

1-1-1972

## Carlyle's Protean Letters: The Duke-Edinburgh Edition. I-IV.

Carlisle Moore  
*University of Oregon*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl>



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Moore, Carlisle (2014) "Carlyle's Protean Letters: The Duke-Edinburgh Edition. I-IV.," *Studies in Scottish Literature*: Vol. 9: Iss. 2, 170–202.

Available at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol9/iss2/10>

This Book Reviews is brought to you by the Scottish Literature Collections at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Studies in Scottish Literature by an authorized editor of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact [digres@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:digres@mailbox.sc.edu).

## REVIEW ARTICLE

### "Carlyle's Protean Letters: The Duke-Edinburgh Edition. I-IV"

"There is a tone of entire sincerity in that style: a constant natural courtesy nowhere obstructs the right freedom of word or thought; indeed, no ends but honourable ones . . . are before either party; thus neither needs to veil, still less to mask himself from the other; the two self-portraits, so far as they are filled up, may be looked upon as real likenesses." "Schiller" (the Schiller-Goethe Correspondence)  
*Essays II*, 168-9.

"But I am getting much too sublime . . . a considerable alloy of nonsense always insinuates itself into such speculations, when I rise into the heroic mood."

*Collected Letters III*, 428.

"Difficulty of speaking on these subjects without affectation. We know not what to think, and would gladly think something very striking and pretty."

*Two Note Books*, 69.

A great man's letters are often the least and the last honoured of his writings. It is only natural that we should esteem him for his published works and look to his letters chiefly to satisfy our biographical curiosity, expecting that these will furnish a more intimate view of his life and character than his public pronouncements. Even 'literary' letters are rarely read as literature by themselves: they seem too impromptu and rambling, too lacking in organic form to be regarded as serious works of art or as constituting a genre. Many a letter-writer would be obliged to admit, with Pascal, that "I have made this letter rather long only because I have not had time to make it shorter." We read the Paston Letters for their history, the letters of Lord Chesterfield to his son for their interesting morality, those of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu for their wit and verve. The great letter-writers of the 18th century enjoyed a classical epistolary tradition which has disappeared but which in the early 19th century was only declining. Since then, letters have grown more informal, and more formless.

This is hardly true of the Carlyles, however. Both Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle have long been recognized as superb letter-writers, each in his own way, and a considerable proportion of their correspon-

dence to each other, and to others, has appeared in various miscellaneous volumes which, often incomplete or otherwise in need of re-editing, needed most of all to be brought together, along with all the letters so far unpublished, into a single and comprehensive collection. This need has at length been recognized, the challenge met—and we have here the first four volumes of a whole which will comprise some 35 to 40 volumes containing all the available letters written by the two Carlyles.<sup>1</sup> These four volumes represent a significant part of the whole, the first, and warrant an attempt to draw some preliminary conclusions about the Carlyle letters and about letters in general.

The magnitude of the project is impressive. For twenty years Professor Charles Richard Sanders of Duke University has devoted himself to the task of locating all the Carlyle letters and editing them for publication in a uniform edition. He has had the valuable assistance of the late Professor John Butt, and more recently of Professor Kenneth J. Fielding and an able board of editors. He has also benefitted from the rich repository of Carlyle Papers in the National Library of Scotland which contains nearly 5000 of the letters in manuscript. Smaller collections lie scattered in libraries from London to New Zealand, and in private hands. Many of these have never been published; many had disappeared and had to be sought by patient search. About 9500 letters have been located and are on file either in facsimile or typescript at Duke University; of these about 4500 have never been published, and nearly 90% of them exist in manuscript, the remainder surviving in printed form only. Some letters—we will never know how many—have been lost, and a few are unavailable; but additional letters are still coming to light and the work of searching and collecting continues.

We may be thankful that so much remains. The conditions that produced such a correspondence hardly exist today. Because letters were then the primary form of written communication they were preserved by their recipients rather than thrown into the fire. People wrote oftener and in general more lengthily than we do now. It gives one a start to think that if the Victorians had had the telephone or reusable recording tape most of their long and fascinating letters simply would not have been written. We may be grateful also for the conscientiousness with which they were composed. For the Carlyles letters were more than merely useful instruments of communication, they

1. *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*. Duke-Edinburgh Edition. Ed., Charles Richard Sanders. Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1970. Volumes I-IV. References hereafter will be to volume and page.

were literary performances that had to stand the test of each other's approval. The very difficulty of writing and mailing letters in the early 1800's contributed to their importance. Paper was scarce, pens were bad, delivery was infrequent and uncertain, and postage, for rural people, was costly. Letters often had to be cross-written to save paper; when one reached the bottom of a sheet *verso* he concluded quickly or undertook to fill another. Until 1840 there were no envelopes, no stamps, and the recipient was liable for the postage. Letters were doubly prized; they had to justify the trouble and expense put into them by the fullness and quality of their content. Thus we have a record of their life and times, their thoughts and feelings, their observations of people and events, and their activities almost daily over a span of nearly 70 years. The value of this record to now and future scholars is incalculable. Other Victorian correspondences which have recently been published—Thackeray's, George Eliot's, Mill's, Emerson's,—whatever their other merits, have not the same range and variety. Born in the country both the Carlyles saw Edinburgh with country eyes; coming up from Scotland they saw London with foreign eyes. So fully did they describe people and places and set forth their response to ideas and events that even considering their special bias, or perhaps because of it, their *Collected Letters* provides a panorama of 19th Century England unequalled in its wealth of historic details and personal insights.

Handsomely bound and printed, each volume of the Duke-Edinburgh Edition contains about 300 of the letters of Jane and Carlyle together. They are not numbered (wisely) but arranged by date of writing, so that at times the two are addressing each other in private dialogue, and at times turning away to conduct one-sided dialogues with others. A footnote for each letter gives the date, the address to which it was sent, and its textual authority: the manuscript if it exists, and its present location in a library or private collection, or, if the manuscript has been lost, the secondary work in which it survives. We are told whether or not the letter has been previously published, and if so where. If the letter bore no date (like many of Jane's) or was misdated, the editors' guess or correction is duly explained. Footnotes are placed conveniently at the bottom of the page rather than, as in some editions, at the end of the letter or of the volume. Persons and places are identified, allusions and quotations traced to their source; Scotticisms and 'coterie' speech (the Carlyles' private language) are explained, and foreign phrases translated. Although the Carlyles were rarely guilty of mistakes in grammar or contradictions of fact, these have been corrected where it seemed wise; nor has it been necessary to 'explain' confused or garbled passages, so lucidly did they write. Much helpful annotation

has been supplied, and it was evidently a nice problem for the editors to decide how much and what kind of information could be given without making the footnotes obtrusive. Should there be biographical commentary connecting the letters, should full descriptions of all relevant persons and events be described; should there be interpretive or critical comment? In general it can be said that the annotations combine careful scholarship with good sense. There are no linking commentaries, and footnote matter is brief and pointed. The full Index in Vol. IV will be incorporated into a master index when the project is completed. In addition to themes, ideas, and opinions, authors and literary works, and quotations, it indexes the persons and places mentioned in the letters. Fifty-one different Carlyles are entered, thirty-three different Welshes, twenty-six Irvings, sixteen Aitkens, and ten Bullers. Two maps of Scotland help one locate the many place-names, and a useful Chronology lists the principal events in the Carlyles' history to 1828.

Professor Sanders' Introduction is distinguished for its cogency and concision. With becoming modesty he describes the problems he met with as collector and editor of the Carlyle letters and gives due credit to distinguished predecessors in the field like Alexander Carlyle, C. E. Norton, and Carlyle himself, as the first editor—of Jane's letters. In what is perhaps the most interesting section he discusses some of the literary characteristics of the letters, giving more attention to Carlyle's than to Jane's because hers are relatively fewer during this period; but he pays tribute to her lively wit, her talent for satire, for metaphor, her "dramatic revelations of character through anecdote and exaggeration," and the "electric fire constantly flashing out from them." Perhaps her unique epistolary talents, so different from Carlyle's, will be discussed further in the later volumes. That her forte from the start was the satiric anecdote is clear in the letters of January and February, 1822, to her friend Eliza Stodart, with their uproarious account of George Cunningham's proposal that they found a literary journal together (II,45-8), and of the unlucky Dr. Fyffe's proposal of marriage (III,25-7). On the subject of Carlyle's letters Sanders is more detailed though still concise.<sup>2</sup> After noting their strongly practical tendency, their power "to impinge upon the minds and control the behavior of people in clearly defined terms," (I,ii) he concentrates on Carlyle's special talent for portraiture, which has led some to call him the Victorian

2. Professor Sanders has already written widely on this subject: "Carlyle's Letters," *BJRL*, 38 (1955); "The Victorian Rembrandt," *ibid.*, 39 (1957); "Carlyle as Editor and Critic of Literary Letters," *EUQ*, 2 (1964); and "Editing the Carlyle Letters: Problems and Opportunities," in *Nineteenth Century Texts* (Toronto, 1967).

