



VI

EDWARD AUGUSTUS FREEMAN *HISTORY AS PAST POLITICS*

I have chosen to conclude with Freeman because of the extent to which he is at once traditional and transitional. He self-consciously placed himself in the tradition of Arnold's moralized historiography. An enthusiastic devotee of the late-Victorian cult of comparative method, he overlaid Oxford School medievalism with the "unity of history" and elaborated a full-scale "science" of historical cycles and racial continuity. He was a Whig who claimed Macaulay as a model, a romantic philhellene, an ardent (if somewhat abstract) democrat. He saw himself in the vanguard of modern historiography but was by temperament kindred to older, even ancient, traditions. Better than any contemporary, Freeman exemplified the ambiguities involved in defining a new status for the historian. Green was keenly sensitive to the conflicts between his own priorities and the requirements of "scientific" historiography; he made his choices. Freeman wanted popular acclaim, but on his own terms: he expected to succeed by making the general reader respect his professional authority. He intended much of his work to be popularizing in the most constructive sense—that is, devoted to correcting the general public's misconceptions about principles fundamental to western history. He was at once too condescending and too self-righteous a crusader to avoid alienating that audience. His violent attacks on Froude and other "amateurs" combined with his weighty erudition to make him the stereotype of a professionalism by definition hostile to the general public's needs and interests.

At the same time, if Freeman was a far more vocal publicist for professional history than William Stubbs or S. R. Gardiner, he was a considerably less successful practitioner thereof. His formidable display of laws and comparative method constituted the same wish-fulfilling imposition of order as earlier "unscientific" men of letters had indulged in. His "history for its own sake" was a moralized antiquarianism, his exacting scholarship a means of turning true facts into ultimate Truths. The Whig theorizing and Aryan mythmaking on which he based his claims for a scientific historiography were precisely what branded his work unscientific in the eyes of later scholars. His very contradictions make him more useful for my purposes, however, because they forecast wider issues in the evolution of professional identity, issues that I will return to at the close of my discussion.

Born in 1823 Freeman, like Green, began to break away from his conservative roots at an early age. The young boy's sympathy for Greek independence first undermined his relations' Tory influence and set the pattern for his later support for Aryan efforts to overthrow alien masters. At Oxford in the early forties, he was deeply impressed by Arnold's lectures but found much more compatible the religious principles of Newman. Yet Freeman was never tempted by conversion; indeed, unlike most historians I have discussed, he seems never to have experienced any serious challenge to his traditional High Church faith. The Oxford Movement's more important influence was indirect; it encouraged his interest in ecclesiastical architecture and medieval history. The latter bore early fruit in his 1845 essay, "The Effects of the Conquest of England by the Normans," which demonstrates how early he had formulated the central tenets of his interpretation of the Conquest. His contributions to *Poems Legendary and Historical* (1850) and *Original Ballads by Living Authors* (1850) show a different but no less characteristic side of his historical interests: his imaginative indulgence of a romanticized patriotism and a love of legendary heroism. These works were in effect his *Lays of Ancient Rome*. Another lifelong interest was evinced by his first significant publication, *A History of Architecture* (1849), predictably devoted to the glorification of Gothic. Freeman was active in delivering papers to local archeological societies throughout the fifties, and developed early that particular merger of architecture, archaeology, and municipal history that characterized his many later articles in the *Saturday* and other reviews. He played a role as a "conservative re-

former" at Oxford in the early fifties, in favor of correcting abuses but hostile to those aspects of reform that he felt undercut a broadbased liberal education and encouraged superficial views of history. When he served as an examiner in the new School of Law and History during 1857, he had already begun to nurture ambitions to win one of its professorial chairs—ambitions that would have to wait thirty years for fulfillment.

He stood unsuccessfully for Parliament several times in the late fifties, styling himself a candidate in harmony with "the more advanced section of the existing Liberal party,"¹ and was a vociferous campaigner against the Bulgarian atrocities in the seventies. But his political interests were channeled more and more directly into the writing of history in his middle years. The first volume of a projected *History of Federal Government* (1863) outlined the "federal principle," one of those characteristic forms of Aryan political structure whose demonstration would occupy so much of Freeman's efforts in later years. Hoping to make himself a more attractive candidate for the Regius Professorship of Modern History at Oxford, he began his *History of the Norman Conquest* in 1865—a five-volume project not complete until 1876. This attempt to define the nature and origins of Aryan/Teutonic institutions spilled over into *The Growth of the English Constitution* (1872), *Comparative Politics* (1873), and the *Reign of William Rufus* (1882). During the same period he was engaged in several works of a more popular nature, among them *Old-English History for Children* (1869), *General Sketch of European History* (1872), and *History of Europe* (1875)—both part of Macmillan's series for the schools—and *The Historical Geography of Europe* (1881), not to mention a voluminous outpouring of articles for the *Saturday* and other reviews, many of which were later collected in his four volumes of *Historical Essays*. The prestige of his historical doctrines was confirmed in 1881, when in a lecture tour of the United States, he had the satisfaction of finding his favorite motto, "History is past politics, politics are present history," adopted as the epigraph for the new *Johns Hopkins University Studies in Historical and Political Science*. Freeman's contribution to the first volume (1882) characteristically treated American government as yet another realization of the Aryan impulse.

When Freeman finally attained the Regius Professorship of Modern History in 1884, he used the chair both to address theoretical questions (in lectures collected as *Methods of Historical Study*, 1886) and to

continue his exploration of European medieval history. But his distaste (and lack of audience) for compulsory lectures and his failing health led him to put in increasingly less time and energy at Oxford as the decade waned. The final installments in his investigation of Aryan history comprised the *History of Sicily* (1891-92), and posthumous histories of *Western Europe in the Fifth Century* and *Western Europe in the Eighth Century and Onward* (1904). He died in Alicante, Spain, in 1892.

Despite the staggering output of Freeman's career—eight major historical studies and eight shorter popular ones, seven major essay collections, not to mention literally hundreds of review essays, lectures, and architectural studies—the major components of his theory of history are relatively few and static. Relying on the comparative method to establish the scientific legitimacy of his theories, Freeman expanded Arnold's belief in the unity of western history into a full-blown myth of Aryan dominance and superiority. In the process of reconstructing an Aryan family tree of representative democracies, he formulated what sounded like a classic Whig view of its most illustrious branch, the Teutonic. But beneath the familiar rhetoric of continuity through compromise and identity in progress operated a timeless kind of monism. Freeman was driven by a craving for order and unity deeper even than Arnold's. The dominant pattern that emerges from his elaborate blueprint of historical cycles is less one of progress than of eternal recurrence.² He paid lip service to the relativism and ambiguity necessary in historical judgments but could tolerate neither. His urge to classify, to subordinate to law, easily conflated scientific and ethical order. His overbearing display of objective investigation and scholarly authority protected moral absolutes that effectively prejudged all.

From his earliest inquiries into historical knowledge, Freeman sought to give his moral convictions the sanction of "scientific" order. As a young man, he withdrew from all dealings with the Royal Archaeological Institute because he felt that it was wrong to apply "to higher matters the merely antiquarian tone which belongs to inferior ones"; the Institute treated "consecrated things" like ecclesiastical art and architecture "merely as facts, curiosities, antiquities" (LF, 1:96). When he came to expand these charges against "archaeologists" as a group in the *History of Architecture*, he had already begun to link their impiety to their lack of "philosophical" perspective. In their enthusiasm for new artifacts, they recorded a "newly discovered

Anglo-Saxon charter . . . as a curiosity side by side with a newly discovered 'low-side window.'"³ That is to say, not only did they consider an old barn no less important than a Christian minster, but they failed to recognize that their antiquarian pursuits should be means to a higher end: the study of man's political development. Their hostility to any attempt to mold theories or develop general principles from the details they amassed represented a failure of moral as well as philosophical insight. In Freeman's eyes such theories were "the vital principle" giving meaning to the "inert mass" of facts.⁴ Only when the historian properly subordinated facts to the illustration of patterns and to the formulation of laws was he functioning in a "scientific" rather than in a merely antiquarian spirit. The study of coins, weapons, tools, and inscriptions became historical—and of moral value—only insofar as they contributed to the understanding of "man as a member of a political community."⁵

Declaring that "history is past politics" did not limit historical study so much as it might appear, for to Freeman political and moral action were in the highest sense one. Like Arnold, he believed that the study of history meant "the study of . . . man in his highest character"—that is, man acting "in his political capacity . . . as the member of an organized society, governed according to law."⁶ In elaborating on the nature of "political science," he conveniently blurred the distinction between moral and methodological criteria. He had quite practical reasons for insisting that "right ruling" was a question of ethics, not expediency; arguing that "the same eternal laws of right and wrong" applied to present politics as to past was the basis of his opposition to Derby and Disraeli's pragmatic support of the Turks.⁷ But he presented his position as being more valid because it was more philosophically sound. He argued that the "science of right ruling" meant something "higher" than following self- or party-interest precisely because it taught us "how to judge of causes and their effects . . . to judge of the character of acts, whether done yesterday or thousands of years ago." In the ability to recognize and apply valid analogies lay history's practical value: "The past is studied in vain, unless it gives us lessons for the present."⁸

