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# Kenneth Joshua Fielding and the Carlyle Letters: A Ruminant Past and Present

Rodger L. Tarr

*Illinois State University, Emeritus*

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*Rodger L. Tarr*

Kenneth Joshua Fielding  
and the Carlyle Letters:  
A Ruminant Past and Present

My first introduction to the Carlyle Letters Project was through Professor G. Ross Roy, my Burns and Scott (with kindly emphasis on Burns) mentor while I was laboring heavily in the vineyards of graduate school at the University of South Carolina. Dr. Roy, as he was then called (some might remember those days of welcome formality), engineered the purchase of a Carlyle letter to the Irish radical Henry McCormac and very generously asked if I would like to edit it for publication in *Studies in Scottish Literature*. It does not take an active genius to imagine how thrilled I was. My first publication, and in my mentor's august journal no less. My mates (English graduate students were then housed, barned really, in a pipe-laden basement) were astonished, even a bit envious. I was overwhelmed.

To be certain I would not commit the usual scholarly infelicities common among graduate students at Carolina, Dr. Roy insisted, rightly so, that I contact one Charles Richard Sanders of Duke University, who had undertaken since 1952, this was 1967, to collect the letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle for eventual publication by the patrician Duke University Press. My portable typewriter shook, absorbing my anticipation and fear as I punched the keys and soon mailed the words north to request assistance from the much-heralded Professor Sanders. To his credit Dick, as he was known to his intimates, answered immediately; to his discredit his response was perfunctory and offered scant encouragement. Of course, I did not realize at the time that I had treaded where no person dared to tread; I had innocently approached the God, some suggested Czar, of the Carlyle Letters, notably without formal invitation.

Graduate students should know better; at least the graduate students at Duke, I gather, knew better. For such temerity I was branded, I learned years later, the “enfant terrible” by certain of the folks at Duke.

To his very great credit, Ross Roy assured me that he would publish the letter after careful editing, which he would oversee. And he did. Ross’s imprimatur resulted in wonders never imagined, and upon graduation I soared over the head of Professor Charles Richard Sanders via Icelandic Airlines, destined for a post-doctoral year at the University of Edinburgh. All of this was made possible through the efforts of Ross and Professor John McQueen, a man of noble character who headed the school of Scottish Studies at Edinburgh. However, since I was determined to continue with my Carlyle studies, a choice that the stellar medievalist McQueen could barely fathom, I was assigned to the Saintsbury Professor of English Literature, Kenneth Joshua Fielding, a Dickensian of immense intellectual proportions, who forthrightly confessed to me upon my arrival in Edinburgh that the Carlyles were not his cup of tea. Still, he avowed at starting that he would do his best to make my stay a memorable one.

I shall never forget that initial meeting in Professor Fielding’s office high atop David Hume Tower overlooking Arthur’s Seat. His confession about the Carlyles, bravely honest I soon realized, threw me for a loop. I was benumbed. What exactly was I doing in this Gaelic land of red-cheeked folk with impenetrable accents? “To study Dickens,” chortled the prescient English-born professor. “Study Dickens?” I silently despaired. As I escaped his paper-strewn office that fateful first day, he commanded in his partly pitched voice, “Read *Pickwick Papers*, and return in a week to discuss it!” To a British-born national such a command might seem reasonable. To an American-born heathen it bordered on the incomprehensible. But when it came to the Old Professor, as I came to call him decades later with deepest affection, respect, and love, his wish was nearly always my command. He sent me off to the Shilling Shop, a dank treasure trove over and down the hill from George Street, where he had spied, hidden in a corner, a complete set of Dickens for £3.50, then converting to approximately \$7. Even from my perspective of poverty—Queen Elizabeth II had granted me £800 to make it through the year—this seemed an astonishing bargain. I gathered together the gilt-stamped volumes in a box of questionable integrity, and headed uphill for Princess Street and Bus 25 to Corstorphine, where the Old Professor had so kindly secured for me a “semi-detached villa.”

“But what about the Carlyle Letters Project?” you demand? I am coming to it; I am coming to it! In fact, I will come to it right now. When I returned a week later—having been sufficiently warned by his compassionate secretary Millie that one dared never to be late—I had in hand a copiously annotated copy of *Pickwick*. The Old Professor was not in a cheery mood that day and snapped, “Why are you here?” He demanded that I sit and explain to him why I was.... I said, “Sir,” an appellation he seemed to appreciate, “You asked that