Rembrandt. Descriptions of the many men and women he met, tossed off spontaneously, and often done again after later meetings with seasoned judgment, but always brilliantly vivid, lend his letters the character of an art gallery. We find not only eminent figures like Coleridge, Lamb, DeQuincey, and Thomas Campbell, but less well-known ones like Edward Irving, Barry Cornwall, Allan Cunningham, and John Wilson; and such obscures as a Turkish sailor, a coach-guard, and the Blacklocks. What distinguishes his portraits of these people is their sharp and humorous detail expressed in the salty language of caricature. Coleridge is "a steam-engine of a hundred horses power—with the boiler burst." Monckton Milnes is "a pretty little robin-redbreast of a man," Leigh Hunt "a talking nightingale." Samuel Rogers has a "toothless horse-shoe mouth drawn up to the very nose." Of two Irish doctors on the Glasgow mail coach, one who "had a pair of little fiery eyes, pretty much resembled an Egyptian mummy—a meagre thing—skin apparently of the nature of parchment—and a complexion that seemed to have been produced by repeated immersion in strong decoction of logwood." It is well known that some of the portraits are grossly unfair to their originals, yet one can understand why the self-disciplined and ambitious young Scot should misjudge the older Coleridge and should be repelled by the highly subjective poetry of Shelley and Keats. Professor Sanders does not attempt to excuse such portraits. That of Lamb he calls "one of Carlyle's even more shocking heresies [which] shows Carlyle at his worst, when artistic subjectivity allowed ignorance, prejudice, and intolerance to warp" his judgment. Carlyle was ill-equipped to perceive or relish Lamb's humor, yet his portrait of Lamb is brilliant as a portrait, or perhaps brilliant as a cartoon which tries not to be fair but to express a point of view. With all its unfairness we can see much of Lamb in it, and much of Carlyle. Moreover the harshest picture of Lamb is to be found not in the Letters but in his *Note Books*, where he wrote more freely.

Under the heading of portraiture Professor Sanders takes up other aspects of Carlyle's artistry, his skill in marshalling and arranging details, his aptitude in metaphor and analogy, and his ideas of order, beauty, and humor. Especially interesting in view of the harsh portraits is the presence of so much humanity in the letters, humanity in the sense of whatever raises man above the level of animals and whatever liberates his faculties from mechanism or bondage. Carlyle looked for it in the people he met; he judged them by it, and sought to exemplify it in his life and writings. At its best this 'humanity' is an indefinable quality which connects men with something infinite and sublime, and it is one of Carlyle's special talents to be able in his portraits to make

us "suddenly aware that his subject belongs not to the earth merely but is a creature of infinitude, staring out at us from a strange, mysterious place where immensity and eternity meet." (I,xlii) He could so richly suggest the "close conjunction of the natural with the supernatural" because this was his own vision; he saw men and events *sub specie aeternitatis*. The smallest action has its place both in the limited span of man's life and in the limitless span of time. As a young man Carlyle wrote to a friend "What is to become of us, Mitchell? The period of our boyhood is past:— and in a little while, if we live, behold we shall be bearded men! from whom wisdom and gravity will be required . ." (I,68) In December, 1828, he described Craigenputtoch as having "a solitude altogether Druidical, grim hills tenanted chiefly by wild grouse, tarns and brooks that have soaked and slumbered unmolested since the Deluge of Noah, and nothing to disturb you with speech, except Arcturus and Orion, and the Spirit of Nature." (IV,433) Such passages, and there are many of them, transcendentalize the letters and indicate that their author may well write a *Santor Resartus*.

Professor Sanders warns us not to expect too much from the very earliest letters and adds that his "claims for the literary value of the letters are based on the whole range of the letters." True, the best are yet to come, after the Carlyles move to London and their substance is enriched by observations of the Victorian scene. Yet for sheer brilliance they are not likely to be surpassed in the later volumes. It may even be argued that the inherent interest and literary talent in these early letters is as great as in the later ones. It would be hard to find a more expert letter, as letter, than Jane's to Eliza Stodart early in 1820, before she had met Carlyle, asking Eliza to purchase painting materials in Edinburgh for the pupils she was instructing in Haddington. In 1828 she wrote Eliza again, from Craigenputtoch, asking her to purchase household supplies, and proved that she could make even a shopping-list entertaining. Carlyle too has by this time fully developed his epistolary powers and wants only more experience and confidence to produce the weightier letters of his maturer years. In short, these early letters amply justify the editorial labor that has been devoted to them.

Now, if so much has been done, what has been left undone? Very little. It is inevitable that a work which is intended mainly for scholars but also for the general reader will occasionally run afoul of one or the other. The sources of literary allusions and references are cited "when possible." All quotations are identified in the footnotes and entered in the Index the first time they occur. But why all quotations? Even in our present state of delapidating culture it must jar upon the mind of anyone able to enjoy these letters at all to find Bartlett's most familiar

ones traced to their obvious source: "A fellow of infinite jest," "caviar to the general," "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought," "The quality of mercy," etc. A "consummation devoutly to be wished" appears several times and is identified each time in a separate footnote. Though some quotations have understandably eluded the editors, others like "burning marle" are for some reason left unidentified. All foreign phrases are translated, many needlessly, like "nous verrons," "de gustibus," and "pour les jeunes demoiselles." Editorial corrections too are sometimes inconsistent. Slips of the pen and misspellings are quite properly corrected in square brackets, as in "the other too [two]," and "M'Darmaid [M'Diarmid]," but some passages are as it were over-corrected, as in "this side [of] the Grave," and "I must [go] forward," while others which need it go uncorrected, like "vallies" and "the good and evil are of the two are so very nearly balanced . ." and Boswell's life of Johnstone." There are some misprints in both the text and notes which are unfortunate but not numerous or serious enough to mar the whole. Another matter which must be mentioned is the editorial commentary in the footnotes, which now and then develops a tendency to fuzziness. In the third volume (p.367) we are told that "much of Carlyle's 'Waste-land' as he describes it in 'The Everlasting No' in *Sartor* and elsewhere is made up in large part of bad health." According to the Chronology (I,ix) this bad health which sent him in 1823 to an Edinburgh doctor for help was "probably the result of overwork." But elsewhere it is said "that the chronic ill-health which plagued Carlyle from 1818 on was probably less the result of over-work than of inadequate and bad diet, wrong medicines, cold, and lack of money to provide comfortable conditions." (I,295) Even allowing for the difference in times here, the reader may well wonder what *was* thought to be the cause of Carlyle's trouble—bad diet or overwork—and whether that ill-health (whatever its cause) or something deeper, accounts for the "Waste-land" condition described in these letters. About the nature of that ill-health, too, there is some confusion. Carlyle refers to it often and variously as "a wicked rebellion of the intestines" (I,295) or as "a bad, bad stomach," (III,274) and treats it with mercury and castor oil, which could not have reached the cause either above or below. The editors, calling it simply his "lifelong stomach ailment," do not attempt to clear up the difficulty.

One heartily agrees with Professor Sanders' conviction that an editor "should make use not only of his knowledge but also of his critical insight to illumine his text."<sup>3</sup> Hundreds of notes provide pertinent in-

3. "Editing the Carlyle Letters: Problems and Opportunities," in *Nineteenth Century Texts* (Toronto, 1967), p. 92.



formation and insights for which any reader must be grateful. How otherwise would we know that the Matthew Allen with whom Carlyle corresponded during these early years was the same who later persuaded Tennyson and his family to invest money in his machine wood-carving scheme and lost them a fortune? (I,250 n.) Or that Jane's passion-tree, killed by a winter storm, is "not likely to do well in eastern Scotland (II,284,n.1). Or that the frugal Carlyles used to smuggle messages to each other in newspapers, which were cheaper than letter-post (III, 184, n.1). Or that Carlyle's mention of Irving's baby son having eyes "both straight in its head" is a reference to Irving's squint (III, 136, n.6). And how could one keep track of Carlyle's restless moving from place to place in Edinburgh, which he called "flitting," (I, 399,n.4) to find comfortable lodging to work in. It is not these, but the gratuitous commentary that one objects to, commentary that becomes apologetic ("Lewis was perhaps the first of many living poets to whom Carlyle, perhaps too well known for his general attack on the poetry of his day, extended a helping hand." I,37), or fatuous (when Carlyle calls Irving a Palinurus, the note explains: "Pilot of Aeneas' ship. Edward Irving had guided the misanthropic Carlyle to a happy haven at Haddington." I,365), or simply unnecessary ("Dr. John Carlyle, who floundered about considerably after taking his degree in medicine, would have greatly profited from a modern internship." III, 176,n.4).

The Index, otherwise exemplary, also suffers from minor defects. There are no entries for "dyspepsia," for "flitting," for Molumbo (IV,287), no general entry for "coterie speech," or for one of Carlyle's favorite quotations, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might," from *Ecclesiastes* (I,193). Under the Index headings for JWC and TC (IV,451,453) we are referred to "the Chronology prefacing each volume," yet the Chronology prefaces only Volume I. Finally, in an edition of the Carlyle letters that aims to be definitive and that must certainly remain unredone for many years to come, one wishes that in addition to the maps the editors had provided genealogical tables for the Carlyle and the Welsh families.<sup>4</sup> They do provide, for the scholar, lists in each volume of extant letters that were written to the Carlyles. One would like to read these, as we can read the replies of Carlyle and Jane to each other. But aside from the impracticality of printing them, they are too few and often too dull. As it is the editors have used them liberally to confirm facts or furnish supplementary information. The contrast is striking. Jane's and Carlyle's shine by

4. Like those which Edwin W. Marris, Jr., included in his edition of *The Letters of Thomas Carlyle to His Brother, With Related Family Letters* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968).

comparison with the rather pedestrian letters of John Carlyle and James Johnston (III, 364-6), or the undisciplined effusions of Mrs. Anna Montagu (III, 392-3, n.10).