In his own work, it is difficult to separate the moral from the political aspects of these lessons. With a self-conscious display of Whig practicality, Freeman, like Macaulay, professed to avoid the arbitrary dogmatism of "abstract" theory by deriving the laws of political behavior from the historical record and by allowing for contemporary

values and circumstances when applying them. In practice the only laws he saw were the ones he looked for, and his own sympathies determined whether their validity was absolute or relative in a given instance. He ransacked history for "illustrative examples" that showed "what course, whether of true growth or of backsliding, the mind of man was taking" at any given time.⁹ His preconceived standards of progress and decline blunted an historicist appreciation of past events and closed off inductive insights. Like Arnold and Macaulay, Freeman assumed that democratic governments were more moral, more characteristic of a politically "mature" society, than other political systems. While arguing that historical study "hindered the growth of any narrow political partizanship,"¹⁰ he did not consider it partisan to assume that man appeared in his "highest form, as the citizen of a free commonwealth." In his eyes the record of despotic government hardly constituted "the history of a people at all."¹¹

He acknowledged the dangers of substituting "abstract right" for an appreciation of the "circumstances, the habits, the beliefs, the prejudices, of each man's time" (HE, 1:119; see also HE, 1:109, 115) and even admitted that Arnold sometimes set too high a standard by failing to consider the weight of prevailing mores. But then, the values of others were always "abstract" in a way "the touchstone of morals" to which he brought all political questions (LF, 2:121) was not. Toleration, he argued, must not confound mere differences of opinion with "moral crimes"; tyranny was not just a political alternative for Freeman, but the "overthrow of all right" (HFG, xv). In opposing British aid to the Turks, he claimed the sanction of a "common morality"; his "scientific" study of history had taught him to view the Eastern Question as no less than a strife between Western civilization and Eastern barbarism, so that any aid to the "foul tyranny" of the Turks became simply "the work of the devil."¹²

His own attempts to correct modern censure by appealing to contemporary standards were often indistinguishable from special pleading for his Teutonic heroes. While relying on "universal" moral standards to condemn actions against his enemies, Freeman demanded of partisans of the right side nothing higher than the prevailing political morality of their age. He tried to mitigate the brutality of Frederick I of Italy, "a high and pleasing type of the pure Teutonic character," by comparing his actions with far greater atrocities in later history (HE, 1:280-84). To decide whether Godwin was guilty of

treachery in the death of the Atheling Alfred, he resorted to precisely the kind of arguments that outraged him when Froude made them. He assumed that "an English patriot" of Godwin's stature simply could not be guilty of any wrong more heinous than acting like "a wary and hard-headed statesman" instead of a "sentimental and impulsive hero."¹³ Like Froude's, Freeman's relativism was employed to protect higher absolutes—to vouch for the righteousness of all in his Teutonic pantheon. If his pretensions to scientific method were greater than those of fellow historians, so too was his dogmatism. He might at times treat laws as if they denoted only practical rules of thumb,¹⁴ but in practice only a set of axioms could brace the rigid polarities of his world view.

In arguing for history's scientific nature, Freeman was caught between conflicting positions. He could not assume the essential unity of moral and physical truth as had Arnold; he could not dismiss out of hand history's claims to be scientific as had Froude. Although he wished to claim for the historian a professional status commensurate with the scientist's, for moral and intellectual reasons he needed to free historical study from the determinism of both Positivism and physical science. He actually shared a great many of the moral biases of his nemeses, Froude and Kingsley. He considered history a form of the "protest of mind against matter in a material age" and held up the study of man as inherently nobler than the study of rocks and tides (LF, 1:118-19). He distrusted a positivistic science of history in large part because he suspected that "it has very little to do with the grand personal drama" of human life,¹⁵ since it treated men as "mere walking automata" (HE, 1:51), enslaved to inflexible law. Like Froude, Freeman argued that the existence of free will made it impossible to reduce historical actions to any "grand scientific law" such as that favored by "the school of Mr. Buckle" (HE, 1:50).

If Freeman wanted to prevent history's annexation by pseudo-science, he was just as concerned to claim for his studies a place among legitimate sciences. He objected to "the strange way in which the name of *science* is often confined to certain branches of knowledge" in order to assume "some special merit and dignity" for them (M, 118). In reaction to this "unfair monopoly of a name," Freeman purposefully returned to the older sense of *scientia* and was thus able to treat history's claims to be a science as "a question of words and nothing else" (M, 152). While appearing to acknowledge the authority of the scientific, Freeman actually diluted the scientist's truths un-

til they offered no significant challenge to the historian's. Like the physical sciences, he argued, history assigned outward facts or phenomena to the working of certain laws or principles. But in both cases these laws were "only generalizations from instances, a high class of probabilities" (LF, 1:118). The physical scientist could not claim a "mathematical certainty" for his laws either, Freeman opined, so that his "deductions from experience" differed only in degree from those of the historian (M, 150).

In fact, Freeman charged, the natural philosopher could only describe how effects followed causes—he could not explain why they did so. When pushed back to a first cause, he had nothing more palpable than "Force" to refer to—an explanation that Freeman dismissed as no more philosophical than a reliance on personal will or an omnipotent being (M, 147).¹⁶ In this regard the historian might have more difficulty establishing facts, but once they were established he was in a better position to assess "the real causes of the facts," for "surely," Freeman asserted with bland confidence, "We know more about the human will than we know about Force" (M, 152). He was content to assume that in the study of human affairs, "We can reach that high degree of likelihood which we call moral certainty"—the same certainty on which men were content to base their daily actions (M, 151). "Moral certainty" was of course for Freeman's purposes far more useful than "mathematical certainty." It was quite compatible with the free will necessary to release history from determinism, but it also permitted valid generalizations about human nature. A science of history possessing "moral certainty" combined the best of both worlds: freedom and order.

In theory Freeman distinguished between narrative histories and the "political science" that abstracted lessons from them. The first was the obvious arena for the "grand personal drama" of human life. Although heroes, especially Aryan ones, towered over Freeman's own narratives, he stopped short of a Carlylean hero-worship, asserting that "the course of history is not a mere game played by a few great men."¹⁷ Rather, Freeman professed the "old-fashioned belief" that God had created a world in which "every man, however obscure he may deem himself, has laid upon him . . . a historical responsibility, a share in guiding the course of the world for good or for evil."¹⁸ The exercise of each man's will helped determine the common will, his unconscious acts the spirit of the age. The actions of the great differed only in degree from those of the lesser. In Freeman's "practi-

cal" way of looking at heroes, the great man was able to lead his nation only to the extent that he was thoroughly identified with its virtues and limitations.¹⁹

In practice the "grand personal drama" of history interested him only insofar as it reenacted the larger patterns discovered by "political science." Harold and William provide imaginative foci to the *Norman Conquest*, but they function less as autonomous individuals than as vehicles of racial destiny. Freeman's deepest engagement lay not with the individual fact, but with the system of historical meaning to which it belonged. He controlled the multitudinousness of experience by subordinating each datum to a master plan. The next best thing to the permanence he longed for was the constant duplication of the same patterns. This duplication accounted for the fact of change without having to surrender the security of the eternal.

Nowhere are his strategies clearer than in the grandiose theory of racial continuity he based on the comparative method. The philosophical prestige of comparative studies at the time made them the natural choice of a mind that wished to endow its craving for analogical system with scientific status. This approach seemed already to have revealed the genealogy of Indo-European language and myth in the same way that evolutionary theory had explained the development of physical life. In an early essay Freeman compared the methodology of comparative philology to that of geology and noted with approval its gradual triumph over obscurantists who had originally tried to deny linguistic evidence, just as others had tried to deny the paleontological evidence against special creation (HE, 2:244-45).

Despite Freeman's pretensions to a similar scientific objectivity and disinterestedness, he had clearly chosen this method because it so convincingly validated his foregone conclusions. He pronounced the comparative method "the greatest intellectual achievement of our time" because it had brought "a line of argument which reaches moral certainty into a region which before was given over to random guess-work."²⁰ "Moral certainty" was vital for two reasons. First, the comparative method enabled the historian to extrapolate with confidence a meaningful pattern into what might otherwise be an uncharted void or a jumble of disparate evidence. He could use analogies revealed by comparative study to provide internal "proof" of the organic continuity of Aryan development—a continuity for which no external evidence could be found. Secondly, the comparative method justified the historian in basing cultural identity on factors subject to

free will—always the realm of “moral certainty”—rather than limiting him to traits subject to the determinism implicit in “mathematical certainty.”

Freeman wanted to define race philologically so that he could treat “national character” and “spirit of the age” as “undoubted facts” without also having to equate these with “unchanging physical forces, over which personal agency has no control.”²¹ He intended this definition to be a scientific advance over popular theorizing about race, but he was also concerned to disassociate racial theory from the materialist ethnology of scientists like T. H. Huxley. As early as 1865 Huxley had exposed the fallacies in trying to treat community of language as proof of racial unity in the physical sense and opted instead for a zoological definition based on skull shape and related traits. In later years he more specifically refuted arguments for Teutonic and Aryan purity similar to those held by Freeman.²² Freeman’s own “Race and Language” (1877) acknowledged these counterarguments but continued to defend his “historical” definition of race. No nation could claim purity of blood from a physiological point of view, Freeman argued; nevertheless, for all “practical” purposes, political or historical (HE, 3:226), such communities could be defined by a common stock of cultural traditions, chief among them language. The real issue of course was that Freeman considered ethnology a purely physical science, based on traits over which man had no control. Language, on the other hand, depended upon behavior perhaps “unconscious” but still “unconstrained.” Thus, he could assume that philology concerned itself with “the aggregation of endless acts of the human will” (M, 61). Freeman went on to argue that although community of language was no certain proof of community of blood, it provided the same degree of “moral proof” available in other areas of human history and thus provided a valid working definition of race.