we....” Those words barely passed my lips when he snapped again, “We what ...we WHAT?” The Old Professor told me some twenty years later, when I raised this moment with him, that he was teasing, trying to get me out of my shell. Well, it did not work. Still, after further prodding he got me to enunciate that we were (by his previous command) to discuss *Pickwick*. He seemed puzzled, almost appalled. Just why would a Dickensian of his stature, who always had forty projects going at once, want to discuss *Pickwick* with an American who had just completed his Ph.D.? Was I daft? What could he possibly learn?—a waste of his precious time to be certain. His eyes darted across his desk and wounded me deeply. Droll, almost bored, he asked, “What do YOU find of notice in the novel?” “Sir,” I stammered, “I am struck by how much of it is after Carlyle.” “What?” he exclaimed, almost coming from his chair while repeating with larger exclamation, “WHAT?” Haltingly, but with gathering resolve, I took him through the novel pointing out how the satiric language and clothes imagery were reminiscent of *Sartor Resartus*. And so began formally my thirty-five-year relationship with the Old Professor. I explained, introduced really, as I saw it, the essence of Carlyle to him. For the next nine months we read Dickens, but for him from a new light, through the lens of Carlyle. My profusely annotated copies of the novels remain to this day a record of our explorations. He learned more about Carlyle; I learned a good deal more about Dickens; and we formed a lasting bond never to be put asunder.

The Old Professor soon became my Lord Jesus Christ. Literally! Not that the Old Professor (and I) did not make errors in judgment. Very early on I pointed out to him that my dissertation was on Carlyle’s influence on the writers of the day, and I urged upon him the notion that a valuable book could be written, *Carlyle and the Victorian Novel* as I titled it. In spite of his growing admissions that Carlyle was at the heart of Dickens, he cautioned restraint. Several years later, while I sought other Carlyle venues to pursue, two books on Carlyle and Dickens were published, almost simultaneously. Yet neither of them contains the depth of insight that transpired during our discussions, and in the years that followed both he and I published, he extensively, from our discussions. I was especially proud that I had convinced him that not only Dickens, but Mrs. Gaskell, Charles Kingsley, George Eliot, even Thomas Hardy and D. H. Lawrence, to name but a few, owed enormous debts to Carlyle. When I last visited the Old Professor in Edinburgh, he paused in mid-sentence during a malt-driven discussion about the growing idiocy of critical theory and said, “Rodger, I was mistaken when I did not encourage you to write that book on Carlyle and the novel.” His testimony still rings loud and bold, and gratefully, in my ears. In a touching sweep of emotion, he acknowledged the importance to him of our conversations some thirty years before.

As for the Carlyle Letters, the Old Professor (he was in 1968 a mere youngster in his forties) had inherited the project after the death of John Butt in 1965. At first he seemed almost reluctant when it came to the Letters. But

soon his passion transformed from a labor of civility to a labor of love. He especially reveled in the scholarly chase. He became particularly adept at reading Carlyle's scrawl; he was the master of tracing allusions; and he was without peer in constructing explanatory notes. His writing style was precise; his observations deft. Charles Richard Sanders took the credit for the early volumes of *The Collected Letters*, and perhaps that is just. He did after all conceive the project. But it was also justice blind. As the volumes unfolded, we all recognized, at least those of us who knew K. J. Fielding, the Old Professor's indelible mark on each and every page. At first he was cast in the role of Associate Editor, but by the fifth volume was acknowledged as Co-Editor, and soon was named Editor. At his death he held the honorable designation Advisory Editor. These titles speak little to his actual contribution. He was through thirty-three volumes the heart and the soul of *The Collected Letters*. As with any project of this size and longevity, there were internecine wars, made crueler by the differing cultures of British and American scholarship. Yet the Old Professor persevered. He always managed somehow, I know not how, to put out the flames of controversy among and between various minions. His admonition was always the same, "We must focus on the good of the project!" Make no mistake, his quiet diplomacy masked a silent rage within. He was the Master Editor among a bevy of subalterns. In private he would oath furiously with little linguistic restraint; in public he accepted gracefully (and gratefully) what Fate had dealt him. He was, after all, the Saintsbury Professor of English Literature.

As for me, the Old Professor once, inadvertently, got me in a heap of trouble. In 1969, he waved in front of me a long typescript, headed "Introduction," as I remember, and asked two things of me: first, what do you think; and second, check with dispatch all the quotations and citations. I, of course, took his request seriously. It was an immense compliment. I headed for the National Library of Scotland to read. And read. And read. I soon realized that the Old Professor had not written the draft, but it was not up to me to guess who had. My assignment was clear: read critically and check carefully. And with relish I complied. I was honored to be asked. After a fortnight of thinking and checking, I handed the Old Professor my annotated copy with myriad suggestions and with more corrections than might be expected of a draft. He was clearly grateful, and we discussed them at length, always taking into account that in all things I was an innocent, and was most certainly innocent of the ways and the means of academe. What the Old Professor asked and what I did resulted in a Vesuvius-like explosion. He had sent along to the author of the Introduction his comments and some of mine. That was an epical mistake. The author I now suspect—I do not know for certain—was none other than the Czar himself. To this day I remain amazed that the author, whoever he was, was not the least bit appreciative. Instead he wrote the Old Professor a stinging letter, waved before me, rebuking him for daring to share the draft, but especially with me, the soon to be crowned "enfant terrible." I witnessed the

