

When he realized that political reform would not occur, Froude turned to religious heroes. During the time he wrote the biography of Carlyle his need to find comfort in the past must have been especially great. All his writings of this period reveal intense concern, indeed involvement, with the condition of England. He was one of many who believed that Victorian society, outwardly healthy and prosperous, carried within itself the seeds of corruption and decline. And the process of decay, long begun, was irreversible.

Coupled with Froude's melancholy, with his desperate unease before the political and religious situation, was his belief that soon he would die. To Mark Pattison he wrote in 1857, "Next year I shall be perhaps two months at work in the Bodleian—if I am alive next year."108 In his last decades Froude viewed himself as one constantly near death. Every work he undertook in the 1880s and 1890s he thought would be his last. He would rouse himself to one final heroic effort and then die. But, amazingly, he lived on, and hardly a year went by without an announcement in the press of a new work by him. When the first two volumes of his biography of Carlyle appeared he was in his mid-sixties. In letters he spoke of his desperate efforts to complete the work, and true to form he assumed it would be his last (82).109 But it, too, among other writing and editorial obligations, he completed—nineteen-hundred pages published within four years of Carlyle's death. Nor did Froude's belief in his approaching end prevent him from leading an exceptionally full and vigorous life until the age of seventy-six and from producing a body of work any Victorian might envy. Lord Carnarvon described in 1878
the strange blend of exhaustion and energy that characterized Froude: "at times . . . he betrays an almost weariness of life: but at other times he is extraordinarily fresh and elastic." In fairness to Froude we must recognize that in the early 1880s he worked under great pressures and that at this time he may have had more reason than usual to suppose that he had not long to live.

What Carlyle meant to him we perceive in a remarkable letter Froude wrote him on 10 July 1874, six weeks before he set out on a diplomatic mission for Lord Carnarvon to South Africa. He did not know whether he would return or, if he did, whether Carlyle would still be alive. I quote this letter virtually in its entirety, for in no other place does Froude express to Carlyle himself so clearly what he owed to him.

The risks of life increase in a long journey like that which I have before me.— I should like to hear something of your plans that I may see you before I go.— You must give me directions about the sacred letters & Papers which you have trusted to my charge.— Whether you wish them to be returned to your custody during my absence—or whether they shall be locked up in a sealed parcel in Onslow Gardens [Froude’s London residence], with instructions in case I never come back to be placed in such hands as you shall desire.

If God so orders it, I will fulfil the trust which you have committed to me with such powers as I have.— No greater evidence of confidence was ever given by one man to another.— And in receiving it from you I am receiving it from one to whom no words of mine will ever convey the obligation which I feel—from one too whose writings I am certain have yet to do their work and form a new starting point for the spiritual hopes of mankind. To me, you & you only have appeared to see your way in the labyrinth of modern confusion— You have made it possible for me still to believe in truth & righteousness and the spiritual significance of life while creeds & systems have been falling to pieces.— As more & more our inherited formulas are seen to be incredible, so more & more the English speaking world will turn to you for light.— Centuries hence perhaps the meaning of your presence here will only be fully recognized. My own Self, whatever it be worth, was falling to wreck when I first came to know you. Since that time in whatever I have done or written I have endeavoured to keep you before my eyes—and at each step I have asked myself whether it was such as you would approve.— What you have been to me you have been to thousands of others[.] Now when I am about to part with you on this long & uncertain journey I feel compelled to tell you in
words what hitherto however imperfectly & unworthily I have tried to shew you silently.— The journey itself is virtually yours. It is only an attempt to give form to ideas which I have so often heard you express.— . . . The thought of you will still be with me wherever I go to encourage guide & govern me.111

Before he left England Froude did spend time with Carlyle, and presumably the two men settled matters to their mutual satisfaction.

Froude revered Tennyson almost as much as he did Carlyle. His correspondence with the laureate casts a revelatory light on both his belief in heroism and his attitude of reverence toward Carlyle. Adrift at Oxford as a young man, Froude had responded to their counsel on the great religious and ethical questions. They understood that the grounds of belief were uncertain, yet insisted upon the need to find truth in what was left, to believe in it, and to live by it. "Tennyson became the voice of this feeling in poetry; Carlyle in what was called prose, though prose it was not, but something by itself, with a form and melody of its own," he wrote in the biography (418). For him as for many others, Disraeli among them, Tennyson and Carlyle were the two polestars of the literary world in the nineteenth century. A letter to Hallam Tennyson of 7 June 1880 reveals Froude's dual vision of the hero:

Your father has two existences.— Spiritually he lives in all our minds (in mine he has lived for nearly forty years)—in forms imperishable as diamonds which time & change have no powers over. . . . Centuries will pass before we have another fullgrown Poet. The seeds of them I suppose are sown and grow for a bit and the reviews clap their hands. But they come to nothing. The moral atmosphere is pestilential. The force which there is in the world is all destruction and disintegration and heaven knows where any organizing life will show itself again[.]112

Tennyson was the last of Froude's heroes to die. He had emerged as a great poet only because, as Froude told Hallam after his father's death, "he was born at the fit time before the world had grown inflated with the vanity of Progress, and there was still an atmosphere in which such a soul could grow. There will be no such others," he concluded, "for many a long age."113

Carlyle also lived on two levels for Froude. On one, he was the petty domestic tyrant, irritable and self-centered,
and this side of Carlyle Froude in all honesty felt obliged to reveal. On the other, he was an ideal whose existence was clothed “in forms imperishable as diamonds which time & change have no powers over.” This was the Carlyle who awed his contemporaries by his powers of mind and who guided them by his prophetic vision. No one was like him, no one would come to replace him. The world would not again see a figure of his stature. With the loss of its great men, a civilization corrupt and heedless of its prophets would inevitably sink into chaos. But during Froude’s lifetime, Tennyson as well as Carlyle had fueled his sense of human greatness and given credibility to his vision of the heroic.