One's first reaction upon reading these letters is surprise at their orthodoxy. There is no Carlylese here, but instead an ease and fluency of expression and a kind of courtly politeness to relative and friend alike that stand in curious contrast to the more characteristically hyperbolic entries in his *Note Books* written at the same time.<sup>5</sup> Though more 'correct' than the *Note Books*, his published writings too were beginning to commit Carlylean offenses, as the reviewer of *German Romance* in the *Monthly Review* complained (IV, 230n.). The letters, addressed mostly to friends whose approval is assured, exhibit a well-tempered Carlyle, genial or loving, playful and sometimes pedantic in the youthful display of his learning, and vigorously concerned with ideas. Except for a sharp letter to Thomas Murray (I, 170) he is consistently good-natured, even decorous, writing in a homogeneous style whose balanced and extended periods reflect his 18th century reading. Such orthodoxy suggests that he has not yet, in these early letters, found his own style. It is Jane's letters that show originality. Being less learned she is perhaps less influenced by models, and takes liberties with form and language, sprinkling dashes everywhere, trying a 'new Hand', using lower-case "i" for the personal pronoun, and bending the letter to her purpose with charming audacity. Byron's "The earth has nothing like a she-epistle" fits her well, but as a compliment.

These four volumes cover 16 years and take the Carlyles to 1828. Jane writes the first (19 Nov. 1812) and the last (30 Dec. 1828). She was 11 years old at the time of the first; Carlyle nearly 17. At the last they are married and have settled at Craigenputtoch, where Carlyle will complete his long literary apprenticeship. Jane had grown up in the town of Haddington, a fashionable young lady, and had lost her father—a traumatic experience that caused her lifelong grief and rendered all but hopeless the suit of admirers who appeared ridiculous in comparison with him. Carlyle, born of peasant stock, had walked his hundred miles from Ecclefechan to Edinburgh at the age of 14 to study for the ministry at the University, had abandoned this for other studies which proved equally unpalatable, supporting himself by teaching mathematics at Annan and Kirkcaldy, and had stumbled opportunely upon German (learned so he could read the works of a German geologist) which opened up to him the world of Goethe and Transcendental philosophy.

5. *Two Note Books of Thomas Carlyle*, ed. C. E. Norton (New York, 1898), pp. 42-3.

When, in June 1821, he met Jane he still had no worldly attainments, yet Jane saw him as the man most likely to replace the loss of her father. "I had never heard the language of talent and genius but from my Father's lips—I had thought that I should never hear it more—you spoke like him—your eloquence awoke in my soul the slumbering admirations and ambitions that His first kindled there—" (II,196). During the next five years, the years of their courtship, Carlyle was to launch himself painfully upon his anomalous literary career. At the University he had studied Divinity, Mathematics, the Law, Engineering, and Mineralogy, dismissing each in turn when it failed to satisfy his inquiring mind or put questions about human existence. Except for his practical bent he might have settled in Philosophy, for with all his love of the particular he wanted like Teufelsdröckh to be a Professor of Things-in-General, of Things Universal. His reading was omnivorous. Even subjects he was soon to reject, like political economy, he read a considerable way into. His procedure was empirical, even opportunistic. "I must live by Literature, at all Hazards; and now is the time for making connexions and opening channels to secure a living by it." (I,336) Although he still could not see his way ahead he was acquiring masses of information and deep understanding in a wide variety of fields. Whatever did not bear upon final questions was discarded (but not forgotten), and the search continued for any knowledge, any idea, that would help him toward the attainment of a unified comprehension of life and society in the 19th century. This painful and often desperate search is recorded in the letters.

The very practice of letter-writing became an important part of Carlyle's apprenticeship. Reading by itself was never enough. "There is nothing more injurious to the faculties," he wrote Jane (II,101); "than to keep pouring over books continually without attempting to exhibit any of our own conceptions. We amass ideas, it is true, but at the same time we proportionally weaken our power of expressing them . . . Besides, our very conceptions when not taken up with a view of being delineated in writing are almost sure to become vague and disorganised." The discipline of writing does more than clarify our ideas, it leads us to new ones. He was later to tell John Carlyle that "order arises out of speech, especially out of writing. Attempt to explain what you know, and already you know something more."<sup>6</sup> Accordingly he urged his early friends to write regularly and often. In his first extant letter, of 24 June 1813, he asked Thomas Murray to send "the history of your adventures and . . . your poems too; you know I like everything

6. *Letters of Thomas Carlyle (1826-1836)*, ed. C. E. Norton, 2 vols. (London, 1888), I, 244-5.

that comes thro' your hands." As a lonely aspirant to learning in rural Scotland, he desired the expression of their friendship, their feelings, adventures, and ideas. To James Johnston (I,155) he wrote: "a letter from a true friend is like an oasis in the desert of selfishness where-with this Earth is filled. Why then . . . should we write to one another so very seldom?" And to Robert Mitchell, "Let us both write oftener—No matter how dull the letters be . . . the shortest and meagrest is preferable to none at all." (I,111) The letters were literary practice, then, exercises in the expression of their literary judgments as well as records of "the progress of our studies." His own were filled with clear analyses and opinions of his current reading—Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, Scott's *Waverley*, the latest issue of the *Quarterly Review*, the works of Goethe and the Germans—and show him trying his hand at the Reviewer's trade he was soon to enter.

His letters were much admired. In 1814, Murray wrote prophetically: "Allow me to observe that among all my elegant and respectable correspondents there is none whose manner of letter-writing I so much envy as yours . . . The time, I hope, will come, but I trust is far distant, when these our juvenile epistles will be read and probably applauded by a generation unborn, and that the name of Carlyle at least, will be inseparably connected with the literary history of the nineteenth century."<sup>7</sup> Their invigorating good humor encouraged his brother John: "Your letters animate me to more genial exertion, and I rise from the perusal of them with better feelings and better purposes. A letter from you is like a sunny spot amid the dim detail of every-day transactions, lighting up into brightness and poetry what seemed ready to degenerate into commonplace." (IV,357) There is little doubt too that his letters played a vital part in his courtship of Jane. She confesses their power "both to deaden my sensibility to pain and to enliven it to pleasure," (III,24) and says once that they are "the *only* pleasure I have." (III,323) On more than one occasion when Jane threatened to cut off their association altogether (e.g., II,40) it was the eloquence and persuasiveness of his pen—or rather the force of his character so evident in them—that revived it.

Carlyle was aware of his talents. "I know there is within me something *different* from the vulgar herd of mortals; . . . something *superior*," (I,327) but that 'something superior' was not leading him in any clear or profitable direction. Even after he had ruled out other careers, that of literature did not appear promising, and as late as 1827, long after

7. J. A. Froude, *Thomas Carlyle. A History of The First Forty Years of His Life (1795-1834)*, 2 vols. (London, 1890), I, 38.

he had declared himself against teaching as a profession, he tried to obtain chairs at the Universities of St. Andrews and London. His ambitions were mixed with deep fears and uncertainty. Why could he not progress? Yet the letters contain little self-recrimination, almost no admission of guilt. Duty and desperation drove him on in the face of difficulties which he regarded as external. "I have tried about twenty plans this winter by way of authorship;" he wrote Mitchell (I,344), "they have all failed; I have about twenty more to try: and *if* it does but please the Director of all things to continue the moderate share of health now restored to me, I will make the doors of human society fly open before me yet notwithstanding. My petards will not burst, or make only *noise* when they do: I must mix them better, plant them more judiciously; they *shall* burst and do execution too." Though much of this is self-mockery, he did see his life as a battle to be fought not so much against an internal enemy as against the adverse conditions of human existence which the 'Director of all things' put here to test us. Fortune was not malign, just enigmatic; nor was it insuperable. Man had a Free Will that Necessity curbed but could not bind, and it depended on the perseverance with which one struggled whether he should succeed or fail. Carlyle's attitude toward this predicament varied from buoyant acceptance to morose complaint. "He who would write heroic poems," he wrote of Schiller, "should make his whole life a heroic poem," but he chafed at "the miserable strife of inward will against outward necessity." (I,292) "We are restless, sleepless creatures," he told Jane, "whose enjoyment lies in the very struggle for enjoyment." (II,472), but he complained of "those feelings of discontent & ferocity which solitude at all times tends to produce, and . . . that host of miserable little passions which are ever and anon attempting to disturb one's repose." (I,127). More than once he declared "I have no genius . . . Chained to the earth by natural gravitation and a thousand wretched fetters, I am miserable unless I be soaring in the empyrean; and thus between the lofty will & the powerless deed, I have no peace, no peace." (II,316). His genius was the tireless energy and strong sense of mission in life that enabled him eventually to emerge from obscurity.

Though his studies lacked plan, in the broadest sense they were constructive: through them he gained a subject, as through the writing of these letters he developed his craft. By 1827 he had "gotten really something which I wished much to say—and have ever since been saying the best way I could."<sup>8</sup> The ideas and convictions he acquired during these early years would with few changes inform his writings for the rest of his life.

8. *Reminiscences*, ed. C. E. Norton, (London, 1932) p. 318.