welling anger in the Old Professor's eyes, but to his eternal credit he maintained his composure. It was his final strength, that unique ability to control his emotion when the stakes were high. Of one thing I am certain: American academe might have won the battle that day, but for nearly forty years thereafter, I am equally certain, the Old Professor never lost a war. The lines were drawn, unfortunately. It was never again the Duke-Edinburgh Edition; rather, it was to him the Edinburgh-Duke Edition. The death of Kenneth J. Fielding, in May 2005, has left a void impossible to fill. The Old Professor, as any honest mortal knows, was the Carlyle Letters.

The volumes under consideration here are the last the Old Professor oversaw. Each time I look at them I am filled with sadness, not only because I know they were his last, but also because I can see his diminishing impact as the editorial reigns were progressively transferred to those whose careers he had created and sustained. The Old Professor was, to the very end, what William Butler Yeats called the "Singing Master." I think it is safe to say that the Carlyle Letters changed utterly when the Old Professor began his crossing of the bar, although the shimmer of his radiant sunbeams is still recognizable in the gloaming.

I have in the past written many glorious words about *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*. In truth I know very little more original to say. My superlatives are dry. My word-horde fails me. As I have written, *The Collected Letters* are always a pleasure to review, "so rich they are in content, so splendidly are they edited." My much-meant hyperbole intensified as the volumes rolled from the press: "The product is nothing short of stupendous, both in content and in execution." And on yet another occasion, I complimented in the most lavish terms the editors for "unparalleled editorial work" and Duke University Press for its "devoted execution." I am quite willing to extend such hyperbole to the present volumes, which cover the Carlyles during some of their most difficulty years, 1853-1858. By this time, Thomas Carlyle was *the* Lion, an oak among acorns, as George Eliot would have it. Jane Carlyle was *the* Lioness. Yes, my lioness chauvinism is deliberate. Jane shepherded their life at Cheyne Row much like the lioness shepherds the lion. Jane was the magnetic lodestone; Thomas the increasingly dependent ore. In the face of both tragedy and triumph, the Carlyles were among the toasts of London, the celebs of the world, at least in Britain and America. Nearly everyone of any importance crossed their threshold or they theirs. It is astonishing, an embarrassment really, that so many newly minted Victorian scholars, or so called, are ignorant of the Carlyles' central presence. Thomas and Jane were *the* literary couple in London; an invitation to No. 5 Cheyne Row was worth its weight in any coin, of any realm.

As the volumes unfold from 28 to 33, we watch intently as Carlyle deals with finality, personal and professional. The writing of *Frederick the Great* consumes him. He becomes fanatical. As time passes, Jane Welsh becomes increasingly fragile, but never loses her acid wit and sharp tongue. Jane is

grounded in a reality that Thomas often forgoes. His passion to write the history of histories leads him ever closer to Daniel's den. Her passion to be heard leads her into the comforting arms of strong-willed women, not the least of whom was Geraldine Jewsbury, feminist extraordinaire. What is especially gratifying about these volumes of letters is not so much what they say about Thomas as what they say about Jane. Surely Jane is the hero of the Letters during this period. She runs the house, placates Thomas, and still manages to have a full life for herself, in spite of her recurrent bouts of ill health exacerbated by morphine. Yet when one stands back from each volume and attempts to see the forest almost overwhelmed by the myriad trees, one gets the defining sense that the Carlyles and in consequence we readers are getting prepared for death. Jane is not to die, of course, until 1869, and Thomas in 1881. But from the mid-fifties a sense of ending, punctuated by moments of ease, begins to pervade. How ironic it seems that as we prepare for the "worst of times" the editorial fortunes of the Carlyle Letters shift from the protective genius so long stamped upon them by Professor Fielding. It is stunning to those of us who have been around since 1972 to see the masthead in volume 31 suddenly change dramatically. Kenneth J. Fielding no longer tops the title page as Senior Editor; he is now placed at the bottom as Advisory Editor.

