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The gallant six hundred: performing the Light Brigade into a heroic icon

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THE GALLANT SIX HUNDRED:
PERFORMING THE LIGHT BRIGADE
INTO A HEROIC ICON

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Theatre

by
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ABSTRACT

History is not so much what actually happened as how we have received and disseminated what happened. This reception and dissemination take place through a variety of media, many of which are not the purview of the traditional historian. It is in the trifles of daily life that we find the patterns of cultural norms – the ethos of the society that is as unnoticed by that society as the air it breathes. Society makes choices that affect the future based on what has been disseminated, rather than on the original event. This is especially true of such military disasters as the charge of the Light Brigade at the battle of Balaclava in the Crimea on October 25, 1854. The purpose of this dissertation is to examine how the event of the charge of the Light Brigade was shaped over time until it became lodged in the British cultural ethos as an icon of heroic and national identity. The dissertation focuses on various types of dissemination: public records, newspaper articles, published personal journals, paintings and lithographs, music, and theatrical entertainments.

The written document is composed of five chapters: Chapter One relates the event, the methodology and the importance of the study; Chapter Two examines the accounts of the Charge published immediately following the event, along with the public record of the Parliamentary investigation into the Charge; Chapter Three focuses on the second generation of dissemination through art and music; Chapter Four discusses the representations of the charge of the Light Brigade on the stage, especially through the eyes of one man who rode in the charge and later became an actor, including its satirization by George Bernard Shaw in *Arms and the Man*; and Chapter Five draws conclusions concerning the perpetuation of the icon of the Light Brigade into this century. A Bibliography and two Appendices will be included providing the text of Tennyson's "The Charge of the Light Brigade" and permissions for use of images within the dissertation.

CHAPTER 1

“I began with a desire to speak with the dead.” (Greenblatt)

I have been haunted by these words of Stephen Greenblatt’s ever since I first read them. An historian is, after all, primarily a medium at an academic séance, in which the historian seeks some communication across the barrier of time with the past. As with any séance, the messages are cryptic, incomplete, and subject to interpretation on the part of the recipients. Often those who surround the medium hear what they want to hear; their belief in a particular way of life, or thought, or cultural identity is confirmed rather than confronted. This confirmation is particularly true in interpreting an historic event that has taken on a life of its own and continued well beyond the actual event itself. Historians have been compared to detectives, people who follow clues that lead ultimately to the “truth” regarding an event. It is better to consider them archaeologists, who attempt to make meaning out of the few fragments that remain as artifacts.

The dead with whom I desired to speak were cavalrymen of the mid-nineteenth century: those who rode and survived or died in the famous charge of the Light Brigade at the Battle of Balaclava during the Crimean War in 1854. In some sense I succeeded: some of the dead at least spoke to me, through memoirs and journals and recorded interviews that had been preserved in libraries. But I discovered in my journey that these were not the same dead as the ones I went looking for. My dead were from poetry, novels, reproductions of paintings; they were all young, they were all brave, and they were all heroic. The charge itself was presented as a tragic romance surrounded by a nimbus of glory and gallantry. Instead, the dead that I found were confused, defensive, and more than a little suspect in their constant glorification of an event that I discovered was far from romantic, and clouded by actions that were far from heroic or gallant. Why was *my* Light Brigade so far from the actuality? And how on earth did my Light Brigade come into being?

Thus was this project born: I set out to discover the process by which the actual events of the battle of Balaclava, with very human participants, became “the Charge of the Light Brigade,” complete with its own mythic heroes and iconography. The investigation into this specific process is, as well, an investigation into how particular events are remembered and included in the discourse of a culture and a nation. As Foucault so clearly points out, our discursive practices control not only what is being discussed, but how we may discuss it. In this sense, this study is also the study of the evolution of a specific discursive practice that might be called “Light Brigadeness.” Prior to 1854, it did not exist. By the early twentieth century, it could be referenced in popular crime novels by a few words.¹ Somehow between 1854 and 1900 this military disaster became deeply imbedded in the British consciousness not as a disaster, but as an icon of heroism and gallantry. The qualities of Light Brigadeness that emerged at the end of the evolutionary process derive from the earliest descriptions of the men of the charge and have become enshrined in the later paintings, music and theatre that surrounded the developing icon. These qualities would be: devotion to duty even when it meant almost certain death, a certain panache and cheerfulness in carrying out the duty, and an unquestioning acceptance of the charge of the Light Brigade as a moment of supreme and heroic sacrifice. This is not only a personal quest; the process of turning images of warfare into icons that in turn are used as rallying cries for the next generation at war has extensive ramifications in today’s world.

¹ In Dorothy Sayers’ *The Nine Tailors*, Peter Wimsey explains how he comes to be at the wedding of a friend of his brother’s. He is there because his brother, Gerald, has fallen from a horse because “he had to go flyin’ over the field like the Light Brigade.” In another Sayers work, Peter says to his friend and brother-in-law, Chief Inspector Parker, “yours not to reason why, old lad.” Margery Allingham has her detective say the same thing to his manservant, to which the manservant responds, “yes, but I don’t want to do or die.” Jasper Fforde’s first novel, *The Eyre Affair*, features a heroine in an alternate English universe where the Crimean War is still occurring; she is a survivor of the charge of the Light Armored Brigade, in which her brother died and was blamed for the mishap. In Anne Perry’s first novel in her new series that takes place during World War I, an anti-war student at Oxford tells the protagonist that his brother had romantic visions of war: he thought it would all be like the Light Brigade.

The Light Brigade incident at Balaclava took place in the wider context of the British Empire abroad during the reign of Queen Victoria. Although it is considered the “first” war during her reign, and the first after the battles against Napoleon at the beginning of the century, the British had, in fact, been almost perpetually in the midst of “skirmishes” abroad in defense and extension of its empire. The first Afghan wars took place in the 1840s, but because the fighting was carried out by troops already stationed in the area, and perhaps because the fights were against “natives,” they were not considered a “major” war. The Crimean War, however, was the intervention of Britain and France supposedly on behalf of the Ottoman Turks against the “oppression” and “harassment” (according to the English) of the Russians. It was, of course, wholly coincidental that the mercantile interests of both France and Britain would be seriously compromised if Russia controlled the access from the Mediterranean through the Baltic and Black Seas to trade in the east.

Because the action involved Britain as a nation sending troops stationed at home into the field in a foreign country, the Crimean action was designated a “war,” and was prosecuted by the government through its generals. The British were also fighting against a power which they understood as a “nation” equal to Britain, rather than against natives in their colonial holdings who took it amiss that the British were enforcing British rule on their native soil. It is easy, especially through the lens of post-colonialism, to see the British Empire as a monolithic entity that enjoyed prosperity and power through extensive colonial holdings that had not been seen since the days of the Roman Empire. It would be a mistake, however, to see the Imperialists as wholly self-satisfied. It had only been forty years since the battle of Waterloo, and while the defeat of Napoleon got rid of a major threat to the British, it was the last in a long line of wars that threatened England’s sovereignty over its own lands, much less those they “owned” abroad.

To be a Victorian in the 1850s was not to stand secure in the might of the Empire; rather it was to feel distinctly insecure about what the Empire had gained, and to be always looking over one's shoulder for the next power that might try to take away what the British had fought for and therefore considered their own by right of conquest.

The threat of Russian domination in the Crimea, therefore, was not a threat to be taken lightly; to the Victorians at the time, it was a very real disturbance in the workings of the Empire and the recently-gained security against outside forces. Although Waterloo, a land battle, was the final defeat of Napoleon, it had taken the combined forces of the English and the Prussians, as well as other smaller nations, to definitively and finally beat the French. The battle that the English looked back upon as their great military achievement was the battle of Trafalgar, which Nelson won with English ships, and which, in hindsight, established the British as the ruling force on the seas. The Crimean War was to be a combined sea and land war, and although the infantry and cavalry were supposed to be in fine fighting form, they had not been tested in many years. Jack Tar was the popular icon that came out of Trafalgar, but with a new war, that icon was about to be replaced. The figure that emerged from the Crimean War as the popular icon was the cavalryman, and the cavalryman was specifically one who had ridden in the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava.

