

The Afterlife of Thomas Campbell and 'The Soldier's Dream' in the Crimean War

Tai-Chun Ho

On 10 August 1854 in the House of Lords, Lord John Campbell appealed to the Prime Minister Lord Aberdeen for government help to secure a site in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey for the erection of a statue of Thomas Campbell (1777–1844).¹ Immediately after the death of Campbell in June 1844, a committee had been established to erect a memorial to the poet in Westminster. Friends of the late poet, Lord Campbell and Aberdeen not only served as pall-bearers during the procession of the poet's funeral in Westminster on 3 July 1844 but also as committee members for 'The Campbell Monument'.² Although Campbell was already a highly esteemed poet and his works were widely popular in his lifetime, the committee's public subscription campaign was far from successful. On 23 August 1844, 'An Englishman', in a letter to the editor of *The Times*, proclaimed that he read the committee's advertisement for subscriptions to Campbell's memorial with 'feelings both of surprise and regret'. He criticized the proposal to squeeze another memorial into the crowded space of the abbey, pointing out that if a statue of Campbell was to be erected, it should be placed in Glasgow, his birthplace, where it 'may have its due moral influence'. He asked, 'what influence [...] will it have in Westminster Abbey?'³ Though the sculptor W. C. Marshall had executed a life-size statue of Campbell in 1848, it was not admitted to Poets' Corner because the committee had failed

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¹ 'Monument to Thomas Campbell the Poet', HL Debates, 10 August 1854, vol. 135, §§ 1501–04, *Hansard Online 1803–2005* <<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1854/aug/10/monument-to-thomas-campbell-the-poet>> [accessed 10 June 2014].

² For a detailed account of the funeral and a list of the committee members, see *Life and Letters of Thomas Campbell*, ed. by William Beattie, 2nd edn, 3 vols (London: Hall, Virtue, 1850), III, 441–44.

³ 'The Poet Campbell', letter to the editor, *The Times*, 23 August 1844, p. 5.

to pay the ‘200 guineas’ demanded by the dean and chapter of Westminster Abbey for a site for the statue.⁴

The Crimean War (1854–56), however, dramatically elevated Campbell’s status. Addressing the long-delayed issue of Campbell’s memorial, a letter to the editor of *The Times* commented on 3 August 1854: ‘Surely at this moment, when the naval songs of Campbell may be exercising no mean influence in the Baltic and Black Seas, this strange omission needs only to be noticed to command instant attention.’⁵ In November 1854, claiming that ‘during the last war his effusions did more to nerve the hearts of the British seamen than those of all the other poets put together’, a critic for the *London Journal* appealed: ‘We hope it requires only a hint to stimulate the country to the slight degree of liberality necessary to enable the “Campbell Monument Committee” to place this suitable memorial of one of its greatest poets among the other “Immortals”.’⁶ As both quotations suggest, by this time Campbell had come to be remembered not merely as a popular poet — commonly referred to as the ‘Bard of Hope’ after his first and longest didactic poem *The Pleasures of Hope* (1799) — but, given the influence of his war poems during the Crimean conflict, as a national poet. It was mainly because of the mid-Victorians’ belated recognition of Campbell’s literary achievements as a pre-eminent early nineteenth-century war poet, and because of the impact of his poems during the Crimean War that his statue was finally admitted into Poets’ Corner in May 1855.⁷

Today the best known and most acclaimed Crimean War poet is undoubtedly Alfred Tennyson for ‘The Charge of the Light Brigade’ (1854) and ‘Maud’ (1855), whereas Campbell is a name that critics seldom associate with the Crimea. Nevertheless, during and shortly after the war, Campbell was revered as a much more popular and established war poet than Tennyson. In a letter of 1 January 1855, author and dramatist Mary Russell Mitford asked: ‘Have you seen Alfred Tennyson’s fine poem, “The Charge of the Light Brigade”, printed in *The Examiner*, some weeks ago?’. She exclaimed that ‘it is a grand war song: except one or two of Campbell’s, I know nothing of the sort’.⁸ In an 1857 review of the poetry published during and after the war, while indicating that ‘Mr. Tennyson is unquestionably a poet of far higher order than Mr. Campbell, and his poem on the Balaklava charge is not unworthy of him’, essayist and critic George Brimley added, ‘it would, we think, be rash to prophesy for it anything like the same popularity as has been attained by “Hohenlinden” and

⁴ ‘The Campbell Monument’, letter to the editor, *The Times*, 21 June 1852, p. 4.

⁵ ‘Westminster Abbey — Campbell’s Monument’, letter to the editor, *The Times*, 3 August 1854, p. 4.

⁶ ‘Thomas Campbell’, *London Journal*, 11 November 1854, p. 152.

⁷ ‘The Poet Campbell’, *The Times*, 7 May 1855, p. 11.

⁸ *Letters of Mary Russell Mitford*, ed. by Henry F. Chorley, 2 vols (London: Lane, 1925), II, 265 (1 January 1855).

“The Battle of the Baltic”.⁹ Both commentaries remind us that during and immediately after the war, Campbell’s early nineteenth-century war poems were secure in their canonical status and served as a cultural benchmark for contemporaries, while Tennyson’s ‘Charge of the Light Brigade’ was still a new piece — one that would only gradually be enshrined as the most iconic Crimean War poem for modern readers.

