

*One Word More . . .*

The Cover of *Carlyle Studies Annual 25*

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ACCORDING TO THE VARIOUS ACCOUNTS, CARLYLE SAT down in the studio of James McNeill Whistler in 1872, situated himself, and exclaimed, “An’ now, mon, fire away.” Slightly taken aback, Whistler seems to have done just that, not by immediately diving into the task of creating a final version of the portrait, no doubt Carlyle’s wish, but by quickly executing a series of studies, including a pen-and-ink drawing, an oil sketch, an oil painting of the head and shoulders, and yet another of Carlyle’s profile. The ultimate result was *Arrangement in Grey & Black, No. 2: Portrait of Thomas Carlyle* (now in the Glasgow Museum and Art Gallery), a masterpiece based upon Whistler’s earlier portrait of his mother.

The sittings for the portrait, as usual for either party, were not an easy affair. In the end, Whistler’s cry, reported by William Allingham, “For God’s sake, don’t move,” had fallen on the ears of the restless Sage one too many times. The final affront came in July 1873, the date of Carlyle’s last sitting to Whistler. A frustrated and annoyed Carlyle had come to believe that the remaining artistic challenge for Whistler was not perfecting his likeness, but that of his coat. For the next sitting, Carlyle sent the coat.

The cover of *Carlyle Studies Annual 25* features one of the studies that Whistler produced, probably in 1872, and probably very quickly, as though he had used a palette knife instead

of brushes. When compared to the immense final version of Whistler's portrait, the study is small, measuring a scant 22 12/16"H x 17"W (57.8 cm x 43 cm), but it afforded the artist enough space to rough in the characteristics of his subject that captured his direct attention. Of particular note are Carlyle's cheeks, painted in what seems a surprising if not unnatural deep cranberry red. In this aspect of Carlyle's visage, however, Whistler was not apparently exaggerating. Alexander Muir, for example, describes Carlyle in 1860 as "a man of six feet, and extremely strong; moustache and beard growing gray, and cheeks more than red,—purple in colour!" (Wilson 5: 399). Whistler no doubt was fascinated by the same characteristic as he quickly represented Carlyle's deep-colored cheeks.

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, acquired the Whistler study of Carlyle in September 1977 from Berry-Hill Galleries, New York, by means of a fund established in 1952 by Arthur and Margaret Glasgow, both of whom had Richmond ties, not the least of which were to Arthur's sister, the novelist Ellen Glasgow (1873–1945). The editors are grateful to the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, and in particular to Howell Perkins and Caryl Burtner for their assistance in obtaining digital images and permission for use of the painting, and in providing information relating to its provenance.

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