Because I am looking at a popular figure, rather than one generated by the government or other ruling body and imposed on society, it is important to look at a variety of "texts" that reflect the different interests of British society on an everyday level. Thus I will be concentrating not on the official "histories," but rather various forms of performance that helped shape the perception of the event of the charge of the Light Brigade over time. In the tradition of new historicism, I will be considering newspaper reports, published journals, official dispatches

that were published because of the aftermath of the event, paintings and their reproductions, sheet music and theatrical performances of various kinds.

METHODOLOGY

History is not so much what actually happened as how we have received and disseminated what happened. This reception and dissemination take place through a variety of media, many of which are not the purview of the traditional historian. It is in the trifles of daily life that we find the patterns of cultural norms – the ethos of the society that is as unnoticed by that society as the air it breathes. In order to interrogate the process of transformation for the Light Brigade, therefore, it is necessary to use a combination of techniques. Although I approach the material as an historian, I am not so much interested in the history of the actual event as I am by what the event became in history. Thus, although a new historicist approach is appropriate to the types of materials I use as sources, a cultural studies approach is necessary in analyzing the way the sources work together to create a cultural reality.

Although I do not believe that the definitive word can ever be said on any particular event (much less an entire era), there is much to be said for the Victorians' attention to detail and artifact. As the myriad books on the Light Brigade produced over 150 years prove, mine will not be the last commentary, only the most recent. That does not prevent me from thinking it worthwhile to attempt such a commentary. History is an interpreted narrative, using the artifacts available, constructed as a persuasive argument. All historians have a bias, and there can be no history free of that taint; it is better to be clear that the narrative I write is a constructed argument of how I interpret the artifacts and the implications they have for our received history. I am not writing the history of the event of the charge of the Light Brigade. I am instead examining the history of the transmission of the Light Brigade as an iconic practice. Because I am focused

primarily on the transmission rather than investigating the event, I am interested in the performative nature of the documents themselves rather than the truth of the matters asserted.

We can conceive of “performance” when addressing the documents in two distinct modes: conscious and unconscious. The idea of a person “performing” for a specific audience without herself being an actor has become a common one in recent years. Television commentators speak of a politician’s “performance” at a debate or other public forum where the politician is present and presenting. In this sense we mean the conscious choices of words, gestures, responses that are part of the politician’s self-presentation. This connotation of performance is in the same sense as we speak of “performing” a task. There are conscious choices involved in the outward appearance and language. Of course, the unconscious choices might also become “performance” in the case of a politician, and commentators often gleefully pounce on the unconscious choices that are perceived as slips, or revelations of the “true” persona of a politician. What Judith Butler, among others, has argued is that we are all performing, all the time. The conscious choices that we make are only part of the performance – the reasons behind the choices, the ones that we might think as being “natural” or “obvious,” are only natural or obvious because they have been ingrained in us by constant mimicry of others’ performance of those choices from our infancy. Thus we look not to something inherent in gender, or class or ethnicity, but rather to learned performances which we then take on and perpetuate by performing gender, class and ethnicity for the next generation.

I would argue that the performance of the Light Brigade began as a very conscious one, with careful choices in language and gesture being made always with the thought to a permanent and critical audience (whether that were the British public, a commanding officer, or a reporter). There came a point in the transmission of the concept of the Light Brigade, however, when the

performances became less conscious and more unconscious – the performance of the Light Brigade had become part of the language of British culture and therefore the self-conscious performance of the medium of a painting or a piece of music relied on the unconscious performance of certain ideas associated with the Light Brigade through previous, more conscious performance.

Thus I examine the “language” of the various texts – literary, visual, and oral – and how these languages contain culturally encoded signs that steer the receiver of the texts in a particular direction and to a particular conclusion. In this I am relying primarily on the literary/critical work of both Stephen J. Greenblatt and Lee Patterson, in their attempt to find meaning through contextual analysis, or as Lawrence Buell puts it, “the discourse negotiate[d] between a model of interpretive criticism and a model of empiricist history” (“Literary History as a Hybrid Genre”). Buell articulates the demand to constantly interrogate texts – the texts themselves are always subjective and often controlled by the ethos of the particular time and place. While new historicism has often been criticized for breaking down historical narrative to the point that no narrative exists, it is possible to understand the deficiencies of the narrative one can create and yet create a viable narrative for the purposes of persuasive argumentation.

The best example for me of a scholar who embodies this dual vision is the historian Peter Brown. In his works on ancient Rome and Late Antiquity, Brown is well aware that he is in many ways swimming against the current tide by producing a book that can dare to be entitled simply, *Rome*, but in his writing he makes it clear that he is bringing new critical thinking to bear on pieces of information from both old and new sources. He employs an interdisciplinary method that examines not only official texts of the time, but also visual and literary art, commemorative tablets, and other artifacts that were ignored by earlier historians. He is careful

not to smooth over inconsistencies, but rather to point them out in order to show the complexity of the time he is investigating. The result is a coherent narrative that embraces rather than ignores or explains away differences, presenting a richly nuanced picture of a particular time. Because I am examining the history of a transformation of an event rather than the history of the event, it is precisely in the inconsistencies that I find the clues that suggest a particular shaping of the historical narrative that alters the original perception of the event as a disaster, and over time renders it instead an icon of gallantry and heroic courage. I am, therefore, writing a narrative that is primarily about the movement away from the actual events of the battle of Balaclava and towards this heroic icon; in the tradition of Peter Brown, it is possible to write a narrative that is coherent without ignoring discrepancies and inconsistencies.

At the same time, I am writing specifically about war, and the way in which it is mediated through visual, textual and oral presentation. As such, Jean Baudrillard's work, especially on the first Gulf War, is a primary influence on the way I approached the project.² In questioning the sense of authenticity that was automatically given to paintings and theatre alike, I came to the realization that "The Charge of the Light Brigade" has become a complete simulacrum of the event of the charge of the Light Brigade. As a result, just as with the Gulf War, our "memory" (our cultural memory, at least) of the event bears no resemblance to the moment when over six hundred cavalymen rode at an emplacement of active Russian guns during the battle of Balaclava in 1854.

Baudrillard's approach is especially important since he writes of a mediated war, because the Crimean War is generally considered to be the first such war; for the first time there were reporters "embedded" with the troops, who wrote dispatches published in national newspapers,

² Paul Virilio also writes a great deal about war and voyeurism; his work, however, seems to me to be much more focused on the specific acts of warfare carried out by soldiers rather than the mediation of war for the benefit of the larger public.

artists who were commissioned by specific publishing houses to create sets of sketches for publication and reproduction, and even photographers present. Much of Baudrillard's sensibility concerning the first Gulf War could easily be applied to the Crimean War. He is especially concerned with the instantaneous and non-stop coverage that occurred before and during the brief conflict with Iraq. Considering the novelty of the war correspondent and the ability to send information with a speed hitherto unheard of, as well as the saturation of the images and reports and commentaries on the reports and letters to the editors concerning the reports, the Victorian British public was in a position similar to that of the American public. The news from the Crimea seemed to be almost instantaneous, especially after the telegraph was put through to Varna: British newspapers could have the detailed information about any engagement within twenty-four hours of the event. The artists' sketches were copious and reproduced in great number. To the British citizen, then, it must have seemed as though s/he lived in a constant media blitz, just as Baudrillard points out the American citizen did through the constant CNN coverage of the first Gulf War, as well as other media.