Studies of Crimean War poetry tend to focus on ‘The Charge of the Light Brigade’. While the poem is often dismissed as the Poet Laureate’s unthinking patriotic response to *The Times*’s despatches, two important interventions appeared in 1985. Christopher Ricks and Edgar Shannon, in their detailed analysis of Tennyson’s manuscripts and letters, elucidate the poet’s artistic labour in composing the poem, whereas Jerome McGann’s new historicist article draws attention to the poet’s engagement with the ideological conflicts during the war, contending that Tennyson appropriated the heroic traditions of French paintings to affirm the threatened role of the British aristocratic class. Later, in a 2003 article exploring the power of poetic representation and the problem of depicting the charge, Trudi Tate further argues that the poem ‘is in fact a subtle and even anguished reflection upon the Crimean War’.¹⁰ In recent years, Matthew Bevis has questioned a tendency among literary critics to disparage Victorian war poetry in the light of First World War poetry, maintaining that the ‘sense of Victorian war poetry as a synonym for victorious war poetry needs to be reconsidered’.¹¹ Given that the Crimean conflict was the first modern war documented by correspondents sending home telegraphic despatches for mass circulation in newspapers, critics have paid increasing attention to the relationship between newspapers and Crimean War poetry. In her book-length study, Stefanie Markovits has made a case for the impact of newspapers on artistic representations of the war: ‘What might be called the pressure of the press changed the shape of novels, poems, and paintings about the War.’¹²

⁹ [George Brimley], ‘Little Lessons for Little Poets’, *Fraser’s Magazine*, February 1857, pp. 218–33 (p. 223).

¹⁰ Christopher Ricks and Edgar Shannon, ‘“The Charge of the Light Brigade”: The Creation of a Poem’, *Studies in Bibliography*, 38 (1985), 1–44; Jerome McGann, ‘Tennyson and the Histories of Criticism’, in *The Beauty of Inflections: Literary Investigation in Historical Method and Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), pp. 173–203; Trudi Tate, ‘On Not Knowing Why: Memorializing the Light Brigade’, in *Literature, Science, Psychoanalysis, 1830–1970: Essays in Honour of Gillian Beer*, ed. by Helen Small and Trudi Tate (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 160–80 (p. 166).

¹¹ Matthew Bevis, ‘Fighting Talk: Victorian War Poetry’, in *The Oxford Handbook of British and Irish War Poetry*, ed. by Tim Kendall (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 7–33 (p. 9).

¹² Stefanie Markovits, *The Crimean War in the British Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 3.

While building on the work of recent critics, this article will argue that the two-year military campaign waged at a long distance was not only a media war but also a literary one, during which civilian poets drew on established forms of war poetry to make sense of the pressing issues provoked by the conflict overseas. This literary war was manifest in the myriad ways Victorian poets and artists rewrote Campbell's 'The Soldier's Dream' (1804) to address the reading public's anxieties and expectations about the welfare of the common soldier. In what follows, I will first highlight Campbell's prominent role as a grandfather of Victorian war poets and briefly discuss his dream-vision poem. Then, I will trace the ways in which Victorian poets and artists reworked Campbell's dream-vision framework at specific moments of the conflict. The rewritings of Campbell's poem this article will consider include: *Punch's* 'The Soldier's Dream' alongside an accompanying cartoon by John Tenniel of 1 April 1854; the poem 'A Night on the Heights', penned by the pseudonymous poet 'Private Jones' in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* in December 1854; a piece of commemorative pottery designed by George Eyre in January 1855; and Part III of Tennyson's 'Maud', published in *Maud and Other Poems* in July 1855. By examining these works at the specific moments of the conflict, I will demonstrate that mid-Victorians deployed Campbell's dream vision to negotiate the soldier's public duties and private emotions, as well as the government's responsibilities for the soldier and his family. While in general mid-century commentators utilized Campbell's dream vision to foreground a benign government's efforts to care for the soldier, Tennyson's conclusion of 'Maud' offered an ironic rendition of this interpretation. Instead, a civilian's dream of fighting a glorious war becomes a nightmarish vision of the government's military incompetence and the suffering of the rank and file in the Crimea.

Campbell's 'war-broken soldier'

One important credential of Campbell as a grandfather of the Crimean War poets was that several of his noted war poems — 'Hohenlinden' (1802) and 'The Soldier's Dream', for instance — were either inspired by or based on the battle scenes he witnessed during his travels in Germany in 1800. In Edmund Blunden's now classic article 'The Soldier Poets of 1914–1918' (1930), Campbell is the only pre-First World War poet mentioned: 'It was one of the romantic things about Thomas Campbell that he had seen as well as sung the Battle of Hohenlinden, or at any rate people said he had seen it, which was remarkable enough.'¹³ Blunden downplays Campbell's experience of war with the word 'romantic' in order to highlight the novelty

¹³ Edmund Blunden, 'The Soldier Poets of 1914–1918', in *An Anthology of War Poems*, ed. by Frederick Brereton (London: Longman, 1930), pp. 13–24 (p. 13).

and distinctive identity of the soldier-poets of his own First World War generation. However, to the mid-Victorians, the authority of Campbell's eyewitness experience as expressed in his war poems was indisputable. In the 1854 article cited above, the writer for the *London Journal* noted that during Campbell's visit to Germany, he 'witnessed the fields of Ratisbon and Ingoldstadt, which inspired his mind with terrible ideas of the horrors of war' ('Thomas Campbell', p. 152). Edited by his biographer William Beattie and published in 1848, Campbell's letters make it clear that he was at first drawn to, but subsequently haunted by, the bloodshed he saw in Ratisbon in 1800. In a letter of that year, he remarks that he 'indulged in what you call the criminal curiosity of witnessing blood and desolation'. He goes on to comment on this experience: 'Those impressions at seeing numbers of men strewn dead on the field — or, what was worse — seeing them in the act of dying, are so horrible to my memory, that I study to banish them' (*Life and Letters*, ed. by Beattie, 1, 284, 285).

