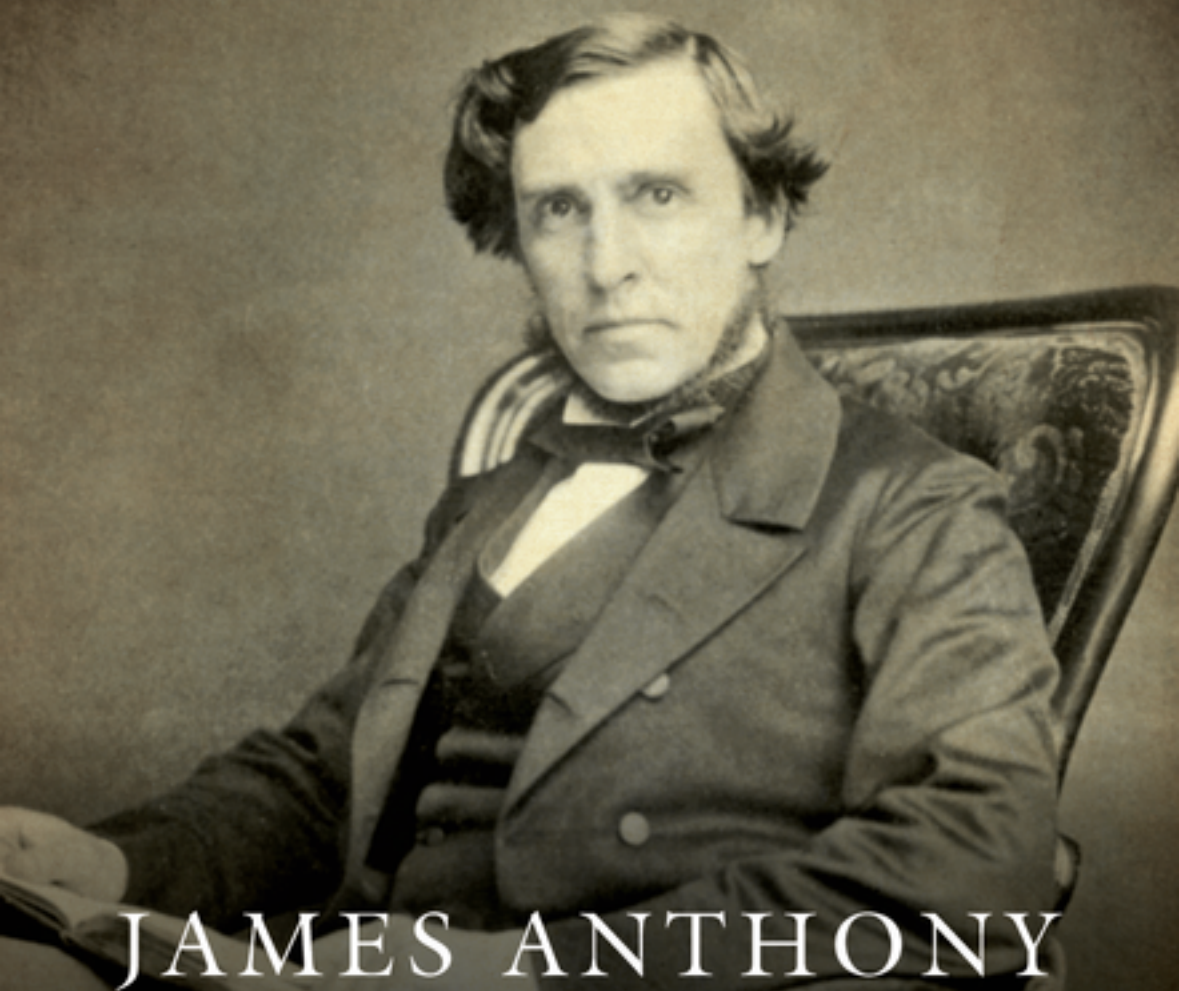


OXFORD



JAMES ANTHONY
FROUDE

An Intellectual Biography of a Victorian Prophet



CIARAN BRADY

JAMES ANTHONY FROUDE

James Anthony Froude remains one of the most commonly referenced and frequently cited of Victorian public intellectuals. Known to intellectual historians as the author of a monumental *History of England* in the sixteenth century and as a key exponent of Victorian religious doubt, he is also noted as the author of a series of scandalously provocative novels and of a hugely controversial biography of Thomas Carlyle. Historians of the British Empire and of Ireland have frequently been compelled to address his sometimes outrageous historical writings. Scholars of mid-Victorian politics have no less often turned to Froude as a typical representative of Victorian fears of democracy, while more recently students of political thought have identified him as an early representative of a new form of Commonwealth civic republicanism.

Yet for all that Froude remains a strangely marginalised, fragmented, and neglected figure. Ciaran Brady now addresses this remarkable gap. Based on a thorough critical examination of all of Froude's published works—many of which have been identified here for the first time—and supplemented by intensive research into Froude's private and widely scattered manuscript materials, he offers the first sustained study of Froude's life and thought. Against the common assumption that Froude's life can be divided along simple lines—the sometime *enfant terrible* who aged into a respectable man of letters—he argues that there was a deeper coherence underlying everything he wrote from the scandalous productions of the 1840s to the orthodox university lectures of the 1890s.

In addition to providing a study of a major but neglected nineteenth century intellectual, Brady offers a critical analysis of the impulses, the aspirations, and the assumptions underlying the Romantic project of personal renovation, and an alternative view of that unique phenomenon known as 'the Victorian sage'.

Ciaran Brady Professor of Early Modern History and Historiography in the School of Histories and Humanities at Trinity College Dublin.

'This book could not be more timely, or more useful in elucidating the roots of a prophetic vocation'

Julia Stapleton, *American Historical Review*

'Brady writes about even the most difficult material with consistent clarity and energy, and with a cool but generous relish for all aspects of Froude's enormous output. Froude's often outré, sometimes absurd and occasionally repellent political opinions and activities are expounded with insight and sympathy, and the portrait of the complex, gifted and exasperating individual that emerges is entirely persuasive'

Eamon Duffy, *Times Literary Supplement*

'a rich slice of intellectual history as well as a memorable portrait of an impressive, if intermittently appalling, personality who left an enduring mark on Irish historiography, Carlylean biography and much else'

Roy Foster, *Times Literary Supplement*

'Brady has mastered not only Froude's own prodigious body of writing but also a vast, demanding literature on Victorian intellectual history. The result is an erudite and absorbing study, a masterclass of scholarly exegesis and lucid analysis ... triumphantly renders Froude, the public historian and sage, more intelligible and infinitely more interesting than we may have assumed and, in the process, illumines large swathes of the intellectual landscape of Victorian England'

The Irish Times

'[Froude's] unpublished autobiography should have been called *Disappointment*. There is nothing disappointing, however, in this elegant biography'

Michael Bentley, *History Today*

'With consummate skill and erudition Brady traces the intricate course of Froude's thinking through his work'

Literary Review

'[Froude's] fate is a puzzle, and Brady's exhaustive investigation is the first to give it the attention it deserves'

John Pemble, *London Review of Books*

'Brady ... has written a shrewd, vigilant inquiry into biography and literary ethics'

The Wall Street Journal

'Ciaran Brady's book deserves to be recognised as the definitive biography of the Victorian prophet'

Irish Historical Studies

JAMES ANTHONY
FROUDE

AN INTELLECTUAL BIOGRAPHY OF
A VICTORIAN PROPHET

CIARAN BRADY

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford, OX2 6DP,
United Kingdom

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trade mark of
Oxford University Press in the UK and in certain other countries

© Ciaran Brady 2013

The moral rights of the authors have been asserted

First published 2013

First published in paperback 2014

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in
a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the
prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press, or as expressly permitted
by law, by licence or under terms agreed with the appropriate reprographics
rights organization. Enquiries concerning reproduction outside the scope of the
above should be sent to the Rights Department, Oxford University Press, at the
address above

You must not circulate this work in any other form
and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer

Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Data available

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Data available

ISBN 978-0-19-966803-8 (Hbk.)

ISBN 978-0-19-872653-1 (Pbk.)

Links to third party websites are provided by Oxford in good faith and
for information only. Oxford disclaims any responsibility for the materials
contained in any third party website referenced in this work.

*For Aoife
and
Fiachra and Oisín*

Preface

Why write about Froude? Two apparently opposite, but equally unattractive, motives immediately suggest themselves. One lies in the pleasures of retrospective moral censure.

Froude is easy to deplore. His imperialism, his chauvinism, his apparent racism, his unabashed religious bigotry, and his worship of strong men are all attributes so deeply distasteful to modern sensibilities that they readily facilitate reproach. And the fact that he himself divulged evidence of his dark and violent childhood experiences makes it all the more attractive to apply psychological assessment, and to ascribe his ideas to the infections of an abused and pathological mind. Such operations have always been as easy as they are questionable. But even if they were demonstrably valid, their achievement seems to me to be of little benefit, other than satisfying a desire for the moral superiority of hindsight.

Yet an opposite impulse, the wish to exonerate, though it may be slightly more noble, is scarcely of greater value. To assert that Froude was not so bad after all: that he had his good side, that (famously) he abhorred cruelty to animals, that he was kind to the poor, etc.; and to show by highlighting other neglected facets of his life, or by supplying contextual exculpations of his views, that he has been unfairly condemned—is a research investment whose intellectual product, however gratifying it may be to the revisionist writer, is so slight that it too seems hardly sufficient to justify the effort.

In undertaking this study I have been moved neither by a desire to rehabilitate nor condemn, but simply by intellectual curiosity. As an historian of the early modern period with a related theoretical interest in the problems of historical writing and judgement, I have for long been intrigued as to how an individual whose passionate devotion to issues of faith and moral responsibility, and whose deep and conscientious engagement with the practices of historical research were such marked characteristics of his mind should also, and unremittingly, have given free expression to judgements and

opinions which now appear to be so wilful, perverse and often repulsive. What was Froude he trying to do?

That Froude was a disturbed and disagreeable man was a conventional estimation from which at the outset I, as an Irishman—a specimen of humanity which he held in particularly low esteem—had little *prima facie* grounds to dissent. Now, after several years of studying his writings, actions and private reflections, I have emerged with an impression of an individual endowed with far more courage, more intellectual strength, and greater moral integrity than I had first expected. I have seen too that there is a far greater coherence in his outlook and purpose than his reputation as a failed *enfant terrible* and a lover of self-indulgent paradox ever allowed, and that at the heart of this consistency was his acute awareness of central moral and philosophical problems, the importance of which few of us would wish to deny. But far from dissolving my own discomfort with certain of his opinions, my admiration for Froude's undoubted qualities has simply deepened my curiosity as to how such apparently profound contradictions arose between his passionate engagement with the spiritual, ethical and epistemological problems with which many of us continue to be concerned, and his particular views on politics, religion and race which have so decisively alienated him from us. Put simply, I have sought in what follows to examine whether the asperities and contradictions which seem to characterise Froude's work were merely the product of a limited and troubled mind, or whether they were a symptom of a profound and audacious engagement with ethical, historical and spiritual questions whose subtlety and complexity we may ourselves have ceased to appreciate.

It is here, however, that a second, more technical question arises: how to write about Froude? What is the appropriate balance to be set between life and work, between the public utterances and the private circumstances which in some degree shaped them? Here Froude presents a particular challenge in that chronologically his life may be sharply divided into two distinct phases. There is the first, running as far as his mid-thirties but concentrating largely on his twenties, during which his personal life—his reaction against his father, his dalliance with Newman, his supposed atheism, his scandalous early fictions and his expulsion from Oxford—appears to embody so much of the troubles of his generation in such a concentrated form as to command detailed biographical attention. But thereafter, once he turned to the sedate and conventional modes of writing English history, secured the editorial chair of the (by then) respectable *Fraser's Magazine*, and

withdrew into a relatively undisturbed, upright private life, the interest of continued biographical study correspondingly declines. Though he had his share of personal achievement and private grief, Froude's public life was—apart from his brief diplomatic mission to South Africa in the mid-1870s—largely uneventful. And such public events or controversies with which he became involved arose primarily from his writings.