Andrew Hoskins points out in *Televising War: From Vietnam to Iraq* that

[I]t is precisely the media and in particular television that have since ensured they remain "written in" to a lasting narrative of Vietnam. The so-called first television war has actually become more significant in its televisual presence since *as* history than its effects or otherwise in the routinized and predicatable news times in American homes of the 1960s and early 1970s. The medium may have been the message, but it is now, quite literally, history (16).

In the same way, the Crimean War was "mediated" for the British public in a way that gave the illusion of knowing "everything" that was going on, but of course that was impossible. Even someone like William Howard Russell, who wanted to write about "everything," had to pick and choose his stories; no matter how wide a net he cast for stories, there were some he didn't know about, and some he didn't choose to report. Because the mediated version of the Crimean War

seemed exhaustive, it would have been easy to assume that as a citizen one was as knowledgeable about what was occurring in the Crimea as the people on the ground. This assumption played into the ultimate shaping of the history of the charge of the Light Brigade: first reports from Russell were so influential that they led almost immediately to the composition of the most famous poem of the Crimea: “The Charge of the Light Brigade,” by Alfred, Lord Tennyson. Just as Hoskins points out that “the media may have been the message, but it is now, quite literally, history,” so Russell’s dispatches, along with other contemporaneous commentaries and reflections on the event, became the history; the mediated version usurped the position of the actual event. In the Baudrillardian sense, the charge of the Light Brigade did not take place any more than the Gulf War did.

Finally, in approaching the paintings and sheet music of the day, as well as the later theatrical productions, I have not claimed the authority of either an art historian or a musicologist. Rather, I approach the material as a form of text that can be interpreted not for its painterly achievement or musical erudition, but as yet another form of communication that was available to the general public. Hoskins, when analyzing the visual memories of the Vietnam War, makes it clear that although television played a large part in the American public’s perceptions of the war, the images that remain most clear are the ones documented in photographs. He points out that the television is ephemeral, and the news broadcasts were constricted by time requirements, but the photographs could be viewed over and over, for as long as one liked (19). Thus the initial reports had their place in first informing the public about events in the Crimea, but the paintings especially were integral to maintaining and transmitting the event of the charge of the Light Brigade to a future generation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Because this project is interdisciplinary in scope, I have drawn from various traditions of criticism. In addition to Baudrillard and Stephen Greenblatt, I have used historical documents, histories of the Crimean War and specifically of the charge of the Light Brigade, art criticism and cultural analyses drawn from art of the period, cultural studies of Victorian musical parlor practices, theories of mythmaking and cultural studies of the British Empire and its self-perpetuation through children's literature. Each of these disciplines and sub-disciplines has offered a unique approach to the idea of the creation of the Light Brigade as simulacrum.

There are numerous works of history concerning the Crimean War and the Light Brigade, beginning immediately following the end of the Crimean War (1856) up to this moment in time. The early works tended to be either eyewitness accounts or publications of collected sketches, maps, etc. A sampling of the titles are as follows: *The Illustrated history of the war against Russia*, E.H. Nolan (1857); *Memorials of Captain Hedley Vicars, Ninety seventh regiment*, Catherine Marsh (1856); *Pictorial history map of the Russian war 1854-5-6: with maps, plans, and wood engravings*, George Dodd (1856); *Complete history of the Russian War, from its commencement to its close: giving a graphic picture of the great drama of war*, publ. J. G. Wells (1856); and William Howard Russell's own collection of his letters to the *Times*, *The war; from the death of Lord Raglan to the evacuation of the Crimea; with additions and corrections* (1856).³

The most influential work, from which most other historical works have drawn their materials, is the monumental *The invasion of the Crimea: its origin, and an account of its progress down to the death of Lord Raglan*, Alexander William Kinglake (1863-87). This work,

³ One of the many people who wrote descriptions of the Crimean War, in the larger context of the military in Europe, was George Brinton Sheridan, later one of the Generals of the American Civil War. He was in the Crimea as an observer at the time.

which does not even describe the entirety of the war (it stops before the fall of Sebastopol), takes eight volumes. Volume 4 (1863) is entirely taken up with the battle of Balaclava. Kinglake set out to be the historian's historian, with no stone unturned, no document unreviewed, and no living person uninterviewed.⁴ This, of course, was not possible, but the massive and apparently exhaustive scale of his project renders it the most comprehensive work on the subject, and daunting to attempt to take on or do better. His work included an appendix that is Lord Lucan's defense, once again, against the charge that he was ultimately to blame for the fiasco that lost the Light Brigade. Kinglake reviews the "evidence" concerning the events that led up to the charge of the Light Brigade, including numerous personal testimonials concerning the character of Lew Nolan, the messenger who brought the confusing order. He comes to the conservative conclusion that Nolan acted rashly, and Lucan might have inquired further, but ultimately no one person was specifically to blame; it was simply one of the tragedies of war.

Kinglake's assessment of the event and its causes tended to be the accepted view that most other authors of the nineteenth century followed, whether writing history or their personal memoirs after Kinglake's publication. The early part of the twentieth century saw the publication of more journals and memoirs, notably W. H. Pennington's, a survivor of the charge who became an actor, as well as documentation of the survivors of the charge of the Light Brigade as the number began to dwindle. The majority of these writers follow Kinglake, with slight deviations. The major upset to Kinglake's extensive description and analysis of the events of the battle of Balaclava came in 1953, with the publication of *The Reason Why*. Written by Cecil Blanche Woodham-Smith, who took her title from a line in Tennyson's poem, this book was in two parts; the first contained a detailed treatise on the old practice of purchasing

⁴ In this respect Kinglake appears to be taking Thucydides as his model, whose remarkable account of the Peloponnesian War was derived from interviews and first-hand knowledge.

commissions, which often meant that the commanding officers were not necessarily those of most experience or ability. The second half is a searing indictment of the three major players involved in the decision-making: Lord Raglan, commander-in-chief; Lord Lucan, commander of the cavalry; and Lord Cardigan, the commander of the Light Brigade. The main point of this work was that the three officers didn't know their business, were pig-headed aristocrats who had no concern for the men under their command, and followed orders because they couldn't think for themselves. This evaluation of the event mainly stood for several decades, especially after Tony Richardson based a movie, *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, on the second half of the book. Released in 1968, it was essentially a protest against the state of the modern English military, and certainly a commentary on the contemporary events in Vietnam.

From the mid-seventies onwards, a reassessment of the descriptive material available, the same available to Arthur Kinglake and Kinglake's account itself, has resulted in a new perspective that tends to distribute blame (as opposed to Kinglake's tendency to withhold blame) among several people. This includes the young officer, Lew Nolan, who delivered the message. It is apparent from Kinglake and others that he was a hothead, disliked Lucan, and was incensed that the Light Brigade hadn't seen more action. The difference in interpretation at this time is not that new evidence has surfaced; rather that we interpret the actions of such a young man less tolerantly than those in the nineteenth century did. This most recent assessment has hardly laid the matter to rest, however. As recently as November of 2004, with responses in 2005, there have been articles advancing fresh theories as to "the reason why," and a recent series on PBS has reopened the issue once more.⁵

In analyzing the pictorial images of the charge, I have used primarily works of cultural criticism that take the paintings as a starting point for discussion of different concepts. *Frontline*

⁵ I will discuss the contemporary profile of the charge of the Light Brigade in my conclusion.

Artists by Peter Johnson (1978), *British Artists and War* by Peter Harrington (1993), and *Visions of War* by David D. Perlmutter (1999), are all analyses of military paintings and the artists who created them. Each author brings a slightly different perspective to his work. Johnson looks at war art from the Crimea to the Second World War. He focuses specifically on William Simpson of the Crimea as one of the first well-known war artists who created their drawings from experience. Harrington focuses specifically on British war and art, as his title implies. He covers the period from 1760 through the First World War, and includes an entire chapter on the artists of the Crimean War, commenting on the various types of images that were produced and the artists' particular interests and styles. Perlmutter's work is much broader in scope and focuses on types of representations rather than periods or wars. He does, however, discuss the Crimean War at some length because of its importance as the first mediated war.