The germ of 'The Soldier's Dream' was the horrific battles Campbell witnessed in 1800 (*Life and Letters*, 1, 384). The poem opens with an anonymous combatant's view of the aftermath of battle:

Our bugles sang truce — for the night-cloud had lowered
And the sentinel stars set their watch in the sky;
And thousands had sunk on the ground overpowered,
The weary to sleep, and the wounded to die.¹⁴

Among the 'weary to sleep' is a soldier who reclines on a 'pallet of straw' and safeguards the dead soldiers' bodies with a 'wolf-scaring faggot' (ll. 4–5, 6). 'At the dead of the night' he sees 'a sweet vision' in his dream that he is running 'from the battle-field's dreadful array' to 'the pleasant fields' to be reunited with his family and friends (ll. 7, 9, 13). As he reaches home, he 'pledge[s]' that he would never again leave them. However, just as he hears his wife's voice — 'Stay, stay with us, — rest, thou art weary and worn' — the 'war-broken soldier' awakes full of sorrow (ll. 21–22). The twenty-four line poem is anti-war, in that it captures a battle-traumatized soldier's war-weariness and longing for home. Campbell's use of the dream vision is deeply ambivalent. His insistence that the soldier-speaker dreamt the vision 'thrice ere the morning' (l. 8) and the adjective 'sweet' (l. 7) suggests an element of indulgence. Although the vision fulfils the soldier's wish for a reunion with his family during his sleep, it also turns out to be an illusion: he wakes up and returns to the harsh reality of war.

While the structure of the dream vision which lies at the centre of Campbell's war poem is a long-established one that goes back to the

¹⁴ 'The Soldier's Dream', in *The Poetical Works of Thomas Campbell* (London: Moxon, 1837), pp. 100–01 (ll. 1–4). All references to 'The Soldier's Dream' are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically by line number.

conventions of medieval literature, Campbell popularized the use of it in the context of war for subsequent artists. Since its publication, ‘The Soldier’s Dream’ had been readapted in both poetical and visual forms and it returned to the fore during the Crimean War.¹⁵ Campbell’s dream-vision framework allowed non-combatant poets and artists to express private emotions through the first-person voice of an emotionally distraught soldier, alternating between domestic and military scenes. The tripartite narrative structure of the dream vision — which entails the soldier’s anxiety about his military duties before he falls asleep, his dream vision of home and his life on reawakening — offered a motif that was easily adapted by civilian artists and readily intelligible to educated readers. As we shall see, the mid-Victorians transformed Campbell’s ‘war-broken’ soldier into a patriotic hero, who was deeply troubled by his family’s welfare but ultimately soothed by the vision of a female authority figure.

The mid-victorian patriotic hero

On 1 April 1854, a few days after England’s declaration of war on 27 March, *Punch* published a poem bearing the title ‘The Soldier’s Dream’. In *Punch*’s rendition, what unsettles the departing soldier is not war-weariness but the practical question of how his wife might eke out a living without the main breadwinner. In his dream, he first sees that his presentiment of his suffering family has come true: his children are starving and crying for food and his wife does not know where to turn for help. Just when they are ‘shivering for cold on a blanketless bed | And crouched round a hearth whence the last spark was gone’, the soldier sees ‘a kind lady’, who ‘look[s] like an angel of grace’, arrive at his house and offer them food, fuel, and clothing.¹⁶ The lady explains to the soldier’s family: ‘’tis the offering of friends [...]’. It comes from the country your husband defends, | Which to you pays a debt that to him it feels owed’ (ll. 23–24). Published immediately after the departure of English troops in February 1854, *Punch*’s ‘Soldier’s Dream’ is a direct response to the public’s concern over the fate of army wives and families left behind without adequate provision.

¹⁵ For instance, the publication of Campbell’s poem immediately prompted a parody entitled ‘The Soldier’s Second Dream’. In 1837, Edward Moxon commissioned William Turner to produce twenty-one vignettes for an illustrated edition of Campbell’s works including ‘The Soldier’s Dream’. Also, a few months prior to the outbreak of the Crimean War, in July 1853, *Punch* printed a satirical rendition. See A. Z, ‘The Soldier’s Second Dream’, *Anti-Gallican*, December 1804, pp. 472–74; *Poetical Works of Thomas Campbell*, pp. 100–01; and ‘The Soldier’s Dream’, *Punch*, 9 July 1853, p. 11.

¹⁶ ‘The Soldier’s Dream’, *Punch*, 1 April 1854, p. 130 (ll. 15–16, 17, 19). Further references to the poem will be cited parenthetically by line number.