Yet the letters give evidence that his progress owed something to luck, in the form of help at opportune times from friends with whom he corresponded. Through Rev. Henry Duncan, editor of the *Dumfries and Galloway Courier*, he met David Brewster, who gave him early employment; Professor Leslie, Carlyle's mathematics teacher at Edinburgh, advised him to learn German; Edward Irving recommended him for the teaching position at Kirkcaldy; Irving also got him the remunerative Buller tutorship, and many smaller tutoring jobs. It was Irving too who introduced Carlyle to Jane Welsh, and who, moving to London, encouraged Carlyle to visit London twice in 1824 where he introduced Carlyle to eminent literary persons, like Bryan Waller Procter ("Barry Cornwall") through whom he was to meet Jeffrey and gain entry to the pages of the *Edinburgh Review*. Such providential assistance does not detract from the credit due Carlyle. He worked hard to deserve each favor when it came. For Brewster he wrote and translated diligently; when he learned German (largely by himself) he discovered Goethe; he wrote "Jean Paul Friedrich Richter", "Burns", and other substantial review-essays, for Jeffrey; and he married Jane. Even so his struggles were arduous and brought him few rewards. He still had no security either financial or psychological, no established profession, and no clear future. As we follow his progress in the letters we see that it was not only virtue that kept him from choosing an easier path. He could do no other. Many a passage shows him attempting to read his own character, to recognize his capacities and limitations. Ambition made his need to write desperate,—but what kind of work could he write? Although he wrote letters easily enough he was beset by doubts and difficulties the moment he attempted an original Book. Having few social graces, and wishing none, he could not join the throng of popular novelists or journalists, either in Edinburgh or London. Both pride and shyness kept him aloof. "Timid yet humble, weak yet enthusiastic," he felt himself unfit either to mix in ordinary society (I,231) or to impress it with a satisfactory literary production. When a subject proved intractable, like the English Civil Wars, he was thrown into a state of nervous frustration: "I feel as if I were impelled to write—as if I had also a very little power to do it; but at the same time as if I had altogether lost the faculty of exerting that power." (II,81) "My character is full of contradictions;" he wrote Jane, "on the surface . . . I am timid as a leveret; while within there are feelings that might suit a tiger—fierce, desperate, deep tormenting feelings!" But he added more sanguinely, "this evil also is but another element in the Chaos of materials out of which the intellect and the will (if any) are to create a glorious and manly history." (II,421). That chaos of materials within himself he would have to examine honestly and somehow translate into order, if

---

his manly history was ever to be lived or any heroic poem was ever to be written.

He will of course live to do both, but problems and difficulties lie ahead which are not only external, arising from what he liked to call "Necessity," but internal, and lay within himself as forces or repressions which imposed severe limitations upon his "Free Will." The most crucial of these, in this early period of his life, was his inability to find a voice, a style in which it would be possible for him to write naturally and without some degree of distortion or affectation. He was fully aware of this problem and he knew that it was not merely stylistic; it was deeply involved with his so-far frustrated efforts to discover his true endowment, his "genius", ultimately his identity, without which he could not do any real work in life. It is ironic that one of his basic convictions, "the end of man is an action, not a thought," was belied by his own circumstances: he needed the knowledge of himself that comes through thought before he could successfully perform the action of writing a genuine work of art. True, like a proto-existentialist he was attempting to move toward his goal of self-knowledge through experience, attempting to create the meaning in his existence by decision and right action. But it is evident from his outcries in the *Note Books*, as well as from his complaints in the letters, that both the knowledge and the meaning eluded him. Not even Goethe and the German transcendentalists availed to quiet his fears or altogether fill the void. No one could help Carlyle in this; he was struggling alone, and would have to wear many guises, even in his letters, to find himself.

We are indebted to Professor Sanders and his colleagues for this first installment. May the others follow in good time. Meanwhile, we should remark that it is a rare pleasure, in this post-Gutenberg era, to be able to read letters which are so richly expressive and coherent, so alive with intelligence and humanity, so noble in conception and purpose.

Carlyle's repeated emphasis on honesty in his letters is especially interesting in view of the equally pervasive presence of deception, in some of its more venial forms. On the one hand, we are wont to think that familiar letters should, more than most other kinds of writing, be mirrors of one's true self; on the other, Carlyle all his life lauded the true self—that core of a man's character which the transcendental eye can see lying beneath his social or other accoutrements. Many of his portraits of people in the Letters are attempts to pierce through externals and expose this core: "to discover and reveal [to quote Professor Sanders, I,xxxiv] the inner and essential reality of which the physical details merely provided the outward tokens." He sought to secure it

for himself by eschewing all insincerity, all sham attitudes and affections. We can see him trying to reach it in some of the introspective passages in the *Two Note Books*: "How difficult it is to free one's mind from *cant*: how very seldom are the principals we act on clear to our own reason." He laments the "Difficulty of speaking on these subjects without affectation," and adds "We know not what to think, and would gladly think something very striking and pretty."<sup>9</sup> With considerable insight he perceives the dishonesty that may arise in the very effort to be honest; yet he is attempting to speak with his true voice from the 'core' of his being—with what he would later so often call "veracity." Behind this effort lay his belief that God expected man to multiply his talents. One could liberate himself from thralldom to worldly externals by honest self-examination and resolution, if these were possible. But they came hard, and time passes. On his twenty-seventh birthday he wrote his mother, "What have I done in this world to make good my place in it, or reward those who had the trouble of my upbringing? Great part of an ordinary life is gone by: and here am I, poor trifler, still sojourning in Meschach still dwelling among the tents of Kedar! May the great Father of all give me strength to do better in time remaining, to be of service in the good cause in my day and generation, and 'having finished the work which was given me to do' to lie down and sleep in peace and purity in the hope of a happy rising!" (II,219). Perhaps he may be forgiven for affecting, in a letter to his mother, more piety than he owned. Affectation is surely present in this passage; but there is no doubt that in thus considering how his light has been spent he is painfully aware of the defects which have kept him in bondage and retarded his progress. It was indeed difficult to free one's mind from *cant*.

Introspectation grew less and less attractive to the young Carlyle and he turned away from it, or tried to, as a species of self-consciousness, unhealthy to self and society alike. Let us not forget that he continued making introspective entries in his *Journal* all his active life, but this germ of his essay "Characteristics" is clear in the *Letters*. Strictly speaking, there is no introspection in the *Letters* at all, since he writes them always to a known audience and contrives both his thought and his expression, especially when the subject is himself. Even to his closest relatives and friends he put his thoughts and feelings in a presentable form. He urged *them*, however, to reveal themselves freely and openly to him. "Abandon your soul to me without reserve," he told Jane, and argued that "the chief end of letters is to exhibit to each a picture of the others soul—of all the hopes and fears that agitate us, the joys and

9. *Two Note Books*, pp. 65, 69.



sorrows and varied anxieties in which a heart's friend may be expected to sympathize." (II,57) To William Graham also, "I hold that there is no finer thing in Nature than to pour out the feelings of one's heart to another that loves us." (I,413) He bade them write spontaneously, without that deliberation which might veil the soul. Jane's letter must be "as long and careless and garrulous and truehearted as it can be made." (II,293) And to his brother John, "when you write to *me*, take no thought what you shall say. Nonsense will do as well as anything—if it be honest nonsense coming from the heart." (I,406) Deliberating, contriving what one says, conceals the true self, interrupts correspondence, and blurs the "picture of one's soul" which is the chief end of letters; spontaneity and 'honest nonsense' on the other hand allow no concealment. Although it is perhaps too much to expect total self-revelation this is just what Carlyle desired. He desired it from others especially, because it gave proof of a love which cheered him in these early uncertain years, and which he needed. "The heart longs for some kind of sympathy," (I,325) he wrote John, "I always rejoice to see one of your letters, because I am sure of its coming from an honest heart that loves me." (II,10)

If others must be entirely frank with him, he also tried to be frank and open with them. In many ways he succeeded. Certainly his letters are self-revelatory to a profound degree. So many of his deepest feelings, his thoughts and daily doings, does he pour into them that we believe we are seeing him whole. He writes on the run, and says so: "I never had it in my power to write you with the smallest portion of deliberation," he told Jane (IV,20), implying that he concealed nothing. He seems to have written too rapidly and voluminously to allow for very much devising, and it does not appear that he was ever intentionally deceitful. True, during one of their quarrels he wrote two trial letters before a third satisfied him, and a few rough drafts of letters he wanted to take special care with have survived. But deliberate intent to deceive is absent. Nor is there any sign that he wrote his letters with an eye to the approbation of posterity; all his attention is devoted to the person to whom he is writing.