Of a slightly different nature are *Recreating the Past: British History and the Victorian Painter*, and *Masculinities in Victorian Painting*. The first, by Roy Strong published in 1978, are an expansion of a series of lectures at the Pierpont Morgan Library, and thus more conversational in tone, but the book gives a remarkable distillation of one type of receiver of the Victorian paintings, which offers some idea as to how the Victorians themselves might have viewed representations of the Light Brigade. The second, by Joseph A. Kestner, published in 1995, includes a chapter on the "valiant soldier" representations in Victorian art, discussing the complex nature of both the art and the masculinity it purports to represent. These two works, twenty years apart in conception and publication, demonstrate the development of critical thinking in the way theoreticians interpret the meaning and purpose of the art itself. Strong's work suggests an unproblematic acceptance of the paintings he discusses; Kestner suggests a

more nuanced reading that reveals as much about the ethos of the society for which the paintings were intended as about the subject matter of the paintings themselves.

In studying the sheet music of the period, I have based my approach on two specific ideas. The first is that the parlor piano was the site of cultural formation for both the player and the listener. This idea, described as “girling” by Judith Butler in a broader context, is given considerable discussion in several works, most notably *Music in Other Words*, a collection of essays on music in Victorian Literature by Ruth A. Solie, published in 2004. Her contention, and others’, that the ubiquitous nature of the “girl at the piano” meant that the “girl” in questions was being formed by society as well as performing Victorian young womanhood, can be extended to include the texts of music she was performing, and the reception of those texts by her listeners, especially her immediate family. The second idea (and this is true of the paintings as well) is that the formation of cultural assumptions occurs in childhood, and that we must look to the things of childhood – stories, illustrations, paintings and music – to discover how the Victorian successor of Empire was being molded into the next generation of British society. In this I found the most helpful text to be Rashna B. Singh’s *Goodly is Our Heritage: children’s literature, empire and the certitude of character*, published in 2004. Ms. Singh’s extensive exploration of standard children’s stories shows over and over that the stories are based on certain assumptions of the inherent naturalness of British colonization, and that these assumptions are passed on to the young readers through their enjoyment of the text and their identification with the characters.⁶ Singh’s work also implies the perpetuation of myth as the most basic of children’s understanding of their world.

⁶ This was certainly true for me: I grew up on English books from the 1930s and 40s, and my first exposure to the charge of the Light Brigade was in a short story called *Jackanapes*.

THE ST. CRISPIN'S DAY CONNECTION

Much has been made of the fact that the battle of Balaclava occurred on the 25th of October, 1854, which is St. Crispin's Day, and therefore the anniversary of the battle of Agincourt in 1415, in which Henry V defeated the French with a numerically inferior force of arms. It is before the battle of Agincourt that Henry, in Shakespeare's *Henry V*, gives his famous St. Crispin's Day speech, in which Henry incites his men to courageous and valorous combat by suggesting that they are somehow privileged to be among a special fighting force. Their deeds at Agincourt will be remembered forever, and "gentlemen in England, now abed" instead of at Agincourt will feel left out and jealous that they were not among "we few, we happy few, we band of brothers" (IV.iii.4-66). Although quite a few of Shakespeare's plays were out of fashion in the mid-nineteenth century, *Henry V* decidedly was not. There were three new productions mounted of the play, including one by Samuel Phelps at Sadler's Wells, in the 1850-60 decade.

The play has been used on more than one occasion to rouse the nationalist instinct among Britons, the most notable being the frankly propagandistic version starring Laurence Olivier during World War II. Out of the speech itself have come at least two titles of theatrical productions: Tom Hanks' recent *Band of Brothers*, and Imelda Staunton's 2005 play, *We Happy Few*, about an all-women Shakespearean company touring Britain during World War II. When the first publications coming out of the Crimean War appeared, many of them contained quotations from *Henry V* at the beginning of the book, and most of the quotations were either all or part of the St. Crispin's Day speech. Fanny Duberly's journal, which I discuss in Chapter 1, quoted an earlier speech in *Henry V*,

Now all the youth of England are on fire,
And silken dalliance in the wardrobe lies:
Now thrive the armourers, and Honour's thought
Reigns solely in the breast of every man. (II.i.1-4)

Arthur Kinglake's work begins with the St. Crispin Day speech, as do several pieces of sheet music of the time, specifically ones that are a musical rendition of Tennyson's poem. Clearly, the authors and memoirists of the day thought that there was a connection between the action at Agincourt and the action in the Crimea, especially with the charge of the Light Brigade. The reunion dinner that took place on Balaclava Day twenty-one years after the event itself was very much a performance of "we happy few, we band of brothers." The Balaclava commemorative society that was formed shortly after the dinner was careful to allow as members only those who had actually ridden in the charge: "those abed in England" (or on sick leave at Scutari, as was more likely) were not to be included in the society. The presence of *Henry V* and St. Crispin's Day is always in the background although rarely explicitly stated, and appears to exert a strong influence over how the survivors of the charge came to view themselves.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Unlike many Victorian poems that have fallen out of favor, Tennyson's "Charge of the Light Brigade" has passed into cultural idiom. The phrase "theirs not to reason why, theirs but to do and die" is often misquoted as "to do **or** die," but it is part of our vocabulary of quotations. "Into the Valley of Death rode the 600" is also with us in popular idiom, as well as "cannon to the left of them, cannon to the right of them." We may no longer know to what battle or what war the poem refers, but as I can attest from two years of explaining my dissertation topic to people, if I say "the charge of the Light Brigade," I am invariably met with "into the Valley of Death rode the 600!" as friends and acquaintances triumphantly prove that they are "in the know" about my topic. The poem is still in most anthologies used in high schools and colleges, whether or not the teacher assigns the poem. A recent syndicated column by a well-known business writer discussed the Light Brigade episode as an example of bad business management based on his recent reading of *The Reason Why*, mentioned above (Dauten September 23, 2007).

The first episode in a news series on PBS entitled “The History Project” concerned the charge of the Light Brigade and the causes of the fatal charge. The Light Brigade is a part of our Anglophone cultural heritage and our everyday vocabulary, and quotations from the poem have become a shorthand reference to Light Brigadeness.

I have divided the body of the work into three chapters, each of which focuses on one particular type of text and follows a roughly chronological development from the event until its parody on stage in George Bernard Shaw’s *Arms and the Man* in 1894. Although the types of text overlap chronologically, there is a particular development from the written word, through visual and oral images (pictures and music), to dramatic presentations, which incorporate traditional text with visual and oral images to create a theatrical event.

Chapter Two begins with an overview of the actual event of the charge of the Light Brigade at the battle of Balaclava in October of 1854. From there I move to a close reading of the first public reportage of the event, which was William Howard Russell’s dispatch, and compare it to the language the Tennyson used in his poem, which followed almost immediately after the public report. I then take up the political upheaval that occurred in the wake of Russell’s reporting, including the extensive coverage of Lord Lucan’s recall and hearing before the Houses of Parliament, which were reported in the *Times* on a daily basis. Finally, I look at two journals kept by eyewitnesses to the event itself. The first is by a woman, Fanny Duberly, who was the wife of a Quartermaster of one of the regiments, and who published her journal almost immediately following the war. The second is a private journal, which was only published long after the author’s death, after it was discovered in a collection of family papers in an attic. The difference between the two journals demonstrates to what extent the first narrative was shaped with an eye to publication, since the second journal is outspoken in its condemnation

of the charge of the Light Brigade and had a great deal to say about what should have happened to the responsible parties. I conclude with a review of how these early textual representations were already shaping the charge of the Light Brigade into myth, and therefore setting the stage for the further representations.