Volume 28, which is devoted to 1853, is a thick volume, delightfully ponderous in size. It is the first volume where Kenneth J. Fielding is identified alone as the "Senior Editor." It is quintessentially a Fielding volume. The notes start short, but soon evolve into the Fielding mark of inclusiveness. I am not arguing that he wrote every note. Of course, not. But each note bears the stamp of his approval, and each note stands as a monument to his close attention to detail, to writing as much as one knows, if not almost more. That is not a twit. What a quintessential Fielding footnote accomplishes is to tease you into further thought after providing a stunningly thorough history of the subject. Reading the notes is akin to reading Victorian history. The cross-referencing, the use of unpublished materials, and the careful attention to full citation are all marks of a Fielding volume. The enduring policy, an admirable one, is never to leave a stone unturned. What might go unnoticed in volume 28 is that Fielding shares the Introduction with Sheila McIntosh, an Associate Editor. The baton is being passed. From here forward Ms. McIntosh will write most of the introductions. Insofar as the Letters are concerned, what is most poignant about 1853 is the death of Carlyle's mother. As his letters tell us and as his *Journal* confirms, it was an especially compelling moment when he said goodbye to his most beloved earthly hero, who whispered in laboring breath to her son the sentiment that all sons long to hear, "I'm muckle obliged t'ye." This is a correction to the long-held tradition that her last words to him were "Muckle thank'ee, wee Tam." I somehow prefer tradition. Margaret Aitken Carlyle died on Christmas Day. Only one other death, that of Jane, would affect Carlyle more deeply. He never fully recovered from the death of his mother. On 28 February 1854, he recorded in his *Journal*: "My mother!

My good heavy-laden dear and brave and now lost mother! The thought that I shall never see her more with these eyes gives a strange painful flash into me many time" (28, x).

Volume 29 covers all of 1854 and through June of 1855. Kenneth J. Fielding continues to be designated "Senior Editor" and, thus, presumably is still in charge. Sheila McIntosh has been promoted to the role of Editor, joining Professor Ian Campbell, Ms. Aileen Christian, and Professor David Sorensen. But most important, the following announcement is made: "As from the publication of this volume, Professor K. J. Fielding will give up his senior editorship, while remaining as advisory editor" (p. vii). There is something amiss with the syntax of this statement. "That the Old Professor is giving up his role—one suspects very reluctantly—as Senior Editor is clear enough, but how is it that he remains as Advisory Editor? If he "remains," that would imply or one could infer that he was also an Advisory Editor while he was a Senior Editor. This is all fun, of course, but tells us how downright devilish the English language can be. Perhaps it would have been clearer if stated more directly: "Professor Fielding will give up his senior editorship, and will become an advisory editor." One thing is certain: this all proves the adage that editors themselves need editors. After this twister, I happen to light upon the "Note to the Text," which I had not read in previous volumes and now see is the same in each volume, at least back to volume 22. The note begins: "Within our editorial conventions we have tried to show as nearly as possible what the Carlyles actually wrote" (p. xxix). Huh? "Nearly as possible"? Does this mean that what we have been reading is not quite what the Carlyles wrote, especially since we have no clue what the "editorial conventions" are? Whatever the conventions are—what are they?—would it not be clearer and more accurate to state: "*The Collected Letters* are governed by certain editorial conventions; thus, what you read here is not exactly what the Carlyles wrote." Read on: we are assured that TC "composed carefully"; thus any indiscretions he might commit are "normally indicated by notes" (p. xxix). Again, huh? What happens to what is not "normally indicated"? As for JWC, we are assured that she "often wrote hurriedly and carelessly" and therefore "her many errors are unnoted, except when editorial comment is necessary to make the text clear, or it needs confirmation that such and such is what she set down" (p. xxix). Whew! Textual scholars might find such policy a bit odd, bordering on the strained if not the bizarre. Let me try some deconstruction. To wit: "Since TC is so accurate, any errors he makes are normally indicated in the notes; since JWC is so inaccurate, she is only corrected where clarity demands." H-m-m-m-m. Such policy—fix when I want; don't fix when I don't want—gives new definition to the notion of eclectic text. How can the reader ever surmise when the editorial pen is in fact silent? How can the reader ever know that a mistake in the text might be a misprint/typo and not authorial? How can...? Well, you get the idea. Then, there is the larger and deeper question: is it the function of an editor to get it right, to correct the author; or is it the



function of an editor to record what is written? One or the other is dangerous enough, but to select arbitrarily and differently what one will edit (not to mention the gender bias possible here) leaves the editor(s) dangerously close to the role of author. Huck Finn had it right: "The statements are interesting, but tough." I might suggest here, cordially, that *The Collected Letters* would do well to lop off a couple of editors and add a Textual Advisor. Ah shucks, the project is 33 volumes down. *Laissez faire!* Editorial sanity now might really disturb the universe. For the first time and at present the last time, Aileen Christian writes the Introduction, informing us that although Carlyle's letters make up "90% of the volume," she will place the letters of "Welsh Carlyle" at the "center." Why should one want to tame by perspective the "witty and sarcastic" (p. xvi) "Welsh Carlyle"? We continue to be offended by Jane Carlyle's being referred to as "Welsh Carlyle." But, if we must succumb to this strained feminist locution that Jane's humanity must be separated from Thomas's—we all agree!—then is it not proper to refer to her as Welsh-Carlyle, the hyphen serving as confirmation of her humanity?