STYLE

Froude is such a master of sustained exposition that it is difficult to put his biography down in one of its narrative stretches. Much of its effect, its hold upon the reader, lies in its style. Froude writes clearly, simply, usually with elegance, often with power, nearly always with irony. He conveys a relentless momentum to his narrative, a sense of event succeeding event, of time moving rapidly, and he does so as much through style as through his choice of incident or his depiction of character. In any consideration of the biography, we must ask, how did Froude create so compelling a narrative?

The “first aim” of style, Froude wrote in 1886, “should be to be simple and forcible.” Once he asserted that he had “never thought about style at any time in my life”; on another occasion he said that he rewrote everything once or twice over. That the two statements do not necessarily contradict each other is suggested by the following observation. When asked in 1890 how to develop a good style, Froude advised: “If you sincerely desire to write nothing but what you really know or think, and to say that as clearly and as briefly as you can, style will come as a matter of course.” Not to be dull entailed writing with the conviction that one spoke the truth. What is needed is a natural fusion of thought and language; once the author has mastered his subject and disciplined his mode of expression, style emerges inevitably.
“Ornament for ornament’s sake is always to be avoided,” Froude insisted. “There is a rhythm in prose as well as in verse, but you must trust your ear for that.” Ornamentation in his own prose made him uneasy. A fantasy he published in Fraser’s in 1879 entitled “A Siding at a Railway Station” suggests that, at least on occasion, Froude viewed his own style with nervous humility. He imagines his writings before the bar of ultimate judgment. “Pale and illegible became the fine-sounding paragraphs on which I had secretly prided myself. A few passages, however, survived here and there at long intervals. They were those on which I had laboured least and had almost forgotten.” Yet one who wrote as well as Froude did must have taken considerable pains with his style, pains of such compass that, as Meredith once said of Carlyle, “every word of a sentence should fall on the ear with the emphasis it carried in his mind.” By yoking directness of expression to simplicity of language, Froude developed a forceful style. The clarity of utterance characteristic of this style could only have come about, as Dunn observes, from an intense effort to express his thoughts in the plainest terms.

But we cannot account for Froude’s best passages by a policy of their being merely “simple and forcible.” That is only the first aim of style. Not only is Froude a master of disciplined precision, but he is also a prose poet of impressive scope who orchestrates a whole range of tones through words. If the basic ground tone is the held trumpet of Carlyle’s tragic character and Froude’s melancholy awareness of it, other tones enter to provide contrast and relief. During Froude’s formative years there prevailed what George Saintsbury calls the “standard style,” exemplified, for example, by Southey, the style commonly utilized during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Froude learned to master it early. Saintsbury also intimates that Ruskin’s prose, which so influenced Charles Kingsley, left some trace upon Froude. Although the first volumes of Modern Painters date from 1843 and the first passages of prose poetry in Froude date from his 1845 essay on Saint Neot, a more musical prose had already entered upon the scene at this time—one could cite De Quincey’s experiments, for instance, which went back several decades. In
my view, when Froude's prose achieves effects of rhythm and harmony comparable to Ruskin's or De Quincey's it is not because he imitates either but because he draws upon his own formidable natural gift for language.

Nor did he fall under the spell of Carlyle's style. "No great thing was ever, or will ever be done with ease, but with difficulty," Carlyle had written in "Sir Walter Scott"; the writer must meditate upon his subject, must let his thoughts mature with great care, and then write them out "rapidly at fit intervals, being ready to do it." Froude observed this precept of Carlyle's but Carlyle's influence on his style probably did not extend much further. No two styles could be outwardly more unlike. Although Froude recognized that Carlyle's poetic prose had "a form and melody of its own" (418), by and large he shied away from imitating it, wisely if we judge by the performances of others who attempted Carlylesse.

Critics have invariably noted the affinities of Froude's style to the writings of his contemporaries at Oxford and, in particular, to those of John Henry Newman. Here attempts to trace a connection are more legitimate. Newman was, by Froude's own admission, one of the major influences upon his intellectual development. Reflecting upon the spell cast by Newman several decades after they had both left Oxford, Froude remembered him as "lightness itself—the lightness of elastic strength—and he was interesting because he never talked for talking's sake, but because he had something real to say." Newman wrote the way he talked—and so did Froude. Herbert Paul, himself an Oxonian of a later generation, took up Froude's words in arguing that Newman and the Oriel Common Room together had given Froude's prose its particular characteristics.

There is the same ease, the same grace, the same lightness of elastic strength. Froude, like Newman, can pass from racy, colloquial vernacular, the talk of educated men who understand each other, to heights of genuine eloquence, where the resources of our grand old English tongue are drawn out to the full. His vocabulary was large and various. He was familiar with every device of rhetoric. He could play with every pipe in the language, and sound what stop he pleased. Oxford men used to talk very much in those days, and have talked more or less ever since, about the Oriel style.
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The “elastic strength” of this style drew upon the intangibles of Oxford, its centuries of tradition, its intellectual companionships, its classical and humanistic emphasis, its high valuation of the art of intelligent discourse. Such an education, followed by decades of writing for leading Victorian periodicals, had taught Froude how to write for a cultivated audience.