Chapter Three takes up the issue of the development of myth – the necessity of transmitting a particular version of events in order to teach the younger generation, who were not necessarily aware of the event when it initially took place, how to interpret the event in a cultural context. In this chapter I explore visual representations, specifically referring to three separate artists who worked at different periods and from different perspectives with different intents, with reference to other representations that were also being presented to the public and reproduced. I also look at a sampling of the sheet music that was written to commemorate the battle of Balaclava and the charge of the Light Brigade in particular, including three musical versions of Tennyson's poem. Here I examine the language used in presenting the music, the instruction to the performer in terms of tempo and style, and relate these texts to the performative aspect of the transmission of the myth in the setting of the home by young girls of the family.

Chapter Four moves into the realm of theatre. There are several kinds of theatrical presentations which draw on the Light Brigade icon. The first is the kind of play where the plot has nothing to do with the event, but a character in the play is represented as being a survivor of the charge who is down on his luck. The second is a play whose plot centers around a character who leaves to fight in the Crimea and returns just in time to save his sweetheart from the evil squire. There is an act that takes place in the Crimea, although the charge is only described rather than staged. The third major play is Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*, which uses the

iconography of the Light Brigade as it existed by 1894 in order to expose the stupidity of warfare.

In my final chapter I review the process by which the charge of the Light Brigade was transformed from event into myth, and investigate its ongoing presence in our contemporary society, as well as comment upon its relevance in the current political climate.

CONCLUSION

I have attempted in this project to trace a trajectory of development in discursive practice from a single event, the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava, to a concept of that event that can best be called Light Brigadeness. Using a variety of theorists from different disciplines, I will construct an argument that examines the texts that arose from the initial event, the transmission of the essence of the texts through paintings and music to succeeding generations, and the embodiment on the stage of the final concept of Light Brigadeness. The next chapter will examine first the actual event, and then reflect on the textual materials that were a response to the initial event, shaping the event even as it was being reported.

CHAPTER 2

Civilization is an agreement to keep people from shouting “Fire!” in a crowded theatre, but the moments we call historical occur when there is a fire in a crowded theatre; and then we all try to remember afterward when we heard it, and if we ever really smelled smoke, and who went first, and what they said. The indeterminacy is built into the emotion of the moment. The past is so often unknowable not because it is befogged now but because it was befogged then, too, back when it was still the present. (Adam Gopnik, 37)

Gopnik was discussing a difference of opinion concerning what Stanton said at the death of Lincoln, but his comments could very easily be referring to the event of the charge of the Light Brigade at the battle of Balaclava early in the Crimean War. The facts concerning the event were in dispute from the first official dispatch, and have never been completely established as one monolithic description to everyone’s satisfaction. The facts that are not in dispute, such as the number of casualties or the catastrophic nature of the event, have been subtly shaped over time to transform what should have been a footnote to a largely-forgotten war into an icon of British courage, heroism and glory. In order to investigate exactly how and why the event became such an icon it is necessary to go back to the original moment and work forward through various types of media, analyzing the choices made by individuals in their construction of the event for public consumption.

Individuals and groups of individuals have had their influences added to the growing iconography of the charge of the Light Brigade, shaping the narrative towards a certain end. Such shaping is not unique to the Light Brigade. Cultures have often created icons out of events through their literature, art and historical narrative. What makes the icon of the charge of the Light Brigade unusual is that the original event was a military disaster, and that it is celebrated as something which has been wholly transformed into the opposite. But perhaps, as Gopnik points out, it is precisely because the past “was befogged then, too,” that cultures are able to shape an event to meet the exigency of a particular moment. As Baudrillard points out in *The Gulf War*

Did Not Take Place, history is actually being shaped as it occurs, as it is presented to an audience of spectators who are at a remove from the event itself, and who experience the event through reports, which are necessarily incomplete and based on the opinions of the reporters.

The first level of evidence pointing to a deliberate shaping of the event into Light Brigadeness comes from the initial official military dispatches, the special correspondence from a reporter for the *Times*, William Russell, and citizen journals – the first meant for publication and the second strictly private. I present the evidence in this chapter not as it was necessarily written, but as it was presented to the public. Thus, although Russell's dispatches appeared in the *Times* later than the official internal dispatches by the commanding officers were written and sent, the official dispatches were not made public until some time later, after the publication of Tennyson's poem in *The Examiner* in December 1854. Fanny Duberly's Journal was published in 1855, while the war in the Crimea was still being fought. George Palmer Evelyn's diary, which rounds out this account of the initial representation of the Charge, was only published long after Evelyn's death, when it was found among family papers. I use this journal in contrast to Duberly's to point out the shaping of her narrative because it was intended for publication.

These are all documents, some based on verbal hearings in the Houses of Parliament, but presented to the public in written form. Language is the essential component that shapes the representations of the charge in these first accounts and enters into the public discourse concerning the event. Language, therefore, is key to understanding the initial reception of the event by the public, as well as the intentions of those representing the charge of the Light Brigade.

THE EVENTS OF THE BATTLE OF BALACLAVA

The essential actors in the actual event of the charge of the Light Brigade are the British military commanding officers and an aide-de-camp. Lord Raglan was the general in charge of

the entire British operation on the ground. Lord Lucan was in charge of the cavalry as a whole, and Lord Cardigan was commanding the Light Brigade. Lords Raglan and Lucan were elderly soldiers by the standards of the day, and Lord Raglan had actually served with Wellington. General Airey was an aide to Lord Raglan, and his own aide-de-camp was a young cavalry officer, Capt. Nolan.

Following the battle of the Alma on 20 September, 1854 which was indecisive, the French and British allies, along with the Turks, were building the siege works around Sebastopol, a major city that was the key to dominance in the region (Russell 17). There were minor skirmishes between various battalions as the Russians attempted to stop the trenches being dug, and the French and British tried to bring the Russians to an open combat. On October 25, 1854, around 7:30 a.m. (Duberly 92, Russell 119), the Russians were sighted attacking the outer redoubts held by the Turkish soldiers. The British and French mustered to help defend the positions, which was finally abandoned by an outnumbered and badly provisioned Turkish garrison (Duberly 92-3).⁷

Control of Balaclava was essential for the French and British, because it was the central supply post and the port town where most of the British fleet were anchored. The Russians, having taken the outlying defensive positions, began to carry away the guns toward Sebastopol. There were many other actions going on during the day of this major battle, but the one that concerns the Light Brigade is closely linked to the fate of the guns.

According to Lord Raglan's dispatch three days later (10/28/1854), he was in a superior position on a hill overlooking the plain of Balaclava and was able to see the Russians taking the guns. Raglan had General Airey, his aide, send an order to Lord Lucan, who was in charge of

⁷ Although Mrs. Duberly's account suggests the Turks were quick to give up their positions, in fact they held out for a number of hours before being overrun by the Russians.

the cavalry, that the Light Brigade was to overtake the Russians and get the guns back (Raglan's dispatch, Kinglake). The order, written by General Airey, is as follows:

Lord Raglan wishes the cavalry to advance rapidly to the front, follow the enemy, and try to prevent the enemy from carrying away the guns. Troop of horse artillery may accompany. French cavalry on your left. Immediate. B. Airey.

The wording is vague, and is based on Lucan being able to see what Raglan could see.

Lucan, however, could not see the British guns being taken by the Russians. The only guns in his sight were the Russian ones on either side of the valley and at the end, all of them being very much in action. Lucan, unwilling to risk his men needlessly, questioned the order (Kinglake IV, App. 360; Russell 126; *Times* 9.3.1855 p 8). Unfortunately, the order was delivered by a Captain Louis Nolan, who disliked Lucan and thought the cavalry wasn't being used as much as it should. Nolan was apparently an extremely good horseman, as well as being incredibly impulsive. When Lucan questioned the order, many witnesses claimed that Nolan gestured with his arm in the vague general direction of the guns that he knew were meant, but could just as easily have been the guns Lucan could see. Apparently he also said, "There are the enemy, and there are your guns," (Russell 126; Kinglake 362) or similar words to accompany his sweeping gesture.