Volume 30 is the first volume in which Kenneth J. Fielding is listed as an Advisory Editor, although we are advised, thankfully, that as "advisory editor on this volume he has contributed considerably, with his customary enthusiasm and scholarship" (p. x). And, lo and behold, and thankfully again, he is the author of the Introduction, this time with David Sorensen. The two editors, father and son, take delight in emphasizing that not only does this volume contain the collected letters through 1855, it also reprints Jane Carlyle's "Notebook, 1845-1852," her partly fictional "The simple story of my own first love," and her "Journal October 1855-July 1856," each of which is headed by notes of introduction explaining provenance and importance. The Old Professor, with Professor Sorensen at his side, is at his best here, weaving in and out like a Spitfire in combat. The editorial work is superb. The Notebook was first edited and printed in part by James A. Froude, and as the Old Professor deftly establishes, much of Froude's version is either inaccurate or truncated, deliberately selective with the aim to prove what Geraldine Jewsbury allegedly whispered in his ear on her deathbed—namely, that the Carlyles' marriage was not consummated and thus was doomed from the start. The Old Professor's Introduction to the story is electric. It bobs and it weaves; it plays intellectual *ropa-dopa*; and in the end is more interesting than the story itself, Jane's wish list of things not done. The Old Professor reminds us that at best Jane was a chameleon, leaping from one fictive branch to another while inserting points of truth about her art of maturation. Jane, concludes the Old Professor, was a "performer as much as a writer. She did not believe that there was room in one house for two writers" (p. 182). Jane conceded "art" to Thomas and retained "bravura" for herself. Feminists might argue that the Old Professor is conceding too much in the name of Jane, but truth is often a bitter pill to swallow. Jane's expressive skill worked best in the art of letter writing, where, to quote Dickens, her "subtle serious humour" found truth in "trifling bits of charac-

ter” (p. 183). Jane’s Journal, from October 1855 to July 1856, is exceptionally interesting, for much of it is not about Thomas, although he lurks. In the Journal, she is her own person, free from the rigors of appearance as she concentrates on reality. To be sure, her reality is her reality. She complains; she laughs; she observes; she criticizes; and in the end she is remarkably self-effacing. She confesses, to herself, that whatever joys and sorrows she encounters, they are not always to be laid at the feet of Thomas. For this brief time, from October to July, we are able to observe the truly marvelous character of Jane Carlyle. What a privilege!

The Appendix to volume 30 is almost as interesting, even though it is the second-hand testimony of Geraldine Jewsbury and Ellen Twisleton, both close friends of Jane Carlyle. Printed first is a letter from Jewsbury to Carlyle’s biographer Froude, outlining in considerable detail the Jewsbury myth that Jane in marriage was always “miserable” (p. 263), that she was left alone in the “desert [Craigenputtoch]” (p. 265), and that she had “only the desolation & barrenness of having all her love & her life laid waste” (p. 266). It does little good for us to say now that the “femme en comprise” (what Jane, teasingly, once called herself in a plaintive domestic appeal to Thomas) here is not Jane. The self-styled radical feminist Jewsbury has planted the seed that Froude wants to nurture: Thomas is the culprit in a well-planned conspiracy to make Jane’s life “barren” (implication: no sex) and “miserable” (implication: impossibly cruel). What nonsense! *The Collected Letters* stands in refutation of such blather. The second document in the Appendix is much more stunning; it is an account by Twisleton, told mostly in Jane’s alleged words, of the Carlyles’ life at Craigenputtoch. If taken literally and not through the lens of Jane’s eyes, embellished by Twisleton, almost thirty ears later, the account (remember: Jane words are the words of Twisleton and not a tape-recording!) confirms the misery asserted by Jewsbury. There is no reason or need to discredit Twisleton, although on more than one occasion Professor Fielding feels compelled to correct her recollections. The account is, in fact, a parlor-room conversation between two intimates, and certainly should be read as such. It is Jane’s version of truth at that single moment, given during a period in her life that was especially conflicted, the year 1854. Of course, such documents should be published, for as Thomas himself said repeatedly, life is made up of “innumerable Biographies.” Yet we have through Twisleton one fractured spoke in a limitless wheel. How we treat historical record says more about us than its participants. Literal acceptance of this document, outside the context of *The Collected Letters*, seems imprudent, if not shameful.