Confronted with this pattern, the small band of Froude's biographers have resorted to various strategies. Thus Herbert Paul chose to minimise the depth and significance of his youthful rebelliousness in order to establish greater continuity with his conventional later career. While Julia Markus, building upon the intense personal revelations of his early life, attempted a psychological portrait which, while fascinating, was necessarily of an increasingly speculative character.¹ Waldo Hilary Dunn who, having been given access to materials never seen before (nor since), was in effect Froude's authorised biographer adopted an ingenious strategy, suggested perhaps by Froude's own biography of Carlyle, of publishing his work in two (relatively short) volumes, divided at the point of Froude's turn to history writing.²

Froude himself contributed greatly to this bifurcation by means of a manuscript autobiography which he prepared shortly before his death. Confessional, intimate, honest (in so far as any such exercise can be), and far from self-exculpatory, the fragment is also sharply truncated, concluding in the mid-1850s when Froude began to publish the *History of England* which was to transform his reputation and his life. And though there is evidence thereafter that he continued to keep a regular journal which could have formed the basis for a continued autobiography, he seems to have made little effort to do so; while such fragmentary pieces of autobiography that he composed pertaining to this later period are couched in a defensive, apologetic, or consciously manipulative tone far different from the autobiography proper.³

Just as there appears to be more deliberation than accident in the shaping of Froude's autobiographical 'remains', so there was also some conscious determination in shaping the actual life which they reflect. For, although it was a crucial one, the abandonment of the confessional voice of the young man in favour of that of the authoritative historian was but one stage in a

1. Herbert Paul, *Life of Froude* (London, 1905); Julia Markus, *J. Anthony Froude: the last undiscovered great Victorian* (New York, 2007).

2. W. H. Dunn, *James Anthony Froude: a Biography* (2 vols Oxford, 1961, 1963).

3. For example, *My Relations with Carlyle* (London, 1903).

lengthy sequence of changing expressive modes which began at least with Froude's coming to maturity around age twenty, if not years before. At the heart of this process of mutating ventriloquism was Froude's profoundly felt sense of his own personal deficiencies. There was nothing overtly deceptive in this move. For far from seeking to hide or deny his inner weakness, he converted it into a life principle. The common aim of his several publicly adopted personae was to demonstrate in his own case the potential of all human beings to rise above their inherited and accidental characters by a determined, self-conscious and self-disregarding engagement with the world. In embarking on such a liberating mission, Froude was doubtless encouraged by certain key contemporary influences urging a similar leap from self-doubt to active commitment—Newman, Goethe and, of course, Carlyle. But the origin of this impulse, and its subsequent management throughout his life, was Froude's, and Froude's alone. For despite his frequently expressed admiration for each of these powerful figures, especially Carlyle, it is remarkable how little influence they exerted on the style and tone of his own distinctive voices. *Voices*: because, despite its formative importance, Froude's adoption of the register of the grand narrative historian was not his only resort. Indeed, over the whole of his career he was to enact an extensive series of different and often contrasting ventriloquisms as he deemed his audience and the occasion demanded.

In what follows I have sought to reflect this pattern of Froude's own life-shaping presentations. Thus in the early chapters, where my principal concern has been to describe the circumstances out of which Froude's consciously constructed life emerged, my approach has been biographical, contextual, and in some part psychologically speculative. But in later chapters, following his attainment of a firm public persona, I have, except in those circumstances where events make the presentation of biographical material requisite, shifted my emphasis from the detail of Froude's private life to a critical examination of his public expressions. So, for example, while I have thought it important to provide some account of the social and cultural conditions obtaining in Oxford during Froude's undergraduate days as being relevant to his crisis of maturation, I have given less attention to the condition of the university at the time of Froude's brief return to it in the early 1890s. For the university exerted little further influence on Froude at that time; nor he on it.

My decision in this matter rests on more than historical or critical convenience. For at the core of Froude's life-strategy was a moral conviction

whose force increased as his career developed, and as his sense of the importance of history—as lived and recollected experience—intensified. This was his belief in the capacity of all human beings to rise above their individual deficiencies, and to realise the potential which the force of creation planted within them. This was a liberating, life-enhancing claim. In its implied acceptance of a fundamental equality between author and reader in a common pursuit of a goal universally attainable, it is moreover, singularly attractive. And in its assumption that the purpose of all imaginative writing, and history writing in particular, was not for establishment of the superiority of some particular interpretation over another, or for the aggrandisement of the author's reputation, but to alert all possible readers to the cluster of moral challenges that lay before them, it supplies a humbling contrast to the impoverished way in which so many of us in the academy profess to study the humanities today.

Yet, for all its sincerity and audacity, Froude's conception of his own prophetic role rested on premises that were beset by moral hazard. One was the conviction that, notwithstanding the defects inflicted by nature, nurture, and history, individual humans could unite in a common cause of understanding their place in the universe which would ultimately resolve their deepest contentions. This was a claim that Marxists and other social theorists would find naïve, even self-servingly so. Another risky assumption was the belief that, having sincerely fought through to his own abnegation of the self, Froude was in a position to guide other searching souls along the same path: a claim that Freud and his philosophical precursors would likewise have found untenable. But finally Froude's presumption that in order to prepare his audience for the full realisation of their historical potential, he might by means of rhetorical strategies persuade them to endorse violently hostile attitudes in regard to the claims for freedom for millions of souls whom he deemed not yet ready for the privilege, was an attitude which fundamentally threatened the ethical foundations of his entire enterprise.

What then is the point of writing about Froude? It is not only for the historical and literary interest which a critical review of this strangely marginalised Victorian may evoke. It lies rather in the present and immediate challenges which his own decisions about the way his life should be managed present to us. Though all of us now readily assert the right to express our opinions and our possession of approximate truths, such a claim entails an equal obligation. This is that in making our public utterances we must ensure that we are prepared to address the consequences of their

expression which, though ethically inescapable are so often conveniently ignored. For the fundamental condition of all humanity that Froude confronted with such clear-eyed courage has not changed; arbitrarily plunged, as we have been, into the flux of history's forces over which we have little control, our very consciousness still insists that, willingly or not, we humans must assume responsibility for our actions in this world, or else abandon ourselves to meaningless existence. And just as in his time Froude witnessed the falling away of the traditional religious and philosophical protections against this reality, so the palliatives to which subsequent generations have had resort such as empirical science, moral relativism, and material progress have steadily lost their valence. And while we may dissociate ourselves from the means and manner in which he attempted to transcend the historical dilemma as he perceived it in his day, the question of responsibilities which Froude faced, and struggled incessantly to meet, remains obstinately before us.

Acknowledgements

In following Anthony Froude over the many regions on which he has left his trace, I have incurred a debt of unusual extent to archivists and librarians in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Spain, the United States, Australia, and South Africa. And in almost every case I have experienced the benefit of their great professional service and their personal generosity which it is a pleasure to acknowledge now. The role served by these indispensable guardians of cultural life is all the more in need of grateful recognition at a time when, even within our universities, the philistine question as to whether such services are relevant to our needs has now become respectable. But in particular I wish to record my personal indebtedness to the late Gerard Tracey of the Birmingham Oratory and J. R. Madicott of Exeter College, Oxford.

This study was kick-started by an award of Naughton Fellowship at the University of Notre Dame, and I would like to thank the Naughton Fund, and Chris Fox, Jim Smyth, Peter McQuillan and all those at the Keough Institute of Irish Studies who were then and on several occasions since hosts of extraordinary generosity both social and intellectual.

I wish to record my gratitude to my own university, Trinity College Dublin where at all levels, from the Provost, Dr Patrick Prendergast, down, I have been in receipt of continuing confidence, goodwill, and personal support. Trinity's practical assistance freely given throughout this long process has now been capped by a grant in aid of publication by the Grace Lawless Lee Fund. Within my own Department I would like to note the generosity of the real experts in nineteenth-century studies, Bill Vaughan, David Dickson and David Fitzpatrick, toward this interloper from the nether regions, and the support from my early modern colleagues, Jane Ohlmeyer and Micheál Ó Siochrú for this potential traitor in their midst. Though they bear no responsibility for the present enterprise and will doubtless (though in characteristically different ways) find much to criticise in it, I want again to record my gratitude to two inspiring teachers and scholars, Aidan Clarke

and Brendan Bradshaw. Throughout all the process of research and writing I have had the inestimable benefit of having a good circle of friends and colleagues within the Department of History and in other disciplines and other universities who have been throughout a constant source of encouragement and inspiration; who patiently put up with my interminable complaints and intolerable enthusiasms; who have read all or part of the work at one stage or another: and whose names it is now a pleasure to record: Robert Armstrong, Eugenio Biagini, Brian Jackson, Helen Kelly, Elizabeth Kingston, Graeme Murdock, John Morrill, Séamas Ó Síocháin, Graham Parry, Eve Patten, and Rory Rapple. Bill McCormack was an unfailing source of stimulating conversation and encouragement. Michael Laffan gave generously of his expertise in modern British and Irish history, and supplied me with a painstaking reading of a late draft which greatly improved it and saved me from many errors and infelicities: my appreciation of his generosity in devoting time, thought and advice to my work is enormous. Some I have imposed on beyond all reason: I wish now to thank my dear friends Michael Quigley, Patrick Geoghegan and Colm Croker. They have lived with Froude for a decade and have been unfailingly generous in the attention which, despite the many pressures on their own time, they have been so willing to offer. At a crucial stage my good friend Jim Murray, who also read the entire book in a critical and constructive way, was a source of reassurance and fortification which I shall never forget. Finally, I must express my special indebtedness to Roy Foster. From the beginnings, when the idea of writing anything about Froude was just a notion, to the very last stages, Roy has been an abiding friend. Without his consistent interest, his generous provision of occasions in which I could try out my ideas, his critical responses, and his shrewd practical advice, I can honestly say this book would never have been brought to completion.

The dedication registers a debt, accrued over many years, which is as deeply felt as it is irredeemable.

Contents

1. Froude's Voices	I
2. Shadows of the Froudes, 1818–36	28
3. Independence: Oxford and Ireland, 1836–42	55
4. Newman: St Neot and St Patrick, 1843–46	86
5. Experiments: Critical and Fictional, 1845–49	112
6. The Road to Recovery: From Philosophy to History, 1849–56	162
7. The Promise of England's Past: Writing the <i>History of England</i> , 1854–70	198
8. The Problems of England's Present: Editing <i>Fraser's</i> , Changing Voices, 1860–74	233
9. The Challenge of England's Future: Ireland, 1862–77	262
10. The Challenge of England's Future: South Africa and Bulgaria, 1874–80	297
11. Heroes and Historical Change in the Modern and Ancient Worlds, 1871–80	321
12. Writing the (Auto)Biography of Carlyle, 1876–84	352
13. Educating Carlyle's Orphans: Space, 1884–88	389
14. Educating Carlyle's Orphans: Time, 1889–94	415
15. Sincerity, Prophecy, Responsibility	453
<i>James Anthony Froude: A Brief Chronology</i>	471
<i>Bibliography of the Writings of James Anthony Froude</i>	474
<i>Index</i>	483

I

Froude's Voices

'The law of man's life is self-annihilation'

James Anthony Froude, 1875

Froude is forgotten. This once unmistakable literary voice which for more than half a century succeeded in stimulating, provoking, and inspiring many thousands of readers, and in scandalising, antagonising, and exasperating at least as many more, has now become submerged in the sedimentary layers of Victorian literary mediocrity. It is, in part, a fate sufficiently deserved. So many of Froude's opinions on politics and society, and on the world in general, now appear so drearily representative of the comfortable middle-class attitudes of his day that there has seemed little reason to retrieve him from the undifferentiated mass of essentially conventional nineteenth-century men of letters.¹ But the extent of this neglect has been neither just nor prudent, and in what follows I shall argue that it has arisen as a result not only of the persistently troublesome and disruptive nature of his voice, but also as a consequence of our own embarrassment in attempting to deal with the intellectual and moral issues which, throughout his career, he insisted on placing before his readers.

I

Froude was more than a domesticated lion of the Victorian literary establishment. He was in several different fields a bold and controversial original.

1. On the decline of interest in Froude, compare the contents of Robert Goetzman's *James Anthony Froude: A Bibliography of Studies* (New York, 1977) with the results of an on-line search through Worldcat or the Modern Languages Association International Bibliography.