Lucan then ordered Lord Cardigan, commander of the Light Brigade, to charge the only guns they could see – those at the end of the valley. Cardigan also objected, pointing out that they would be riding not only towards active guns but with flanking fire on either side of them. According to a statement Cardigan later made to Kinglake for his massive history of the Crimea, Lucan stated "I cannot help that; it is Lord Raglan's positive order that the Light Brigade is to attack the enemy" (IV, App. 362). Cardigan gave the order; Capt. Nolan rode with the Brigade in front of a squadron of the 13th Light Dragoons (*Times* 7.4.1855, p. 7), and was the first man

killed in the charge. He was seen riding out in front yelling and waving his sword (Duberly, Evelyn, Kinglake).

Although the Brigade was fired upon from both sides and in front, with much loss of life of men and horses, they were able to win through to the Russian guns at the end of the plain, where they cut down as many soldiers as possible. Some were taken prisoner, but most who made it that far were able turn and ride back. As they did so, the Russian soldiers who had not been cut down in the Brigade's attack were able to return to the guns still functioning and fire on the rear of the retreating Brigade. The entire event took about twenty-five minutes from the moment the Brigade started the charge until the field had been cleared (Russell 128).

The battle of Balaclava was a defeat for the allies, and the Russians took the guns from the Turkish outposts and brought them inside the walls of Sebastopol. The English and French were able to continue to occupy Balaclava, and settled in for the long siege of Sebastopol. Sebastopol finally fell after numerous battles and skirmishes, much loss of life from disease as well as wounds, and a truce was declared in early 1856.

There were two circumstances that prevented the Light Brigade's action at Balaclava from being simply a part of a larger report, one of many unfortunate losses in a rather futile war. The first was William Howard Russell's detailed description of the charge and Tennyson's subsequent glorification of it. The second was a passing reference in Raglan's report to the Duke of Newcastle that Lord Lucan misunderstood his order, and that this misunderstanding was the source of the severe loss of life in both horses and men. Lord Lucan learned of this report, and challenged it immediately, making the political investigation into the event a foregone conclusion, while Russell via Tennyson planted the first seeds of the popular myth.

THE FIRST PUBLIC REPORTS

William Howard Russell, an experienced journalist, was assigned as a special correspondent to the *Times* of London from the front of the Crimean War. He wrote specifically about the hardships and bad management that the troops endured, largely uncensored for at least the first six months of the war because the government was in recess (Kelly appendix). He remained in the Crimea for the duration of the War, and is credited with being the first real war correspondent. According to the editor of his dispatches (and many others), “it was due to Russell’s dispatches from the scene more than to any other single factor that the British government’s mishandling of affairs, and the gross negligence of the War Office in particular, came to light and that the resignation of Lord Aberdeen’s cabinet was brought about” (Bentley, 11). He was responsible in large part for many of the public outcries against conditions for the soldiers, the initial lack of nursing, sanitation, proper supplies, and other hardships that the soldiers endured (and which he endured with them). The debacle of the leadership in the Crimea is often credited as one of the main forces behind the abolition of bought commissions after the war ended, and the failures in leadership were mainly exposed by Russell in his dispatches. Thus he could be considered not only the first war correspondent, but also the first investigative journalist.

His gift for making the events in the Crimea seem real lay in the intimate details of camp life which he interspersed with battle details of horrifying specificity. His description of October 25, for example, begins

Lord Lucan’s little camp was the scene of great excitement. The men had not had time to water their horses; they had not broken their fast from the evening of the day before, and had barely saddled at the first blast of the trumpet when they were drawn up on the slope behind the redoubts in front of their camp to operate on the enemy’s squadrons (119-120)

Such details made the soldiers accessible to the audience at home – more everyday and less remotely heroic. The public felt more sentimental about the men, especially when the *Times* began publishing letters from the front. The men became individuals, someone's son or brother or husband. Russell's talent lay in exposing the division between the glorious heroics and the everyday squalor, making itself felt in the population's ability to be both outraged by the latter in the deprivations and losses of the soldiers, and exultant in the victories and heroics.

Russell's dispatch on Balaklava was part of a larger dispatch describing the time following the battle of the Alma, as well as several days' aftermath of the battle of Balaklava. Because the telegraph at that time didn't extend to Varna, the dispatch arrived about a fortnight after the events – indeed after the battle of Inkerman had already been fought (Kelly 321). This still made the publication of such a detailed eyewitness account incredibly immediate. Russell did not witness the beginning of the debacle of the charge, but based his account on reports from others. That did not prevent him from giving details of the exchange between Nolan and Lucan, prefaced with “God forbid I should cast a shade on the brightness of [Nolan's] honour, but I am bound to state what I am told occurred” (126).

Although Nolan's behavior has been repeatedly reported by many others, (see, e.g. Evelyn as well as Kinglake's numerous accounts), it is Russell who first reported the altercation between Lucan and Nolan as other than simply a question and answer concerning details of Lord Raglan's order. Russell defended Lord Lucan's actions, saying “Lucan, with reluctance, gave the order to Lord Cardigan” (126), and went on to describe Cardigan's reluctance as well.

“At ten minutes past eleven, our Light Cavalry advanced.” (127), and Russell's ensuing report focused on details told in the language of high adventure epic, similar in tone and vocabulary to authors such as Rider Haggard and Anthony Hope. “They swept proudly past,

glittering in the morning sun in all the pride and splendour of war,” and as they rode down to the end of the plain where the main Russian guns were,

their desperate valour knew no bounds. A more fearful spectacle was never witnessed than by those who, without the power to aid, beheld their heroic countrymen rushing to the arms of death. . . . Their flight was marked by instant gaps in our ranks, by dead men and horses, by steeds flying wounded or riderless across the plain.

Russell’s use of such terms as “desperate valour” and “heroic countrymen” already indicate exactly what the reader is to think about the engagement. As a body, the Light Brigade is an exceptional group of men, set apart by this moment, in a sense canonized through their actions and Russell’s reportage. Note that Russell does not describe specific details, such as individual cavalymen receiving mortal wounds, nor does he describe the sound of the battle. The entire engagement is a “spectacle,” a dumb show from the viewpoint of the reader. Russell sets the engagement apart as unique when he says “[a] more fearful spectacle was never witnessed”; this is an historic moment that has never occurred before in the entire history of warfare. In this way, Russell sets the men at the side of other great warriors whose battles are legendary, going all the way back to the first great war epic, the *Iliad*. Russell also suggests that those who were present were somehow privileged to be able to see such a sight. There is no room for any doubt as to the efficacy of the charge; that is left for others to discuss.

Russell goes on to describe the moment at which the men come into direct engagement with the Russian gunners.

With diminished ranks, thinned by those thirty guns, which the Russians had laid with the most deadly accuracy, with a halo of flashing steel above their heads and with a cheer which was many a noble fellow’s death-cry, they flew into the smoke of the batteries; but ere they were lost from view, the plain was strewn with their bodies and with the carcasses of horses. (127)

Although Russell is explicit about the fact that many of the men died at this point, his description belies the tragedy of the moment. The men have “halo[s]” over their heads, again suggesting a

kind of instant canonization. They give a cheer as they ride against a battery of cannons that becomes “many a noble fellow’s death-cry,” but it is a cheer nonetheless. A cheer, as opposed to a war-cry or a shout, implies a spirited concurrence with the event that is taking place. Such moments include parades, rallies, and football games. A cheer is a confirmation as well as an encouragement.⁸ Russell represents the men as being “cheer”-ful to the very end, a representation that allows the reader to believe that each man went willingly to his death because it was his duty as an English gentleman.