Volume 31 covers only January through September of 1856. It is a bit odd to have only a partial year. No doubt this was done to make more consistent the number of pages of each volume. Ian Campbell, thirty-odd years the Editor-In-Waiting, is for the first time assigned the task of writing the Introduction. It is neither bold nor insightful, although it rightly places the mathematics of published versus unpublished letters in a note, rather than in the opening

paragraph that previously distracted from the narrative. I have always liked these facts and figures, but deciphering them can take some doing. For example, we are instructed on how many letters have been “published elsewhere” and “published in collections” (How are the two different?), and then those “partly published” and “quoted” (these two designations are so indefinite as to be virtually worthless). Anal fixates (I am one) want more precision, while the rest of the world, I suspect, could not care less. The Introduction contains some inviting, often entertaining, Campbellisms. We are told at one juncture that Carlyle’s “father had been long immured” (p. xiv). Immured? Would it not be more descriptive, never mind precise—Carlyle used the word “interred” for his mother (28, 356)—to say father James “lies ’a moldering in his grave”? Immured has the odor of east-Lothian elitism, and for that matter is not true. James Carlyle was not and is not “entombed” in an alabaster chamber. The grave is a simple one, fully sodded and marked by a modest stone. Shifting gears, Professor Campbell writes of Carlyle’s liking to visit his “adored” Lady Ashburton at the “servanted grandeur” of Bath or the Grange, and of his disapprobation when “they were cooped up together in a cold and damp Highland shooting lodge” (p. xvi). I am no so sure about this “adored” business, and my computer (often inaccurate) red-lines “servanted” as coinage unknown. However, that Carlyle and Lady Ashburton were “cooped up” is a delicious and potentially pregnant avian metaphor, which I wish I had written myself, so full it is of possible deconstructions. Lord knows, I have written worse, but not with a bevy of editors beating their wings about me. Hilarity can turn somber, however. We are instructed by Professor Campbell on the star-doomed marriage of John Ruskin and Effie Gray (p. xvii), but in it all Professor Campbell neglects to gloss the more private parts of the mythic relationship—namely, Ruskin’s alleged astonishment when he saw for the first time (and presumably last) that the fresh Mrs. Ruskin had pubic hair. Little wonder Mrs. Ruskin quickly and repeatedly flew into the arms of her Pre-Raphaelite consort John Everett Millais. At the very least, divulging the above would have added new meaning to Jane Carlyle’s comment, “Mrs Ruskin must have been hard to please” (p. 38), a comment Professor Campbell takes pains to quote (p. xvii). Still, we are heartened when Professor Campbell closes with the assurance that the Carlyles through the months of 1856 enjoyed a “physical return to their roots” (p. xix). Freud or Derrida or both: wherefore art thou? All said, Professor Campbell tries valiantly, if too often uninterestingly, to unravel our complexly rooted Thomas and Jane. Finally, and for the record, volume 31 is the last volume in which Professor Fielding’s name heads the spine.

Volume 32, October 1856–July 1857, does little to rescue us from certain editorial enigma, except for the extraordinarily provocative appendices (more on those in a moment). The Introduction this time is by Sheila McIntosh, who writes with a much more exciting style than does Professor Campbell. Ms. McIntosh points us in all the right directions, especially alerting us to the Carlyles’ determination to return more often to their native Scotland. Thomas

Wolfe must not have known about the Carlyles when he admonished readers that "You Can't Go Home Again." The Carlyles, who had lived in London since 1834, seemed to sense that their lives were moving toward a finality, at least insofar as their Scottish families and friends were concerned. But in the end there was always the "infernal" *Frederick the Great* project to draw Carlyle back to London. But all was not doom and gloom regarding *Frederick*, as Ms. McIntosh implies. In fact, as Ruth apRoberts has so wonderfully laid out, there is much humor in *Frederick the Great*, leading us to the conclusion that as Carlyle was pouring his soul into the manuscript, he was also having a good time. The point is Carlyle was not always a doom-and-gloom oaten-cake eating Scot, as he is so often portrayed. And if scholarship would even bother to read the notes to *The Collected Letters*, it would find elucidation of that fact. It is also true Jane Carlyle could complain with the best of them, and she had reason as various physical maladies enveloped her just when the irascible Thomas became more irascible. But it is also manifest that Jane's sardonic wit, both Renaissance and modern, always lingered and could be displayed with rapier-like quickness. She loved to tease with words. Her letters in this present volume bear testimony to the brilliance of her high-Scot humor.