His early fictional writings were among the first to take on the scandalous and disturbing topics of atheism, adultery, and sexual impotence. A novella he wrote in 1847 contains one of the rarest and most frank depictions of an operating brothel, as well as an experiment in time-shifts and multiple endings which was to be taken up and developed by modernist writers only decades later. In his history writing he was among the very first English historians to found his narrative almost exclusively on manuscript primary sources rather than on standard printed authorities, and he was the very first to extract his evidence from a range of archives across the continent of Europe never before used for the writing of England's history. In regard to the history of Ireland, he was also an innovator, opening up topics in that country's economic and social history which remained part of Irish historians' agenda for almost a century, and questions of England's moral conduct towards its people which remain even now the central preoccupation of some modern scholars.² As an observer of contemporary history he was also in some respects prescient. He was among the first English commentators to see that the triumph of the North in the American Civil War presented a fundamental challenge to Britain's international pre-eminence; and he was among the first to advocate a reconstruction of the British Empire as a commonwealth in which power would be shared equally by all members.³ It was as a biographer, however, that Froude was especially audacious. In his short life of Disraeli which the Tory grandees encouraged him to write shortly after the great man's death, he refused to bow to the pious conventions surrounding such works, and provided instead an account that was not only moderately critical but distinctly modern in its emphasis on its subject's literary talent and psychological temperament. Most notoriously of all, Froude used his position as the official biographer of Carlyle to provide a deeply intimate portrait of Carlyle's relations with his wife Jane which was to be a scandal in its time, and a model for all post-Freudian biographers.⁴

2. See the comments by L. M. Cullen in W. E. Vaughan (ed.), *A New History of Ireland: vi: The Eighteenth Century*, 123–4; for an example of the continuing relevance of the issues raised by Froude to Irish historians of the sixteenth century, see Vincent Carey, 'John Derricke's *Image of Ireland*, Sir Henry Sidney and the massacre at Mullaghmast', *Irish Historical Studies* (May, 1999).

3. Carl Bodelson, *Studies in Mid-Victorian Imperialism* (Copenhagen, 1924), 172–205.

4. John Clubbe (ed.), *Froude's Life of Carlyle* (Columbia, OH, 1979) is an abridgement with scholarly commentary which includes a discussion of the influence of Froude's work on subsequent approaches to biography in general; the most recent biography, Rosemary Ashton, *Thomas and Jane Carlyle: Portrait of a Marriage* (London, 2002), while offering some qualifications, largely endorses Froude's assessment of Carlyle's conduct in the marriage.

Yet Froude's was also a wilful, unpredictable, and offensive mind. Possessed of a troubled and trouble-making voice from the beginning of his career to its close, he seemed to have made a practice of deliberately provoking enemies and deliberately disappointing friends. At one time or another almost everyone in British public life had good reason to feel mortally offended by Froude. Pious churchman and atheists, radical materialists and idealist Carlyleans, empiricists and mystics, plutocrats and working men, Liberal reformers and High Tories, Irish nationalists and Anglo-Irish landlords, imperialists and colonial separatists were all on occasion infuriated by his public utterances, usually to an intense degree. He even managed to ensure that his two brief intervals of cloistered academic life—the first as Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford, the second as Regius Professor of History at the same university—though separated by fifty years, were infused with controversy.⁵

The persistently uncomfortable nature of Froude's relations with his own intellectual contemporaries should not, however, be seen simply as a sign of his personal eccentricity. It is, rather, a symptom of the complex, and frequently misunderstood, character of the cultural environment in which he worked. That Froude, despite their apparent similarity of interests and life-long friendship, could discount the literary work of Charles Kingsley may not be altogether surprising, but that he should have praised and defended Swinburne and Frank Harris is.⁶ That Froude the historian of empire should have reserved his most bitter private comments not for his inveterate public enemy, the Little Englander E. A. Freeman, but for the mild and inoffensive J. R. Green, is similarly unexpected. That he should have deeply admired George Eliot, but loathed her partner G. H. Lewes; that he should have discounted the work of fellow biographer and editor Leslie Stephen, but esteemed that of Stephen's brother Fitzjames; that he should have despised the Church of England establishment, but continued to seek out and even to praise Catholic priests and apologists—these are all seeming incongruities which can be resolved on intellectual rather than psychological grounds. But this very resolution necessarily entails a serious revision of the currents underlying cultural, moral, and political argument in nineteenth-century Britain.

The problem of his 'unclubbability', however, has extended beyond Froude's generation down to our own, for on all those issues which might

5. See chs. 5 and 6; Ian Hesketh, *The Science of History in Victorian Britain: Making the Past Speak* (London, 2011), 153–7.

6. For Froude's admiration of Swinburne, see Froude to Skelton, 15, 19 August 1866, *Table-Talk of Shirley*, 136–7; Frank Harris, *My Life and Loves* (2 vols., London, 1922), ii, ch. viii.

have brought him closer to us, he appears not only to have failed to go far enough for our taste, but actually to have taken off somewhere else. Thus the early fictions' blend of adultery and agnosticism which scandalised his contemporaries we now regard as mild and unsatisfactory, because Froude, we can see, was not an atheist at all, but a passionate believer. Similarly, the great archival discoveries of his books on English and Irish history are obscured for us by the unashamedly polemical interpretations for which he put them to use. His admirable latitudinarianism, his interest in Buddhism, his pleas for a free discussion of religious difference, are spoiled by his repeated attacks on Romanism. His advanced proposals for a British commonwealth are likewise tainted by a strong whiff of racism. And the psychological modernity of his biography of Carlyle is crossed by his own uncritical admiration for the prophet's achievement.

Thus Froude has continued to stand as awkwardly in relation to us as he did to his contemporaries. And in face of our difficulty with taking him whole, we have in general sought to fragment him, calling on his services in several different but always minor ways. As a writer, for instance, he has retained some value for us as a source for some colourful anecdotes concerning the Oxford Movement, or for some characteristic phrase of jingoistic history, or for some enlightened comments on man's cruelty to animals. As an historical figure in his own right he has likewise done some service as a representative victim of Victorian hypocrisy—the burning of his second novel by the sub-rector of Exeter College seems to be the most commonly known fact about him—or of the brutalities of early nineteenth-century childhood. Yet all the while we have preferred to ignore the common source of such different and often contradictory signals: Froude himself. And, as a consequence of his obstinate refusal to be bracketed by us either as a drearily familiar Victorian, or as a harbinger of the modern, he has been condemned to drift toward the margins of our attention, the contradictions and disjunctions that have never been far from the surface of our understanding of his awkward mind attributed lazily to the unstable and perverse nature of his own psychology.

II

Given the frightful conditions of his upbringing, there can be no doubt that his personal psychology exercised a major influence in shaping Froude's

public address to the world. But the role that it played was rather more complex than has often been assumed, and the reductionism of our own post-Freudian understanding of motives and conduct has rendered us insensitive to the subtle (and sometimes quite unsubtle) manner in which environment and experience and cultural inheritance conditioned the psychological reflexes of the Victorian mind.

As an early modern historian by training, I have been accustomed not 'to make windows into men's souls', especially when the materials for shining any light inside are rarely present and never adequate. But with Froude, who himself recorded the sufferings of his childhood years with such honesty and dispassion, the obligation at least to acknowledge the operation of psychic forces on the intellect is doubly enforced. Bereft before his third birthday of a mother who had spent most of the years after his birth in a sick-bed, suffering from what was generally believed to have been the consequences of his delivery, Froude's start in life was especially unhappy. The youngest child of seven, he grew up in a household that was, even for its time, remarkably sombre, austere, and dominated by two powerful male figures: his father, Robert Hurrell Froude, the formidable Archdeacon of Totnes, and his eldest brother, the charismatic but mercurial Richard Hurrell Froude.⁷ Within this joyless environment—'We were a Spartan family,' Froude records—love was never openly expressed (and perhaps rarely felt). Instead, the young Froude was the victim of sustained physical and psychological abuse. His own memoir records instances of violence and torture with a restrained precision that is impossible to question: his earliest memory was of being whipped for soiling his frock before the age of two; and this late account is given a chilling corroboration through one of the few surviving writings of his mother in the form of a note from her sick-bed begging brother Hurrell to desist from torturing the young Anthony in his cot.⁸ In receipt only of intermittent protection and maternal affection from his sister Mary, whose early death he was to record as one of the deepest tragedies of his life, 'poor Att' was designated by Hurrell and his father as a 'sawney'—family-speak for a weakling and a coward, a designation which he himself sorrowfully accepted and took to heart.⁹

7. See Piers Brendon, *Hurrell Froude and the Oxford Movement* (London, 1974).

8. Louise Imogen Guiney, *Hurrell Froude: Memoranda and Comments* (London, 1904), 4–7.

9. The *Oxford English Dictionary* records the use of the word as a derisory term for a weakling and a fool as early as 1700.

Amidst this misery, Anthony was possessed of one notable gift. He was intellectually precocious, showing at a very early age a competence in classical languages that was, in this intellectually ambitious and competitive family, a sign that something might be made of the 'sawney' after all. His budding talent, however, was to lead to even further suffering. High-level performance at Westminster Public School led to Anthony's advancement to senior form while still aged twelve. But there, in the jungle anarchy of the unsupervised dormitory, the young 'swot' was exposed to the most brutal forms of maltreatment which not improbably included sexual abuse.¹⁰ Desperate to escape from this 'den of horrors', Anthony ceased to perform; he seems to have embroiled himself in some minor financial scandal, and after three and a half years his father was asked to withdraw him. Two further years of domestic misery followed during which the young Froude was subjected to an intensive regime of censure, interrogations, isolation, and regular flogging by the archdeacon, now infuriated by this apparent confirmation of the sawney's incorrigibility. Until at last, adequate supplications having been made, he was thought ready for sending up to Oxford, though shadowed still by the expectation that he would fail.

The consequences of this endless ordeal will appear to psychoanalytically informed minds to have been utterly predictable. The adult Froude, it may be expected, was deeply marked by his childhood traumas, a prey to all kinds of neuroses, personal dysfunctions, and antisocial impulses. It is easy enough to find evidence for such a familiar prognosis, even if it turns out, on closer examination, to be only of a superficial and quite deceptive kind. Cut loose from his prison, the undergraduate Froude, it has been reported, became dissolute and wayward, and deliberately set out to fail in line with expectations. He drank too much, wasted his father's money, spent his days in idleness, and, most probably, some of his nights in the company of prostitutes.¹¹ Having established his freedom in this self-destructive manner, he next became aggressive and parricidal, issuing in his first novel, 'The Spirit's Trials' (1847), the most damning indictments of an unloving father fifty years before Samuel Butler and Edmund Gosse, and producing in the second, *The*

10. See ch. 2.

11. That Froude had some early personal experience of prostitution may be inferred not only from his account of a brothel in 'The Lieutenant's Daughter', but from his recollections of the common practices of Oxford undergraduates of his day supplied in his essays 'The University Commission', in *Eclectic Review*, 93, June 1851, 699–717, and 'The Oxford Commission', *Westminster Review*, 52 (October 1852), 317–48.

Nemesis of Faith (1849), a plot so scandalous as to compel his mortified father publicly to repudiate him. Only having rid himself of his family demons by this process of abreaction could he properly enter the world of adulthood.¹²

Attractive though such interpretations of the psychic origins of Froude's public persona may be, they remain nonetheless speculative and misleading. Resting largely on the evidence supplied by Froude's autobiographical early fiction, they are at once innocently reductionist in their identification of experience with imagination, and more seriously remiss in overlooking the psychological maturity and control required to transmute the recollections of personal experience into literary art. In the chapters that follow I shall argue that much more ambitious things were going on in Froude's fictions—that his philosophical and literary aspirations were at least as important in their composition as his psychological deficiencies—even if his early literary experimentations were largely unsuccessful.¹³ Whatever their contribution to his imaginative creativity, what can actually be said of the effects which the profoundly damaging wounds of childhood worked upon Froude's adult character turns out, in fact, to be surprisingly limited. Despite the repeated crises of his life, both private and public, Froude, it seems, was not a notably unstable figure, marked by impulses of irrationality, and obsession, or tendencies toward self-destruction.

Unlike Edward Fowler—his fictional creation in 'The Spirit's Trials'—Froude as a young man was not a neurasthenic recluse, solitary, and physically fragile. As an undergraduate he was in fact normally gregarious and without even the hint of the consumption that had shadowed his elder siblings. True, he fell in with a set, spent too much on his wine bill in his first year up, went on walking tours in the Lake District, and fell hopelessly in love. At length he reformed his wayward conduct, though too late in the day to take the expected First. But he nonetheless recovered sufficiently from his excesses to take a highly creditable Second and to compose thereafter a prize-winning essay on political economy which put him in line for the junior fellowship at Exeter College that came his way within two years of

12. See Robert Wolff, *Gains and Losses: Novels of Faith and Doubt in Victorian England* (New York, 1978, ch.7); Gertrude Himmelfarb, 'A Forgotten "Worthy"', in *Victorian Minds* (Gloucester, MA, 1975); Basil Willey, 'Froude', in *More Nineteenth Century Studies*; Froude, *The Nemesis of Faith*, edited and with an introduction by Rosemary Ashton (London, 1989). 'The Spirit's Trials' first appeared as the first part of the two part collection *Shadows of the Clouds*, see p.134 below.