Both individual sentences and paragraphs demonstrate what Froude calls “rhythm in prose.” This stylistic rhythm complements and occasionally overshadows his substance. Although Froude concentrates on shorter clauses and phrases, he varies his sentence structure by using many syntactical forms. But in one he may have no equal: the short sentence, or rather the sequence of short sentences. The subject-verb-object pattern is the basic unit, often disguised with additions so that it does not tire the reader by repetition. Nor does it have the jerky monotony often characteristic of this style. If a sequence of short sentences does not have internal variation, Froude will deliberately break the pattern in the last sentence. He utilizes short sentences most commonly to synthesize material. Late in 1824 Carlyle stood at the crossroads of his career:

He had now seen London. He had seen Birmingham with its busy industries. He had seen Paris. He had been brought into contact with English intellectual life. He had conversed and measured strength with some of the leading men of letters of the day. He knew that he had talents which entitled him to a place among the best of them. But he was sick in body, and mentally he was a strange combination of pride and self-depreciation. (162)

Six short sentences vividly build up Carlyle’s diversified experience; the seventh, veering in another direction, undercuts the momentum achieved—and lets the reader ponder the tension between the outward life and the inner man. George Washburn Smalley has well described the effect that Froude’s paratactic sentences achieve: “Read Mr. Froude, or listen to him, and the result is the same; you perceive that he so employs the short sentence as to produce the sustained effect which the long one aims at—the easy movement, the unbroken flow, the rhythm, the never-failing charm. Alone he possesses it.”

Short sentences also quickly supply background infor-

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mation, recalling facts from Carlyle's past to explain the present. Often Froude mixes syntactical patterns skillfully to achieve a climax in which concentration of thought emerges in short, aphoristic sentences capped (as so often) by a colorful concluding metaphor. *Cromwell* had just appeared:

He had drawn his breath when he ended his work in September. He had felt idyllic. He and his poor wife had climbed the hill together by a thorny road. He had arrived at the height of his fame. He was admired, praised, and honoured by all England and America; nothing; he said, could now be more natural than that they should sit still and look round them a little in quiet. Quiet, unhappily, was the one thing impossible. He admired quiet as he admired silence, only theoretically. Work was life to him. Idleness was torture. The cushion on which he tried to sit still was set with spines. (444)

If Froude appears more conscious of balance and rhythm than of vocabulary and imagery, still metaphors abound in his prose. Occasionally—as in the above—the metaphor may give the reader, as the "spines" did Carlyle, a mild start. Cactus imagery seems especially favored. Froude thus depicts the trying conditions under which Carlyle prepared his lectures on heroes: "Among such elements as these grew the magnificent addresses on great men and their import in this world. Fine flowers will grow where the thorns are sharpest; and the cactus does not lose its prickles, though planted in the kindliest soil" (389).

Even Froude's complex sentences retain the basic subject-verb-object pattern; these he often links skillfully by the connective "and." By giving prominence to "and," Froude's prose can produce almost infinite further differences of rhythmical effect. In 1848, when revolution threatened in England, Froude describes the situation thus: "The spring wore on, and the early summer came, and all eyes were watching, sometimes France and sometimes Ireland" (470). The repetition of "and" suggests the passing of time, that of "sometimes" keeps the synecdochic "eyes" moving from one country to another. The paratactic pattern is maintained, but has become hardly recognizable. When in 1853 a neighbor's cocks joined other annoyances to wreak havoc on Carlyle's nervous system, Froude notes laconically:
"The cocks were locked up next door, and the fireworks at Cremorne were silent, and the rain fell and cooled the July air; and Carlyle slept, and the universe became once more tolerable" (519). Here the sequence of "and" establishes an ironic effect as Carlyle's nerves are slyly equated with the state of the universe. A little later, after a recurrence of the cocks, we read, "Morning after morning the horrid clarions blew" (ibid.). Here the rhythm of the prose moves toward the overtly metrical as three iambics follow three trochees.

Froude's control of style extends from the sentence to the paragraph. Often constructed upon an intricate pattern of syntactical units and always designed with care, Froude's paragraphs demonstrate the economy with which he composed his narrative. He knew how to reveal character through anecdote: "Monckton Milnes had made his acquaintance, and invited him to breakfast. He [Carlyle] used to say that, if Christ was again on earth, Milnes would ask Him to breakfast, and the Clubs would all be talking of the 'good things' that Christ had said" (376). The paragraph's next and final sentence qualifies this impression of Milnes's conviviality. "But Milnes, then as always, had open eyes for genius, and reverence for it truer and deeper than most of his contemporaries." Here Froude's sense of "rhythm in prose," by focusing first on Milnes's surface charm, suggests multiple dimension in character by insisting upon inner worth. The paragraph, only three sentences long, holds together as a believable cameo of Milnes's personality. It hints, moreover, at the essential qualities of his relationship with Carlyle.