I cannot let volume 32 go without speaking of the two appendices, the first containing the humors of the Edinburgh Editors and the second the glossing humor of Carlyle himself. In the first instance, certain Edinburgh Editors take pleasure in asserting with not too carefully carved subtlety that in my *Thomas Carlyle: A Descriptive Bibliography* I am incorrect in naming the first collected edition of Carlyle's works the "Uniform Edition." They try to pinion me by reproducing the conflicting ads placed by Chapman and Hall in the *Athenaeum*, where the edition is variously titled "Complete and Uniform," "Cheap and Uniform," and just plain "Cheap Edition" (p. 213). They then imply that I got the order of publication of the volumes incorrect, again based on the *Athenaeum* ads. It turns out that I got my information from the Chapman and Hall records. The hullabaloo is over my designation of the first complete edition as the "Uniform Edition" and its cheap reprint as the "Cheap Edition." Further, the editors conjure up that Chapman and Hall even printed a "more expensive" edition of the *Essays*, "leather-bound, with marbled endpapers and fore-edges" (pp. 213-14). Whew! What can I say? First, it does not matter one whit what the collected edition is called. I used the Chapman and Hall records, as printed in their own editions, and they used ads from the *Athenaeum*. Let the world decide, as if the world cares, which has the more authority. Second, there was a "Uniform Edition" entirely different from the "Cheap Edition"; the former was expensively blind-stamped and the latter was cheaply bound printing from the same plates. These well-fed wits of Edinburgh need only consult the Rodger L. Tarr Carlyle Collection at the Thomas Cooper Library in the University of South Carolina to see the dramatic difference. Third, these editors do not seem to know, analytical-bibliographically speaking, that the "People's Edition" and the "Library Edition" are markedly

different from the "Uniform Edition" and the "Cheap Edition," or whatever one cares to call them. Furthermore, and I have not seen the physical evidence so I am offering an educated conclusion, the so-called "expensive...leather-bound" edition they cite from the NLS is actually a contemporary rebinding. To my knowledge, pitiful as the editors think it is, Chapman and Hall never issued a leather-bound, marbled edition of any of the works in question. What is comical about this whole affair is that these Edinburgh Editors really think they have hanged poor Tarr. As the Renaissance dramatist John Ford once opined, "'Tis a Pity." Better words elude me. What is more, this pathetic attempt at discrediting me almost overshadows the second appendix, which displays in facsimile and quasi-facsimile Carlyle's marginal notes in a copy of Elizabeth Browning's *Aurora Leigh*. As the American editors, David Sorensen and Brent Kinser acknowledge, I discovered this important document early in the 1970s, had photographs of it made, and then put it all in my files until I gave the whole to Professor Kinser. The accompanying introduction to the documents by editors Kinser and Sorensen is wonderfully cogent and succinct.

Volume 33, covering August 1857 through June 1858, is, alas, the last volume in which Kenneth J. Fielding's name will appear on the title-page. In an "In Memoriam" to the volume, it is announced that he died on 20 May 2005. How much the Old Professor had to do with the content of this volume one can only conjecture from the outside, but I would deem it significant. There were not many weeks that passed when David Sorensen, the Senior American Editor, did not turn to him for his wisdom, advice, and hope. KJF, as he was called generally, contributed to the very end, and all of us have faith that his presence will carry the letters to the final volume. The Introduction is once again left to Sheila McIntosh. There are fewer Jane Carlyle letters this time, leading Ms. McIntosh to conjecture that they are lost or unavailable. But what there is of Jane is, as always, transforming. As Ms. McIntosh deftly concludes, "JWC's letters are written for the most part to entertain and beguile; they are long, witty, and perceptive" (p. xivi). Ms. McIntosh does, however, spend a goodly time telling us how, in spite of valiant efforts, the Carlyles' marriage seems to be rapidly deteriorating. Jane is growing waspish; Thomas is becoming aloof. Jane writes of perceived betrayals; Thomas writes of Frederick. However, there is still that current of interdependence; each needs the other, if only as a platform to carp. What should be emphasized here is that Thomas is approaching his mid-sixties, and we all now how men in their mid-sixties carp! Jane is approaching sixty, and we certainly know how women when they are approaching sixty carp! Carping is part of the human condition. Jane and Thomas are not exempt. So, it might behoove us to be a little circumspect before we pronounce too readily the death of the Carlyles' marriage. The notes to this volume continue in the Fielding tradition, in spite of linguistic slips now and again, like "She apparently fell in love with him" (p. 32). How does one apparently fall? One falls or one does not fall, one would think. Perhaps what is meant is that "Apparently, she fell in love with him," or "she fell

in love with him, apparently”? God knows, we all commit such clunkers; and God knows, we all love finding them in the notes of others, or is it others’ notes? Before we close this chapter, let me say emphatically how helpful it is to have the “Biographical Notes” that come at the end of each volume, even though the outsourcing of information to the *DNB* finally wilts through repetition.