Practicality, scientific order, moral certainty—what higher recommendations did Freeman’s theory of Aryan continuity need to claim intellectual prestige in the late nineteenth century? Here was the “vital principle” that vindicated the lesson he had first learned from Arnold: that the political life of the western world constituted “one living whole” (M, 7). Here was the organic unity that allowed history to be read “not as a mere chronicle of events . . . but as the living science of causes and effects” (HE, 2:234). A cyclical pattern further reinforced this unity. Like Arnold, Freeman rejected as artifi-

cial the distinctions between ancient and modern history, arguing that "the later days of a people, amidst countless differences of detail, may have more real likenesses, more identity of principle, with its very early days, than with intermediate times from which . . . they are separated by much slighter differences" (HE, 4:250). The laws of political cause and effect remained valid because the same political forms reconstituted themselves from age to age of Aryan development. Freeman devoted a major part of his work to tracing the common descent of Aryan constitutions from Greece, through Rome, and by way of the Teutons to the most recent British parliament and American congress. So compelling was the genetic metaphor that he believed he could "describe either an Homeric [assembly] or an English mickle-gemot all the better for having seen a [Swiss] Landsgemeinde" (LF, 1:417). He naturally saw ontogeny recapitulating phylogeny in the American colonies as well: colonial governments had reproduced Teutonic institutions prevalent in the fifth and sixth centuries, thus giving new life to traditions that "in their older home had well nigh died out."²³ Everywhere the "germ" of Aryan government was planted, it generated the same species of constitution.

Although Freeman's philhellenic enthusiasms produced conflicts of interest,²⁴ he was a self-proclaimed panegyrist for the Teutonic branch of the Aryan family tree. In an early pamphlet concerning the new school of modern history at Oxford, he lamented the exclusive concentration on ancient history and called on his countrymen to recognize "that the soil of Teutonic Christendom has brought forth as glorious works of art and genius, as mighty deeds of national and individual greatness, as aught that southern heathendom can boast" (LF, 1:120). Freeman's *History of the Norman Conquest* and related works aimed not merely at correcting this neglect, but at demonstrating that the political traditions unique to the despised "barbarian" Teutons were in fact directly responsible for the stability and greatness of modern England.

In pursuit of this end he joined forces with Green and Stubbs to build for the Whig view an historical foundation in the Middle Ages. Not content with ruling out all taint of Roman absolutism in English institutions, he went on to argue that England became "in the days of its earliest independence, a more purely Teutonic country than even Germany itself" (HE, 1:51). Among all the nations of modern Europe, England could still claim for "its political institutions the most unbroken descent from the primitive Teutonic stock" (CP, 45). Free-

man's peculiar emphasis in the Whig debate fell on his insistence that the Conquest had made "no formal change whatever" in the constitution. It was a turning point, not a beginning. William had "claimed the Crown by legal right," and "he professed to rule . . . according to the laws of his predecessor and kinsman King Eadward."²⁵ Even William's tyranny was conducted under legal forms that tacitly legitimized the very freedoms he sought to stifle. Freeman assigned something like the status of a "fortunate fall" to the Conquest. "Had there never been a time of foreign tyranny," he claimed, "our liberties might have crumbled away without our knowing it" (HNC, 5:459). As it was, the Conquest did not "crush or extinguish the Old-English spirit" but rather invigorated it. The Normans, once "washed clean from the traces of their sojourn in Roman lands" (HNC, 3:405), returned to the Teutonic fold as worthy proselytes (HE, 1:52).

Although more explicit about the dangers of false analogies between parliaments of the ninth and nineteenth centuries, like other Whig medievalists Freeman held that in principle "there is absolutely no gap between the meeting of the Witan of Wessex which confirmed the laws of Aelfred . . . and the meeting of the Great Council of the Nation" in 1873 (CP, 47). True, as Burrow points out, Freeman at times resorted to an implicitly discontinuous series of revivals or restorations in order to preserve this continuity. The English reformed by "falling back on a more ancient state of things," by "calling to life again the institutions of earlier and ruder times," by casting aside "the slavish subtleties of Norman lawyers" and "the innovations of Tudor tyranny and Stewart usurpation" (GEC, 21). Still, restorations did not negate the principle of continuity; if anything, they made more explicit the mythic dimensions of this loss and recovery of national identity.²⁶ And of course they also created classic examples of modern periods that shared more "identity of principle" with the distant than with the nearer past.

For Freeman as for other Whigs, there were greater modern advantages to reading English history not as a series of purifications but rather as a palimpsest in which all emendations could still be read, or to figuring the constitution as a building that had often been repaired but never razed and rebuilt (GEC, 55-56). The paths of precedent had always been for the English the paths of progress because they had early learned how to reform without destroying, unlike the "clever constitution makers" of France (CP, 234). Altogether "guiltless of political theories," England's "stout knights and citizens" had pre-

served the fabric by mending it before it tore. Because political change in England had always been "conservative because progressive, progressive because conservative," Freeman could claim ancient English history as the true possession of the "Liberal, who, as being ever ready to reform, is the true Conservative, not of the self-styled Conservative who, by refusing to reform, does all he can to bring on destruction" (GEC, 55, viii). By also portraying the English constitution as an organism growing "almost in obedience to a natural law" (GEC, 66), Freeman turned change into a fulfillment of genetic destiny, the maturation of the "germ" into the fully realized organism.

More importantly, he made this genetic destiny part of a larger, implicitly providential pattern. With a chauvinism typical of his age, Freeman taught that only the Aryans possessed a "history in the highest sense."²⁷ Western culture was synonymous with the successive achievements of Greek, Roman, and Teuton. Each had championed the progressive side in the eternal struggle for light against darkness, freedom against bondage, civilization against barbarism.²⁸ Like Arnold, Freeman imposed on Aryan legateses the responsibility for sustaining the upward spiral of progress on behalf of the whole world. In widening the franchise or opposing the Turks, the Victorians were reenacting that eternal struggle. Their achievements and their duties became charged with a cosmic significance.

Dignifying the temporal with the eternal is, in more or less explicit form, the standard means by which the Victorian historian reconciled progress to permanence. In Freeman's case that juxtaposition of temporal and eternal conceals conflicts that ultimately belie the whiggish present-mindedness and relish for progress he seems otherwise to exemplify. Burrow skillfully illuminates the contradictory nature of Freeman's devotion to the past, a devotion "so intense as to amount to a reluctance to recognise it as irrevocably past."²⁹ His elaboration of Aryan cycles simply enacts on the largest scale an obsession with parallels pervasive enough to constitute something close to typological or figural thinking. For such a mind it is always a short step from analogy to identity, to the collapsing together of types that makes the past eternally available. This is also the appeal of his two models for change, restoration and continuity. Both were "forms of triumph over time . . . because they offered alternative images of eternity: the tying of the ends of history into its eternal circles and the architectural palimpsest as the symbol of the co-existence of all ages."³⁰ Freeman did not, like Macaulay, value the past because it had made possible

the present success. Rather, he defined success in terms of its accurate recapitulation of tradition. In this respect his reverence for the past had more in common with Carlyle's. But where Carlyle allowed—indeed, required—the building to be razed so that the traditional could be re-created in new forms, Freeman could be secure only with palpable permanence: either the old building with all its repairs, or a return to the purity of the *ur*-form. If he was guilty of anachronism, it was not because he applied his contemporary political beliefs to the past, but because “apart from history he had no contemporary politics at all.”³¹

Freeman resists easy classification. Among the most enthusiastic champions of modern methodology, he was in a more profound sense the least reconciled to modernity of the six authors here discussed. A vocal public proponent of greater rigor and objectivity, he was driven by a private mythology that imposed its own evaluative criteria on all judgments. If the contradictions run deep, they are only the most extreme examples of ambiguities that in fact pervaded the transition to professionalization. It was his longing for a unitary standard of truth, some key that would make all phenomena morally intelligible, that made Freeman the sage and Freeman the scientist one and the same. Like Arnold, he wished to co-opt scientific methodology so that it served, not threatened, the moral function of history. So convinced was he of the truth of his reading of western history that it never occurred to him that he had put the cart before the horse—chosen the methodology to justify, not to verify, the teleological pattern of history, and thus compromised the objectivity of the historian in the very process of trying to vindicate it.

II

If we consider in more detail Freeman's strategies as a practicing historian, we find his affinities to the “literary” tradition even stronger. The apparent contradictions in Freeman's position arise less from what he actually did as an historian than from his self-consciously polemical role in the late Victorian debate over old and new models of historiography. It was in his public personae as the *Regius* Professor, the Froude-Slayer, the scholarly heavy that he gained the reputation as chief antagonist to the “literary” cause. His unfortunate penchant for rhetorical overkill obscured what was in fact the main thrust of his efforts as a publicist: to aggrandize, not to belittle, the traditional aims of historical study.