There remains the larger canvas made up of hundreds of paragraphs working cumulatively upon the reader. Froude prepares his audience to contemplate the main themes of his narrative by adumbrating them in passages whose importance can only be discerned in retrospect. Consider the biography's first paragraph:

The River Annan, rising above Moffat in Hartfell, descends from the mountains through a valley gradually widening and spreading out, as the fells are left behind, into the rich and well-cultivated district known as Annandale. Picturesque and broken in the upper part of its course, the stream, when it reaches the level
country, steals slowly among meadows and undulating wooded hills, till at the end of forty miles it falls into the Solway at Annan town. Annandale, famous always for its pasturage, suffered especially before the union of the kingdoms from border forays, the effects of which were long to be traced in a certain wildness of disposition in the inhabitants. Dumfriesshire, to which it belongs, was sternly Cameronian. Stories of the persecutions survived in the farmhouses as their most treasured historical traditions. Cameronian congregations lingered till the beginning of the present century, when they merged in other bodies of seceders from the established religion.

The first two sentences trace the river Annan from its source to its termination; the third speaks of the "wildness of disposition" of the inhabitants in this long-contested border region—and prepares us for Froude's reiterated emphasis on the wildness of Carlyle's own character; the fourth introduces us to the religious beliefs of Dumfriesshire that will, in considerable measure, determine the course of Carlyle's life and the mode of his prophetic utterance. In the fifth and sixth we learn of the tradition of dissent and protest into which the young Carlyle—himself raised as a Burgher Seceder—grew and matured. The religious isolation into which Carlyle was born foreshadows both his role as a prophet for his age and the solitude in which he would deliver his message to the world. He will remain incorruptibly true in his hatred of cant and sham and in his insistence upon the eventuality—and necessity—of a better life.

Reading this passage we gain a sense of the passing of time, from the seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries and, by implication, on to the biographer's own present, three-quarters of a century later, in which he looks upon what has happened with an awareness that such ages of faith have now disappeared forever. As we think of Carlyle entering the world in such a context, we remember that he too perceived man within a similar time perspective, the present being "the conflux of two Eternities . . . made up of currents that issue from the remotest Past, and flow onwards into the remotest Future." Froude's metaphor of the river links space with time: as the river flows from time past through time present into time future, it flows also down from the mountains into the plain, from the
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larger area of Annandale into the smaller of Dumfriesshire, before it joins the sea. Thus it unites Carlyle's life with the ongoing life of humanity, both the particular humanity present in southwestern Scotland and the larger family of mankind. In six economical sentences, rhythmically and syntactically in delicate balance, Froude not only has introduced us into a physical landscape, but has suggested what we may call the world of Carlyle's being.

A Victorian writing a Victorian life in the decade of Victoria's Golden Jubilee, Froude is also the first modern biographer. In his conception of the biographer's role, he inaugurates a new era. Froude "was the first to introduce into English biography the element of satire," Harold Nicolson affirmed in his 1928 lectures on The Development of English Biography. "The peculiar brand of sceptical detachment which we realise to be the main element in twentieth-century biography can first be recognised, although only in germinal form, in Froude's treatment of the Carlyles." By "satire" we should understand Nicolson to mean something very close to "irony"; by "detachment" we should understand, not the distancing of oneself in order to write "objective" biography, but the liberty of the creative artist to speak about his subject freely and from a personal point of view. Froude does indeed write from such an individual perspective, and he maintains it through a pervasive use of irony. His employment of irony on different levels—in vocabulary, in commentary, in depiction of incident, and in dramatic portraiture—suggests the presence of a commanding intelligence that controls style as well as substance. Clearly it is impossible to consider his style without, at some point, dealing with the omnipresent irony.

Nicolson, to instance Froude's ironic stance, cites a passage in the biography from Carlyle's Journal of 7 July 1833. Carlyle was thirty-eight. He and his wife had lived at Craigenputtoch over five years and found themselves increasingly dissatisfied with their existence there. In the Journal Carlyle contemplates his destiny:

On the whole, however, art thou not among the vainest of living men? At bottom, among the very vainest. Oh the sorry mad ambitions that lurk in thee! God deliver me from vanity, from self-conceit; the first sin of this universe, and the last—for I think it will never leave us? (284)
Froude prefaces this passage simply: “One discovery came on him as a startling surprise.” He makes no further comment. He does not have to. Irony of style, even in the restricted sense of juxtaposition that Nicolson intends, is indeed a major component of Froude’s method.

But Froude’s ironic stance pervades his biography even more than Nicolson realized. His understanding of Froude’s biographical method was perceptive but incomplete, limited by his own practice and by the climate of biography in the 1920s. Detachment achieved through style is only part of a method whose purpose was to reveal a subject’s inner nature. I have already touched upon the ironic manner Froude adopts when he places himself in the role of the Greek chorus that comments at crucial moments upon the fortunes of his hero and heroine (10–11). We have also seen that when Froude endows Carlyle with traits of certain other heroes—for example, with the credulity of Owen Glendower or with the slavish devotion of Don Quixote (11–12)—he interjects a note of unmistakable irony. Neither of these techniques, however, exhausts the possibilities of revealing Carlyle’s inner nature.