He was perhaps frankest with his brother John, to whom he wrote oftenest and told most. John was, after Carlyle, a student at Edinburgh and though he became a physician he had lifelong literary interests. His translation of Dante is still well known. With Alick the tie of kinship was equally close but it was not a tie of mind, for Alick remained a farmer, raised a large family, and moved permanently to Canada in 1843. Carlyle's letters to him are filled with deep and loyal

affection. As older brother, he generally gave both brothers a confident account of himself. To his parents too, as their oldest son, he described his prospects in hopeful terms. If he is suffering from his chronic 'dyspepsia' he writes, "I feel myself much stronger and more free of pain than I was some months ago." (II,86) When he is seeking a Professorship in Moral Philosophy at St. Andrews, a position which would have made it unnecessary for him and Jane to move to Craigenputtoch, he tells John, "The truth is, I hardly care sixpence myself which way it go." (IV,317) Only to a relative stranger, Mrs. Montagu (IV, 390), does he confess his disappointment at losing it. Such variance in his presentation of the case need not be taken as deception, yet it constitutes a withholding of his private fears from his family. Perhaps he is only as frank with them as he can bear to be with himself, stopping short of full self-exposure for fear of facing his own fears. In his letters to Jane before their marriage he is often disarmingly frank, pointing out to her the full extent of his ill health and the perilous uncertainty of his professional future, which might well have ruined his suit. At the same time, he was in some matters frank with her only to a degree, and spoke with design. In January, 1825 when they became unofficially engaged, he confessed ruefully "how often other motives than real love for your permanent advantage have mingled in what I said to you; how often I have turned my words to the interests of the passing hour, and repressed the honest tho' discordant voice of truth that was speaking at the bottom of my heart." (III,269) He hoped that they could "learn to speak truth to one another! It is a better morsel, that same truth, bitter nauseous morsel; but it is the grand specific of the soul. The man that dares to meet it in all its forms is happy become of him what may." (III,269-70) As their marriage approached, both saw the need for full confession. "Hitherto even in each other's company, we have seen each other thro' a glass darkly; steering carefully amid pitiful perplexities which locked up our confidence . . . Let us now see each other face to face!" (III, 308-9) Prompted by this, but more by a warning letter from Mrs. Montagu, Jane finally confessed to Carlyle the secret she had withheld from him, that she had loved Edward Irving: "I have deceived you *I* whose truth and frankness you have so often praised have deceived my bosom friend! I told you that I did not care for Edward Irving, took pains to make you believe this—It was false; I loved him—must I say it—*once* passionately loved him . . . I have concealed and disguised the truth; and for this I have no excuse—none at least that would bear a moment's scrutiny. Woe to me then if your reason be my judge and not your love!" (III,356-7) Carlyle's reply, though late ("Mr. Carlyle do you mean to kill me?"), bore a judgement that was both reasonable and loving, and a request that was humble:

---

"O love truth, my Dearest . . . Help me too to love it: I can talk more largely of it than you; but many an hour I could say with Brutus, 'Virtue, have I worshipp'd thee as a substance, and found thee an empty shadow?'" (III,358)

Carlyle apostrophised truth because he could not speak it. All his life he suffered from his extraordinary facility with words, which often led him, in his attempts to hit the truth, to overshoot the mark. It was next to impossible for him to be altogether unaffected. Both his feelings and his ideas had to be given elegant clothing, enhanced by imagery, analogy, hyperbole, or (as so often) literary quotation, which inevitably disguised his intended true meaning. Fully aware of this, he sought for a natural vein, the true voice, in which he could speak honestly. The search is to be found in his works: "Schiller is in the wrong vein," he wrote in his *Note Books*, "Laborious, partly affected, meagre, bombastic: too often it strives by lofty words to hide littleness of thought . . . I secretly desire to compensate for laxity of *feeling* by intenseness of *describing*."<sup>10</sup> It is to be found also in the letters despite their ease and spontaneity. "Wrote a long letter to poor Mrs. Swan," he told Jane (7 Sept. 1833) "I was stupid, and could not *feel* my feeling rightly, much less *think* it."

Carlyle had therefore to try to avoid affectation on the one hand and tactlessness on the other. How to be genuinely sincere, how to speak temperately, how to write truthfully—these were ever-present problems, expert writer though he was. From his father and mother he concealed the worst of his health, the bleakness of his prospects, and his falling away from the pious faith in which they had reared him. He did not want to lie, but he would not offend them if he could help it. Tact was necessary also in the letters to his friends and acquaintances, and this was harder. His long-delayed ambition goaded him to intemperate expression; his impatience to arrive at understanding and to teach what he understood made him assertive. He lamented his assertiveness: "I had not then, nor, alas, have ever acquired in my solitary and mostly silent existence, the art of gently saying strong things, or of insinuating my dissent, instead of uttering it right out."<sup>11</sup> And very early he recognized his tendency to dogmatism: "Few men have the secret of being at once determined (*bestimmt*) and open; of knowing what they do know, and yet lying ready for farther knowledge."<sup>12</sup> Still young enough to lie ready for further knowledge, Carlyle erred less from dogmatism than from a politeness which led him more than once to

10. *Two Note Books*, pp. 51, 65.

11. *Reminiscences*, pp. 327-8.

12. *Two Note Books*, pp. 77-8.

say what he did not mean—as when Basil Montagu's spoiled son Charles "wrote to me, to go to Bolton Abbey and join his Father and Badams. For certain I was to go! For certain I wrote a letter and did not go an inch." (III,391)—this to Jane. In his letter to Basil Montagu, however, Carlyle wrote in his most courtly manner expressing profound regret that he could not give himself the pleasure of coming (IV,441-2).

If much of his 'deceit' was a matter of tact, more of it was a matter of tactics, of his impulse to persuade by setting a tone. He almost never writes a letter without suggesting some guise, if it is only the guise of order into which he marshalls his thoughts and feelings in order to describe them in words. More often it is a mask. To each of his correspondents he shows a different face: to his parents, the dutiful and loving son laboring in the vineyard; to his early friends, the ambitious student and comrade; to Jane, her teacher and, increasingly, her suitor; to Mrs. Welsh, the able and devoted son-in-law to be; to Goethe, his chief English disciple; and to all who might help him on his way, a brilliant and ambitious young writer full of ideas and energy. The letters tend to become, as Professor Sanders observed, instruments of a practical purpose. After playing their part in his literary apprenticeship they begin to serve him in the advancement of his career by winning him respect and confidence in the literary worlds of Edinburgh and London. This is not Machiavellian. He is not deceitful; one never finds him lying. With all his egotism he does not boast, and there is no distortion traceable to vanity or jealousy. The letters are, in fact, frank, open, eloquent; but he writes as it were out of the self he wants to be or is determined to become. It may be an aspect of himself which he wants his correspondent to see him by, or it may be a role which he almost unconsciously assumes when addressing a particular person. Whether wearing a guise or taking a stance he suits his character to the occasion. The letters thus become vehicles for role-playing. Homogeneous though they are in style, Carlyle subtly adjusts his voice to his hearer, and to the time and circumstance. If this is no more than anyone does who writes for many years to many people, we need only remember Carlyle's insistence on honesty and his aversion to affectation or pretension. The letters are not so perspicuous as they seem.

What he is doing in the Letters is quite characteristically to present himself in different persons at different times while always seeking a solid inner sense of himself as the bedrock of his life, as the basis upon which he can build his work. His flights of self-dramatization become projections of his various imagined selves. After a formal opening

to his mother he acts out an image of himself as a lonely sailor at sea: "It is true, I am toiling on the waves, and my vessel looks but like a light canoe; yet surely the harbour is before me, and in soberness when I compare my tackle with that of others, I cannot doubt hardly that I shall get within the pier at last." (I,308) It is one of his favorite images. To Johnston: "I would not advise anyone to launch, as I was forced to do, upon the roaring deep, so long as he can stay ashore. For me, the surges and the storm are around my skiff; yet I must on—on lest biscuit fail me, ere I reach the trade-wind and sail with others." (I,345) He figures himself in many other roles, as a protagonist in the battle of life, as a heroic struggler against Fate, as the noble seeker after truth, as a martyr to crass society; he may be losing the battle, or be determined to win it ("I am a stubborn dog—and evil fortune shall not break my heart—or bend it either, as I hope." I,154); or he would win it if only he had better health. It becomes formulaic, even syndromic, for him to think his present state of health worse than it used to be and that it alone impedes his progress. "Oh! if I were well, I could soon make myself rich and bid defiance to fortune." (III,12), or "O for one day of such vigorous health and such elastic spirits as I have had of old!" (I,306) The "if" gambit, as it may be called, applied also to his habitation. In the country he longed for the intellectual life of the city; in the city he missed the salutary air of the country. Years later, in London, he could not work if he did not have absolute silence. Rarely did he write his friends and relatives without mentioning his health, and it is surprising that he does not conjure an image of himself as a sick man dying or in danger of dying. Biographers of Carlyle have observed that though his suffering from 'Dyspepsia' was real enough, he never had a really sick day in his life. The physical distress it caused him he describes metaphorically in terms of its effect on his spirits, as in a letter to Edward Irving written in August, 1821, which might have been written by Teufelsdröckh ten years later:

The bodily pain is nothing or next to nothing; but alas for the dignity of man! The evil does not stop here. No strength of soul can avail you; this malady will turn that very strength against yourself; it banishes all thought from your head, all love from your heart—and doubles your wretchedness by making you discern it. O! the long, solitary, sleepless nights that I have passed—with no employment but to count the pulses of my own sick heart—till the gloom of external things seemed to extend itself to the very centre of the mind, till I could remember nothing, observe nothing! All this magnificent nature appeared as if blotted out, and a grey, dirty, dismal vapour filled the immensity of space; I stood alone in the universe—alone, and as

it were a circle of burning iron enveloped the soul—excluding from it every feeling but a stony-hearted dead obduracy, more befitting a demon in its place of woe than a man in the land of the living! I tell you, my friend, nothing makes me shudder to the inmost core—*nothing* but this." (I, 378)

How is it that with such suffering (even if we allow for hyperbole) he could live to write 30 volumes of published works and (in this Duke-Edinburgh Edition) 20 or more volumes of letters? Whatever the reason, these dramatized images of himself and his plight gave him comfort and support, enabled him to see himself in respectable, even heroic, proportions. Although the physical distress caused by his ill health was very real it seems also to have served as a defence-metaphor, or as a role—that of maimed hero—which he could and did assume on occasion. Thus he could excuse his long-delayed progress and, in his worst moments of discouragement, postpone the attainment of his hopes and ideals. "It is so fine to wrap yourself up in the bright bespangled webs of the Imagination," he wrote William Graham (I, 365) "to let the good creature have care of you herself, and rock you and lull you as she lists."