13. See ch. 4.

graduation.¹⁴ As a youthful academic performance there was nothing grossly abnormal here.

Once established as a Junior Fellow, Froude, moreover, did not abandon the outgoing, energetic character of his undergraduate days. He made friends easily (he was one of the few Oxford dons to retain acquaintances both among the Newmanites and their opponents), and by his mid-twenties he had established himself at the centre of an energetic and self-confident literary group surrounding the *Oxford and Cambridge Review* which included Charles Kingsley, F. D. Maurice, George Butler, Richard Cowley Powles, and Arthur Hugh Clough.¹⁵ Among other glimpses of his days at Oxford, the journals of Lady Caroline Fox for the early 1840s reveal a young man who was witty, talkative, and charming, offering party tricks in palmistry and graphology to keep his place on the invitation lists; while the recollections of George Butler have Froude leading a reading party in the Lake District, visiting the dissolute Hartley Coleridge, whisky bottle in hand, and taking a kindly but not entirely respectful attitude towards the ageing sage.¹⁶ His correspondence from this time is lively, gamey, and intellectually self-confident, redolent of a man somewhat contemptuous of his elders, and determined to make a mark in the world as a critic and artist—nothing, in short, that can distinguish him from many of the ambitious young dons of his day. Like other young college men of the 1840s, however, he had also become deeply frustrated with the oppressive traditionalism of Oxford, and in particular with the requirement that he take orders in the Established Church as a condition of holding his fellowship. Like many among his circle he planned to escape from Oxford as soon as it was financially feasible, and was researching possible careers in medicine and in teaching abroad even as he was composing his explosive second novel.¹⁷

The publication in 1849 of *The Nemesis of Faith*, which contained sympathetic treatments of a young man's slide into atheism and a young woman's drift into adultery and ruin, did indeed provoke a crisis in Froude's life. Upon its appearance, Froude was disgraced in Oxford, forced to resign his

14. *The Influence of the Science of Political Economy on the Moral and Social Welfare of a Nation: A Prize Essay read in the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford, June 8, 1842* (Oxford, 1842), 44 pp.; for a discussion, see ch. 3.

15. See ch. 3.

16. Lady Caroline Fox, *Memories of Old Friends* (2 vols., London 1883), i, 252, 327–8; George Butler, 'Reminiscences of the Lakes in 1844', *Longman's Magazine*, 72 (October 1888), 621–35.

17. See chs. 4 and 5.

fellowship at Exeter, was refused a teaching post in Tasmania to which he had previously been appointed, and was compelled to find a living for himself. Some, though by no means all, of this came as a shock. In regard to his notoriety in Oxford, Froude was quite indifferent. He had long since determined to escape from the university, and the scandal merely facilitated his withdrawal. The withdrawal of the offer of the headmastership of a school in Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) was mildly discomfiting; but the publicity surrounding it only added to the aura of martyrdom with which in some circles he had been invested. More disappointing, however, was the reaction of his closest friends Kingsley, Clough, Maurice, and Frank Newman, who, though sympathising fully with his intentions in writing the novel, were honestly critical of the manner of its execution.

The reception of *The Nemesis of Faith* by sympathetic friends and ignorant enemies alike served, therefore, as a sharp but salutary lesson. It made clear to Froude that his literary aspirations lay beyond the capacity of his abilities, and convinced him that, since he lacked the skill to voice his message in fiction, other means of expression would have to be explored. Thus, unlike the central figure in the novel, Markham Sutherland, Froude was not plunged into a suicidal despair by this setback. Rather, having defended himself ably against his detractors, he resolved to set out anew. And so, politely refusing the offer to take up a scholarship at Heidelberg and other offers of help, Froude determined instead to strike out on his own. After a short but untroubled courtship he married Charlotte Grenfell, sister-in-law of his friend Kingsley, took up a temporary post as a private tutor in Manchester, and set about purposefully developing an independent career as a critic and essayist.¹⁸

Thereafter, for those in search of evidence of profound psychological disturbance, the remainder of Froude's personal life is a considerable disappointment, seemingly unperturbed by any further crisis. Though regarded by some in later life as aloof and uncommunicative, others found him immensely charming on first acquaintance.¹⁹ He acquired, moreover, as his substantial

18. The offer which Froude politely refused was made by another close friend, the Prussian ambassador Baron Bunsen. Froude also turned down an offer of financial support from Lord Brougham, though he accepted a temporary post as private tutor to a family in Manchester which he held for just over a year while continuing to write for the journals. Upon their marriage in April 1850 Charlotte brought a modest dowry of about £300.

19. See, for example, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt's account of Froude's charm on their first meeting: 'I never was more taken with anyone than with Froude, from the moment he came into the room and spoke, for his voice is the most sympathetic in the world,' *The Land war in Ireland* (London, 1912), diary entry for 1 January 1886, 13, also J.C. Collins's recollections in Dunn, *Froude*, I, 542–5.

surviving correspondence demonstrates, a very large set of acquaintances and a select number of genuinely close friends. His *curriculum vitae*, so to speak, was by modern standards remarkably well-balanced—even boringly so—for in addition to his strenuous literary and editorial occupations, he lived a highly active life. He enjoyed hill-walking, fishing, and especially sailing—a skill at which he was an acknowledged master. He was also in his youth an excellent shot, but gave it up on moral grounds, and his later correspondence contains several instances of his literally disarming attempts to avoid the social obligations of the shoot.²⁰ He liked cigars, drank moderately, and refused to endorse temperance. He was married twice, and had three children by his first and two children by his second marriage. Bereaved by the death of his first wife Charlotte after a long illness, he married one of her closest friends, Henrietta Warre, possibly with Charlotte's dying blessing, and was devastated when she too died after twelve years of marriage.²¹ Unlike those of his friends Carlyle and Ruskin, both unions appear to have been happy—the second more intensely so than the first. And he was, unlike his own father and so many of his contemporaries in the land of Victorian letters, a warm and loving father, fond of family games and private jokes, and not above abasing himself to gain advancement for his sons.²²

Neither the less than traumatic nature of the crisis of 1849 nor the apparent serenity of the years that were to follow should, however, be seen to endorse the contrary inference that childhood suffering exercised little or no impact on Froude's personality or his outlook on life. Some chronic symptoms of disturbance are indeed demonstrable; and it is precisely because they do not readily yield to the dramatic diagnoses of paperback psychology that the less obvious psychic scars of his youth may be seen to have been all the more persistent, more profound, and even more positive in their effects.

Froude was a lifelong insomniac, troubled on occasion by intense bouts of sleeplessness which drove him to the point of exhaustion.²³ With the sleepless nights came attacks of acute anxiety which afflicted him (and became apparently more painful) even when his position as a respected man

20. Froude to Kingsley, 23 March (1863–65?), British Library Add MS 41299 f.111; Froude to Carnarvon, 18 October 1877, Add MS 60799(a) f. 63.

21. Dunn, *Froude*, II, 295, reporting Margaret Froude.

22. See *inter alia* Froude to Margaret Froude, in Dunn, *Froude*, II, 293–4; Henrietta Froude to [unknown], British Library, R.P, f.143; Froude to Lady Derby, 6 April [1883], Derby MSS, Liverpool Public Library, no. 9.

23. See his account of his chronic condition given to the Earl of Carnarvon, British Library Add MS 60997(a) ff.345–7.

of letters had been securely established.²⁴ And if he was not pathologically depressive, he became in his private life increasingly melancholic.²⁵ Despite his assertive and combative public persona, he was, as so many acquaintances testified, personally reserved. With close friends, such as John Skelton and George Butler, he could, according to their own testimony, be warm and intimate, but his relations with the majority of the many great political and literary figures with whom he had dealings were generally distant. The nature of his friendship with his closest friends is, moreover, enigmatic. Josephine Butler, fully aware of the disagreements between Froude and her husband on political and educational matters, was once driven by curiosity to eavesdrop on one of their long nights of post-prandial conversation, only to discover the topic that really engaged them: the pleasures and pitfalls of fly fishing.²⁶ Over time Froude found the demands of social life less and less tolerable. He came to detest residence in London during the season. He loved to withdraw for several months at a time to retreats in Ireland and in Devon; and, in his surviving correspondence, notes that decline invitations to house and dinner parties outnumber acceptances.

Social reservation was accompanied by a form of private repression. In his adult life Froude was afflicted by an abnormal degree of private bereavement and suffering, little of which is registered in his private correspondence or autobiographical writing. Neurasthenic from the outset, his first wife Charlotte became increasingly withdrawn, and, according to Oxford Common Rooms' gossip, fell a victim to narcotic addiction which shortened her life.²⁷ Froude also experienced the loss of three of his five children. One, Rose May, died shortly after birth; a second, Phyllis, succumbed to the family curse of consumption in her early teens; and a third, Froude's eldest son 'Grenny', died by his own hand.

A source of anxiety since his childhood, Pascoe Grenfell Froude disappointed expectations of following his father to Oxford. At the age of fourteen he secured enrolment as a naval cadet, and after four years training,

24. For an example of such anxious thoughts, see the entries in his journal kept while sailing to the West Indies, as extracted in Dunn, *Froude*, II, 550–1.

25. In Froude's private correspondence with close friends such as Ruskin, Charles Butler, and Lord Carnarvon from the later 1870s through to the 1890s the increasing tone of melancholy is unmistakable.

26. Josephine Butler, *Recollections of George Butler* (London, 1894), 45–7, 54.

27. A. L. Rowse, *Froude, the Historian: Victorian Man of Letters* (Sutton, 1994), 12; Charlotte, it has sometimes been suggested, was the model for the neurasthenic Mrs Hale in Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*.

which included two periods of punishment for disorderly behaviour, was finally discharged, ostensibly on grounds of ill health. Not without some trouble to himself, Froude found employment for Grenny as private secretary to Sir Maurice Barlow, a middle-ranking colonial administrator in the Cape Colony; and in return the young man almost immediately provoked embarrassment by losing, on the voyage out, a crucial cipher by which Barlow was to communicate with the Colonial Office. To put him on his feet, Froude gifted his son with a lump sum of £5,000 with which he was to purchase a farm in the Cape. But Grenny gambled it away, had himself declared bankrupt, and then, aged twenty-seven, hanged himself.²⁸

Grenny's death in 1879, coupled with that of Froude's youngest daughter within the year, doubtless contributed to the darker hues of Froude's later outlook on life. But, in contrast to his response to the death of his second wife, little of this later grieving can be discovered from Froude's own pen. Apart from a mild reference to Grenny's incorrigibility in a letter to his daughter Margaret, a laconic sentence in a letter to Ruskin reporting the first news of his son's death, and a note to his stockbroker explaining the financial consequences of his wasted endowment, the record of the short life of his son must be traced largely in external sources.

Pathological repression should not be attributed to Froude from all this, however. Instead, all that can reasonably be inferred is that when confronted with occasions of private anguish in his later life, Froude resorted to the kind of concealed strategies for survival which had enabled him to withstand with such remarkable success the violent assaults to which he had been subjected in his youth. By definition, the nature of such private techniques defies easy identification, but a number of clues can be found scattered in the surviving evidence of his early years.

Froude's own autobiographical recollections of a young man immersing himself in dissolute ways, carousing with disreputable (but scrupulously anonymous) companions, yet recovering in time to take a respectable degree is, in the first instance, suggestive of a high level of artifice and disguise. More contemporary evidence supports the impression that the young Froude was something of a dandy. John Keble thought him affected as an undergraduate; and Elizabeth Gaskell, who first met him in the months after the scandal of *The Nemesis of Faith*, was at once engaged and irritated by his

28. This brief account is derived from sources in the Admiralty papers, National Archives, and the National Archives of South Africa.

mannerisms.²⁹ His youthful correspondence with Clough is likewise replete with playful affectation.³⁰ As a Junior Fellow of Exeter he was regarded by some Senior Fellows as disrespectful, and he liked to joke: the trip to Hartley Coleridge was not untouched by a slightly cruel irony, and in 1848 he once hired a band to play the Marseillaise under the windows of the College rector simply to annoy him.³¹ Of the darker side of affectation, dissimulation, Froude might also be accused. An early undergraduate letter to Mark Pattison, written in the post-Christmas gloom of the archdeacon's house, supplies unsurprising evidence of adolescent sneakiness: his prodigality having been exposed, Froude is compelled respectfully to suffer his father's reproof, while all the time longing for the fun of term to begin again.³² Another cringing letter to John Keble has him apologising for his idleness and promising amendment, lest Keble stand in the way of his gaining his fellowship.³³ An innocent recollection of Ralph Waldo Emerson reveals Froude as a young don gesturing theatrically towards the rooms of Edward Pusey (a man whom in reality he had always regarded with little less than contempt) and declaiming 'There is the source from whence all our light has come!'³⁴ And Froude, of course, did not admit to having been the paymaster of the revolutionary band.