It was 'A Naval Officer', in a letter to the editor of *The Times* on 22 February, who first drew the public's attention to the welfare of soldiers' wives. Stating that 'the pay of the soldier is wholly inadequate to maintain his wife, even without children, in his absence on foreign service', he contended that 'no better proof could be given of deep and heartfelt interest in the welfare of our soldiers [...] than by an earnest effort upon the part of the country to ameliorate the condition of their wives and families'.¹⁷ What the country and people at home should do for the soldiers' dependents became the subject of public discussion in the following months as an outpouring of letters addressing this issue appeared in the columns of *The Times*. On 23 February, 'A Young Englishwoman', who read the letter by 'A Naval Officer' quoted above, confidently expressed that 'there are thousands (young ladies especially) who would willingly come forward, and turn to good account, in aid of the soldier's wives, the many hours they now spend daily in comparative idleness'.¹⁸ She suggested that women could contribute to the war effort by visiting soldiers' families or by working for a bazaar selling articles to raise funds for them. Later, on 2 March, *The Times* printed a letter by 'M. Walker', a soldier's wife, who wrote that since the departure of her husband, she had 'nothing but my needle to depend on to provide for myself, one child, and another unborn. I have neither money nor the necessaries for my confinement'.¹⁹ She appealed to readers of *The Times* to look into her case and grant her admittance to the Queen Charlotte's Lying-In Hospital. Her request was immediately answered. On 6 March, a committee member of the hospital wrote that 'M. Walker' whose husband was a soldier of the Scots Fusilier Guards, was given admission already and that 'the committee will, as long as they have any means left at all, be too happy to receive the wives of those brave men now gone to fight our battles'.²⁰ While there were various local war efforts to aid the soldier's wives and children, the official organization was the Central Association for the Aid of the Wives and Families of Soldiers Ordered to the East, established in March 1854.²¹

The *Punch* poet transformed Campbell's dreamer's longing for home into a soldier's anxiety about his family. The dream of this Victorian soldier is not an illusion but a vision, 'a glad dream' that makes him feel 'sorry no more' (l. 7) and that in turn helps shape his understanding of the war, a pattern we shall see in subsequent rewritings. The pivotal moment of this 'glad dream' is illustrated in John Tenniel's cartoon that accompanies the

¹⁷ 'Soldiers' Wives', letter to the editor, *The Times*, 22 February 1854, p. 12.

¹⁸ 'Soldiers' Wives', letter to the editor, *The Times*, 23 February 1854, p. 9.

¹⁹ 'Soldiers' Wives', letter to the editor, *The Times*, 2 March 1854, p. 9.

²⁰ C. H., 'Soldiers' Wives', letter to the editor, *The Times*, 6 March 1854, p. 10.

²¹ For philanthropy and women's war efforts in the Crimean War, see Myna Trustram, *Women of the Regiment: Marriage and the Victorian Army* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 161–89.

poem with the caption ‘The Soldier’s Dream’ (*Fig. 1*). In the foreground of the cartoon is the soldier sleeping face up, while his children are visited by two angels in the top left and his wife bows and shakes hands with a lady in the top centre. Here, the lady visitor’s face-to-face encounter with the soldier’s wife visualizes the war efforts of middle- and upper-class women as invoked in the correspondence columns of *The Times*. The *Punch* poet’s reworking of Campbell’s poem accompanied by the cartoon is thus an attempt to ease the public’s anxiety about the condition of soldiers’ families, to shore up the self-image of the civilian middle class, and to embolden soldiers to fulfil their public duties without having to worry about their families: ‘His heart will be stouter, his arm will be stronger, | When he knows that his children are clothed, taught, and fed’ (ll. 24–25). Thus, the poem that captures the soldier’s anxiety about his family, his hopes of a lady’s philanthropic intervention, and his emotional resolution in his waking life — ‘I stood to my arms with a heart free from grieving, | All fears for my wife and my babes chased away’ (ll. 30–31) — becomes itself a testimony to the government’s war effort on the home front and the soldier’s dedication to his service at the onset of the war.

Meanwhile, the poem suggests that there is a kind of military covenant between the soldiery and the nation: since soldiers sign up for the army and run the risks of dying on the battlefield, the nation is obliged to underwrite the welfare of their families. This doctrine, however, was problematized when, in the aftermath of the Battle of Alma on 20 September 1854, *The Times* reported the suffering of the wounded both in the Crimea and at Scutari Hospital. In an article of 10 October 1854, one correspondent wrote that ‘the wounded were left, some for two nights, the whole for one, on the field [. . .]. There were no proper means for removing the wounded from the field.’²² In an alarming report of 12 October, Thomas Chenery, the Constantinople correspondent for *The Times*, disclosed the shortage of the medical supplies and staff for the wounded transported from the Battle of Alma to Scutari Hospital. Claiming that ‘the British government has not even found linen to bandage their wounds’, Chenery called on the public to donate money and clothing to the wounded.²³ The government reacted to Chenery’s report by establishing the Royal Patriotic Fund commission to raise subscriptions exclusively for the widows and orphans of the mariners, soldiers, and sailors who died in the war.²⁴ In the following two rewritings of Campbell’s dream vision, we shall see how civilians, informed by newspaper coverage of the suffering of soldiers in the wake of Alma, reworked Campbell’s dream vision to negotiate a troubled relationship between the government, soldiers, and their families.

²² ‘The Battle of the Alma’, *The Times*, 10 October 1854, p. 7.

²³ [Thomas Chenery], ‘The Crimea’, *The Times*, 12 October 1854, p. 7.

²⁴ ‘The Patriotic Fund’, *Illustrated London News*, 21 October 1854, p. 381.