Carlyle could assume an outside self also through literary quotation. Gifted with ample power of original expression he still chose to salt his letters (and his works) with passages borrowed or adapted from Shakespeare, the Bible, Goethe, the classics of English and European literature, all stored in his remarkable memory ready for use when needed. With their help he could connect his life with a grander tradition and describe even his failings in more acceptable terms, for others and for himself. Thus, to William Graham: "I live idly and 'trifle with life's falling leaf'—as best I can. There are books to read; and things to write (*such* things!) but I mind not that. Life is but a kind of tragicomedy at best: if I play a mute's part in it, what matter. The Great Scene-shifter will hush up all, in a little while. Then 'hoity-toity!' *where* is the Emperor? *Where* is the shoeblack? Both quiet." (I, 366)

By casting himself in so many forms, in a boat shooting Niagara, as a "captious and discontented wanderer on the face of the earth," or standing "alone in the universe—alone," or as "a poor grasshopper . . . among the many Bulls of Basham," he not only consoles himself, he conceals some of himself from others by creating the images by which they are to see him, images highly charged with emotion. Who cannot pity the Wanderer, and feel for the sufferer? Who cannot admire the hero? True, his flights do not last long; he soon returns to earth, a little conscious of having gotten silly, if not dishonest. "But

---

I am getting much too sublime," he wrote Jane after one such flight, "a considerable alloy of nonsense always insinuates itself into such speculations, when I rise into the heroic mood." (III,428)

Yet there is also the unheroic, practical Carlyle, whose image we see in the letters he wrote to his publishers, William Tait, Oliver and Boyd, the Frasers, John Taylor, and others, with whom he corresponds in businesslike fashion and whom he shows, not in figure, but by qualities of mind and temper evident in his language, that he is an able young writer on the way up. Radiating force and ability, he is immaculately polite to them, though in his letters to John and Alick he is apt to express his impatience with these gentlemen who had such power to hinder or halt his progress. Quite impressive practical abilities are also to be seen in his handling of private business matters, the effort to obtain the Shawbrae farm for his parents in 1825-26, and the peaceful evicting of William Blacklock, tenant farmer of Mrs. Welsh's Craigenputtoch, who was letting it go to ruin and not paying his rent. Carlyle met with the Blacklocks, called in arbitrators, and demonstrating a mastery of the legal intricacies of the case as well as fairness and firmness in his personal negotiations with them brought all to a satisfactory conclusion. Add to this the financial support which out of his limited resources he gave to help his brother John towards a medical degree, and the frequent sums of money he sent home to Alick and his parents even while he was attempting to build enough reserve to marry and support Jane, and one must conclude that whatever heights his imagination might carry him to his feet were planted on solid Scottish soil.

Yet this practicality is only one more side of Carlyle, exhibited to suit an occasion or a particular person, and one is left as before with the question, where is the true Carlyle, what was that "inner sense of himself" from which he projected his roles, as if his world was a stage indeed. It does not appear that the true Carlyle is revealed in these letters. He strikes attitudes; he analyses himself in passage after eloquent passage, but differently to each person and differently to the same person at different times. The letters in their hundreds leave a host of impressions, and a mystery. As if they were a sort of "Enigma Variations" where the true theme is never stated and cannot be determined, they keep their secret well-hidden among the suasive and modulating phrases.

Carlyle's honesty, in the sense of unreserved frankness, was put to its hardest test in the letters to Jane. It took him five years and nearly 120 letters to win her hand. Because their wonderful correspondence

seems so complete we are liable to forget that it forms only one part of their courtship—a surprisingly large part, it is true, but a part that is in many respects artificial, Carlyle especially trying to show his best front and avoid offending her. Despite his care, he did offend her, and nearly lost her, early in 1822 when he attempted too soon to step out of his role as her tutor into that of suitor. In his letter of 14 January, with the Buller tutorship in prospect, he expatiated upon his lonely struggles:

Nevertheless I must persevere. What motive have I *not*, which man can have? The brightest hopes and the darkest fears—on the one side are obscurity and isolation, the want of all that can render life endurable, and "Death sad refuge from the storms of Fate"—without even an approving conscience to disarm it of its sting; on the other is—!—I tell you, my friend, to be in no pain for me. Either I shall escape from this "obscure sojourn"—or perish, as I ought, in trying it. The game is deep; but I must play it out: I can no o her; so away with fear! *Nil desperandum, te duce et auspice te!* (II, 14)

Nevertheless, he goes on gallantly:

I am far from desponding or complaining. I seem to have a motive and a rallying-word in the fight of life: when the battle is waxing fierce without, and the heart is waxing faint within, I shall remember it and do bravely, *Alles fur Ruhm und Ibr!* (II, 15)

The "*Ibr*" seemed a veiled reference to Jane as his love. He announced his intention to accept her mother's "most kind invitation" to visit Haddington, to discuss weighty matters, presumably the Buller tutorship. "In two weeks I am with you; *unless* you declare I absolutely must not . . . *Do not* refuse." (II,15) Though he concluded with the admission that "This is the most egotistic letter I ever scribbled," the harm was already done, and he doubled the offense by adding slyly, not for her mother's ears: "you know what keeps me from other subjects." He had overstepped himself by assuming an importance in her life, and privileges which he did not possess. Jane in her reply demolished him. She poured scorn on his combined presumption and self-pity, denounced his claim to intimacy as false and dishonest, and told him his visit would by no means be welcome: "if you come, you will repent it." Forced to change his manner Carlyle replied, "I am content to have my vanity humbled, since you wish it so," (II,26) but went on to instruct her that the "*Ibr*" in his quotation from Schiller referred to "A great King's daughter, a brave King's wife: and all poor *Ritter* hoped for, was a smile from her fair countenance to greet his triumph, or a tear from her bright eyes to hallow his last and bloody



bed." (II,27)—an explanation which surely gave further offense, as did his announcement that he was going to visit her anyway. The whole letter implied not intimacy but a superiority that was meant to impress her. The mask of humility simply did not fit. "This is poor suing; I need not continue it. Excuse all my thousand faults: I know their number, and regret their magnitude as well as their number—*mais c'est assez.*" (II,27) His visit to Haddington, when he made it, was disastrous and nearly led to a final break. He did not go there again for more than a year, and their letters, perhaps their whole connection, might have ceased altogether if it had not been for a fortuitous assist provided by Irving who, asking Carlyle to convey a letter of his to Jane, helped to restore the correspondence. Carlyle was thoroughly chastened—or was he? "After that unfortunate visit," he confessed (II,40) "it seems as if our connection depended on a single hair; and I tremble lest some unguarded word may dissolve it forever." He asked her to "Forget the roughness of my exterior, if you think me sound within." (II,41), but reverted to depicting himself in Miltonic imagery as a pitiable outcast from the heaven of her favor, which she clearly recognized as humbug: "All is harmony, from beginning to end—and the Metaphor and Antithesis in which it abounds render the style *surprisingly* rich & striking—Surely with such a *model of composition* I should be satisfied!" (II,51) She was furious; but her extra-epistolary sentiments were still in his favor. "Do not write to me for a long time," she commanded him, and welcomed a letter from him six days later. The question at issue, "Should he be permitted to court her?", was not answered, but he had been chastised for his presumption and he took care to address her more honestly thereafter.

The next three years of their correspondence show him growing into the role of suitor until it is no longer a role: he is her suitor, even though they do not speak openly of their love for fear of Mrs. Welsh who reads his letters: "everything depends upon your appearing as my friend and not my lover." (III,79) Yet she is not ready for an open declaration. Though she loves him "I am not *in love* with you." (III,249) In January, 1825, he proposes marriage, somewhat ineptly, with a return to his rhetorical style, and again gives offense by posturing. The burden of his letter is "Marry me and make me well." Her refusal this time is not caustic, but sadly and sweetly reflective of the difficulties that still lie in the way of their union. It is a pleasure to see her taking him to task for assuming a masculine all-importance that excludes consideration of her, and exposing some of the vanities in his argument.

bed." (II,27)—an explanation which surely gave further offense, as did his announcement that he was going to visit her anyway. The whole letter implied not intimacy but a superiority that was meant to impress her. The mask of humility simply did not fit. "This is poor suing; I need not continue it. Excuse all my thousand faults: I know their number, and regret their magnitude as well as their number—*mais c'est assez.*" (II,27) His visit to Haddington, when he made it, was disastrous and nearly led to a final break. He did not go there again for more than a year, and their letters, perhaps their whole connection, might have ceased altogether if it had not been for a fortuitous assist provided by Irving who, asking Carlyle to convey a letter of his to Jane, helped to restore the correspondence. Carlyle was thoroughly chastened—or was he? "After that unfortunate visit," he confessed (II,40) "it seems as if our connection depended on a single hair; and I tremble lest some unguarded word may dissolve it forever." He asked her to "Forget the roughness of my exterior, if you think me sound within." (II,41), but reverted to depicting himself in Miltonic imagery as a pitiable outcast from the heaven of her favor, which she clearly recognized as humbug: "All is harmony, from beginning to end—and the Metaphor and Antithesis in which it abounds render the style *surprisingly* rich & striking—Surely with such a *model of composition* I should be satisfied!" (II,51) She was furious; but her extra-epistolary sentiments were still in his favor. "Do not write to me for a long time," she commanded him, and welcomed a letter from him six days later. The question at issue, "Should he be permitted to court her?", was not answered, but he had been chastised for his presumption and he took care to address her more honestly thereafter.