Insignificant in themselves, such instances of youthful masquerade are collectively indicative of a deeper fascination with the contrast between public appearance and private sensibility which appears to have captivated Froude's interest from early on. Initial evidence of this recurrent impulse is supplied by Lady Caroline Fox. Over his several visits she noticed the young man's preoccupation with the gap between an individual's outward persona and his authentic character: thus his fascination with reading personality through handwriting and palms; and thus also his memorable disquisition one evening on the motives and modes of affectation.³⁵ But Froude's concern with the nature of the self and its relation to the world soon

29. Froude to Keble, Keble MSS, Keble College, Oxford; V. A. C. Gattrell (ed.), *The Letters of Elizabeth Gaskell*.

30. F. L. Mulhauser (ed.), *The Correspondence of Arthur Hugh Clough* (2 vols., Oxford, 1957), i, 246–7, 250–1; Froude to Clough, 8 September 1848, Bodleian Library, Oxford, Clough MSS 41032 (Eng. Lett. c190) ff.261–2.

31. Froude's 'autobiographical fragment', printed in Dunn, *Froude*, I.

32. The letter is printed from a private source, in Dunn, *Froude*, I, 102.

33. Froude to Keble, 22 March [1841], Keble MSS, Keble College, Oxford, 162.

34. R. W. Emerson, *Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks*, ed. Joel Porte (Harvard University Press, 1982), 235.

35. Fox, *Memories*, 328.

extended beyond parlour entertainments and conversation. It exercised a powerful influence over his first literary work, manifesting itself in his critical interest in the German Gothic, in the work of Ludwig Tieck and the Brothers Grimm, where dual personalities and doppelgänger abound.³⁶ Less noticeably, but no less significantly, it can be discerned in his early fascination with certain forms of Indian philosophy and with the Zenda Vesta in particular (on the context of whose composition he once planned to write a novel) where the limited personal self is transcended by a vision of the eternal.³⁷ It can be seen in his intense and continuing interest with the ascetic saints and martyrs of early Christianity whose abnegation of the self in the face of the Christian message of eternal salvation he saw as a variation on the Buddhist insight.³⁸ Most strikingly it emerged as the dominant theme of his early fiction. It is, for instance, at the core of his portrait of Edward Fowler, the inherently defective weakling of 'The Spirit's Trials' who nonetheless strives to transform himself into a kind of hero; and it is explored from the opposite direction in the character of Markham Sutherland, the anti-hero of *The Nemesis of Faith*, who fritters away his many gifts, intellectual, physical, and material, through lack of resolve.³⁹

The critical failure of his fictions did not, however, dispel Froude's preoccupation with the problem of how the blighted and utterly finite self might be made to grasp and to maintain a perception of the vast eternal realities of which it was a tiny but vital part. It remained instead a central preoccupation which was to recur over and again in his writing. It is a central theme of his essays on 'The Lives of the Saints' and on 'England's Forgotten Worthies'; it was, he claimed in an essay of that title, the sole remaining virtue of 'Calvinism'. It was the grounds on which he made his claim for Bunyan's genius; and it was his principal justification for the extraordinarily intimate voice he assumed as Carlyle's biographer. The following passage from an essay on Euripides is merely an example of this recurring Froudian motif:

Throughout human life, from the first relation of parent and child to the organisation of a nation or a church, in the daily intercourse of common life, in our loves and in our friendships, in our toils and in our amusements . . . at every point where one human soul comes into contact with another, there is to be found everywhere, as the condition of right conduct, the obligation to

36. See ch. 5. 37. See chs. 2 and 3.

38. See chs. 2 and 3. 39. See ch. 5.

sacrifice self. . . . The upward sweep of excellence is proportioned, with strictest accuracy, to oblivion of the self which is ascending.⁴⁰

Here was a lofty aspiration indeed. But throughout his career there are indications that even in his private life Froude strove to transform precept into practice. 'I hate myself', he once exclaimed to John Ruskin amidst their intense exchange of letters in the 1870s. But his assertion was made not in a fit of despair or self-disgust; it arose, as he went on to explain, from his conviction that concern with the self was one of the most painful, most futile, and most utterly misguided of human vanities.⁴¹ As in his published writings, this stoical insistence of the vanity of self-consciousness was a recurrent theme in Froude's private correspondence not only with fellow intellectuals, but with politicians and even, oddly enough, with his stockbroker.⁴² And it was, by all accounts, more than just an affectation. Major upsets, such as a serious burglary in his isolated farmhouse in Wales when he had little enough to spare, or the destruction of his books and manuscripts by fire, left him relatively unperturbed. To personal criticism, from whatever quarter, he was also in large part indifferent. Though his writings were frequently to embroil him in bitter controversy, he seemed on most occasions to be personally unaffected by hostile criticism, even when, as in the case of the vendetta pursued by Edward Augustus Freeman, it assumed a particularly vicious form.⁴³ Once established as a distinguished man of letters, moreover, he disdained celebrity: he was indifferent to photographs of himself, and he discouraged autograph hunters (once telling a hopeful applicant that it was his daughter who normally discharged this duty for him).⁴⁴ More exasperating was his chronic refusal to supply full dates for his letters—a habit that has presented scholars with frequently insurmountable technical problems, and has ensured that no collected correspondence has ever been produced. This, it appears, was the result which Froude had

40. 'Euripides and sea studies', in *Fraser's Magazine*, NS 11 (May 1875), subsequently reprinted in Froude, *Short Studies on Great Subjects* (London, 1896 edn.), III, 238–9, under the deceptive title 'Sea Studies'; see also similar comments in his *Bunyan*, 54–8.

41. Helen Vilojen, *The Froude–Ruskin Correspondence* (New York, 1966), 38.

42. British Library, Add MSS 6077 A, Carnarvon MSS; Edinburgh University Library, Butler MSS E.87.105.

43. Freeman, who made it his ambition to destroy Froude's reputation as an historian, rarely provoked a response, except on the occasion when he charged that Froude had written his book on Thomas Becket in an act of revenge against his dead brother Hurrell; see 'A few words on Mr Freeman', *Nineteenth Century*, 5 (April, 1879), 618–37.

44. Froude to Mr Knight, 3 April [after 1872], Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, Knight Collection.

intended all along. Late in life he expressed the desire that no official biography be written for him, and in his will he left instructions that all his private papers and correspondence be destroyed.⁴⁵ In others also he admired aloofness: a common fortitude in face of the inescapable sufferings of human existence was what underlay his close friendship with the tough-minded Fitzjames Stephen; Dickens, whose talents he fully appreciated, was spoiled for Froude by his need for popular acclaim; the stoic Tacitus was above all others his favourite historian.⁴⁶

The mutation of the youthful dandy into the adult stoic is a type not unfamiliar in British public life, especially among those forced to undergo the rigours of an English public school. In Froude's case the sources for such an attitude towards life can be readily traced to the silent sufferings of the isolated child. But the suggestion that Froude was fundamentally a Victorian stoic is ultimately only a little less simplistic than other psychological explanations, and needs to be qualified by attention to another, equally prominent element in his public character. For Froude was also an inveterate self-writer, intensely engaged with the exploration of his own persona and its presentation before his reading public.

III

No detached and dispassionate commentator, Froude speaks with a distinctive authorial voice that intrudes deeply into all his published work. The strongly autobiographical element in his early fiction has already been alluded to. But a sense of his intrusive individuality as a writer is no less palpable in all his later work. It is there, for instance, in the trenchant, uncompromising, and unapologetic voice of the magisterial narrator of the *History of England*, in the humorous and mildly eccentric middle-aged travel-writer, in the passionate polemical celebrant of 'England's Forgotten Worthies', and in the cool, discriminating memorialist of 'The Oxford Counter-Reformation'. It is a salient characteristic of his biography of Carlyle which so many critics found distasteful, and a similarly personal

45. Froude's will, dated July 1894.

46. 'The greatest man who has yet given himself to the recording of human affairs is beyond question Cornelius Tacitus', in 'The Lives of the Saints', *Short Studies on Great Subjects*, I, 555; in the early 1850s Froude proposed to write a history entitled 'The Age of Tacitus'.

presence permeates the elegiac tone of the final sets of lectures delivered by the ageing professor to a new generation of Oxford undergraduates.

And yet the distinctive authorial voice which intrudes itself so strongly in all his work is also a chronically inconsistent one, altering radically from one genre to another. The pious hagiographer is not the historical dogmatist; the dogmatic historian is not the reflective philosopher pleading for a free discussion of theological issues; and the philosopher's serenity is lost in the agonised engagement of the biographer of Carlyle. At once a source of his sustained popularity with the general reading public and of the charges of paradox and insincerity with which he was so often assailed by hostile critics, Froude's ventriloquism—his hiding the actual writer behind the mask of the narrator—became so perfected that it rarely obtruded into the surface of his style. But its mechanisms were revealed through occasional failure. They appear, for example, in the complicated narrative techniques (the introduction of multiple narrators, time-shifts, simultaneous actions, and so on) which he attempted in his early fictions, and which his critics, hot on the scent of autobiographical revelations, have all too often ignored. They can be seen also in the slightly comical case of two essays on Ireland, where he was forced to publish in the second a repudiation of the persona he had assumed in the first under the threat that his deception would be exposed.⁴⁷ And, more seriously, the contrivances of authorial affectation are laid bare in his writing on the West Indies where his rhetorical pretences collapse utterly in his attempt to mimic the voice of an innocent traveller while insinuating nonetheless a noxiously racist argument.⁴⁸

In these efforts Froude's failures make his intentions obvious. But the moral purposes and ethical limits of his authorial manipulations were magnificently affirmed in his biography of Carlyle, when Froude, convinced that the only voice which could be adopted to inspire his intended audience was that of his authentic self, rose to face the challenge.⁴⁹ Unflinching to the point of self-sacrifice, the narrator's voice in *Thomas Carlyle* is in itself both an abandonment and a vindication of all the authorial guises that had preceded it. The biography of Carlyle represents the greatest practical

47. In 1870, amidst the storm provoked by his anonymous essay 'A Fortnight in Kerry', the threat of exposure forced Froude to confess in a second instalment that he had been assuming the guise of a visitor to Ireland when he had actually been in residence in the area he wrote of for several months of the year over several years: *Fraser's Magazine*, May, September, 1870.

48. Froude, *The Bow of Ulysses: or The English in the West Indies*; for a discussion, see ch. 13.

49. See ch. 12; for an unusually sensitive reading of Froude's intent in the biography, see Christopher Ricks, 'Froude's Carlyle', *Essays in Appreciation* (Oxford, 1996), 146–71.

achievement of Froude's life-long literary endeavour. But the most extended insight into Froude's sense of the relationship of his own self to his public voice that enabled him to write in so many registers is supplied in the remarkable and incomplete autobiographical fragment which he composed in the early 1890s, shortly before his death.

Frequently painful in its content, and resolute in the manner in which it records the sufferings, trials, and failures of his early life, Froude's short autobiography is one of the most moving pieces of his literary *oeuvre*, and also one of the most problematic. In his decree that no biography be written and his archive destroyed, Froude was by no means alone in the company of eminent Victorians; and likewise in his decision to compose an autobiography, he was far from unique.⁵⁰ Yet when taken together and in conjunction with the persistently assertive voice of his published writings, these moves seem so purposeful as to suggest, to those of us accustomed to the hermeneutics of suspicion, a deliberate attempt not only to suppress information about his character and life, but actually to fabricate it. Misgivings of this kind are easily reinforced by the conduct of his daughter Margaret—a veritable keeper of the flame—who in the years after Froude's death went to extraordinary lengths to see that a biography was actually written based on a portfolio of letters, notes, and, most importantly, on the autobiographical fragment which she had selected and provided to would-be biographers only on the strictest terms.⁵¹ According to these, the autobiography was to form the spine of any biography and was to be inserted into the text as part of its narrative up to the period when it ended (around 1856); it was to be accepted uncritically by the official biographer, whose task it was simply to elaborate on the evidence it supplied from the matter provided in the portfolio.⁵² Given these demands, Margaret appears to have had trouble in finding a suitable candidate for the commission until she finally settled upon the

50. See Trev Lynn Broughton, *Men of Letters: Writing Lives*, a valuable study which, while analysing Leslie Stephen's 'Autobiography' and Froude's *Life of Carlyle* in relation to each other, does not consider Froude's own autobiography.