Consider, for example, his position on the reform of historical education at Oxford: it was weighted much more to older conventions of liberal education and didactic historiography than to specialized professionalism. He objected to the founding of a school of modern history in the early fifties not just because it would distort the underlying unity of history and deal with periods still too controversial for balanced judgment, but also because the specialism it encouraged would subvert the ideals of liberal education. He believed that the main purpose of undergraduate study in history should be to train students' minds in the principles of historical philosophy, and felt that this could be achieved simply by approaching the curriculum of the old school of *Literae Humaniores* in a more scientific (that is, comparative) spirit. The passing of the Oxford Act and the Examination Statute over the objections of Freeman and others meant that when he returned as Regius Professor in the eighties, he found an educational system conducive to neither sound tutoring nor a research professoriate. Examinations had degraded teaching into a trade, he charged, and were driving students from the generalist college tutor to the specialized "combined lecturer," affiliated with no college and therefore dispensing education in a moral and social vacuum.³² These lectures also usurped the role of the professors, who, because they had little control over examinations and their lectures "did not pay in the schools," often found themselves, as did Freeman, speaking to almost empty benches. The heavy lecturing duties attached to the Professorship further undermined its effectiveness and authority. To require of a professor forty-two lectures a year was to make research not less but more difficult—indeed, downright "penal."³³

Freeman declared that the professor's duty was not to prepare students for examinations but to be a representative of learning, to guide those interested in knowledge for its own sake to the study of "original authorities" (M, 16). He actually valued the close reading of primary texts not as a source of original research but as an heuristic model closest to that of the old school of *Literae Humaniores*: the "old-fashioned study of 'books'" represented an antidote to the "delusive" pursuit of "subjects" and "periods" (M, 36). Far from styling himself a professor in the German mode who was "bound to utter something new every time he officially opens his mouth" (HE, 4:201), he felt it entirely appropriate to use the Regius Chair to outline "the great periods of history" (M, 38) or to summarize the historical background of topical issues. He considered an understanding of basic

principles more important to accuracy than the exhaustive research "the last German book" could boast of (M, 289). His quite traditional priorities were summed up at the end of his Inaugural lecture, where he declared that enabling his listeners better to play their part in the present by providing clearer knowledge of "those earlier forms of public life out of which our own has grown" was an object higher than the "search after truth for its own sake" (M, 40).

Freeman drew the battle lines between the old and new historiography much more broadly when addressing the position of history outside the academy. But his very willingness to play so active a role in the wider public debate was a sign of a commitment to an ideal broader than professionalism alone. Endowing the historian with professional status was a way of cementing his traditional authority, not of defining its replacement. Freeman took on the crusader's role with relish. From his earliest essays for the *Saturday Review*, he never tired of insisting that the serious historian should, like any other professional, be expected to master the methodology of his science before beginning his work and to meet scholarly standards in executing it. His harrying of Froude was only the most notorious instance of his broader assault on dilettantes who had taken up history because they had nothing better to do and whose works belonged in the drawing room, not on the historical shelf.³⁴ As we have seen, the physical scientist provided a ready model for the kind of authority Freeman desired. He regretted that the wide popularity of historical writing made it much harder to convince readers of the importance of "scientific" levels of expertise. The public assumed that the scientist's position was backed by an expertise that admitted of no challenge from mere laymen. But history possessed nothing like science's technical terminology to "frighten away fools" (LF, 2:202); England had no equivalent to the German *Gelehrten* to expose imposters and render authoritative judgments (LF, 2:185). When the historian ventured (as Freeman so often did) to correct misconceptions, he was charged with pedantry; the public assumed that in historical controversies, every side had "an equal 'right to their own opinion' " (M, 86). As a result, although crackpot scientific views had been rooted out of sources "laying any claim to a scientific character," the historical equivalent of "flat earth" theories still flourished in "publications of considerable pretensions" (M, 90).

Freeman linked the issue of authority to the broader one of audience expectation and discrimination. He lamented that readability

was more important than accuracy to the general reader and that the historian who wished to reach an audience that read for pleasure and amusement was thus tempted to sacrifice fact for effect (M, 99). Freeman was particularly zealous in lauding the virtues of men like Stubbs and Finlay, who sacrificed popularity to the painstaking, meticulous work of "real" scholarship.³⁵ He was particularly resentful of an audience whose taste for pretty pictures and lively paradox made Froude a best seller, while it condemned the scrupulous Gardiner to obscurity (M, 100-102), and he was particularly hard on men like Charles Kingsley, who discredited the Regius Professorship by bringing history "down to the lowest level of the sensational novelist" in *The Roman and the Teuton*.³⁶ In part Freeman's animus against popular writers may be attributed to repeated criticisms of his own dullness and pedantry,³⁷ heaped on top of his disappointment at being so long passed over himself for a professorship. But we should also remember how easily his attempt to raise the standards of historical writing would have appeared to him as no less than a defense of truth against falsehood, of good against evil (M, 102-3, 112).

The crucial point about Freeman's role in this debate is that precisely because the promulgation of truth was so important to him, he could not accept J. R. Seeley's remedy to the professional's identity crisis: "To make sure of being judged by competent judges only, we ought to make history so dull and unattractive that the general public will not wish to meddle with it."³⁸ He might applaud the efforts of the Rolls Series to provide reliable texts for serious students of history,³⁹ but he was not willing that scholars should abandon the general reader to the rising tide of popularized history that flooded the mass market in the second half of the century. The circulating libraries and the middle class thirst for self-help were creating a lucrative business for the practitioners of "the art of history made easy"—topical and often sensationalized farragoes of romance and history, detail and digressions—all the more pernicious because their uncritical audience took their statements on trust.⁴⁰ It was not history's popularization that Freeman objected to, but its vulgarization in this way. Accepting the expectation of the general public that some kind of history be "served up to it," Freeman proclaimed it the duty of the serious historians "to improve its taste, to guide its voice, and to teach it to speak the right way."⁴¹

In attempting to practice what he preached, Freeman displayed a broader range of styles than his defense of professionalism might

suggest. In the seventies he contracted to write a series of short histories for Macmillan's *Historical Course for the Schools*, hoping thereby to supplant "the many wretched compilations and epitomes which misled and bewildered the minds of young readers by their blunders, and disgusted them by their dullness" (LF, 2:31). *Old-English History for Children* he designed as an experiment to prove that "clear, accurate, and scientific views of history . . . may be easily given to children from the very first"—specifically, that they could be taught "to distinguish true history alike from legend and from willful invention."⁴² This did not mean excluding those legends that had so often usurped the place of true history, but presenting them as did Arnold, in the antiquated style of the King James *Old Testament*.

Freeman was particularly concerned to promulgate his theory of Aryan continuity in a form accessible to the general reader. He aimed to make his *History of Federal Government* "instructive and interesting to any thoughtful reader, whether especially learned or not," by avoiding "technicalities" in the text and relegating discussion of detailed points to notes that he hoped would satisfy "the requirements of the most exacting scholar" (HFG, xv). He left the *Growth of the English Constitution* in the form of its original "popular lectures," hoping that its "more highly wrought shape" would catch the attention of readers and lead them to the "proper sources of more minute knowledge" (GEC, vi). The *History of the Norman Conquest* itself was to be a major scholarly work, but one he also hoped would attract that "strangest of beings, the general reader" (LF, 1:336). His goal was to clothe "with flesh and blood the dry bones" of his old English heroes, whose "living personal interest" had up until then been obscured by "fantastic legends" or "summaries of the most repulsive dryness" (NC, 1:xvi-xvii). Even Stubbs's recent constitutional history would need to be "translate[d] . . . into thunder and lightning" (LF, 2:88) in order to impress the true greatness of English continuity on the public mind.

Far from ruling out imagination in historical research, Freeman agreed with contemporaries that—under proper restraint—it was essential to perceiving history's patterns (M, 282). Far from believing excellence of style to be incompatible with excellence of matter, he felt that combining both was the best way of winning over the serious reader to the cause of truth.⁴³ He objected to the spasmodic excesses of historical sensationalism precisely because they reduced great moments to tawdry bombast (HE, 1:326-27). But to acknowledged mas-

ters of historical narrative like Arnold and Macaulay, he accorded higher honors than to their more scholarly German brethren. Though concerned to improve the historian's image in the public eye, Freeman's goal was not professionalism for its own sake. Although he recognized the legitimacy of a separate genre for fellow specialists, he devoted his major efforts to upgrading popular historical writing—to mediating, not widening, the gap between popular and professional audiences. In styling the historian a professional, he was trying to combine, not to replace, the Victorian sage with the historical scientist.

Freeman's own research techniques, for example, were essentially conventional rather than innovative. He might have lauded facts "drawn from the fountain-head" as the appropriate corrective to crude theories promulgated by "the philosophical school or the picturesque school,"⁴⁴ and have styled himself merely an illustrator or harmonizer of original texts: "I wish no one to read me instead of my authorities" (M, 270). But the voluminous *History of the Norman Conquest* was more a synthesis of existing accounts than a compilation of original research. His command of the narrative sources of Anglo-Saxon history was unrivaled at the time, but his repugnance to working in libraries kept him from consulting any "original authorities" not available in print. He would often hold up the painstaking drudgery of the plodding dryasdust as the virtue that separated the scholarly sheep from the dilettante goats. Yet he felt the German insistence on mastering every scrap of the whole historical *Literatur* for every issue to be an unreasonable one,⁴⁵ and excused his own less than exhaustive analysis of Domesday, for example, by saying that only an editor would sit down to read it through, word for word (NC, 1:xi).

He believed that he provided evidence voluminous enough to allow readers to double-check him and draw different conclusions if they wished. But he seldom realized how much he distorted that evidence by trying to force syntheses from contradictory accounts or the extent to which his own assumptions biased his choice of data.⁴⁶ His forerunners on the Norman Conquest, Thierry and Palgrave, he found guilty of failing to distinguish the relative value of different authorities in their eagerness to support their own theories (NC, 1:xv). Freeman dutifully cautioned his readers against the panegyric excesses of English sources, but too often his own critical method amounted to little more than examining the English account of some fact and then comparing the "Norman perversion of it" (NC, 2:4 n.).