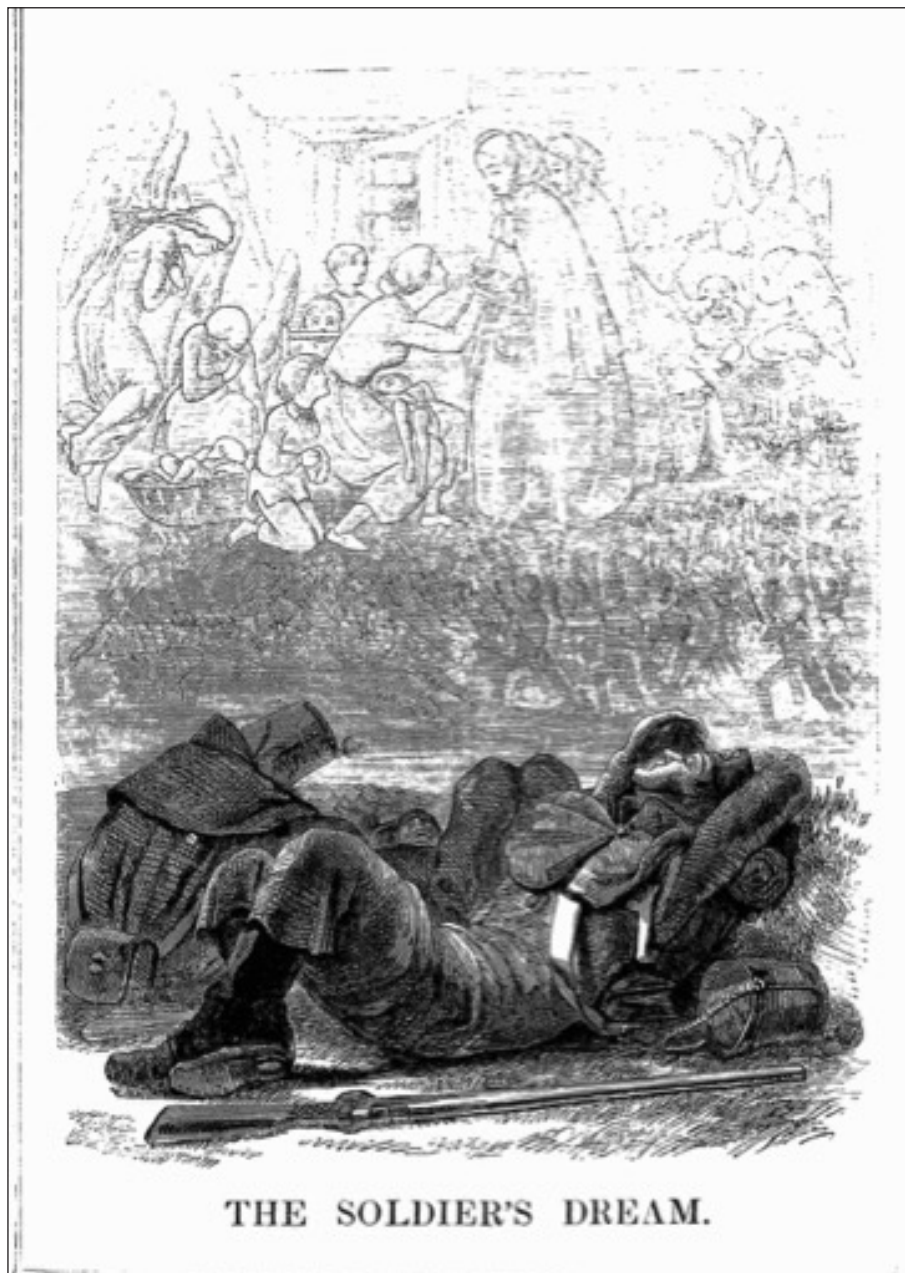


Fig. 1: [John Tenniel], 'The Soldier's Dream', *Punch*, 1 April 1854, p. 130.

In January 1855, Samuel Alcock and Company, a pottery manufacturer based in Burslem, Staffordshire, produced a 'Royal Patriotic Jug' designed by George Eyre. In an advertisement printed in *The Times*, the company announced that it manufactured this jug for anyone desiring to 'possess a memorial [...] illustrative alike of the horrors of the War, as well as of the nation's grateful efforts to alleviate them evidenced by the Royal Patriotic Fund'.²⁵ While Staffordshire pottery was made in profusion during the war to commemorate specific people and events, Eyre painted the jug with the battle and home scenes of Campbell's dream-vision poem.²⁶ There are obvious parallels between Tenniel's *Punch* cartoon and the jug's scenes but the most striking difference is that Eyre incorporates the ethical dimension of the sufferings of the soldiers into his visual representation (*Fig. 2*). In Tenniel's cartoon, the sleeping soldier remains unscathed and his wife, receiving help from two charitable ladies, appears to be only concerned with the problems of the household. In contrast, on the jug, sitting in the foreground of the battle scene is a wounded soldier whose head is covered with a bandage; in the middle ground, another, either wounded or dead, is being carried away. On the other side of the jug, superseding the charitable lady in *Punch*'s cartoon is an angel carrying a banner inscribed 'The Patriotic Fund'.



Fig. 2: 'Royal Patriotic Jug', designed by George Eyre and manufactured by Samuel Alcock and co., Hill Pottery, Burslem, 1 January 1855. Courtesy of the National Army Museum, London ©.

²⁵ *The Times*, 21 March 1855, p. 14.

²⁶ Asa Briggs, *Victorian Things* (London: Batsford, 1988), p. 164.

As only those who lost their men at the front line were entitled to claim from the fund, the angel can be read as a harbinger of death. Hence, the soldier's wife is in mourning, and covering her face with her hands. In this sense the artefact brings the cost of the war into the mid-Victorian parlour. However, for the wounded soldier who sees his family visited by the angel in his dream, the Patriotic Fund is a quasi-official guarantee that, if he dies, his family will receive financial support from the government. The envisioned scene brings reassurance for the soldier, and hence he is encouraged to carry out his duties. By advertising the government's official public subscription through the angel, Eyre reworked Campbell's dream vision to acknowledge the sacrifices and sufferings of both the soldier and his family and to highlight the government's efforts to assuage them.