At the Russian emplacement, what was left by then of the Brigade killed as many gunners as possible, then wheeled and turned back to ride up the plain to their original position. “With courage too great almost for credence they were breaking their way through the columns which enveloped them, when there took place an act of atrocity without parallel in the modern warfare of civilized nations” (128). The Russians actually returned to their guns and started firing on the brigade from the rear. Russell made the assumption here that war could be civilized but that the enemy was refusing to “play the game.” It is as if the sheer gallantry of the charge should have rendered the enemy speechless with awe and respect, and so unwilling to fire on what was left of the men who had just swept through their ranks, cutting down as many Russians as they possible could before retreating. With these few words Russell establishes the British cavalryman as heroically superior to the Russians, and the Russians as men without honor.

The heavy brigade had to cover the retreat until “at thirty-five minutes past eleven, not a British soldier, except the dead and dying, was left in front of these bloody Muscovite guns” (128). With his insertion of the time of day, Russell returned to the battlefield, as if the charge took place outside of the quotidian in a liminal space of all great heroics. Russell took the pride

⁸ Note the use in the *Times* later in this chapter to signal approval of something said in the House of Lords by Lord Lucan.

and splendor of war as a given with the unfortunate side effect of occasional death; in the case of the Light Brigade, quite a lot of death.

“C’EST MAGNIFIQUE, MAIS C’EST NE PAS LA GUERRE.”

(“It’s magnificent, but it isn’t War,” attr. to General Canrobert, leader of the French forces, as he observed the Light Brigade charging the Russian guns.) Canrobert’s supposed statement reflects the initial ambivalent attitude towards the charge. If the first part of his statement expressed awe and admiration at the courage of the cavalry, it also suggests a certain performative quality on the part of the soldiers, admired at a distance (as one would a great work of art) and pronounced to be exceptional, but not something that oneself would create.

The second part of Canrobert’s statement brings the first before judgment – it isn’t War. *La guerre* denotes in French a sense of the Platonic reality: war as a concept, or warfare as a set of fixed rules, which the charge against the Russian guns violates. Contrast this with Jean Baudrillard’s third essay on the first Gulf War, “The Gulf War did not take place”. Baudrillard’s statement, unlike Gen. Canrobert’s, refers specifically to the media manipulation of the Gulf War fought against Saddam Hussein by the elder George Bush. “. . . only TV functions as a medium without a message, giving at last the image of pure television” (63). Baudrillard asserts here that because we have only experienced this war through television images, to us, the conquering nation (not to the people whose homes were destroyed or whose lives were lost), the War became an image only, a theatrical event with no basis in the reality of what happened.

Although no television existed in 1854, the burgeoning medium of newspapers did, and the popularity of personal journals and firsthand accounts added to the stylization of the event of the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava. Russell’s dispatches were credited with being the most realistic (in large part because of his extensive detail of daily life), and therefore the most accurate, without analyzing the linguistic effects he used to produce such a sense of immediacy.

Although Russell did a great deal to reveal the actual conditions of life during the Crimean campaign and he told truths that the government would have preferred remain a secret, he also shaped his narratives from a deliberate perspective that can best be described as a combination of righteous indignation and fervent John Bull nationalism, favoring the common soldiers and lower echelons of officers over those in command, and anyone in the Crimea over the War Office and ruling government in London.

As editor of the dispatches in a 1966 edition of the collection (last published as such in 1858), Nicolas Bentley defends Russell's bias as follows: "Russell's dispatches, though often far from objective, were not deliberately sensational. There was no need for them to be, the facts spoke for themselves. Besides, the news value of an indisputable fact was worth more to Russell than any purple patch of supposition; and if, for reasons of policy, information was temporarily withheld from the press, he did not try to hide his ignorance by elaborate obscurity" (11).

Although Bentley asserts that "the facts spoke for themselves," the facts were often related in highly vivid descriptive language that was meant to evoke strong sentiments. In addition, Russell himself could not be omniscient in his reporting. And though he made it his business to go many places, talk with many people and report as widely as possible, even he was not receiving every "fact" that existed, nor could he report every one of the ones he discovered. He often wrote in generalities based on his own observations, and made no secret of his scorn for a government totally out of touch with what was occurring on the battlefield. As a result, as Bentley points out, "[h]e was easily moved to pity or indignation and reacted accordingly, with the result that his judgements [sic] were sometimes thought to be unduly harsh, sometimes too hasty. But however deeply his criticism were resented, his honesty of purpose was beyond question" (11-12).

Although Bentley certainly believes in Russell's purity of motives, Bentley published the collection of the dispatches in 1966, a time which had not yet been exposed to the overwhelming power of "mediation" that newspapers and television were to exercise during the height of the Viet Nam war. Indeed, even that war did not compare in "mediation" to the Gulf War, with broadcasts by the "Scud Stud" while wearing a gas mask, the flashes in the nighttime background looking like fireworks rather than bombs.

Baudrillard describes a fully mediated war as "[w]ar stripped of its passions, its phantasms, its finery, its veils, its violence, its images; war stripped bare by its technicians even, and then reclothed by them with all the artifices of electronics, as though with a second skin" (64). Russell sought to present war as it really was, and yet by doing so created a separate war in the imaginations of the British reading public that bore a strong resemblance to, but was not the totality of, the war actually taking place. He created images that were then transformed into easily remembered poetic stanzas, which in turn created paintings and music, and finally theatrical performances which, like Plato's chair on stage, were a dim shadow of the reality of what occurred in the Crimea.

Russell's language is a written attempt to make the eye see what Russell saw, and it is done with a passion, and "[i]f nowadays [Bentley is writing in 1966] his sentiments see a trifle heroic or his style flowery, it should be remembered that they did not seem so at the time" (Bentley, 12). Bentley goes on to severely castigate the journalist of his day, saying "[a]nd in an age of journalism debased by ignorant perversions or stemming from the influence of *Time* magazine's syntactical rape, it is satisfying to read the reports of a journalist who has a solid respect for the usage and common forms of the English language." One might consider if Russell's brilliant command of English could be considered equivalent to the skills of a master

political orator, who is a pleasure to hear because he speaks so well, and yet so few pay actual attention to what he says or reflect on his actual intent and their response.

Baudrillard rightly points out the dangers in believing that one image is representative of the whole, and Tennyson's creation of "The Charge of the Light Brigade" is the second step away from the event, based, by Tennyson's own admission, on "the first report of the *Times* correspondent, where only 607 sabres are mentioned as having taken part in [the] charge." (Note by Tennyson himself). On December 9, 1854, a poem commemorating the heroic and doomed "Charge of the Light Brigade"⁹ was published in *The Examiner* under that title, written by Alfred, Lord Tennyson.

Russell's language in describing the charge is closely echoed in Tennyson's poem. In stanza one, the poet quotes a "he" without mentioning any names, but "'Forward the Light Brigade! / Charge for the guns!'" (ll 5-6). Russell, relating "what [he was] told occurred" (126), says "Captain Nolan pointed with his finger to the line of the Russians, and said, 'There are the enemy, and there are the guns.' or words to that effect, . . ." (126).

Russell says that "Lord Lucan, with reluctance, gave the order to Lord Cardigan to advance upon the guns, conceiving that his orders compelled him to do so. The noble Earl, though he did not shrink, also saw the fearful odds against him" (126). He goes on to state a "maxim of war" that indicates that no one should have ordered the charge without a support of heavy guns and infantry close by. Although he refrains from actually saying someone made a mistake, the editorials which accompanied his dispatch took up the idea that "someone has blundered" (Kelly 321).

Compare this description to stanza two,

⁹ The poem in full is attached as an appendix.