English encomium was usually allowed to presuppose some legitimate basis for praise, Norman invective to result from "interested invention" (e.g., NC, 2:21, 1:472). He never tired of holding up Froude as the classic case of the gullible amateur, a "confiding innocent" who took Henry's royal proclamations and acts of parliament at face value. No experienced historian could be so naive, Freeman scoffed. Yet he used documents in a similar way to prove "parliamentary subserviency" in an age of Tudor "unlaw."⁴⁷ The methodology of those who disagreed with him always struck him as less professional than his own.

Freeman's treatment of myth and legend offers the most illuminating parallels to earlier historians. On the one hand, myth was fundamental to his reconstruction of Aryan nationalism; on the other, it would appear a primary obstacle to a scientific reading of history. As early as 1866, Freeman had pinpointed the tendency to prefer romance to fact as the bane of popular historical writing and attempted to lay down guidelines for distinguishing between the two (HE, 1:1-39). At times this involved verifying details by known facts or analyzing their internal consistency. More often, it meant using comparative methods to expose similar accounts as imitations of a genre. Freeman noted with a kind of grim satisfaction that the result of textual criticism was "to tear away all shreds of likelihood, all shreds of possibility, from the choicest, the most beautiful, the most cherished, legends"; still, he resented the fact that "this often makes our studies unpopular; people quarrel with us because we rob them of their beloved fables, and they . . . say that they will believe the fables in spite of us and our evidence" (M, 139-40). The serious historian might permit readers their artistic pleasure in pretty stories, but he had to insist that belief was a matter of fact, not taste.

For all the self-righteous severity Freeman mustered in the persona of the embattled professional, it is important to see that here too his motives were the same as Arnold's and Carlyle's: to try to establish a groundwork of fact upon which a legitimate hero-worship might be raised. His real objection to sacrificing history to "silly stories" was that as a result, "the real actions of very remarkable men are utterly forgotten" (HE, 1:8). For England in particular, substituting history for legend "almost always tends to exalt instead of to depreciate the ancient heroes of our land." For "truths like these it is worth while to surrender a few pleasant fables," Freeman argued; "but on the other hand, we must beware lest sound criticism degenerate into indiscrim-

inate scepticism" (HE, 1:39). Their precise historical accuracy might remain in question, but mythic accounts should still be allowed some germ of truth that testified to Aryan ideals. Freeman thus parted ways with Grote, who censured all attempts to pin down historical truth in Trojan legends. He likewise drew the line at theories (like Max Müller's and G. W. Cox's) that reduced all Aryan myths to expressions of natural phenomena, fearing that "if Achilleus and Odysseus are ruled to be the sun, later heroes of mythology and romance, Arthur and Hengist and Cerdic and the Great Karl himself, may some day be found out to be the sun also" (HE, 1:2). If this naive literalism was largely a pose, it did not rule out a quite serious concern that too thoroughgoing a scepticism about early history might erode respect for genuine tradition as a legitimate historical source. Like Arnold, Freeman used scientific methods not to discredit myth and legend, but rather to give authority to the "right" ones. It was all the more gratifying to praise famous men when imagination and fact were thus joined.

Myth, superstition, and folklore also played an important role in Freeman's re-creation of the mind or spirit of the age. "The history of opinions about facts is really no small part of the history of those facts" (M, 267), he reminded his readers. Hagiography, outdated histories, and popular literature also helped reconstruct that opinion. Even traditional documents like Domesday had a double value, providing the legal record but also letting the reader behind the scenes: "Every human relation, every position of life . . . the wail of the dispossessed, the overbearing greed of the intruder, the domestic details of courtship, marriage, dowry, inheritance, bequest, and burial, all are there" (NC, 5:44). Most often, the mind of the time served Freeman as it did Froude and Macaulay. He was too obviously the judicious lawyer highlighting detail that supported his case, leaving in shadow what did not. References to daily life in Domesday are muted except where they demonstrate the injustice of Norman rule (e.g., 5:44-45); legendary accounts are brought to the fore mainly when they argue for his good opinion of Teutonic heroes (e.g., NC, 3:361). Freeman might (in appendixes) insert disclaimers about the reliability of superstition and folklore, but in the text he takes full advantage of the rhetorical weight they lent to his own interpretations. He manipulates "the feelings of those times" about oaths in such a way as to condemn William for making Harold swear fealty, rather than faulting Harold for breaking the oath (NC, 3:252). To heighten the porten-

tousness of William's last year of life, he lets "our ancient tongue . . . set forth the full horrors of such a time" (NC, 4:695). Quoting the words of the chronicler and going on to cite other catastrophes that popular belief anachronistically placed in the same year allows Freeman to reinforce, without actually having to credit, the sense that some ritual revenge was being wrought upon the usurper.

Despite the vast detail of Freeman's major work, there is little of the texture of daily life, few of the individual faces of custom, that captured Macaulay's and Green's imaginations. Lack of data was a factor, although Green overcame the same liability with significant success. We might also argue that "history as past politics" necessarily meant that only lead actors deserved center stage. The more persuasive explanation lies in the demands of Freeman's mythology. His focus is always on the archetype, not on the individual, on the public spectacle, not on its private contexts. The universalizing pull of his cycles flattens into insignificance the quotidian and the personal. It is the infrastructure rather than the "pulse of life" that attracts him most. When he makes significant detours from the main course of the political narrative, it is to linger in places where the historical record has in effect solidified; in the streets of cities, in the surrounding terrain.

Freeman's contributions to "comparative urban history and historical travelogue" were substantial.⁴⁸ He credited Green with first teaching him that towns too had personal lives with relevance to the principles "animating" their architecture. The *Norman Conquest* is studded with capsule histories of towns along the way (e.g., IV, 87, 196, 202), and his frequent travels abroad yielded dozens of travelogue "middles" for the *Saturday Review*. For Freeman, capturing the "local character" of a town seldom meant resuscitating its teeming street life as it had for Green. He is more interested in establishing "its position in the history of the world"—its role in the wider drama of Aryan history (HE, 4:v). He cherishes the physical structure of cities as a literal palimpsest that preserves in miniature all strata of cultural evolution. Nothing fascinated him more than finding spots where he could see the whole history of the world "stamped for ever on the stones of a single building" (M, 316). Like Carlyle's inventory of Cromwell-land, his capsule histories become catalogues of the famous men and deeds associated with place. Yet the effect of Carlyle's stereoscopic imposition of perspectives is to draw the past into the immediacy of the present. Freeman valued place less for the dynamic

immediacy of its history than for the monumental fixity that constituted permanent presence. The effect of his miniature travelogues in the *Norman Conquest* is not to make us feel time's evanescence, but to stabilize—even immobilize—us in the density of the historical record. The cross threads of universal history actually wind up muting local color. When Freeman conducts us on a walking tour of Falaise, where legend joined William's parents for the first time, like Carlyle he positions us as "the traveller [who] gradually ascends to the gate of the castle, renowned alike in the wars of the twelfth, the fifteenth, and the sixteenth centuries" (NC, 2:177). But associations that for Freeman enrich the scene—Talbot's tower leads on to his role in Aquitaine, the castle's keep to Henry's siege—diffuse the focus of the reader who could not glimpse the private patterns that ordered this relentless cross-referencing. Freeman's allusive density enriched an otherwise sketchy period in the *Norman Conquest*, but the tendency to turn coincidence into connection became to some an exasperating mannerism.⁴⁹

Where the land itself was concerned, it was also for Freeman less a case of seeing how the organic shaped human history than of learning to read the marks of "deathless history . . . written for ever on the everlasting page of the soil, the hills, the sea" (M, 319). Again he credited Green with helping him appreciate the importance of terrain to military history; Green or their mutual friend, the geologist Boyd Dawkins, often accompanied Freeman in on-site visits, by then *de rigueur* for "the finished historian" (M, 314). But Freeman valued geography mainly for its reinforcement of political distinctions. He never tired of correcting popular misunderstanding of geographical—and hence political—divisions and devoted his entire *Historical Geography of Europe* to tracing the major contours of political geography from the days of early Greece to the present. Not surprisingly, the *Geography* became a tedious chore long before its final appearance in 1881. Freeman lacked the attachment to landscape that for Arnold galvanized streams and rivers into the veins and arteries of a living being. To climb a mountain for any reason other than a better view of historical sites seemed pointless to him. The effect of geographical detail in the *Norman Conquest* is static rather than dynamic. Such evidence simply fixes a site with more precision (e.g., Harold's landing place at Porlock, NC, 2:322) or thickens the density of allusion. The *felsen* or steep rocks from which Falaise took its

name acquire value not from their sublimity but because there "the good old Teutonic speech still lingers in local nomenclature" (NC, 2:178). Freeman's nature, like his cities, is no more than the fixed repository of a fossil record.