51. On these negotiations, see Dunn MSS, Wooster College Library, Wooster, Ohio; also Sarolea MSS, Edinburgh University Library; after several efforts to find a suitable candidate Margaret appears to have settled finally on Dunn because of a highly sympathetic monograph he had published on *The Froude-Carlyle Controversy* (London, 1930).

52. It is not even clear if the autobiography actually concluded at this point. Margaret had published an edited version of further autobiographical reflections as J. A. Froude, *My Relations with Carlyle* (London, 1903); and to add to the mystery Dunn confesses that he excised some portions relating to Froude's recollections of his relations with Newman because they were made superfluous by what he had written (earlier) in 'The Oxford Counter-Reformation'.

American scholar, Waldo Hilary Dunn. This quasi-official biography finally appeared in the format laid down by Miss Froude, in two volumes in 1961 and 1963; and since then the autobiography, the library, and much of the other material to which Dunn had been given access have, so far as I have been able to ascertain, disappeared.⁵³

None of the shenanigans surrounding Froude's archive should be allowed to foster confusion over his own intentions—it was not he, after all, who orchestrated this complicated release of his materials. Yet a writer who persistently professed his belief in the worthlessness of the self while intruding his own striking personality into all his works and then composing an intensely personal autobiography is not easily exonerated from the charge of inconsistency. The light which the autobiography itself sheds on this apparent contradiction is, however, highly revealing. It cannot be said, in the first instance, that, as an account of his early life, it was in any obvious sense grossly self-serving or dishonest. During the course of my research for this book I have found surprisingly few occasions where Froude's personal narrative departs from the externally verifiable record to any considerable degree, and these are generally the result of elision, or confused chronology, rather than positive falsification. Inevitably, they occur; and, as such, they are always significant—the more so because they were probably unintended.⁵⁴ But rather more interesting than such unavoidable lapses is the set of organising tropes to which Froude had to resort in reshaping his lived experience as narrative.⁵⁵

The dominant motifs that Froude adopted, knowingly or not, in giving literary shape to his life are readily identified. In his story of childhood suffering, adolescent waywardness, and ultimate redemption Froude is in part following the Augustinian mode, employing the paradigm elaborated by the great classical autobiographer and readily developed in the conversion narratives of English Calvinist tradition of whom Bunyan (a hero of Froude's) was the great exemplar. No doubt this came naturally enough to Froude. In the best Calvinist manner, his mother had enjoined that each of her children should keep a journal of self-examination and auto-criticism.⁵⁶ There is

53. Waldo Hilary Dunn, *James Anthony Froude: A Biography* (2 vols., Oxford, 1961, 1963).

54. For one crucial example in regard to his early days at Westminster, see ch. 2.

55. George P. Landow (ed.), *Approaches to Victorian Autobiography* (Ohio, 1979) offers an extremely valuable set of theoretical and empirical studies, though none of the contributors make reference to Froude's fragment; see also the sophisticated discussion in Avrom Fleishman, *Figures of Autobiography: The Language of Self-Writing in Victorian and Modern England* (Berkeley, 1983).

56. See ch. 2.

reason to believe that from his youth Froude had followed the family practice: his early writings and several of his later books and essays show clear signs of being based upon journals of self-reflection which he kept during their preparation; and an extensive set of private diaries appear to have been among the materials which his daughter Margaret dutifully destroyed.

But within this formal framework, Froude's autobiographical narrative is infused with the language of honestly expressed feeling, with an acknowledgement of suffering and a confession of personal deficiency that runs against the Augustinian motif of wilful sinfulness and redemption, and is distinctly Rousseauite in its sensibility. The young Anthony may have been in Froude's account a weakling and a coward. But if so, he was these things by nature; and the ordeals which his family had put him through in their disregard of his nature had merely exacerbated rather than remitted his faults. His recovery—insofar as it took place at all—had come through endurance, and through the emergence of better circumstances later on. A passing reflection on his dead brother Robert encapsulates the profound ambivalence towards his own self and the circumstances which shaped it that characterises the memoir:

I have thought—but perhaps I am too much inclined to lay on circumstance the faults of my own character—but anyway I had thought that had Robert lived to guide me, my own small career might have been a happier and more useful one.⁵⁷

There is a tension at play here and throughout the memoir as a whole between the Augustinian polarities of redemption or salvation, whose certitude is based upon a conviction of objective, eternal truth, and a darker sensibility which perceives that such a truth, if it exists, can be apprehended only through unstable, deficient, and solitary subject intelligences. 'What is the meaning of existence? What is the purpose of my presence within it? What am I to do with what I have been given and with what has befallen me?' These are the questions posed directly and desperately by Froude's very first fictional hero, Edward Fowler, in 'The Spirit's Trials' and they are returned to repeatedly throughout his subsequent writing; and they are enunciated again, as the defining imperatives of his life in the old man's autobiography.⁵⁸

57. Dunn, *Froude*, I, 10.

58. 'The Spirit's Trials' 110–12; Dunn, *Froude*, I, 126–7, 150–1.

IV

This straining after an understanding of eternal truth within an inescapable web of inherited and acquired subjectivities is not, of course, unique to Froude. In this engagement with the dichotomies of objective knowledge and subjective human perception, of necessity and free will, he was typical of the generation of young intellectuals, scholars, and artists who came of age in the 1840s. He was, it might be said, but another victim of the great crisis in Christian faith which troubled so many of his contemporaries. But such hasty contextualisation answers fewer questions than it may seem; for within this movement Froude trod a singular and almost wilfully individual path.

In their attempts to reconstruct a framework for understanding a world without evidence of a purposeful God, the generation of the 1840s experimented with a spectrum of options which ranged from political radicalism through detached scientific experimentalism to the fideism of the Oxford Movement. Froude, for a period, flirted with each, and even briefly considered in his earliest explorations the possibilities of a Christian political economy.⁵⁹ But while several of his contemporaries and companions—and two of his brothers—finally elected for one or other among these, Froude ultimately held himself aloof.⁶⁰ Instead, as he grew to maturity he sought enlightenment in the writings of the later German Romantics and the young Hegelians, of Goethe, Schleiermacher, Fichte, and F.W. and A. W. Schlegel. In this also he was not entirely unique; but again only a small minority of his age group were as well-read in contemporary German theology and philosophy as he was, and only an exceptional few acquired the proficiency as a translator which he achieved.⁶¹ Like many also, Froude sought to explore the dilemmas of his generation in fiction. In this he was hardly more successful than most; but few offered so sympathetic an account of the doubters' condition, and none were as audacious in placing questions of sexual morality at the heart of the matter.⁶²

In the 1840s and thereafter Froude was within a larger company of those who were profoundly influenced by Carlyle; but few of the prophet's

59. *The Influence of the Science of Political Economy* was the title of the prize-winning essay he submitted as part of his campaign for Fellowship in 1842.

60. See chs. 2 and 3.

61. Rosemary Ashton, *The German Idea: Four English Writers and the Influence of German Thought* (Cambridge, 1980).

62. See in general Wolff, *Gains and Losses: Novels of Faith and Doubt in Victorian England* (New York, 1977).

acolytes were to remain so personally loyal to him in his darker days, and none was to be so devastating in the uncompromising assessment of his work. Finally, in the great age of history writing that dawned in the years after 1850, Froude taught himself to become a master historian, an original researcher who worked primarily with archival sources. But for him, historical research always remained a mere means to greater purposes rather than an end in itself, and he repeatedly rejected positivism, empiricism, and any other claims that history might possibly be a science with a decisiveness that rendered him unique and isolated among his fellow historians, and deeply mistrusted by them too.⁶³

The cumulative force of such purposefully discriminative choices serves to reinforce the impression that Froude had embarked upon a sustained individual search for a public voice which would at once be comprehensible yet distinctive, familiar, and yet provocative. From the beginning, and throughout his career, Froude found it appropriate to address his public with a variety of different, sometimes recurring rhetorical styles: the pious hagiographer, the sentimental novelist, the polemical essayist, the reasoned philosopher, the authoritative historian, the political dogmatist, the open-minded traveller, the agonised chronicler of flawed lives—all of which were independent of the private self, which was revealed only to a few friends and family, and was regarded by its owner as of no broader significance. Behind this lifelong literary strategy there lay, no doubt, a psychology. In view of the horrors of his childhood and of the manner in which he had striven to overcome them, the adoption of a mask supplied a powerful mode of releasing his creative and expressive energies that had been pent up and repressed by the exigencies of childhood survival. But there was also an aesthetic: Froude's authorial voices were a variation on the multiple masks and guises adopted by so many of the poets and prose-writers of later Romanticism in whose work he had immersed himself, and whose techniques of confession, masquerade, and ventriloquism seemed to have been so useful in their efforts to reveal the eternal world of Creation in the finite world of man. Yet it is impossible at this distance to disentangle the process by which these two forces worked to shape Froude's imagination. It can only be said that Froude was a Romantic not merely from conviction, but from personal necessity as well.

63. See ch 7.

Most importantly of all, there lay also behind this strategy of public presentation an ethic of considerable complexity. As the collapse of faith in the moral and intellectual authority of orthodox Christianity deepened, the generation of the 1840s sought refuge in alternative conceptual frameworks which seemed to hold out the promise of an authority equal to and more durable than the one they had been forced to abandon. Between the various options available—Comtean positivism, Oxford Tractarianism, Romantic radicalism, and Marxist materialism—substantial differences existed. But each, in one form or another, proposed as a solution to the contemporary crisis the recovery of the art of prophecy or, more accurately, the reconceptualisation of thought and perception as instruments for immediately transforming the world. The elevation of the intellectual and the artist as a new kind of prophet provided a powerfully invigorating force to those who had lost faith in traditional forms of belief, and was immensely attractive to Froude's generation for all sorts of reasons, not all of them philosophical or moral.⁶⁴ Each was afflicted with its own predictive limitations and its own inherent problems which in the years after the great anticlimax of 1848 would soon make themselves plain.

In the light of the failure of the hopes raised in 1848, Romanticism's peculiar rejection of a scientific basis of one kind or another presented its adherents with problems which were particularly urgent and acute. Having deprived itself of the support of any external, pseudo-objective referent, the force of the Romantic appeal was dependent almost entirely on the individual character, vision, and communicative ability of the prophet alone. The psychological, intellectual, and moral pressures applied by this necessity to function both as a seer and as an agent of the good were immense, and in their different ways many of the movement's great figures suffered under them. In some the fault appeared to lie in their own deficiencies: they had, like Coleridge or Newman, confused the significance of the truth revealed to them, or, like Wordsworth, lost it altogether; or, like the later Carlyle, they had alienated their audience by the obscure and rebarbative nature of their expression. But, more importantly, the general misunderstanding with which their attempt to communicate their vision had been met was itself a

64. Other sources of this imperative are considered in general in Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain, 1850–1930* (Oxford, 1991); Jeffrey Von Arx, *Progress and Pessimism: Religion, Politics and History in Late Nineteenth Century Britain* (Cambridge, MA, 1985); T.W. Heyck, *The Transformation of Intellectual Life in Victorian England* (London, 1982); and in a particular case in Noel Annan, *Leslie Stephen: The Godless Victorian* (London, 1984).

symptom of the degree to which contemporary culture was in the process of disintegration. The emergence of this small set of visionaries was, therefore, a profoundly ambivalent phenomenon—an indication that either spiritual transcendence or spiritual decadence was at hand.