Froude can use irony either to distance himself from Carlyle or to achieve a perspective on him that differs from Carlyle’s own; yet he often does so to bring us—ultimately—closer to his hero. Early in 1836 Carlyle, who was then toiling over The French Revolution, had reached a low point in his fortunes. Basil Montagu offered him a clerkship at £200 a year. A proud Carlyle politely, but firmly, refused. To his brother John, however, he gave vent to his indignation. “One other thing I could not but remark: the faith of Montagu—wishing me for his Clerk; thinking the Polar Bear, reduced to a state of dyspeptic dejection, might be safely trusted tending rabbits.” Froude comments:

The “Polar Bear,” it might have occurred to Carlyle, is a difficult beast to find accommodation for. People do not eagerly open their doors to such an inmate. Basil Montagu, doubtless, was not a wise man, and was unaware of the relative values of himself and the person that he thought of for a clerk. But, after all, situations suited for polar bears are not easily found outside the Zoological Gardens. (347)

By expanding Carlyle’s metaphor, Froude underscores the
intractability of Carlyle's nature and his consequent isolation. He soaks his style in irony—so much so that it becomes difficult to isolate it precisely; irony appears in the interjections (“it might have occurred to Carlyle,” “doubtless,” “after all”), as well as in the narrative sequence of statements. Yet as so often the ironic effect has a purpose. The rest of the paragraph thoughtfully assesses Carlyle's position, concluding: “This small incident shows only how impossible it was at this time to do anything for Carlyle except what was actually done, to leave him to climb the precipices of life by his own unassisted strength” (ibid.). The irony of the first sentences, by preparing us unconsciously for the sobriety of the subsequent analysis, serves to open up a perspective upon Carlyle both understanding and shrewd. As the paragraph proceeds, the distance between Carlyle and his biographer gradually narrows until we find ourselves by its end in complete and unironic sympathy with Carlyle's position.

Elsewhere Froude observes Carlyle with ironic, yet tender, regard. This gentlest of ironies, pervasive yet varying greatly in mode of usage, is almost invisible in passages such as the following, where—significantly—Carlyle cooperates in the effect. The Sage had just returned from Scotland.

His wife was at the Grange when he reached Cheyne Row. There was no one to receive him but her dog Nero, who after a moment's doubt barked enthusiastic reception, and “the cat” who “sat reflective, without sign of the smallest emotion more or less.” He was obliged to Nero, he forgave the cat. He was delighted to be at home again. (499)

Usually irony is so much a part of Froude's presentation that style and substance merge indissolubly, as in the following instance in which the biographer brings to our attention Carlyle's horse Fritz. During the many years Carlyle toiled “in the valley of the shadow” of Frederick, he went riding on Fritz most afternoons. Without these rides in Fritz's company, Carlyle hardly knew how he would have written his history. Fritz was “a very clever fellow,” he told Froude, and “was much attached to me, and understood my ways” (535). Each time Fritz reappears in the narrative, Froude reminds us of his intellect and devotion
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(e.g., 537, 572). When he finally becomes too old to support his master with security, we regret his departure as we would that of an old friend. Wit, fused with tenderness, causes Fritz to live in memory.

Somewhat more overt in its intended effect is a passage a few pages after Fritz is first introduced in which Froude plays with Carlyle's language. The Sage relished abstract nouns—the Immensities, the Eternities, and so forth. While staying with his sister Mary in 1858, he wrote in his Journal under 30 June: "The evening walks in the grey howl of the winds, by the loneliest places I can find, are like walks in Hades; yet there is something wholesome in them, something stern & grand: as if one had the Eternities for company in defect of suitabler" (543). Froude coolly observes: "The Eternities, however fond he was of their company, left him time to think of other things." Irony here renders Froude's more common-sense position and serves as an implicit comment on Carlyle's mode of thinking and expression. He may even expect his readers to remember that, if now Carlyle found the Eternities congenial, a moment ago Fritz had been the favored companion. Juxtaposing the two in our minds affords us relief as we follow Carlyle through the wearisome years of Frederick.

Only on a very few occasions does Froude's sense of tact fail him. In these moments irony becomes mere cleverness. In one, narrating an excursion by Carlyle into Wales to climb Mt. Snowdon, Froude writes: "They travelled light, for Carlyle took no baggage with him except a razor, a shaving-brush, a shirt, and a pocket-comb; 'tooth-brush' not mentioned, but we may hope forgotten in the inventory" (426). This observation deserves A. Carlyle's marginal notation "How clever!" It is clever; it is also uncalled-for. Yet such instances in the biography stand out as rare. That Froude occasionally indulges in a petty aside should not obscure the basic integrity of his presentation.

We return to where we began in our discussion of Froude's art, the need for the biographer to reveal his subject's inner nature. This can be done as well through style as by dramatic portraiture or by sympathetic hero worship. Froude developed a style that appeals as much to the
heart as to the head. "Masculine vigour and feminine delicacy," John Skelton wrote of this prose, "blended in the expression of, what may be called, intellectual emotion."133 "Intellectual emotion" suggests that Froude strove to achieve in his prose the effect of poetry, for the phrase is virtually identical to one he used to describe Shakespeare's impact. "Shakespeare is true to real experience," he wrote in "The Science of History." "The mystery of life he leaves as he finds it; and, in his most tremendous positions, he is addressing rather the intellectual emotions than the understanding."134 History, of which biography was a part, was not only drama, then, but poetry. To render the great moments in a person's life, the biographer must subsume reality in myth, must transcend the "understanding" in order to present "real experience," must—above all—stir the "intellectual emotions" of his readers. He can best do so, in Froude's view, by writing a poetic prose, musical in its cadences, taut in its controlled power. Saintsbury speaks of this prose "as a perfect harmony of unpretentious music, adjusted to the matter that it conveys, and lingering on the ear that it reaches."135 In other words, it is the prose of one who has the mind of a poet. Froude had insisted in an early essay on Homer that "the poet is the truest historian." Only the empathetic imagination of the poet can penetrate to the hidden recesses of the past. "Whatever is properly valuable in history," he continues, "the poet gives us—not events and names, but emotion, but action, but life. . . . Great men . . . lie beyond prose, and can only be really represented by the poet."136