The next three years of their correspondence show him growing into the role of suitor until it is no longer a role: he is her suitor, even though they do not speak openly of their love for fear of Mrs. Welsh who reads his letters: "everything depends upon your appearing as my friend and not my lover." (III,79) Yet she is not ready for an open declaration. Though she loves him "I am not *in love* with you." (III,249) In January, 1825, he proposes marriage, somewhat ineptly, with a return to his rhetorical style, and again gives offense by posturing. The burden of his letter is "Marry me and make me well." Her refusal this time is not caustic, but sadly and sweetly reflective of the difficulties that still lie in the way of their union. It is a pleasure to see her taking him to task for assuming a masculine all-importance that excludes consideration of her, and exposing some of the vanities in his argument.

. . . you assure me, that you are not "*hurt or angry.*" Thank Heaven you are not! But does not this imply that there is some room for your being hurt or angry—that I have done or said what might have hurt or angered another less generous than you? I think so. Now, room for disappointment there *may* be; but surely there is none for mortification or offence—I have refused my immediate, positive assent to your wishes; because our mutual happiness seemed to require that I should refuse it; but for the rest I have not slighted your wishes, on the contrary, I have expressed my willingness to fulfil them, at the expense of every thing but what I deem to be essential to our happiness: and so far from undervaluing *you*, I have shown you, in declaring I would marry no one else, not only that I esteem you above all the men I have ever seen; but also that I am persuaded I should esteem you above all the men I may ever see—What, then, have you to be hurt or angry at? (III, 264)

In the same letter she admits that their marriage, "in a year or so," is "the most *probable* destiny for me." They are "half-engaged." What remains wanting is, first, an improvement in his finances, so that poverty will not stifle their happiness, and second, "some improvement in my sentiments towards you." The latter objection, that she did not love him enough, she had concealed from him. "I was guilty of a false and illtimed reserve . . . But I *must* be sincere, I find, at whatever cost!" Despite her avowal there is still some restraint, some reserve, between them which prevents their complete love and trust.

Another ordeal awaits them the following year, when, starting with Carlyle's "We must *take up house*, Jane, at no distant date in some way or other!" (IV,13), they are drawn into a painfully long effort to decide where to live once they are married. Carlyle preferred the country, and Jane reluctantly agreed. Then he proposed that they settle in Edinburgh. Jane, not wanting to leave her mother, suggested a plan of Carlyle's renting a house near them in Edinburgh till they could be married (IV,29). But Carlyle objected, declaring that two households could not live as one (IV,35), which wrung from Jane the cry, "Was ever mortal so difficult to please?" She rallied him for being inconsistent, playfully accused him of subjecting her to "a trial of patience and obedience" (IV,38), and even fancied they might better try to find other mates—but alas, were they not already as good as married? "What is to become of us! at times I am so disheartened that I sit down and weep—and then at other times! oh Heaven!" (IV,38-9) Her teasing and her disappointment were both lost on him. He replied with a ponderous self-defense mixed with reproof, and (with subline inconsistency) offered to free her from their engagement. Once again Jane was forced to challenge his sincerity: "it is so

unlike *you*, the sworn enemy of cant, to make high-sounding offers, in the firm confidence of their being rejected! . . . For it is in no jesting, or yet 'half-jesting' manner that you tell me my hand is free—'If there be any other—you do not mean whom I love more—but whose wife all things considered I would rather be; you call upon me as my Husband—(as my Husband!) to accept that man'. Were these words really Thomas Carlyle's, and addressed to *me*? . . . Dearest! it will take many caresses to atone for these words!" (IV,47)

If Jane's letters seem to be more honest than Carlyle's it is because her characteristic mode of expression is satire, or banter. She expects that one will see through the humor and understand her real meaning, and one does. The few deceptions she practiced on him she exposed to him herself. Her power of forthright statement is as amusing to us as it was disconcerting to Carlyle, who could brandish his potent rhetoric at others but was vulnerable to theirs. With perfect aplomb she dealt him such hammer-blows as: "Your Friend I will be, your truest most devoted friend . . . but your wife! never never!" (II,427); "Devil! That I had you here to beat you with a stick!" (III,70); "Thou a Man of Genius! thou art an ass—" (III,79), and "Mr. Carlyle do you mean to kill me?" (III,360) His own power was for hyperbolic, self-regarding statement which is meant to be believed and which he often believed himself, so strong was the imagination that produced it. But we do not believe it. Jane did not either. "I do not see that it is incumbent on you to 'perish' because you fail in writing a good Novel, good Tragedy, or good anything else." (II,19) Carlyle once disparaged a letter of hers as "a faithful copy of your feelings at the moment it was written." (III,255) His own are not a copy but an exaggeration of his feelings, or a regulation of them according to his purpose, at the time they are written. It is not always easy to see through the distortion to his real feelings. It is an irony that even at his most hyperbolic he was trying to express them, which brings us back to what is perhaps his central conflict. His desire for truth, to be open, frank, without reserve, collided with his impulse to assume personae, both in his letters and in his published works. It was this conflict that prevented him from writing a good novel: he could not sustain his fictions because they were not true. Only in *Sartor* was he able to create roles, those of Teufelsdröckh and the Editor, which satisfied his requirements of truth *and* fiction. And in *Sartor* as in all his published works, having to put himself on public display made him wear clothes that revealed only what he wanted seen.

We may now ask, can we find Carlyle clear and whole in his autobiographical writings? Ostensibly the *Reminiscences* are mainly con-

cerned with others—his parents, Jane, and certain of his friends. Except for the early reminiscence of his father, he wrote them late in life, and in his state of deep remorse following the death of Jane. With all their vividly remembered detail they reveal much of his young self, but it is a recalled self, cleansed by the intervening years of all petty flaws and irrelevancies, and, as in *Sartor*, made mythic. Carlyle's memory sifts and recreates the world of his childhood and youth into ideal form. Though he nothing extenuates he has lost his pearl, richer than all his tribe, and suffuses all with his sadness. In the "James Carlyle", written after his father's death in 1832, the mythicizing process is already at work, imparting the charm of a fairy story to the description of his father leading him, when he was five, off to the school at Annan. Looking back, he sees his father as a sort of farmer-king, a great natural man, uneducated but endowed with the wisdom and power of righteousness, almost a god. His childhood spent in the lap of his Old-Testament family, frugal but pious, stern but loving, seemed a kind of rustic idyll. "I was a happy son."

In his Journal, that is, in the first two *Note Books* covering the years 1822 to 1832, he is not the happy son but the lonely student. With no audience but himself he writes down his feelings and thoughts as they come to him, making notes on his current reading, formulating ideas and convictions, drawing up plans for work, complaining bitterly against himself for inaction or slow progress, and bitterly answering his own complaints. He does not, as in the Letters, seek to dispel his gloom with sanguine expressions of resolve; rather he cries out in frustration and blames himself for idleness in the most uninhibited manner. The style being less formal, closer to Carlylese, one's first impression is that here at last in these intimate confessions Carlyle writes without disguise. Since he is communing with himself he does not need to be on guard or "to prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet." He writes for his own sake. But he writes for the most part when he is unhappy. The *Note Books* give us a narrower Carlyle. We do not see him in his relations with others, do not hear of his travels, his lodgings, his social life. He turns to them for reflection, to clear his thoughts for action, to trace the exciting development of his ideas about Clothes, and perhaps to purge some of his gloom in words. And in the vehemence of his self-blame and his ambition he is led, as in the Letters, to exaggeration and distortion. On a New Year's Eve he writes:

Another hour and 1823 is with the years beyond the flood.  
What have I done to mark the course of it? Suffered the pangs  
of Tophet daily, grown sicker and sicker, alienated by my misery  
certain of my friends, and worn out from my own mind a few

---

remaining capabilities of enjoyment, reduced my world a *little* nearer the condition of a bare haggard desert, where peace and rest for me is none." (*Two Note Books*, p.55)

This reminds us of the passage, already quoted (p. 184 above), in the letter written to his mother on his 27th birthday, where he had concluded with expressions of hope and piety meant to comfort her. Here he instinctively moves on to even deeper gloom and speculates on suicide, but the wording is inflated. He discourses with himself: "Then why don't you kill yourself Sir? Is there not arsenic?", and replies that, with all his ill-health, there will be time enough for that "when I have *lost* the game, which I am as yet but losing." Even when he wrote alone, then, he assumed dramatic roles—the antagonist of Fate, the wounded warrior in the battle of life, or the tormented pilgrim tempted by Satan—where he could see himself in heroic or legendary proportions that concealed the time-bound mortal beneath.

We will not find the whole Carlyle in the *Two Note Books*, the *Reminiscences*, or the published works like *Sartor*, any more than in the Letters. Each kind of writing engages him differently, shows only parts of him. Of course the whole of him is not to be found even in the entire corpus of his writings, since the very process of putting one's self and experience into language inevitably involves omission and distortion. Experience is altered in the telling, hyperbole creeps in, and all suffers a word-change, often into something too rich and strange to be a faithful copy. But by that token it is art; it is literary creation. We must look for Carlyle in the Letters as we have always looked for him in his works, by reading his figures and looking into his roles and self-images, his recurrent metaphors, his characteristic phrases and ways of speech, his dialectic. In short we must look at those very exaggerations and distortions which are so much a part of the Letters, and ask why he resorted to them, what purpose they served.