In his early reviews of the *Norman Conquest*, Green had taken Freeman to task for neglecting the "moral, social, and intellectual advance of man." Freeman protested in private that such was not his "mission,"⁵⁰ but he responded in the final volume with a survey of the Conquest's "local," "social," and "ecclesiastical effects," and of its impact on culture. If this section (or the appendixes touching points of social and cultural history along the way) does little to restore the organic relationship between social and political life that pervades Green's work, Freeman's analysis is far more substantial than the survey either Froude or Macaulay provides at the outset. If the needs of Freeman's political argument dominate this discussion, so too did theirs. But by putting this section last, Freeman does underline its subordination to his political interests. Although he acknowledges the interaction of custom and innovation, we sense this data less as part of a living environment than as so many more analogical layers of artifacts, deposits of the same political glacier. Social and ecclesiastical change he treated so as to document the working of that same "general law" of continuity (NC, 5:505) that we see everywhere; the Conquest simply furthered changes already under way. His discussion of its impact on language, literature, and art (which he equates with architecture) duplicates familiar paradigms as well. Noting that he will treat philology "only as it illustrates the political history" of the time (NC, 5:vi-vii), he dutifully uses the predominance of Teutonic vocabulary and syntax to buttress his claim that Norman influence represented only an infusion into a dominant stock (NC, 5:538). Here, however, the fossil record showed evidence of catastrophic destruction that uniformitarian arguments could not rationalize away. Freeman could not help feeling that these infusions "marred for ever the purity of our ancient tongue" (NC, 5:651). His penchant for choosing germanic over latinized words, which became an obsession in later life, represented his personal attempt at reparation. The same sense of corruption and loss hangs over his discussion of literature. The tameness of the *Roman de Rou* is contrasted with the old heroic songs of the English folk (NC, 5:586-88); the translator of Wace is condemned for unleashing a flood of "wretched fables" to drive out

"the true history and worthier legends of our fathers" (NC, 5:590). Burrow quite rightly detects "an un-Whiggish sense of irrevocable disinheritance" behind all this mourning.⁵¹

Freeman is luckily able to find more consoling evidence of both purity and continuity in architecture. The argument permits full indulgence of his earliest and deepest love. He rummages through the architectural record of all western Europe, comparing, classifying, ranking, until each specimen has been securely placed in one vastly branching family tree. In the process he is able to defend the "primitive Romanesque" of pre-Conquest England as not a corruption, but a more perfect carrying out of the true Roman form (NC, 5:603-4). The Norman Romanesque that replaced it still kept English architecture in the family, and insofar as that replacement had begun with good King Edward, Freeman could still argue that the Conquest had merely given a fresh impulse to causes already at work; once again, it was a turning point, not a beginning.

In turning to consider Freeman's stylistic strategies, we must to an extent distinguish between the different audiences he served. His most avowedly popularizing works—the outlines and school texts—were by their very nature largely devoted to summary and synthesis. Freeman could make few concessions to good stories for their own sake in such works. *Old-English History*, which he originally wrote for his own children, is an important exception. It tells at length selected legends like the story of King Edwin "because it is such a famous and beautiful tale," but it brackets such stories apart from the rest of the text and consciously antiquates the style to distinguish them from "true history" ("Then Aethelfrith sent unto Raedwald, saying, 'Slay me Edwin mine enemy, and I will give thee much gold and silver.' But Raedwald would not hearken").⁵² In Freeman's own narrative voice there is much of the confiding dogmatism of the earnest schoolmaster. He coaxes the naive reader along in a story-telling singsong, prompting the correct judgments ("You will perhaps say that our forefathers were cruel and wicked men . . . but you must remember . . . that it is not fair to judge our fathers by the same rules as if they had been either Christians or civilized men") and gently but firmly inculcating the lessons of the Aryan catechism ("We should always think with reverence of our own fathers and kinsfolk, and think what great nations have grown out of the people who were then looked down upon as *Barbarians*'").⁵³

Freeman's grand style is more dignified but no lighter in its touch.

He was a great admirer of Macaulay's "English undefiled" (M, 105) and claimed that it had taught him the need for clarity, simplicity and judicious repetition.⁵⁴ The results of Freeman's imitation would scarcely have flattered Macaulay. Freeman's attempts at lucidity translated into a doggedly insistent prose that hammered home the same ideas in the same simplistic cadences and virtually unvaried phrasing. His conviction that what every schoolboy knew was a jumble of anachronisms and misnomers turned Macaulay's breezy allusiveness into labored antiquarianism, his easy authority into an overbearing dogmatism. Freeman strove for dignity and grandeur but achieved at best what Green called "a sort of undertaker-solemnity," all anthems and no timbrels (LG, 302, 222). Freeman's limitations were in part temperamental. Subtlety of any kind irritated him. He could trust the black and white garishness of Macaulay's prose, but instantly suspected Froude's elegant nuances. Not surprisingly, his taste for fiction was highly limited. His essential dogmatism admitted no toleration for alternative realities. He was also the least novelistic of my six historians. The aesthetics of sympathy brought one a bit too close to familiarity. Freeman was jealous for the reputations of his Aryan pantheon and required a conventionally histrionic heroism to keep them larger than life.

The History of the Norman Conquest in England was first and foremost a patriotic epic, the latest in a long chain of Aryan sagas: for Freeman, part of both a literary and an historical tradition. He had begun his career as a composer of ballads celebrating Aryan heroes; when it came time to tell the story of his own nation in prose, he naturally adopted the same mode. However often he might acknowledge the weight of relative standards of behavior, he measures the stature of any individual with pretensions to greatness against centuries-old ideals of military valor and honor. Whenever he wishes to deepen the resonance of important moments, he automatically borrows analogies from that tradition: the battle of Maldon naturally struck him as having a "thoroughly Homeric character," its record in verse as breathing "the true fire of the warlike minstrelsy common to Greek and Teuton" (NC, 1:273-74). Such conscious parallels helped not only to make good his claim that the achievements of Teutonic Christendom rivaled those of the ancient world, but also to aggrandize England's special providential role in Aryan history.

Casting English history in terms of this epic tradition necessarily meant stressing the importance of individuals, in refutation of Posi-

tivist claims against individual freedom. Despite his disclaimers about hero-worship, Freeman was instinctively attracted to "great man" explanations: to situations where the "spirit of a gallant army" could be "fouly damped by the malice of a single traitor" one year, and rallied to victory in the next by "the efforts of a single hero, boldly struggling against every difficulty" (NC, 1:322). On the other hand, if individuals hold the center stage in the *History*, judgments always reach beyond the individual. Freeman's handling of men and events encourages us to gauge their stature as silhouetted within ever widening frames of perspective: to judge their significance first to English, then to Aryan, and finally to Universal history. William and Harold play the leads in the "great drama" of the Conquest, but it is their role in the "great struggle of nations and tongues and principles" that gives them interest, not vice versa (NC, 1:532). Freeman begins, rather than ends, with a summation of Harold's and William's vices, virtues, and political significance. There is little or no sense of a character evolving in either man. The moral and political estimates of each are fixed at the outset, the rest of their characterization tailored to vindicate these. As a result they do not come home to us as personalities in the way that Carlyle's Cromwell or even Froude's Henry does. This effect derives partly from the amount of verifiable detail Freeman had at his disposal, but is more a question of his own narrative choices and abilities. Lengthening the field of focus necessarily subordinated individual personalities to the larger pattern. The principles he represents, not the man himself, emerge as the real source of dramatic interest.

Harold's place in the ranks of English heroes is assured from the beginning. Freeman casts him not as the usurping Godwinson but as "the hero and the martyr of our native freedom" (NC, 2:37), a consummate military commander and an even more accomplished statesman whose goal was ever to keep England free from foreign domination. He was in all things Teutonic: even those foreigners he promoted were "natives of . . . kindred Teutonic lands" (NC, 2:41). Freeman takes great pains to keep his motives as pure as his lineage. He devotes a substantial portion of the narrative in volume 3 to the most controversial point of Harold's reign, whether or not he had sworn an oath to place William on the throne after Edward's death. He continues his special pleading in lengthy appendixes, content only when he can turn the final blame against William.

Freeman's usual strategy for aggrandizing Harold's position consisted not of directly refuting "Norman calumny" but of magnifying the terms of comparison. He begins by comparing Harold, the "champion of England against the Southern invader," (NC, 2:44) to Constantine Palaiologes, who fell, sword in hand, defending his native Greece against invading Turks. Freeman consciously heightens the drama surrounding Harold's election and reign, enlarging their scope until he seems a political leader of international proportions. Referring to the Bayeux tapestry, Freeman lingers for five pages over the hesitant expression on Harold's face when he is formally offered Edward's crown. He attributes to him a conception of its political significance clearly more Freeman's than Harold's. By noting that Harold was not of noble blood, Freeman isolates him in world history; by measuring him against a rogue's gallery of tyrants, he easily inflates Harold's distinction:

For him, no son of a kingly father, no scion of legendary heroes and of Gods of the elder faith, to see with his own eyes the diadem of Ecgbheht and Cerdic ready for his grasp, was of itself a strange and wondrous feeling, such as few men but him in the world's history can have felt. He was not like others before and since, who by fraud or violence have risen to royalty or more than royalty. Harold was not a Dionysios, a Caesar, a Cromwell, or a Buonaparte, whose throne was reared upon the ruins of the freedom of his country. He was not an Eastern Basileus, climbing to the seat from which a fortunate battle or a successful conspiracy had hurled a murdered or blinded predecessor. (NC, 3:22)

Having suitably intensified the awe with which Harold must have viewed the English crown, "freely offered in all its glory and greatness," (NC, 3:23), Freeman then turns to other reasons for Harold's hesitation: to his consciousness of assured challenges by Tostig, his brother, and by William, to his memory of the ignominious oath he had sworn to the latter and would now have to break: "No wonder then if, as the picture sets before us, he looked at the Crown at once wistfully and anxiously, and half drew back the hand which was stretched forth to grasp the glittering gift. And yet the risk had to be run. A path of danger opened before him, and yet duty no less than ambition bade him to enter upon the thorny road" (NC, 3:24). By arguing on Harold's behalf that William would challenge the throne regardless of who held it, and that only Harold was an adversary mighty enough to protect it, Freeman casts his decision in the light of

self-sacrifice rather than self-interest: "The danger then had to be faced. The call of patriotism distinctly bade Harold not to shrink at the last moment from the post to which he had so long looked forward, and which had at last become his own. The first man in England, first in every gift of war and peace, first in the love of his countrymen, first in renown in other lands, was bound to be first alike in honour and danger" (NC, 3:25). Arnold himself could not have conjured up a more noble set of motives for a silent hero.