Emotion, action, life—over these does Froude's prose, marvelously subtle and modulated, play so lovingly. He is himself one of the poets of humanity, nowhere more so than in the biography of Carlyle. In his deepest being as well as in his art, Froude was a Romantic, and, like other Romantics, he appealed to resources other than the intellectual. His style, full of emotional resonance, has a quality that has almost disappeared from modern prose. That quality is eloquence. Froude did not fear to strive for large effects. Occasionally he failed, more often he succeeded. And in the biography's great moments—the courtship of
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Jane Welsh, his first meeting with Carlyle, the moving final pages—he triumphed.

2. Ibid., p. 176.
4. Froude's private statements to correspondents about his purpose in writing the biography accord with his public pronouncements. To Thomas Wentworth Higginson he wrote: "He was an extraordinary man—extraordinary in his intellect & peculiar in his character. I should be false to him and false to my duty if I were to trick him as a painted idol for the mob to put in their temples like their Christs & Virgins" (letter of ca. 1881, reproduced in Higginson, *Part of a Man's Life* [Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin, 1905], after p. 56). Compare the similar comment to Frederic Ouvry: "I honoured and loved him above all other men that I ever knew or shall know. It is my duty to show him as he was & no life known to me will bear a Sterner Scrutiny. But he wished—especially wished—his faults to be known. They are nothing, amount to nothing, in the great balance of his qualities. But such as they are they must be described.— Surely by no unfriendly hand" (12 May 1881, cited in K. J. Fielding, "Froude and Carlyle: Some New Considerations," in *Carlyle Past and Present: A Collection of New Essays*, ed. K. J. Fielding and Rodger L. Tarr [London: Vision Press, 1976], pp. 255-56).
6. 13 May 1884. MS: Bodleian Eng. lett. d. 100, fol. 240.
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Recent opinion supports Froude on most disputed points. An exception is the Fielding essay (cited in note 4). I discuss Froude's inaccuracy and touch upon the controversy in the section on editorial procedures.


15. 10 April [1886], in Viljoen, p. 46.


18. Introduction to Froude, *Nemesis of Faith*, pp. xiv, xv. Conway's observations have especial value, coming as they do from a man who had read many of Froude's writings and who had known him well.

19. Froude interpreted "the Lady Ashburton business" through an elaborate analogy based on Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. The interrelationships that he drew among Lady Ashburton (Gloriana, Queen of Fairyland), Carlyle (the rustic Red Cross Knight, gallant but occasionally obtuse), and Jane Carlyle (Una, the faithful believer in him) were usually present in Froude's mind even when not pointed to directly in his narrative. Although he did not intend exact correlations, he probably expected his more discerning readers to envision a complex web of indirect associations between the reality of the interlocking relationships and Spenser's poem and settings. For further discussion of these analogies, see my "Grecian Destiny: Froude's Portraits of the Carlyles," in *Carlyle and His Contemporaries*, pp. 324–31. Iris Origo presents a balanced discussion of "The Carlyles and the Ashburtons" in *A Measure of Love* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1957).

20. P. xiii.


22. Ibid., p. 258.

23. Ibid., p. 266; 4:112.


25. Use of the Greek chorus is only part of a larger control of narrative through irony, a subject that I take up more fully in the section on style.
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26. The entry can only be that of 10 October 1843 or of 29 December 1848. See p. 321 and the accompanying note.


30. Prometheus on p. 561; “knight errant” on p. 278; Owen Glen­dower in an unpublished manuscript on Carlyle, composed by Froude but in Margaret Froude’s hand, cited in chap. 16, n. 4 (MS: Beinecke Library, Yale); Dante on p. 317; for the rest, see below. Although not all of the above analogies occur in the biography itself, those that do are similar to those that do not.


33. \textit{My Relations with Carlyle}, p. 18.

34. Ibid., p. 19.

35. Froude to Mrs. Charles Kingsley, [October 1884], in Paul, p. 331. See also p. 318 below.

36. This and subsequent quotations in the paragraph are from \textit{My Relations with Carlyle}, pp. 12, 13.

37. Ibid., p. 13.


40. “Lord Macaulay [a review of Trevelyan’s \textit{Life}].” Fraser’s Magazine 93 (June 1876): 693.