In December 1854 *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* printed 'A Night on the Heights' by the pseudonymous poet 'Private Jones'. The title of the poem refers to the evening spent by a British Grenadier after allied victory at the Battle of Alma. The poet incorporates details of the battle into the framework of Campbell's dream vision to produce what appears to be a soldier's account of war. The soldier-speaker is a young Grenadier Guard traumatized by his first combat experience:

My heart was filling fast as I weary down did lie —
My heart was filling faster as I looked upon the sky;
And then it went and burst, for I thought that I should cry.
'Why, William, what's the matter? What's the matter Bill?' says I.²⁷

The poet draws on the rhyme 'sky' and 'die' (ll. 2, 4) in the opening scene of Campbell's poem while putting much greater emphasis on the soldier-speaker's psychological conflict in the aftermath of Alma. 'I thought that I should cry' suggests an emotional breakdown and the poet registers his conflicting emotions in the final line of this stanza, when the speaker addresses two masculine voices, William and Bill, simultaneously.

As the dialogue of the two voices progresses, it becomes clear that William represents the emotional, sensitive side of the soldier who is horrified by the ugliness of killing — 'Such a bloody piece of business as to-day you've had to do?' (l. 14) — and is anxious about his family — 'Bill! How about them — you know! — in Old England all alone?' (l. 32) — and the consequence of his death — 'And if some stray Russian bullet — !' (l. 45). At one point, the soldier realizes that William is the 'little boy' in him: 'I thought he grow'd up hard, and a soldiering did go; | But I find he's still a youngun, and I hope he'll never grow' (ll. 22–24). Here, the soldier's ambivalence towards William epitomizes his contradictory feelings towards

²⁷ Private Jones, 'A Night on the Heights', *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, December 1854, pp. 743–45 (ll. 5–8). Further references to the poem will be cited parenthetically by line number.

‘soldiering’. As a soldier, he ought not to have doubts about killing enemies or worry about his family. At first, the soldier is not troubled by William’s voice and simply asks him to stop: ‘I’m about the Nation’s business: there aint nothing half so clear: | And how *am* I to do it, if you goes on like this here?’ (ll. 35–36). And yet, William’s voice finally renders him hysterical: ‘Spare me, though I am a soldier! Strike these thoughts upon my brain, | Strike them dead, that they may never, never, never rise again!’ (ll. 47–48). Not long after his breakdown the soldier falls asleep and dreams that he is back in England.

In the second part of the poem, having searched for his children in vain, the dreaming soldier encounters Britannia:

‘Bill, my son,’ says she, ‘what ails you, that you doubt me so to-night?
Do you think that I shall never learn my faithful to requite?’

‘Iron soldier, tender-hearted! tender-hearted, true and tried,
See whose hands in mine are clasped — see whose little feet I guide!
Thine or mine!’ says she, and then her robe of glory parted wide,
And I saw two little children clinging at my Country’s side. (ll. 79–84)

The poet reiterates the nation’s obligations to the soldier and his family through the figure of Britannia. The soldier not only sees his children being protected but has a direct encounter with Britannia who calls him ‘Bill, my son’.²⁸ It is interesting to note that the soldier’s wife is absent from his dream and he is only concerned about his children. The implication of this emblematic scene is that the soldier who has undergone his first experience of combat is himself a son who desires to be comforted by a maternal Britannia. ‘Private Jones’ thus recast Campbell’s dream vision into a soldier’s struggle with his conflicting emotions, suggesting that his vulnerability is embraced by the nation. The epithet Britannia gives him — ‘Iron soldier, tender-hearted’ — acknowledges both traditional manly virtues and the emotional side of the soldier. Significantly, it is when Britannia helps regulate the soldier’s conflicting emotions that he wakes up with renewed confidence in his vocation. In the final stanza of the poem, the poet plays on the masculine rhyme ‘fulfil’, ‘Bill’, ‘still’, and ‘will’ (ll. 93–96) to show the reconciliation of the two conflicting masculine voices and to reinforce the message that the soldier called Bill fulfils his duty.

²⁸ *Punch* had disseminated this maternal image of Britannia protecting and taking care of the soldiers’ children at home in two cartoons. See ‘Britannia Taking Care of the Soldiers’ Children’, *Punch*, 4 March 1854, p. 84; and ‘Britannia Takes the Widows and Orphans of the Brave Under her Protection’, *Punch*, 21 October 1854, p. 158.

As we have seen, Crimean War poets and artists borrowed Campbell's dream vision to produce a fabricated testimony to the government's war relief. The soldier's dream vision — whether through the figure of the lady philanthropist, the angel of the Patriotic Fund, or Britannia — dispels his anxiety about his family and reaffirms his conviction in his public duties. Part III of Tennyson's 'Maud', however, was an exception to this pattern. The final section of this article will explore how Tennyson's speaker provokes readers' anxieties about the condition of the common soldier at the closing stages of the war.

Tennyson's madman

When publisher Edward Moxon informed Tennyson of Campbell's death in 1844, Hallam Tennyson recalled: 'My father missed him, for he was a kind-hearted man and a brilliant talker in a *tête-à-tête*; and very good-natured whenever they met.'²⁹ Tennyson was not only a friend of Campbell's but knew his works well from childhood. He once said: 'When I was eight, I remember making a line I thought grander than Campbell' (Hallam Tennyson, II, 93). Hallam Tennyson's *Memoir* reveals that Tennyson often invoked Campbell as a poet of an older generation against whom he measured himself, reciting and analysing his war poems, including 'The Soldier's Dream'.³⁰ As I hope to show, the poetic influence of Campbell can be seen in Tennyson's heavily allusive war poem 'Maud', published in *Maud and Other Poems* in July 1855, Tennyson's first volume after becoming Poet Laureate in 1850.