Amidst this crisis the addition of simply another prophetic voice, especially one which he regarded as flawed and deficient as his own, would have had little effect other than to make a further contribution to the cultural confusions of the day. But it was precisely on the basis of this modest insight that Froude came to believe that he might play a lesser but not unimportant role in correcting, mediating, and adapting the essence of the great prophets' message for reception by the imperfect and clouded minds of ordinary Englishmen. In the anti-heroes of his early fiction—Edward Fowler and Markham Sutherland—he can be seen presenting case studies of figures who, when confronted by the vision of truth offered by the great prophets, found themselves paralysed and overwhelmed through their own inherent deficiencies: physical and emotional in the case of the former, intellectual and moral in that of the latter. These fictional experiments were far from successful. But even though he abandoned his ambitions as a novelist in the aftermath of his own personal failure in 1849, Froude returned to the problem of how eternal truths might be made intelligible to limited and historically determined human intellects in an early critical essay published in 1852.⁶⁵ In this piece on Reynard the Fox Froude followed Goethe in considering the age-old myth of the cunning, disingenuous, but ultimately winning animal as a metaphor for the guises, disguises, and falsehoods which the good man must adopt if he is to act effectively in sustaining justice and truth within the benighted world. The argument Froude developed there provides a rare exposition of the underlying ethical justification for the provocative, exasperating, and carelessly inconsistent literary strategy which he was to adopt throughout the rest of his career.

V

Yet the burden under which the great prophets had eventually buckled bore down with no less force upon their modest follower. In his struggle to tell

65. 'Ethical Doubts concerning Reinecke Fuchs', *Fraser's Magazine*, 46 (September 1852), 321–30.

the truth about Carlyle, for example, he can be seen, despite great personal cost, to have succeeded magnificently. But elsewhere, in his writings about South Africa and about the West Indies, his condescending efforts to engage the demos in his particular campaign to transform the Empire produced a nervous, insinuating rhetorical style that was as distasteful in its tone as in its intent.⁶⁶ But nowhere did his attempts to use his creative talents to effect a change in popular moral attitudes implicate Froude in a web of aesthetic and ethical problems more than in the case of Ireland.

A frequent visitor to the island from the early 1840s to the early 1870s (in the 1860s he was in the habit of residing annually at Derreen in County Kerry for four months between July and October), he had acquired a rich knowledge of the country even before he began his major work on Irish history. Long before the publication of *The English in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* (1872–74), Ireland had featured significantly in his *History of England*, his essays, and even in his early fiction. In 1872 he travelled to the United States to deliver a set of lectures on the course of Irish history, and in the late 1880s he returned again to fiction and to Ireland with his *Two Chiefs of Dunboy*.

Yet if Froude's concern with Ireland was deep and sustained, it was far from sympathetic. Though most British intellectuals were opposed to Irish aspirations to independence and were opponents even of Home Rule, few matched Froude in the implacability of his opposition to any attempts at political reform, the virulence of his attacks on the Irish temperament, and his enthusiasm for measures of coercion and repression.⁶⁷ Yet on a personal level Froude was popular in those parts of Ireland where he stayed, and counted several Irishmen, including Home Rulers, among his acquaintances. 'It is not true that Froude hated the Irish', remarked T. P. O'Connor, 'except in a metaphorical way.'⁶⁸ What O'Connor was hinting at here was the fact that Froude's preoccupation with Ireland was based upon his conviction that the present state of the country and its history represented the greatest single instance of England's failure to discharge the providential role that had been allocated to it at the beginning of the Reformation. Offering

66. See chs. 10 and 13.

67. On the hostility of British intellectuals in general to the campaign for Home Rule, see Tom Dunne, 'La trahison des clercs: British Intellectuals and the First Home-Rule Crisis', *Irish Historical Studies*, 23:90 (1982), 134–73; also E. D. Steele, *Irish Land and British Politics: Tenant Right and Nationality, 1865–1870* (Cambridge, 1974).

68. Gerard Lyne, *The Lansdowne estates in Kerry*, (Dublin, 2001), 398–400; T. P. O'Connor, in *The Sunday Times*, 24 June 1928.

at once an indication that the spiritual and moral regeneration promised at that time had been incomplete, and a warning that, should it fail in its present responsibilities, England might be plunged into an interminable decline, the problem of completing the assimilation of Ireland into the Empire was for Froude as urgent as it was inescapable.⁶⁹

Froude's public utterances on the Irish problem were, therefore, inextricably linked to his essential moral and spiritual imperatives; and it was Ireland consequently that revealed at once the magnificence and the inadequacies of those treasured objectives for which he strove. Whether metaphorical or not, Froude's insistence that the interests of the Irish must forever be subordinate to the metahistorical obligations of the English was wholly unearned: at once historically and morally unsustainable. Insofar as the influence of his Irish writings and of his incessant private lobbying contributed to the obstruction and deferment of a successful resolution of the Irish problem, some portion of responsibility for all the misery, suffering, and disappointment which arose from that failure must be laid at the feet of Froude, moralist.

For it is as a moralist—rather than as an historian, critic, or ideologue—that Froude himself sought above all to be understood, and how he should ultimately be judged. Yet such a judgement is intensely problematic not only in regard to Froude himself, but also in its implications for those of us who choose to make it. Of the sincerity of his aspirations there can be no doubt, nor of the courage and endurance he displayed in attempting to fulfil them. Yet the intrinsic risks of his undertaking are equally clear. Froude's ascetic self-denial permitted him to assume a series of disguises by which to stimulate—or actually to manipulate—different audiences to attend to universal moral issues in their own particular way. That there was craft here, and artistic cunning, is undeniable. But there was also a supreme arrogance. Underpinning it all was an assurance not only that eternal moral principles existed, and not only that Froude himself had been given the gift accurately to apprehend them, but that he also had the capacity to translate such truths into forms more understandable to lesser minds and hearts. This assumption of the absolute superiority of the visionary few over the benighted multitude was in contradiction with the spiritual and moral universalism he had

69. Ciaran Brady, 'Offering Offence: James Anthony Froude, Moral Obligation and the Uses of Irish History', in Vincent Carey and Ute Lotz-Heumann (eds.), *Taking Sides: Colonial and Confessional Mentalities in Early Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2004).

adopted from his youth: a secular version of the vulgar predestinarianism which he had rejected from the beginning. But, more seriously, in permitting him to excuse or ignore the exploitation and repression of such manifestly lesser peoples as the 'kaffirs' of South Africa, the West Indian blacks, and the Irish next door, it was also fraught with the gravest risks for the thing he cared for most: his contemporary and posthumous influence as a moralist.

We know now how utterly Froude failed. In the era of disillusion that followed the Victorian age of doubt, the questions concerning the meaning of the universe, the purpose of our existence and the validity of such concepts as truth, justice, and goodness which he insistently posed, and for which he took so many risks, now seem pathetically naïve in their formulation. Embarrassment with the apparent unsophistication of this particular Victorian's moral struggle, however, should not serve as an excuse for an unwillingness to confront our own moral dilemmas, or for a refusal to face the consequences should we choose to deny their existence altogether. The collapse of Froude's particular enterprise raises broader and more urgent questions regarding the intellectual and academic culture of our own times. Over the last several decades we too have been witnesses to another intellectual and cultural breakdown as so many of the forms of scholarly enquiry established or reconstituted in the closing decades of the nineteenth century have become exposed to fundamental question. The victims at once of successive theoretical challenges and ideological failures, but also of so many careerist or craven surrenders to commercial and institutional pressures, those empirical, analytical, and anti-metaphysical modes of apprehending the world which came into the ascendant as orthodox academic disciplines with the passing of the Romantic moment are themselves now suffering a steady loss of authority. And the capacity of intellectuals (especially those embedded in the academy) to function as independent and effective critics of the prevailing mores of society has at the same time, and for the same reasons, been sharply diminished.

In these circumstances a revisit to the Victorian attempt to regenerate the spiritual and moral basis of society, conducted through an investigation of one of its most versatile, resourceful and committed exponents, is of value not in the interests of antiquarian curiosity, and still less in a spirit of nostalgic reaction. Its aim rather should be to enquire whether Froude's failure to sustain a spirit of independent moral criticism in a secularised world was the result of his own prejudices, defects, and disappointments, or whether it lay fatally at the heart of the entire enterprise.

2

Shadows of the Froudes, 1818–36

I

In seeking access to his earliest conscious years, Froude compels us to attend to his final ones. While independent evidence pertaining to his childhood and youth is exiguous, fragmentary, and scattered, Froude himself, some time in the early 1890s, composed a compact, continuous, and highly informative account of his early life.¹ In this he was far from unique. The composition of memoirs, reminiscences, and straightforward autobiographies was a common practice among leading figures in the late Victorian intellectual and literary world. Many of Froude's acquaintances, including Ruskin, Trollope, Mill, and Spencer, had explored modes of composing subjective accounts of their lives and of their relations with others, while Froude himself was indirectly the cause of one of the most remarkable exercises in the genre—the deeply spiritual account of a life in mid-passage composed by Newman in the *Apologia pro Vita Sua*.²

1. Retained in manuscript by his daughter and literary trustee, Margaret, Froude's autobiography was supplied to his biographer Waldo Hilary Dunn in the 1930s. In the first volume of his biography Dunn, under an agreement reached with Margaret Froude, published lengthy sections of this text, largely without critical commentary. It remained with Dunn in company with the large file of material left to him by Margaret, but I have been unable to trace its present whereabouts.
2. On Victorian autobiography in general, see George P. Landow (ed.), *Approaches to Victorian Autobiography* (Ohio, 1979); Avrom Fleishman, *Figures of Autobiography: The Language of Self-Writing in Victorian and Modern England* (Berkeley, 1983). Curiously, it was Charles Kingsley's intemperate and irrelevant remarks about Newman in a puffing review of the early volumes of Froude's *History of England*, which Froude had asked Kingsley to write, that gave rise to the *Apologia*. Froude himself was deeply exercised by the *Apologia* when it first appeared; in an important passage in his own autobiography where Froude describes his feelings in recalling his childhood sufferings as an 'infandum dolorem' (unspeakable pain) he is quietly alluding to Newman's extraction of the phrase from the *Aeneid* (Book II, verses 3–6); in a passage in the *Apologia* referring to his agonies in leaving Oxford, see Harold Weatherby, *Cardinal Newman and his Age* (Vanderbilt, 1974), 129–31.

Froude's own exercise in the genre, however, differed from those of his contemporaries in several ways. In the first place no authoritative text exists. The fragment, such as it exists, has come down only through the most curious of circumstances. The original manuscript was given to Froude's authorised biographer, Waldo Hilary Dunn, by Froude's daughter Margaret in the 1930s, under strict conditions concerning how it was to be used in the biography.³ We do not know if Dunn received the full text, but we do know that he made exclusions from the version he included in his study. What has survived, therefore, is quite possibly a fragment of a fragment. We do know that its original composition was in part the consequence of the storm of personal abuse and innuendo provoked by the appearance of Froude's biography of Carlyle, and might therefore be read in part as an attempt at self-exculpation, though its gestures in this direction are surprisingly modest. Froude did indeed compose a fragment on his 'relations with Carlyle' specifically to justify his biography.⁴ But this was conceived and kept separate from his autobiographical exercise, which breaks off roughly in 1856, considerably before he had formed a close association with Carlyle. It was not, moreover, intended for publication. Instead it was addressed to his two surviving children in an effort, perhaps, to reveal to them something about their often absent and usually distant father who had encountered so much controversy and so much hostility in the closing years of his life. In ending abruptly around the time when Froude was aged thirty-eight, it was also something akin to a *Bildungsroman*—an account of the character formation, education, and coming-to-maturity of James Anthony Froude. Finally, in contrast to the major autobiographies of the period, it is resolutely unreflective on the problems of authenticity that are attached to all self-writing. It aims, Froude says at the outset, to supply a plain account of the circumstances and experiences of his early life, to describe 'who we were, from what stock we came and what our life was like'.⁵

This assumption that Froude 'confident in [his] own integrity'⁶ could attain such a simple intention was, to say the least, naïve; and like most

3. On the conditions imposed by Margaret Froude on Dunn, see Dunn MSS, Wooster College, Wooster, Ohio; neither the fragment nor any of the large body of materials supplied to Dunn by the Froudes is retained in this collection.

4. *My Relations with Carlyle* was not intended for publication during his lifetime; it was published posthumously, and without a clear indication that they were following their father's wishes, by his children Margaret and Ashley in 1903, amidst continuing rancour over the Carlyle biography.