45. *My Relations with Carlyle*, pp. 33-34.
46. Ibid., p. 17.
47. 1 May [1886], in Viljoen, p. 46.
49. In an interesting twist, Dickens has Florence Dombey always ready to sacrifice herself for her father—but the sacrifice is continually rejected by him. In chap. 47 Edith elopes and Mr. Dombey strikes Florence, precipitating her flight from his household. In the plate to this chapter, “Florence & Edith on the Staircase,” Dickens underscores the brutality of the father’s act by including a statue of Agamemnon, knife in hand, about to strike Iphigenia.
50. W. M. Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*, ed. Geoffrey and Kathleen Tillotson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1963), p. 120. Thackeray depicts on the plate to chap. 13, “Mr Osborne’s welcome to Amelia,” that part of the chronometer showing Iphigenia about to be sacrificed by Agamemnon.
51. George Meredith, *The Egoist*, ed. Lionel Stevenson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958), p. 370. See also chap. 10, in which Clara, asked to wear the Patterne family jewels, inquires of Sir Willoughby, “Does one not look like a victim decked for the sacrifice—the garlanded heifer you see on Greek vases . . . ?” She concludes, “I have learnt, that the ideal of conduct for women is to subject their minds to the part of an accompaniment.”
52. *Short Studies*, 3:166.
53. Ibid., p. 167.
55. *Short Studies*, 1:15. Similar statements mark Carlyle’s writings; for example, in a letter of ca. 1 February 1831 to his sister Jean he states: “Humility is no mean feeling, but the highest, and only high one; the denial of Self it is, and therein is the beginning of all that is truly generous and noble” (*CL*, 5:225).
57. Ibid., p. 169.
61. 29 November [1886], in Viljoen, pp. 65-66. In several letters of 1889-90 to Mrs. Alexander Ireland, who was working on what became the first separate biography of Jane Carlyle, Froude urged her to speak more candidly than he had spoken: “Mrs Carlyle ought to have been a wife and a mother—she was neither. . . . You leave the impression that
it was only a question of tempers—you may say that I have done the same. I allow it—but I did not seek the task which was laid on me. Had I undertaken to write Mrs Carlyles life myself I must have told the whole truth—or else when I found out how the matter stood, have let it alone. I know you cannot tell in plain words what was amiss—but you might indicate that there was only companionship” (11 October [1890]. MS: Beinecke Library, Yale). In an earlier letter Froude gave what was probably his final judgment: “The marriage was a most unfortunate one—yet I can hardly wish it had never been—as without her, Carlyle would never have been what he was” (20 September [1889]. MS: Beinecke Library, Yale).

62. For discussion of the Oedipian dimensions of Carlyle’s relationship to his mother, see chap. 2, n. 3.

63. Any juxtaposition or reconciliation of the myths of Iphigenia and Oedipus in Froude’s biography clearly fails. But need they be juxtaposed or reconciled? Froude does not, I think, intend them to be, but uses them rather to suggest dimensions of the Carlyles without implying total, or even dominant, parallelism, just as he uses other figures to suggest elements in their characters as disparate as Don Quixote’s idealism and Una’s fidelity. No analogy excludes any other. For Froude analogy was an artistic technique by which his readers might better perceive both the complexity and the inherent drama in the lives of his protagonists.

For a different perspective on the Carlyles’ marriage, see chap. 8, n. 24.

64. Short Studies, 1:23.

65. Froude to G. J. Holyoake [1882], in McCabe, 2:126.

66. David Masson makes both points in Carlyle Personally and in His Writings (London: Macmillan, 1885), pp. 18, 17.


68. Harold Nicolson, The Development of English Biography (London: Hogarth Press, 1928), p. 129. A. C. Benson, in Rambles and Reflections (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1926), makes the same point in a different way: “Froude had a strong romantic element in him, and when he had made up his mind about a subject, he saw facts not as they were, but by the light of his own imagination. Froude was wholly incapable of deliberate distortion, but his subconscious mind was too strong for him” (p. 122).

69. After his father’s death Hallam Tennyson asked Froude to tell him what he recalled of Carlyle and Tennyson together. Froude’s answer suggests further reasons why he recorded so little of Carlyle’s talk in the life. “I remember well seeing your father with Carlyle in Cheyne Row,” he wrote Hallam,

—but I kept no notes of their conversation. It is long ago and I have experienced so often in myself and others the unconscious
tendency to reconstruct scenes of this kind in memory till they lose
all likeness to the past that I dare not try.

To attribute words which they did not use to such men as Car­
lyle and your father is a sin against the Holy Ghost.

Carlyle very often talked to me about your father, and of course
you know how he admired and loved him— Even of their conversa­
tions however, which are more vividly present to me I should hesi­
tate to write anything. Half the discourse attributed by St John to
Christ was probably so modelled by St John's own mind that
Christ would hardly have recognized his own speech in him. . . .

The difficulty in reproducing expressions of Carlyle is that he
rarely praised any one without an acrid drop intermixed— Leave
the drop out and you destroy the character of the words. Put it in,
and you have a disagreeable taste. He used to complain of your
fathers "indolence" in his own peculiar way. I entirely disagreed
with him . . . but I am afraid to trust my memory as to what he
said. (2 May 1893 or 1894. MS: Beinecke Library, Yale).

This reply indicates something of Froude's conscientiousness in wishing
to present Carlyle's views fairly. His unwillingness to reproduce con­
versations imperfectly remembered led him to rely excessively on
Carlyle's letters and Journal to render Carlyle's personality. Froude
was not aware, as scholars now are, that Boswell took down at the time
extensive notes and that he based the passages of Johnson's conversa­
tion in his Life of Johnson on them.

70. My Relations with Carlyle, p. 4.

71. Introduction to Froude, Nemesis of Faith, p. xiv. Conway ex­
pressed a similar opinion in his Autobiography: Memories and Experi­
2:213. Yet Carlyle himself, in his last letter to Emerson, recognized the
vigor of Froude's conversation: "Froude is coming to you in October.
You will find him a most clear, friendly ingenious solid and excellent
man. . . . He is the valuablist Friend I now have in England, nearly
tho' not quite altogether the one man in talking with whom I can get
any real profit or comfort" (2 April 1872, in Slater, CEC, p. 589).