'Maud' concerns a mentally unstable speaker's failed relationship with a neighbour's daughter, the eponymous Maud. In the poem, the speaker obsessively dreams of Maud and strives to interpret his sights and visions of her:

If Maud were all that she seemed,
And her smile were all that I dreamed,
Then the world were not so bitter.³¹

According to Susan Shatto, the etymology of Maud derives from 'a Norman-French form of the old German "Mahthildis", a compound name meaning "might", "strength" and "battle", "strife"'.³² Maud, in the war plot of the

²⁹ Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1897), I, 220.

³⁰ Hallam recorded that Tennyson regarded the line 'The sentinel stars set their watch in the sky' from 'The Soldier's Dream' as 'unquantitative' while praising the next line 'The weary to sleep and the wounded to die' (II, 202, 289).

³¹ 'Maud', in *Poems of Tennyson*, ed. by Christopher Ricks, 2nd edn, 3 vols (London: Longman, 1987), II, 513–84 (p. 583) (l. 225–27). All references to 'Maud' are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically by part and line number.

³² *Tennyson's Maud: A Definitive Edition*, ed. by Susan Shatto (London: Athlone, 1986), p. 33.

poem, is a passive, silent, and emblematic female figure who arouses the speaker's war fantasies. In Part II, the speaker kills Maud's brother in a duel and is haunted and driven to madness by the ghost of Maud. At the beginning of Part III, the speaker, however, claims that he has recovered from his madness and decides to enlist, having seen a vision of Maud in his dream:

She seemed to divide in a dream from a band of the blest,
And spoke of a hope for the world in the coming of wars —
'And in that hope, dear soul, let trouble have rest,
Knowing I tarry for thee', and pointed to Mars
As he glowed like a ruddy shield on the Lion's breast. (III. 10–14)

The speaker's dream vision is one saturated with emblems of war: 'Mars', 'Lion', and Maud herself. Tennyson's portrayal of Maud as a woman who emerges 'from a band of the blest' resembles the female authority figures we have seen in earlier rewritings of Campbell's dream vision. Here, the crucial difference is that Maud embodies not the maternal but a martial image of Britannia exhorting the speaker to engage in the war. This image of Maud is best illustrated in a *Punch* cartoon published soon after England's declaration of war in April 1854 with the caption 'Right against Wrong' (Fig. 3). It depicts a warrior-like Britannia carrying a sword in one hand, holding a standard on her shoulder, and standing next to a lion.

Significantly, the speaker's dream vision of Maud marks the decisive turning point of his attitude towards war:

And it was but a dream, yet it yielded a dear delight
To have looked, though but in a dream, upon eyes so fair,
That had been in a weary world my one thing bright;
And it was but a dream, yet it lightened my despair
When I thought that a war would arise in defence of the right,
That an iron tyranny now should bend or cease,
The glory of manhood stand on his ancient height. (III. 15–21)

The speaker's vision of war echoes the pro-war rhetoric of early 1854 that heralded the coming of the war as a regenerative force for a mercantile society, after forty years of morally stagnant peace.³³ Just like Campbell's soldier who dreams of 'a sweet vision [...] thrice ere the morning', Tennyson's speaker refers to the effects of his dream three times, stressing how his vision 'yielded a dear delight | To have looked' and 'lightened my despair'. At first glance, the dream vision in 'Maud' seems to serve the same function as we have seen in earlier rewritings: it inspires the

³³ Part III of 'Maud' is the earliest part of the poem Tennyson composed around March 1854 (Shatto, pp. 9–10).



Fig. 3: 'Right against Wrong', *Punch*, 8 April 1854, p. 144.

speaker to enlist at the outbreak of the Crimean War. Far from assuaging anxiety, however, the conclusion of 'Maud' actually heightens readers' uncertainty, generating a heated debate over what contemporary reviewers termed Tennyson's 'war philosophy'.³⁴ While some approved of the

³⁴ Edgar Shannon, 'The Critical Reception of Tennyson's *Maud*', *PMLA*, 68 (1953), 397-417 (p. 401).

speaker's voluntary military service at the end of 'Maud', several critics such as Goldwin Smith and William Gladstone denounced it. 'What the speaker wants is not a just and necessary war, but war in itself — war, as a cure [...] for the hysterical mock-disease of a heart-broken and, one must add, guilty man', protested Smith in November 1855.³⁵ 'What interpretation are we meant to give to all this sound and fury?', wrote Gladstone in his 1859 review. He continued: 'We would fain have put it down as intended to be the finishing stroke in the picture of a mania which has reached its zenith.'³⁶