Freeman maintains the note of quavering sanctity through Harold's coronation, the highlight of which was the voiced consent of the people to his election: a classic Whig anachronism, here intensified into a moral victory: "Never was there a more lawful ruler in this world than Harold, King of the English and Lord of the Isle of Britain—King, not by the mouldering titles of a worn-out dynasty, not by the gold of the trafficker or the steel of the invader, but by the noblest title by which one man can claim to rule over his fellows, the free choice of a free people" (NC, 3:47). Harold's endorsement by the most hallowed traditions of English political life is made more poignant by their imminent disruption. To drive home Harold's position in the saga of English liberties, Freeman pauses in the account of his final laying to rest at Waltham for one of those parallels that were his trademark. He looks forward two hundred forty years to the day when the body of Edward I lay temporarily at Harold's side. In Freeman's hands comparison becomes typological, and coincidence reveals the major contours of English liberty:

With Harold, our native Kingship ends; the Crown, the laws, the liberties, the very tongue of Englishmen, seem all fallen never to rise again. In Edward the line of English Kings begins once more. After two hundred years of foreign rule, we have again a King bearing an English name and an English heart—the first to give us back our ancient laws under new shapes. . . . In the whole course of English history we hardly come across a scene which speaks more deeply to the heart, than when the first founder of our later greatness was laid by the side of the last kingly champion of our earliest freedom. (NC, 3:521)

If a man be judged by the company he keeps, Harold's good reputation would be assured by the way Freeman frames his portrait. Held fast in the interlocking circles of English history, Harold becomes by implication larger than life, a martyr to causes most sacred to the Whig view.

Notwithstanding Harold's symbolic importance, it is William who

is the more personally realized—and not just as the villain of the piece. This is true in part simply because Freeman had more materials to work with: one of the perquisites of success was more and better press. William's characterization draws more fully upon the conventional materials of the Victorian historian: we see his portrait in the later years of his reign (NC, 4:622), hear his voice in direct quotations (NC, 4:707), are treated to the detailed deathbed scene (NC, 4:708-9), and mythic alternatives to the standard biography. Although Freeman wants us to remain at an awestruck distance, his efforts to make William larger than life work at cross-purposes with his political sympathies. Only the highest superlatives quite satisfy him: "No man that ever trod this earth was ever endowed with greater natural gifts; to no man was it ever granted to accomplish greater things" (NC, 2:164-65). But knowing that this sheer force of character helped crush old English freedoms necessarily qualifies Freeman's admiration. He casts his qualifications in ethical rather than political terms, however. Only when William's actions are looked at "without regard to their moral character" may he "fairly claim his place in the first rank of the world's greatest men." William's preeminence, like Harold's, earns him the right to be judged by international standards. But William is hardly a match for the much more punishing competition of the world's "pure patriots." Harold easily looked good in the exclusive company of tyrants; William, if not damned, is at least compromised, by much fainter praise:

If we cannot give him a niche among pure patriots and heroes, he is quite as little entitled to a place among mere tyrants and destroyers. William of Normandy has no claim to share in the pure glory of Timoleon, Aelfred, and Washington; he cannot even claim the more mingled fame of Alexander, Charles, and Cnut; but he has still less in common with the mere enemies of their species, with the Nabuchodonosors, the Swegens, and the Buonopartes, whom God has sent from time to time as simple scourges of a guilty world. (NC, 2:165-66)

Although admitting that considering his upbringing and the mores of his time, William was to be commended for not being worse, Freeman never lets relativism devalue the moral and patriotic hierarchies that structure history. Finally, of course, these hierarchies are one and the same: it was because William "stretched forth his hand to grasp the diadem which was another's" that he was not "one of the best, as well as one of the greatest, rulers of his time" (NC, 2:171).

Another strategy Freeman uses to universalize the moral judgments

against William is to let the eye of contemporaries see the hand of God in policies Freeman wished to condemn as immoral. Freeman's own well-publicized campaign against fox hunting undoubtedly encouraged him to find William's laying waste of populated lands to create the New Forest especially blameworthy. He allows contemporaries to draw conclusions from the fact that William's son was to be treacherously murdered there: "Our age shrinks, and it is often wise in shrinking, from seeing the visible hand of God in the punishments which seem, even on earth, to overtake the sinner. The age of William was less scrupulous: the men of his own day . . . saw in the life of William a mighty tragedy, with the avenging Atê brooding over the sinner and his house" (NC, 4:610). Freeman goes on to elaborate the classical analogy. At "the highest pinnacle of earthly greatness . . . the pride of greatness and victory overcame him. They led him on to those deeds of greater wrong by which the avenger, as in the tales of old Hellas, was wont to punish earlier deeds of lesser wrong." In the view of the eleventh century, the disgraces of William's later years were "so many strokes of the sword of the avenger," (NC, 4:610-11) punishing William for harrying Northumberland, allowing the death of Waltheof, and desolating Hampshire for his own pleasure. "To speculations beyond his range the historian can say neither Yea nor Nay," Freeman sagely cautions. This would-be disclaimer hardly obscures the fact that Freeman willingly chooses to see a "poetic justice" (NC, 4:701), if not an outright act of divine vengeance, in the tragic downfall of a once mighty ruler whose base actions had lowered him to the level of meaner men. The condemnation gains more authority by being modeled on a paradigm of western culture. In condemnation, as in celebration, the terms of comparison assume maximum breadth of judgment.

The Battle of Hastings (or of "Senlac," as Freeman rechristened it), the thematic as well as literal center of his major work, provides us with the set piece that most effectively demonstrates Freeman's handling of events. Apart from the conventional devices of Victorian military history—speculations on the thoughts of soldiers, citation of battle cries and dialogue, notes on the modern appearance of the field—we are struck most forcefully by the Homeric echoes that sound throughout the account. This was the crux of the "great struggle of tongues and nations and principles"; its importance in world history demanded a suitably grand style of presentation, one that gave great warriors and great nations their due. The handling of details, focus,

and action is calculated to convince us that this epic of Norman and Teuton equals in gravity and splendor any in the Aryan canon.

Like Carlyle at the battle of Dunbar, Freeman begins by allowing us behind the lines on the night before the fighting. The Normans, "under the influence of that strange spiritual excitement which had persuaded men that an unprovoked aggression on an unoffending nation was in truth a war of religion" (NC, 3:454), occupied themselves with prayer and devotion. What the French source slightly refers to as "singing and drinking" in the English camp, Freeman converts into the symbolic moment when "spirit-stirring strains of old Teutonic minstrelsy" were heard for the last time "in the air of a free and pure Teutonic England." To underline this point, he speculates that "they sang, we well may deem, the song of Brunanburh and the Song of Maldon; they sang how Aethelstan conquered and how Brihtnoth fell." He thus converts a Norman slight into a solemnly patriotic preparation for battle, as fitting as all the "pious oratory" on the other side. Paralleled accounts of the morning's preparations follow: the generals' speeches to their men, a survey of the troops, a closeup shot of each side as battle positions were taken up. Freeman closely follows the *Roman de Rou* in its account of the nobles who rode with William, but he characteristically pauses to allude to each man's past or future significance in the saga, to weigh up his vices and virtues, before passing on. We glimpse Robert Montgomery, who would found a mighty house in the conquered isle, Roger of Norfolk—"a man false alike to his native country and its foreign King"—and Eustace of Boulogne, who had murdered unarmed Englishmen on their hearthstones and would soon bear the ignominy of being the only man to show craven fear (NC, 3:460-61). The effect is not so much to personalize the account as to make it resonate with historical associations: in this moment lay the intersection of many strands of personal and national history. The surveying eye moves on, noting the regional identities and characteristic weapons of the common soldiers as they approached the field of combat. It reserves the closeup for William and Odo, leaving them dramatically spotlighted at "the innermost center of the advancing host": "There, in the midst of all, the guiding star of the whole army, floated the consecrated banner, the gift of Rome and of Hildebrand, the ensign by whose presence wrong was to be hallowed into right. And close beneath its folds rode the two master-spirits of the whole enterprise, kindred alike in blood, in valour, and in crime" (NC, 3:463). After a

description of each leader, the perspective widens back out again, to close with a roll call of "the chivalry of Normandy, the future nobility of England": the men who gained a foothold by wrong but whose children would win the rights of the Great Charter (NC, 3:466).