72. "Believing mainly as I do in little other Political right than the
right of the strongest" (Froude to A. H. Clough, [mid-1840s]. MS:
Bodleian Eng. lett. c. 190, fol. 288). Various statements in the biography
indicate that Froude came to a more subtle understanding of Carlyle's
"might vs. right" concept than he reveals here.

73. For an astute analysis of the widespread hero worship pervad­
ing all levels of society, see Walter E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame

74. "I would rather be wrong with Plato than right with such men as
these" (Cicero Tusculan Disputations 1. 17. 39). "Such men as these"
were the Pythagoreans.

75. "To err with your Master is your reward," adapted from Goethe's
"Sprichwörtlich," ca. 1810-12: "Willst du dir aber das Beste tun, /
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So bleib nicht auf dir selber ruhn, / Sondern folg eines Meisters Sinn; / 
Mit ihm zu irren ist dir Gewinn.”


79. Ibid., p. 80.

80. Ibid., pp. 80, 80–81, 82, 84.

81. Ibid., p. 87.

82. Ibid., p. 90.

83. Ibid., pp. 90, 91, 92.


86. Dowling, p. 81.


89. Dowling, p. 85.


91. Ibid., p. 924.

92. Ibid., p. 948.

93. Ibid., p. 1201 (but see Johnson’s qualification of this view on p. 1288).


96. Preface to the second edition. The two tales in *Shadows of the Clouds* (1847) also end tragically.

97. 16 May [1852]. MS: Bodleian Eng. lett. d. 177, fol. 61. Pub-
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98. 13 February [1854]. MS: Bodleian Dep. d. 170, fols. 73v and 74r. The ellipsis points are Froude's.

99. 2 May [1858]. MS: Bodleian Eng. lett. e. 74, fol. 33. This attitude may suggest a chief reason for Froude's carelessness in small matters, for which see the discussion in "Editorial Procedures."

100. Preface (dated 6 November 1882), *Short Studies*, 4:v.

101. 17 January 1881. MS: Bodleian Eng. lett. e. 44, fol. 136.

102. 6 February 1881. MS: Humanities Research Center, University of Texas.


107. 30 May [1881?]. MS: Hon. David Lytton Cobbold and Hertfordshire County Council. Professor Robert Goetzman kindly drew my attention to this letter.


109. See also Stead, *The M. P. for Russia*, 2:324.


111. MS: Folger Shakespeare Library. I wish to thank Professor G. A. Cate for bringing this letter to my attention. Waldo H. Dunn published Carlyle's moving reply, dated 13 July 1874, in "Carlyle's Last Letters to Froude," *Twentieth Century* 160 (September 1956): 243-44.

112. MS: Tennyson Research Centre, City Library, Lincoln. Printed
with slight variations from the manuscript in [Hallam Tennyson,] Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1897), 2:244.

113. 16 December [1892?]. MS: Tennyson Research Centre, City Library, Lincoln. Printed in Tennyson: A Memoir, 2:468, where it is dated "1894." The year 1892 (possibly 1893) is more likely (Froude died 20 October 1894). Tennyson's hero worship of Arthur Hallam would also have drawn Froude to him and his poetry.


118. Short Studies, 4:393–94.

119. Quoted from Clubbe, Carlyle and His Contemporaries, p. 262.

120. Dunn, Froude, 2:570.


123. Works, 29:79. See also Reminiscences, 2:41.

124. See essays by Gordon S. Haight and G. B. Tennyson in Clubbe, Carlyle and His Contemporaries, especially pp. 186 and 310. Kenneth Allott points, however, to a passage in Froude's Nemesis of Faith "strongly influenced by Carlyle" (Victorian Prose, p. xxxvi). It may also be argued that Froude's prose owes something to the paratactic style of much of The French Revolution, a book he admired greatly.

125. Short Studies, 4:199.

126. Paul, p. 61. Several passages in Froude's life of Carlyle betray signs of hasty writing. Yet few authors sustain, as Algernon Cecil has claimed in regard to Froude's History of England, so high a level of expression through so long a work. See Cecil's Six Oxford Thinkers (London: John Murray, 1908), p. 174.


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129. Nicolson, pp. 130, 135-35 (and 143). A disciple of Lytton Strachey, Nicolson wrote his lectures under the influence of Eminent Victorians and Queen Victoria.

130. 26 January 1836 (NLS, 520.50). See p. 444 for another instance of Froude's picking up Carlyle's always interesting animal imagery.

131. Notation in his copy of Froude's biography, now NLS, 753.

132. Donald J. Greene, in a rather different context, has discussed the motivation that may lurk behind such remarks. "Bruno Bettelheim reviewing Ernest Jones's biography of Freud," he writes, "called attention to the time-honoured tradition of the disciple subtly undercutting the master, pointing out (in the most reverent way) his little imperfections, bringing him down to the disciple's size or a little lower, making his teachings comprehensible to the masses by diluting them with his disciple's—as, Bettelheim complains, St. Paul did for Jesus. Perhaps he might also have cited Boswell on Johnson." Or, we might add, Froude on Carlyle. For Greene's statement, see "Reflections on a Literary Anniversary," in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Boswell's Life of Johnson, ed. James L. Clifford (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970), pp. 100–101. Bettelheim's review of Jones's biography of Freud is in The New Leader, 19 May 1958.


134. Short Studies, 1:19.


136. Short Studies, 1:337. "Homer" was first published in 1851.