One important reason why some reviewers read the speaker's ardent desire to participate in the Crimean conflict with such a profound scepticism is that by the time 'Maud' appeared, their initial excitement and national pride had given way to disillusionment with military incompetence and the troops' privation. In the wake of the collapse of the Aberdeen coalition in late January 1855, the leader writers of *The Times* described the military campaign as a nightmare for both the reading public and the soldier. On 30 January 1855, *The Times* wrote: 'Is there nobody who can wake us from this hideous dream, and show us the British army in the Crimea not so wholly unchanged from that which began to land there on the 14th of September, only four months since?'.³⁷ A few days later, on 3 February, speaking of the plight of the soldiers, a leader lamented that 'from the 14th of September till now their life has been one long, troubled, miserable dream, — battle, and famine, and rotting wet, and icy cold, increasing labour, and diminishing strength'.³⁸ Furthermore, the British government faced serious problems convincing men to join the army. As recruitment did not operate on conscription but on a voluntary system, the government had to introduce the Foreign Enlistment Bill, an unpopular and controversial move that allowed foreign mercenaries to fight for England. On 4 January 1855, in a letter to the editor of *The Times*, commenting on the manpower shortage in the army, a writer argued that the fundamental solution to the problem was to raise the soldier's pay to reflect the nation's appreciation of their service:

Increase the soldier's pay, and we shall not lack men in this
or any other emergency — men ready to serve their country at

³⁵ Goldwin Smith, 'The War Passages in *Maud*', *Saturday Review*, 3 November 1855, pp. 14–15 (p. 14).

³⁶ William Gladstone, 'Tennyson's Poems', *Quarterly Review*, October 1859, pp. 454–85 (p. 461). I should emphasize that Gladstone changed his opinion of 'Maud' in 1878, acknowledging that Tennyson's treatment of the war was far more complicated than he had assumed. For his recantation, see Hallam Tennyson, II, 398–99.

³⁷ Leader, *The Times*, 30 January 1855, p. 8.

³⁸ Leader, *The Times*, 3 February 1855, p. 6.

duty's call. We cannot expect patriotism alone to be the only motive in inducing our youth to enter the ranks of the army.³⁹

As these quotations suggest, it was the public's increasing awareness of the difficulties of recruiting men and of the privations of the common soldier that prompted critics to question Tennyson's speaker's reading of his service as a moral purge. Why, in the circumstances, does Tennyson's speaker decide to enlist?

In several respects, the speaker's dream vision in 'Maud' is a deeply ironic one that confounds the expectations of a reading public familiar with the conventions of Campbell's dream-vision framework. It is ironic in that, unlike the husband-and-father soldiers in earlier rewritings of Campbell's poem, Tennyson's speaker is an unmarried recruit deprived of the claims to citizenship that go with heading a family. While the dream visions we have encountered so far transport the married soldier home to his family, Tennyson's reverses the movement: his dream vision motivates the single and heartbroken speaker to sail 'on a giant deck' to be reunited with Maud on the battlefield: 'I saw the dreary phantom arise and fly | Far into the North, and battle, and seas of death' (III. 34, 36–37).

As the speaker wakes up, he asserts that his vision of war 'had been in a weary world my one thing bright' (III. 17). The word 'weary' is a key one which first appears in Campbell's 'Soldier's Dream' and recurs in mid-Victorian rewritings. In Campbell's poem and Private Jones's 'A Night on the Heights', the word denotes both the soldier's physical exhaustion and war-weariness in the aftermath of a battle. In the context of 'Maud', however, Tennyson's use of the word 'weary' hints at the speaker's languor or loss of masculine power on the home front. It would seem that it is his crisis of masculinity, concomitant with loss of family, love, and status and manifested in his madness that induces him to participate in public action. The outbreak of the war provides an opportunity for him to reclaim 'the glory of manhood [...] on his ancient height' (III. 21).

Tennyson, in other words, rewrites Campbell's soldier's yearning for home and peace into a civilian speaker's desire for power and war. His rendition evinces a civilian's anxiety over his masculine status in wartime. Indeed, Part III of 'Maud' can be read as a critique of the civilian's war fantasy. That some contemporary reviewers could still identify with the speaker's dream of performing his public duties in the arena of war suggests that they also shared his anxiety about the non-combatant's status on the home front. Meanwhile, it is important to reiterate the Laureate's defence of his monodrama. Tennyson insisted that 'Maud' is told from the perspective of a madman and that 'the whole was intended to be a new form of dramatic

³⁹ Desaix, letter to the editor, *The Times*, 4 January 1855, p. 10.

composition'.⁴⁰ In this sense, his deployment of Campbell's dream vision in a dramatic form further underlines the poet's critical distance from the politics of the war. Tennyson leaves to his readers the task of interpreting the vehement speaker's dream of war, one that radically reworks the conventions of Campbell's dream vision and challenges the reading public's conceptions of war and suffering.

In a letter of 11 December 1854, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, residing in Italy, declared: 'I understand that literature is going on flaggingly in England just now, on account of nobody caring to read anything but telegraphic messages.'⁴¹ Her observation highlights the dominance of modern forms of reportage and the literary challenges facing armchair civilians depicting a conflict already mediated by the press. However, reading together the mid-Victorian rewritings of Campbell's 'Soldier's Dream' not only reveals the pervasive influence of Campbell but also sheds light on how mid-Victorians harnessed Campbell's dream-vision framework to address distant suffering. The dream-vision poems thus chart the artistic endeavours of civilian poets to respond to the private emotions and well-being of the soldier in a foreign land: a humanitarian concern for the suffering of fighting men that marks the enduring legacy of Crimean War poetry.

⁴⁰ Letter to Archer Thompson Gurney, in *The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson*, ed. by Cecil Y. Lang and Edgar F. Shannon Jr, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981–90), II: 1851–70 (1987), p. 138 (6 December 1855).

⁴¹ Letter to Mary Russell Mitford, in *The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, ed. by Frederic G. Kenyon, 2 vols (London: Smith, Elder, 1897), II, 453 (11 December 1854).