In turning to the English side, Freeman had no such record as Domesday to aid him: "The heroes who fought against [the French] for hearth and home are nameless" (NC, 3:467). After giving a paraphrase of Harold's exhortation to his troops, he fills in by taking time to refute Norman aspersions cast on English conduct. He then follows with a parallel survey of the weaponry and battle positions of the English, and similarly closes in, first on the ensign bearing the Dragon of Wessex—"the sign which had led Englishmen to victory at Ethandun and at Brunanbuhr, at Penselwood and at Brentford"—and then to the leaders beneath it. Freeman gradually constricts our focus, slowing the action with self-conscious repetition and paralleled phrasing, to apply maximum concentration on the hero at the center of this scene, as he is at the center of the *History* itself:

There, as the inner circle of the host, were ranged the fated warriors of the house of Godwine. Three generations of that great line were gathered beneath the Standard of its chief. There stood the aged Aelfwig, with his monk's cowl beneath his helmet. There stood young Hakon the son of Swegen, atoning for his father's crimes. And, closer still than all, the innermost centre of that glorious ring, stood the kingly three, brothers in life and death. There, in their stainless truth, stood Gyrrh the counsellor and Leofwine the fellow-exile. And there, with his foot firm on his native earth, sharing the toils and dangers of his meanest soldier, with the kingly helm on his brow and the two-handed axe upon his shoulder, stood Harold, King of the English. (NC, 3:474-75)

The stage is now set for the fighting to begin. Freeman admits the traditional account of Taillefer's throwing his sword in the air and striking the first blow, but decidedly deflates its picturesque appeal with a no-nonsense observation: "A bravado of this kind might serve as an omen, it might stir up the spirits of the men on either side; but it could in no other way affect the fate of the battle" (NC, 3:477). He skims through the first Norman assault, ending with balanced parallels that underscore the literal and symbolic opposition in the scene: "Javelin and arrow had been tried in vain; every Norman missile had found an English missile to answer it. The lifted lances had been found wanting; the broad-sword had clashed in vain against the two-handed axe; the maces of the Duke and of the Bishop had done their

best. But . . . the old Teutonic tactics . . . proved too strong for the arts and the valour of Gaul and Roman" (NC, 3:479-80). As one would expect, hereafter the battle focuses on individual combat. Freeman relates the story that William, seeing the Breton troops in retreat, personally rallied them by baring his head to show that he still lived and exhorting them to return to the fray. He chooses the version that has William kill Gyrth with his own mace for similar reasons: these hand-to-hand struggles were the stuff of epic heroism and made overt the symbolic significance of the battle. The epic parallels become explicit in Harold's reaction to his brother's fall: "The deed of Metaurus had been, as it were, wrought beneath the eyes of Hannibal; Achilles had looked on and seen the doom of his Patroklos and his Antilochos. The fate of England now rested on the single heart and the single arm of her King" (NC, 3:485). So important to Freeman was "the great personal struggle which was going on beneath the Standard" of the English that he attributed a similar preoccupation to the English troops: this explained why the French were able to penetrate the barricade for the first time. He completes the account of how Norman "craft," in the form of a false retreat, allowed French troops finally to break through the shield wall with another sampling of the "more remarkable" instances of hand-to-hand combat from Wace (NC, 3:492).

Despite the fact that his audience was well aware of the battle's outcome, Freeman tries to maintain suspense to the end. With the Breton retreat, "for the moment the day seemed lost" (NC, 3:481); even after the French breakthrough "the fight was still far from being over. It was by no means clear that some new chance of warfare might not again turn the balance in favour of England" (NC, 3:491-92). Not until that one arrow "more charged with destiny than its fellows" pierced Harold's eye is the cause conceded as lost (NC, 3:497). All that is left to do is to "call up before our eyes the valiant deaths of those few [English] warriors of Senlac whose names we know" (NC, 3:500). Compared with one of Carlyle's battle pieces, Freeman's seems peculiarly static, almost ritualized. We are clearly watching a pageant, not participating in one. Freeman's intention is not so much to duplicate the experiential reality of the fighting as to sing his song of arms and the man in terms befitting its importance: to convince his audience that "never was a battle more stoutly contested between able generals supported by more valiant soldiers" (NC, 3:505). His main tactic is not to strive for imaginative originality, but to sound echoes of time-

honored conventions of epic heroism; not so much to personalize the battle as to universalize it.

When the *History of the Norman Conquest* began first to appear, periodicals like the *Athenaeum* and the *Pall Mall Gazette* hailed Freeman for delivering England's early history from the hands of trivializing romancers and dryasdust chroniclers alike. They praised the life and spirit of his prose and appreciated his success in raising the tone of historical writing.⁵⁵ But Freeman ended by pleasing neither general nor professional audiences. The same journals soon began to weary of his prolixity and repetitiveness.⁵⁶ Despite Freeman's obsession with the laws of political science and his dislike of excessive specialization, he became in public eyes a classic example of the new scholar who rejected all synthesis until every fact had been catalogued.⁵⁷ Although he recognized the importance of style to history, the violence of his attacks on Froude and Froude's readers stereotyped Freeman as hostile to any literary concessions. Frederic Harrison's "The History Schools (An Oxford Dialogue)" caricatured Freeman's supposed positions in the manuscript-sifting pedant, Aethelbald Wessex.⁵⁸ Harrison also pointed out the ways Freeman's almost exclusive attention to the Aryans and to history before 1300 undercut the very "unity of history" he touted.⁵⁹ Instead of being converted by the Aryan gospel, reviewers resented Freeman's assuming "the tone of a prophet of a new revelation."⁶⁰ The *Athenaeum* pronounced his argument for Aryan continuity self-defeating.⁶¹ The intemperance of his Francophobia discredited his analyses for some, the fulsomeness of his praise for liberty and its Teutonic defenders strained his hero-worship for others.⁶² Freeman's tendency to "treat modern politics like an archaeologist" demonstrated how very *unpractical* a politician he was.⁶³ With so few converts to his credit, Freeman had good reasons for feeling a baffled messianism.⁶⁴

If the general audience found his antipathies and enthusiasms too intense for sound views, one can imagine how fellow professionals reacted. C. H. Pearson matched him source for source in questioning Freeman's idealization of Harold, and ended by paying him the dubious compliment of finding him a more vivid portraitist precisely because he was such a prejudiced special pleader.⁶⁵ J. H. Round's ferocious pedantry and professional jealousies quite outdid anything Freeman had inflicted on Froude. After criticizing Freeman's battle of "Senlac" in excruciating detail, Round dismissed Freeman's work in terms echoing Freeman's own criticisms: blinded by democratic zeal

and carried away by his "homeric" dramatization of heroes, Freeman had drawn more upon the "resources of his imagination" than on the judicious analysis of sources.⁶⁶ Others agreed that the epic poet in Freeman was incompatible with the "calm and unprejudiced observer" the historian should be and wrote him off as merely the last of those who wrote history as romance.⁶⁷ For the new school of Maitland and Tout, it was Freeman's anachronistic attempts to justify present politics by past precedent that discredited his scholarship.⁶⁸ While maintaining an attitude of respect, the *English Historical Review* treated him more as a synthesizer than an original researcher.⁶⁹

Freeman was in a sense a casualty of changes in audience expectations, but much more so of his own inherent strengths and weaknesses. His popular success was limited not because he cared too little for general readers, but because he had too much invested in his message to them. His immersion in private myths blinded him to measure and proportion in his public elaboration of them. What were to him analogies that demonstrated the master plan struck his audience as irrelevant pedantry; the lengthy analyses of sources intended to salvage truth more often convinced them of its elusiveness and made Freeman out a casuist. Having converted his own beliefs into moral absolutes, he self-righteously attacked the disagreement of others as defiance of a common morality. His avenging zeal more than once carried him beyond the limits of good taste and good judgment. To be sure, Freeman did serve his audience well in more general ways. Although the continuity of English history had by then become a commonplace, it was still reassuring to have it made "scientific" by such an authority. The public could and did take comfort in the thumping assurance of his patriotism and appreciated his giving the Conquest the full-dress treatment it had long deserved. And surely for every one reviewer who deplored Freeman's simplistic partisanship, there were a dozen readers secretly comforted by his reduction of all western history to one vast psychomachia: to a clearcut struggle between good and evil in which England—provided she forsook the Turk—could place herself complacently on the side of faith, civilization, and progress.⁷⁰

Freeman revealed the central imperatives of Victorian historical writing all the more openly because he thought that he had justified his positions by scientific scholarship alone. Just as much as Arnold and Carlyle, he was concerned to rescue the past from obscurity and determinism, to endow historical study with the "moral certainty"

that made human action possible and meaningful. He needed to argue for the unity of history in order to vindicate the universality of his own assumptions about political behavior. He advocated the most exacting methods of source criticism in order to set his hero-worship on a firmer basis. His scholarship was more scientific—in the sense of being more thorough and more self-conscious—than that of his men-of-letters predecessors, but the important point was that he adopted the guise of the new German professionalism in order to aggrandize, not to undercut, the emotional authority of the Victorian sage. Like those predecessors he signalled his request for a belief that went beyond mere credence by adopting a self-consciously “literary” approach—an epic style that justified the awe and reverence his vision deserved.

By pointing up how easily traditional Victorian assumptions about history’s cultural value could be assimilated to the new academic professionalism, Freeman’s career forecasts a pattern distinctive to England. At the ancient universities, the power of historical thinking would continue to outweigh the command of specialized skills in the study of history. History’s main purpose would remain the teaching of useful lessons. The historical scientist’s research would have to be “applied,” not “pure,” if he were to fulfill his highest duties. To an extent unprecedented elsewhere, English historians remained responsive to the wider society’s demand for practical and uplifting history. Freeman demonstrates the resulting contradictions between public and professional priorities in their most flagrant form: the further ramifications of those contradictions will be the subject of my epilogue.