Before I bid *The Collected Letters* adieu for the last time, let me make a final observation or two about past and present. It concerns me and I believe it should concern all of us, that, apparently, few mortals actually read the Letters and still fewer have any sense that they exist. So we are left with the baleful conundrum: what is in store for *The Collected Letters* as the edition moves inexorably toward its end with the final letter in 1881? Many of the Carlyleans of today will not be present when this stupendous event occurs twenty-three Victorian years hence, or as many as twenty more volumes. We can only hope that editors Sorensen and Kinser are still fore and aft when it is over. We commend them to celebrate especially the unparalleled contribution of Kenneth Joshua Fielding, who saved the modern-day Jericho, *The Collected Letters*, for posterity. We further hope that they will celebrate the lesser philistines, perceived and actual, who contributed in large and small ways to the history of *The Collected Letters*. And we finally hope that they will stand in rejection of the petty editorial squabbles of the past. When the glasses rise in final toast, those attending should pay homage to David Southern, at present the Managing Editor of the project, and to Steve Cohn, at present the Director of Duke University Press, for not giving up on the project. As it is, we are even further heartened by the e-Carlyle, directed by Brent E. Kinser, the project to put all the letters on electronic files. This exceptional enterprise, with all of the advantages that computers bring to our Spirit of the Age, should be celebrated in and for itself.

And yet the final nagging concern does not seem to go away: who out there, if our current culture of conflagration and insanity continues, will have read or will be reading the Carlyle Letters? We are not sanguine. At present the sheer truth is *The Collected Letters* are seldom read and are not being subscribed to. “Not read?” you say. Of course not, except by a shrinking pool of devotees, now evaporating more rapidly than “angel’s portion” from single malt. At the celebrated publication of the first four volumes in 1972, nearly 1500 copies were sold. Victorians, each and all, were lavish in their praise. Then something unexpected happened; the Letters quit selling. Libraries and Individuals alike did not renew their subscriptions. “How come?” you ask. There are those quick to blame Duke University Press for marketing blunders, that somehow the press did not keep track of its subscribers. I wonder about such explanation, although it is true that the press moved increasingly toward theory and away from primary documents during the decades following the initial publication of the Letters. But it seems to me too convenient to fault the press, at least exclusively. If one recalls the so-called “paradigm shifts” that

took place during the volatile 1970s, if one acknowledges that historical truth, at least as the Carlyles saw it, was under attack, if one realizes that the moral epi-center Carlyle represented had shifted to aimless rivulets of unverified opinion, if one realizes that history was being glossed by a post-modern world fog-bound in Garp, indeed, if one comes to grips with the realization that tradition is no longer valued in a world blindly committed to the lip-sync of diversity, then why would academe, now the deconstructed refuse of ill-read, ill-begotten puppets of cultural diversity, read the Carlyle Letters? These theory-enveloped pretenders to the throne of intellect have little to gain by reading Thomas and Jane Carlyle, and much to lose. The plain truth is, with notable exception, the collective professorate has turned its back on the Carlyles, the very professorate that revels in the boast that it has not read Carlyle at all. Ask yourself, when have you last spoken to anyone familiar with Carlyle's pivotal essay on Burns, the poet who gave inspiration to *Studies in Scottish Literature*? Do you know anyone who knows that Carlyle's "Burns" was required reading in the secondary schools during the second half of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century? Do you know...? But why go on? Our world has descended from the Prufrock challenge. Scholarship, I use that designation reluctantly, has become a culture of endless post-modern coffee spoons whizzing through cyber-space. Confusion has finally confounded. We last troglodytes, who have rolled up our trousers beyond the knee of Hope, are being dashed upon the rocks of spin. The world of intellect we once revered has hip-hopped into the din and bin of theory babble.

As I turn off my computer screen, very shortly forever, I cannot help but despair. Many of us have devoted our lives to the Carlyles. But for what? For every step forward in the past, we seem to be taking two back in the present. Yet, in all the darkness, I try to take solace from the Singing Master of *Sartor Resartus*, who exhorts us above all "To be of Good Hope." Within this injunction, dear Carlyleans whoever you are, I bid you adieu. I do so with the hope that what I have conjectured here about the future of Carlyle studies lacks eternal verity. I hope against hope that the world of scholarship will return to the primacy of text. I hope against hope that those truths that perish never will once again be unfurled. And in closing I herewith pledge as I am sung back home to articulate to those willing to listen that *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*, in spite of aforementioned difficulties, is finally a glory to behold, a glory that would have passed away from this earth long ago had it not been for Kenneth Joshua Fielding, Saintsbury Professor of English Literature, to me the Old Professor.

*Illinois State University*  
*Emeritus*