Carlyle's deceptions do not deceive; his rhetoric is translucent. Though it is true that we often do not know what his elaborate roles conceal we recognize them clearly enough as roles. It is more likely that they deceived him, so habitual do they become. He slips so naturally into the heroic to Jane, the pious to his mother, the converted disciple to Goethe, that he seems not to notice the transition. When he does notice it, as in a letter to Jane: "But I am getting much too sublime . . .", he shifts into still another role, the dramatic, three paragraphs later. Asking Crabb Robinson for information about a Professorship at the University of London (IV,225) he casts himself with self-conscious humor as a "Jack of all Trades," but to John and Alick slides unawares into the role of omniscient preacher.

It may seem that such behavior is not peculiar to Carlyle but common enough in the letters of many literary persons. Full communication is always subject to limiting factors within and without, and it is not unusual for a correspondent to show a different face to each person he writes to. Carlyle's role-playing, too, may appear unimportant in view of the generally even tenor running all through the Letters, the same intellectual and personal energy, the same strong purpose and firmness of decision giving them their homogeneous character. There is no question that he was decisive in matters known and possible. It was the unknown and unmanageable part of his life that worried him. For in the most crucial way he did not know himself. He could not be happy and confident when his career was still so uncertain, when his real talent was yet undiscovered, and his will powerless to determine his future. Even his devotion to duty was no sure guide, for having lost the faith of his parents he could only follow the duty that lay nearest. In all this he suffered repeated identity-crises, like that on Leith Walk in 1822. He had, as it were, to create selves to live in and speak through until he could find the self that he was. His inner sense of himself was still to a large extent fabricated, either an ennoblement or a debasement. Rhetorical expression came easily to him, but not natural expression. He could be literary and quote, or dramatic and complain, or didactic and preach or he could hide his fears under the guise of humor. As we have seen, he could also be reasonable, practical, affectionate, and quite orthodox. But orthodoxy was not really his doxy; it was to give way later to the Carlylese of *Sartor*. Meanwhile his search for a stance, a tone, led him to the adopting and devising of styles, the assuming or creating of roles, until he found one which would liberate his pent-up talent. His long apprenticeship was not yet complete.

It is in large part this harrowing uncertainty about his future and lack of confidence about himself that make the letters so creative. They force him to recreate his past and his present. Sometimes he reviews the whole course of his life in large perspective, as on a birthday, or a New Year's Eve, or in self-justification to his mother or Jane, very much in the style of the *Reminiscences*. More typically he reviews his recent past and present circumstances, rethinking and remolding them into an acceptable form, imposing order on the drift of his daily existence and giving it meaning so that he can see his future course more clearly. He found confidence also in his observation of people, whom he incorporated into his past by 'drawing' their portraits. They too had their troubled souls, and their encounters with Necessity. His portraits often hinge on the wonder and mystery of their grotesque

---

outward features in contrast to the potentially divine self within. He is quick to note the presence or lack of true individuality, of right direction in a person, as if seeing this would help him find his own. Edward Irving is one of many examples:

The hair of his head is like Nebuchadnezzar's when taken in from grass: he puckers up his face into various seamy peaks, rolls his eyes, and puffs like a blas-furnace; talking abundantly a flood of things, the body of which is nonsense, but intermingled with sparkles of curious thinking, and tintured with his usual flow of warm-hearted generosity and honest affection. . . . He is a kind good man with great qualities, but with absurdities of almost equal magnitude. He meditates things in which he must evidently fail; but being what he is, he must always remain a high place in the estimation of a certain portion of the public . . . I shall always wish him well: as men go, I know of no one like him. (II, 456)

From Irving's character, so much like his own, and from Irving's career, always a little in advance of his own with its movement from mathematics teacher to preacher, from Scotland to London, Carlyle learned much; from Irving's tragic decline and defeat he might have learned more. But even at this early stage in his career, being a proud and insecure man, Carlyle took his own way in life, acknowledging help from few. Experience seemed the best teacher, and these remarkable letters are a record of the experience he knew best, his own. That they leave so much to be guessed at makes them not less valuable, but more so.

Reading them all together in these four volumes, we see a more complicated Carlyle than we expected, who seems frank but masks his deepest feelings, who seems cocksure but is tormented by fears, who knows that he can write but cannot (yet) produce an original work, and who beset by doubts and exalted dreams still conducts his business affairs with great practical skill. We see a Jane, it must be admitted, whom we quickly learn to know: bright and charming, attracted by Carlyle's personal and intellectual powers but unwilling to marry till she loves, and disarmingly honest. The exchange of their letters to each other provides a literary increment, a drama within a drama. For all the letters in these first four Volumes taken together compose a sort of Chapter One of the book of their life,—a sort of Romance, too; although Carlyle has not attained his literary goals he has won Jane and their life together at Craigenputtoch is full of promise. Carlyle's last letter (11 Dec. 1828) is a magnanimous offer of shelter to DeQuincey, full of humor and love; and Jane's last letter (30 Dec. 1828), written to Carlyle from Templand, is a passionate



testimony of their married and marital happiness. "Taken as a whole," Professor Sanders suggests, "the letters have a vital unity and unfold a story resembling that of an enormous . . . realistic novel, swarming with major and minor characters, containing much dialogue, and having a moving and complex plot with subplots and auxiliary anecdotes . . ." (I, xlili-xliv).

A sort of epistolary novel then, though composed of real letters. Epistolary novels, we know, evolved in the 17th and 18th centuries from collections of real or fictional letters and from manuals of instruction which were produced in great numbers. Letters were a fashionable literary form with recognized standards of style and wit, and such collections, offering to gentlemen and gentlewomen of breeding guidance in the art of inditing elegant epistles, gradually developed into sequences, and at length into novels. As in the case of the once-notorious *Letters portugaises* it was not easy to distinguish between real letters and fictional ones, but a collection of real letters always differs from an epistolary novel in being in a special sense incomplete: much is left out that a Samuel Richardson would find a way to put in; the overall contrivance is lacking.<sup>13</sup> Real letters are written to a real person, in the writer's immediate present, with the events of the recent past still alive in his mind, and with the future still unknown. Hence they are more intimate, yet more genuinely reserved. The distinction between real and fictional letters seems to diminish, however, with the Carlyle letters, which are so complete, so fully expressive, that the omission of information needed to understand the 'story' is slight. They are in actual fact more intimate and more genuine-seeming than any fictional letter can be because they are genuine. At the same time, as we have seen, they have their mimetic nature. They create the image of a world completing itself, and they seem 'fictional' not because they are parts of a fictive whole but because Carlyle is always adopting poses.

It remains to ask whether familiar letters are a literary genre or only instruments to achieve an extra-literary end. If one determines a genre, with Northrop Frye, according to the "radical of presentation," letters belong to a distinct class of writing in which the words are not acted, or spoken, or sung, or addressed to a public audience, but are written privately to a private reader.<sup>14</sup> That letters may be real or fictional, that

13. Natascha Würzbach, ed., *The Novel in Letters*, London, 1969, p. xii; and Robert Adams Day, *Told in Letters, Epistolary Fiction before Richardson*, Ann Arbor, 1966, p. 33.

14. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, 1957), pp. 246-7, 326-7.

letter-writers write also to themselves, and utilize various devices of rhetoric—of persuasion, of attack, of eulogy—complicates but does not alter the genre. For Frye most letters are non-literary because of their practical intention and direct address. Only a few, like Johnson's letter to Lord Chesterfield or Lincoln's to Mrs. Bixby, which seize on a crucial event in history and articulate the emotions concerned with it, become literary works. At least one of Carlyle's should qualify under this head: his letter to Mill after the burning of the manuscript of *The French Revolution*. In most of his letters Carlyle's purpose is, as we have noted, practical, but it would be a mistake to assume that their 'intention' is easy to define or that the address is always direct and one-directional. Often they rise above the level of their rhetoric into the region of literature because of the Protean nature of their author. No one would make this claim for all the letters—many are merely occasional—but taken all together they create a developing image of his life which is distinct from his actual circumstances because it is rendered in terms of his imagination.

The letter stands somewhere between the essay and the journal; it combines history with autobiography. These of Carlyle and Jane contain information on a wide variety of subjects—the frugal and pious life of Scottish farmers at the close of the 18th century, their close-knit family unity, Scottish religious sects, literary life in Edinburgh, education at the University, and the broader intellectual milieu of Scotland and England during the Romantic period, and many more. They record the courtship of Carlyle and Jane in the context of their correspondence with many other people; and they show Carlyle in the crucial first stage of his long career trying with his 'Free Will' and Dyspepsia to conquer Necessity by becoming a writer. Seeds of his later works lie scattered in them: he knows that man's happiness derives from the extravagance of his desires (III,298), that all things are symbols of deep spiritual truths, and that evil is a necessary concomitant of good—but he has not yet fused them into the Clothes Philosophy or found a fitting literary form for them. Finally, we see that Carlyle's letters are not vehicles of unreserved confession, as he wanted them to be. They are fictions.

It is not to be thought, however, because we have found in them so many 'variations' on the truth, that we are at all disposed to doubt his fundamental honesty. Until he knew what his true self was he could hardly reveal it, however much he tried; he could only imagine selves for himself in the hope that one of them would fit, or that he could somehow become that self, as he had become Jane's suitor and

husband. We are disposed rather to conclude that as the poet never affirmeth and never denies, Carlyle was playing his roles in the letters like an artist aspirant, neither affirming nor denying but projecting parts of himself into trial personae, just as two years later he was to project parts of himself into Professor Teufelsdröckh and the English Editor.

CARLISLE MOORE

*University of Oregon*