5. Dunn, *Froude*, I, 12.

6. Dunn, *Froude*, I, 12.

autobiographies, Froude's tended to drift toward one of the dominant organising tropes of the genre—in his case, the Augustinian mode.⁷ Whether he was conscious of it or not, the dominant myth of Froude's self-representation was that of loss, alienation, and redemption, of the eventual attainment of adult stability and personal integrity by the rejection of self-pity and self-love. Yet the manner in which this Augustinian trope was deployed by Froude was distinctive. Unlike Augustine's, Froude's early life was far from being one of comfort, stability, and love in which the only troubles and anxieties encountered arose from within the mind and the soul. On the contrary, the events detailed in the early pages of Froude's narrative constitute a record of suffering and misfortune which in their duration and their violence far surpass the oppressions remembered by Ruskin and Mill, and even the miseries memorialised in fiction by Butler and Gosse. The successive stages of this protracted ordeal are articulated by Froude in a spare, lapidary voice that, in its meticulous balancing of remembered feeling and distant evaluation, gracefully negotiates between the pitfalls of sentiment and hard-boiled stoicism. 'I have no intention', Froude writes of his schooldays 'of reviving the *infandum dolorem* of my life', while making it plain that 'the unspeakable pain' which he suffered 'left indelible marks on my memory and perhaps on my character.'⁸ Froude's redemptive myth is, therefore, a subtly balanced one in which the Augustinian achievement is tempered by a Rousseauite recognition that natural and congenital defects will always make such attainments fragile, conditional, and artificial. Its surrounding contingencies notwithstanding, redemption remained attainable; and in employing it as a central theme of his *memoires d'outré tombe*, Froude was insisting upon the vital formative event of his life: the act of coming to terms with his own sense of his defective self which was also a simultaneous transcendence of that self.

The force of Froude's sustained conviction of the process of his self-formation, for all his acknowledged frailties, challenges his interpreters in many ways. To those of us habitually attuned to critical scepticism the voice of the septuagenarian autobiographer may appear artificial—an attempt to impose a retrospective coherence on a series of accidents, disruptions, and unresolved contradictions—yet it is nonetheless a deliberate artifice, consciously forged in the smithy of the early years toward which it is redirected

7. On the tropology of autobiography, see Fleishman, *Figures of Autobiography*.

8. Fleishman, 32; on the significance of the phrase 'infandum dolorem', see n. 2.

as its most intense focus. The ready conclusion that Froude's self-narrative was a myth—as such exercises usually are—should not obscure the recognition that in the liberating force which it supplied to him, it was also for him the final point of an intensely felt process of living.

Such an observation is all the more relevant in Froude's case because, far from being his only exercise in this form, the late autobiography was merely the last in a series of explorations in remembrance and self-writing with which he experimented throughout his literary career. This repeated concern with the relationship between the constructed recollection of the text and the life actually lived demands that any assessment of Froude's representation of the self must go beyond the familiar attributions of self-serving or exculpatory motive. Critical caution must above all be employed in approaching all his attempts to put shape on his earliest years; for while these were years which continued to preoccupy Froude in his last autobiographical writing, they were also at the core of a series of bold and painful literary experiments which he undertook close to the very beginning of this process of conscious self-refashioning.

Frequently obscure in their expression and clumsy in organisation, Froude's early fictional efforts in autobiographical confession have normally been regarded as naïve expressions of self-pity. Yet for all their imperfections they were also (as will be argued below) assertions of humanity's need to transcend the deficiencies and misfortunes imposed by nature and by environment; and an implied claim on the part of the author that in rewriting his life in this manner, he himself had actually done so. Nothing could have been further from his intentions as a novelist in the later 1840s (and nothing more clearly demonstrated his failings in that art) than that his readers should have understood his intentions to have been so subjective and pathetically self-exculpatory; yet it is as such that his fictions have generally been read by commentators and biographers who have frequently applied materials derived from the fiction as simple autobiographical evidence.

The interpretative challenge posed by Froude's presentation of his self is, therefore, unusually complex, for in addition to the normal suspicion of retrospective reconstruction, it requires also an understanding on the part of the reader that this process of reconstruction had begun to take shape in the earliest phases of Froude's life. The profound and vigorous artificiality of Froude's public persona was, that is, an essential characteristic of his private self. It is with these cautions in mind that I have sought in what follows to disentangle the myths that have come to surround Froude's

life and character not in order to lay bare some hidden inner self, but to uncover a powerful and more deeply absorbed myth of personal reconstruction which underpinned his thought and action throughout all of his adult life.

II

I have been unable to follow our family history beyond my grandfather who died in 1769 at the age of twenty four and lies buried in Avon Gifford churchyard in the South Hams of Devon.⁹

These opening lines in his autobiography represent a curious disclaimer on the part of a writer who had established a reputation as a pioneer explorer in the great untapped treasures of the English manuscript archive; and it was one made all the more peculiar by the fact that, had he cared, he might himself have easily constructed an extensive genealogy of the Froudes along the lines which the enthusiastic amateur genealogist, R. E. Hooppell, was pursuing even as Froude wrote. The origins of the Froude family were, as Hooppell admitted, obscure. Of Norse origin, the name suggests a Viking heritage. But from the twelfth century on, names from which Froude was an obvious derivate began to appear in increasing numbers in south-west England. Their frequency increased to the extent that Hooppell was able to construct an incomplete but continuous genealogical tree of Froudes running through twelve generations down to the historian and his siblings.¹⁰

Central to Hooppell's genealogical researches were the great lay subsidy rolls of the reign of Henry VIII lodged in the Public Record Office, which provided him with a crucial means of identifying, connecting, and differentiating the numerous later Froudes which he found in court and probate records. His success in this makes it all the more strange that the great proponent of the value of underused manuscript sources in bringing a new sense of historical immediacy to contemporary readers and the great apologist of the administrative intrusions of the Henrician state should have himself elected to disregard such a rich resource for original research.

9. Fleishman, *Figures of Autobiograph* 12.

10. R. E. Hooppell, 'The Froudes or Frowdes of Devon', *Transactions of the Devonshire Association*, 24 (1892), 441-57.

Froude's rejection of such an obvious autobiographical starting-point may prompt suspicious minds to speculate that he had something to hide: that he was embarrassed by relatively modest origins, or perhaps that he was anxious to obscure a close family connection with the notorious hard-drinking, hard-riding, and thoroughly disreputable Parson John Froude (celebrated in folklore and song).¹¹ But more subtle intentions are at play. Parson Froude aside, Froude showed no difficulty about his forebears: they were small landholders, he states, probably worth, by the late eighteenth century, about £500 or £600 a year. And in what was a characteristic strategy of his mature historical style, he found a way of dismissing such tasteless searches for ancestry by means of anecdote. One of his relations (he does not care to specify which one) had been foolish enough to purchase a coat of arms from the Herald's College. It was an embarrassment. Froude's father had hidden it away, and though he may have glimpsed it once, the great historian had no interest whatever 'in such unsuitable vanities', and had never looked for it since.¹² Instead, by rejecting biography's conventional opening trope, by foreshortening his origins and minimising the significance of lineage and place, Froude was able to concentrate his focus on the arena which he himself believed to have the most profound effect on the formation of his character: his own immediate family, his brothers and sisters, and above all his father, who, following his mother's premature death, was to dominate every aspect of Froude's early life.

By the time James Anthony was born in 1818 his father, Robert Hurrell Froude, was, at forty-eight, already a middle-aged man in the midst of a busy clerical career. Economically comfortable and professionally established, he was much respected as a figure of great authority not only within his own parish but as a magistrate in the county of Devon as a whole. By means of Froude's formidable rhetorical skills he has since been preserved in aspic:

He was a parish priest of the old sort, with strong sense, a practical belief in the doctrines of the Church of England as by law established which no person in his right mind would think of questioning. As a country gentleman and a landowner himself he was looked up to by the tenants and parishioners with affection and reverence. He farmed his own glebe . . . He was a magistrate, the most active in the South Hams, and the most rational and just.¹³

11. The parson was Froude's grand-uncle, see S Baring Gould, *Devonshire Characters* (London, 1908), 29–63.

12. Dunn, *Froude*, I, 12.

13. Dunn, *Froude*, I, 13.

This is the historian's deftly sketched portrait of his father. Commonly accepted, its provenance, however, requires some comment. Before it reappeared in the autobiography, it had first been aired in his 1881 essay on 'The Oxford Counter-Reformation', where it served an overtly polemical intent of showing how, even within his own family circle, the character of the English clergyman had declined from the honest-to-God pastors of the late eighteenth century to the effete Newmanites and Puseyites of the Oxford Movement.¹⁴ And though critically informed readers might have noticed the sharp contrast that existed between this benign sketch and the earlier, notorious portrayal of his clergyman father—the cold, hypocritical, and cruel Parson Fowler—in his partly autobiographical first novel 'The Spirit's Trials' the rhetorical effectiveness of the later account lay in its happy familiarity. What Froude was reproducing here is a copy of a comfortingly recognisable type: the pragmatic, moderately religious, moderately Tory clergyman—magistrate, stern and authoritative on the outside but benign and morally sensitive beneath, and happily free of intellectual pretensions withal. Froude, it is true, adds some qualifying touches to this caricature. His father 'had a taste for books . . . especially of history and antiquities', and he had a talent for sketching. But the effect of such concessions to complexity is considerably muted by the power of another anecdote through which Robert Hurrell Froude is first introduced:

He was a fine rider, passionately fond of hunting, and rarely was in a field when he was not the best mounted there. When an undergraduate he leapt the turnpike gate at Abingdon Road with pennies under his seat, pennies between his knees and the saddle, pennies between his feet and the stirrup irons, and carried them all over safely.¹⁵

An entertaining story which neatly reinforces the impression of the fox-hunting country parson, it served to lead effortlessly to the satisfying conclusion that, as one early reader, surrendering totally to the writer's intent, put it, 'we know the type'.¹⁶

14. 'Our own household was representative of the order. My father was rector of the parish. He was archdeacon. He was justice of the peace. He had a moderate fortune of his own . . . and he belonged therefore to "the landed interest". Most of the magistrates work of the neighbourhood passed through his hands . . . In his younger days he had been a hard rider across country'; 'The Oxford Counter-Reformation', in *Short Studies on Great Subjects*, IV (1883), 241; the essays were first serialised in the magazine *Good Words* early in 1881.

15. Dunn, *Froude*, I, 13.

16. A laudatory comment made in a review of Herbert Paul's *Froude: A Life*.

There is much in Froude's sketch of his father that is quite verifiable. As is commonly the case, most of the surviving records of Robert Hurrell Froude's public and professional life—ordination lists, episcopal visitations, quarter-session reports and the like—leave only the traces of a featureless functionary of even less interest than Froude's series of stereotyping anecdotes.¹⁷ Yet others suggest a more complex man.

Born in October 1770, Robert Hurrell was the only son of Robert Froude, who had died while his wife Phyllis Hurrell was still pregnant with this their third child. Though young, Robert Froude was a prudent man who had already made careful settlements in regard to his two daughters. The family tragedy thus issued for Robert Hurrell in a surprisingly consoling result as he became sole heir to the Froudes' modest estate. Within a year, moreover, his fortunes improved substantially when on the death of his maternal grandfather he became the principal beneficiary of a substantial Hurrell inheritance which was bequeathed to his mother.¹⁸

Quite unexpectedly, then, Robert Hurrell Froude became comparatively well off at a very early age. Educated privately, he went up to Oriel College, Oxford, at the age of seventeen in 1788. There he took an ordinary BA, stayed on to take an MA in 1795, took holy orders, and was ordained priest on 10 July 1796. By the time of his ordination he had already secured a curacy which offered a small but for a novice curate a generous stipend of £40 a year. Two years later, in 1798, he was instituted as rector of Denbury, a small country parish with a commensurately small living of £100. But then, in 1799 he attained to the glittering prize of Dartington, made vacant by the death of Francis Yarde, another sporting parson famous for his enthusiastic participation in 'the Dean's Hunt', which at almost £500 per annum was at that time measured as the third most lucrative living in the diocese. Together with Denbury, which he retained for life, this made him one of the most richly beneficed clergymen in the entire see. To that good fortune was added the further benefit of the Dartington parsonage house itself—an opulent, sprawling edifice valued in the early nineteenth century to be among the top 10 per cent of parsonage houses in the diocese, and a substantial glebe farm containing valuable mineral and woodland resources which Parson Froude was to exploit to its utmost throughout his years of

17. The records of the diocese of Exeter and the archdeaconry of Totnes held in the Devon Record Office contain a very large amount of information relating to Robert Hurrell Froude's routine activities.

18. Hooppell, 454–5; Dunn, *Froude*, I, 214