‘Forward the Light Brigade!’
Was there a man dismay’d?
Not tho’ the soldier knew
Some one had blunder’d:
Their’s not to make reply,
Their’s not to reason why,
Their’s but to do and die:

Tennyson condensed a thoughtful, if heartfelt, account of the decisive moment into seven short lines of triumphant courage murdered by rank incompetence. The soldier riding in the charge is faithful to death, obedient to superior orders, and the ironic word “blunder,” associated with major mistakes but not with slaughtering over half of the cavalry, is a masterpiece of understatement in which the poet seems to be ingenuously unwilling to point a finger, leaving the incensed audience angry, grieving, and seeking a scapegoat.¹⁰

Other stanzas use language that echoes Russell, especially the description of the final retreat:

The Russian gunners, when the storm of cavalry passed, returned to their guns, and poured murderous volleys of grape and canister on the mass of struggling men and horses. It was as much as our Heavy Cavalry Brigade could do to cover the retreat of the miserable remnants of that band of heroes as they returned to the place they had so lately quitted in the pride of life (Russell 128).

Cannon to the right of them,
Cannon to the left of them,
Cannon behind them
Volley’d and thunder’d;
While horse and hero fell,
They that had fought so well
Came thro’ the jaws of Death,
Back from the mouth of Hell,
All that was left of them,
Left of six hundred. (Tennyson)

Note that Russell uses the term “band of heroes,” an echo of the “band of brothers” of the St.

Crispin’s Day speech from *Henry V*, which I discuss in my introduction. This term may have

¹⁰ It is interesting to note that the line “theirs but to do and die” is often misquoted as “theirs but to do OR die”; the “and” makes the fate of the men inevitable before one horse has moved forward.

been common enough, but it is evocative nonetheless. Russell appears to be already weaving the Light Brigade into the mythos of the St. Crispin's day heroes, kept alive through performances of *Henry V* in the same way that the Light Brigade will be kept alive by Tennyson's poem and subsequent performances of Light Brigadeness. Tennyson picks up on Russell's outrage at the Russians' firing on the retreating remnants, inverting the original lines "cannon to the left of them, cannon to the right of them," to indicate their retreat the way they had originally charged, and adds the line "cannon behind them," suggesting the cowardly action of a man who would shoot someone in the back. Russell's "miserable remnants" becomes "all that was left of them," followed by a reminder of how many had started out. I would argue that the incendiary undertones of this piece, as much as Russell's dispatches, led to Parliament's later recall of Lord Lucan to answer for the loss of the Light Brigade.

THE OFFICIAL DISPATCHES

The original dispatches among the officers became public because of Lord Lucan's recall, and were made a part of the daily record of Parliament, through Hansard, and then published in the *Times* on the following days, as a part of its Parliamentary reporting. Lord Lucan was the officer in charge of the cavalry, and because he was the one who gave the actual verbal order for the Light Brigade to enter the combat, he became the lightning rod for Parliamentary questions and public outcry. Lord Raglan, as the commander of the British forces on the ground, and the person who directed the order to be prepared and sent, came in for his share of the blame. Lord Cardigan, because he was following a direct order of Lord Lucan, and because he actually rode in the charge, was called to present his own account publicly, but was let off lightly concerning any blame. Capt. Nolan, of course, was the first to die in the charge, and as I discuss below was both blamed and exonerated without the benefit of anyone being able to question him.

Lords Lucan, Raglan and Cardigan all began to differ in their accounts early in the dispatches sent by the commanding officers up the chain of command, and the subsequent disputes, in writing, over what orders had been given, to whom, and how worded. Even within these supposedly factual dispatches we see a certain attempt at what we would now call “spin” going on. Emphasis was put on the gallantry and “brilliance” of the charge and there was a gap between such description and the mention that there had been heavy casualties. There were three major dispatches. The first was from Lord Lucan to Lord Raglan, dated October 27. Lord Lucan was commanding the troops which included the Light and Heavy Brigades.¹¹ This is the opening paragraph:

. . . the cavalry division under my command was seriously engaged with the enemy on the 25th inst, . . . that it made a most triumphant charge against a very superior number of the enemy’s cavalry and an attack upon batteries which, for daring and gallantry, could not be exceeded. The loss, however, in officers, men and horses has been most severe. (Dispatch from Lord Lucan to Lord Raglan, October 27)

Note that the charge was “triumphant,” that it was against “a very superior number,” and “could not be exceeded . . . for daring and gallantry.” It was only at the end of the paragraph that Lord Lucan reported the casualties. Although the language is similar to the word choices of William Russell in his reports to the *Times*, Lucan is writing for a supposedly different audience. The dispatches were internal reports of a battle, from which the superior officer would then create his own report to send on to his commanding officer, which would then go to the head of the War office in London.

Here Lucan is already working to appropriate the representation of the charge in such a way as to downplay the catastrophic aspects (the “most severe” loss of men and horses) and magnify the action of the Brigade, perhaps in order that the gallantry and daring of the men

¹¹ A “heavy brigade” was one with the large guns (cannons, etc.) and a light brigade was cavalry armed primarily with sabers or lances.

would obscure the loss of life, not to mention the practical reality of the loss of a fighting troop of cavalry. In order to protect his reputation, and probably his command, two days after the event Lucan shapes the narrative in such a way that the audience's attention is drawn away from the visual reality of a plain littered with dead cavalymen and horses (the outcome of the event), and towards the action of the charge before its gory outcome. He focuses on admirable military qualities in a general sense, rather than on any specifics.

Further in the report he expands on his brief summary:

When, being instructed to make a rapid advance to our front, to prevent the enemy carrying the guns lost by the Turkish troops in the morning, I ordered the Light Brigade to advance in two lines, and supported them with the Heavy Brigade. This attack of the Light Cavalry **was very brilliant and daring**; exposed to a fire from heavy batteries on their front and two flanks, **they advanced unchecked** until they reached the batteries of the enemy, and cleared them of their gunners, and **only retired when they found themselves engaged with a very superior force** of cavalry in the rear.

The losses, my Lord, it grieves me to state, have been very great indeed, and, I fear, will be much felt by your Lordship. (Ibid., my emphasis)

Lucan seems to be making the best of a bad job through his description here. Since the Light Cavalry were under his command (through Lord Cardigan), it seems as if he is taking credit for their deeds. If the attack was "brilliant and daring," it was because Lucan had ordered them to attack. He also asserts that he supported them with the Heavy Brigade, which is stretching the truth quite a bit. The Heavy Brigade was not sent in until the Light Brigade had been all but wiped out, when they were already through the gun battery. Lucan's language also suggests that were it not for a large Russian cavalry contingent on the far side of the guns, the Light Brigade would have continued its victorious sweep. By the time the Light Brigade had reached the guns and broken through, there were so few left they would have been hard put to regroup to face any concerted resistance to their small rank. They in fact retreated because they had not been

supported by the Heavy Brigade and were in no position to engage the opposing contingent of cavalry.

Lord Lucan continuously emphasized the successful aspects of the charge, making it appear that the brigade swept through enemy lines without a problem, succeeded in their mission, and then gracefully retired when overwhelmed by the enemy. It was only two paragraphs later that Lord Lucan once again mentioned the heavy casualties. It seems disingenuous of Lucan to describe the advance of the cavalry as unchecked, since Lucan also acknowledges that the cavalry are under fire from flanking batteries. From this description, an audience might imagine that the entire Brigade swept down the plain with bullets flying harmlessly around them. It is a representation of war that is being mediated through Lucan's determination to separate the fact of heavy casualties from the moment of the charge itself. This is the mediation that Baudrillard describes as having the "purpose . . . to produce consensus by flat encephalogram. (68)" Lucan presents his material as if a consensus has already been reached concerning the charge of the Light Brigade, and this presentation is a step along the way toward the event's transformation. In this sense, Light Brigadeness was already developing through Lucan's initial presentation of the ease of the action, the panache of the cavalry and the unflinching devotion to duty that the cavalrymen displayed.

Lord Raglan, as commander of the ground forces and superior officer to Lucan, received Lucan's dispatch concerning the battle of Balaclava along with other dispatches from other officers concerning their movements during the battle. Raglan used these dispatches in order to create a fuller report, and then forwarded his own dispatch to the Duke of Newcastle, who was the superior officer in London. Lord Raglan also emphasized the successful aspects of the

charge, as well as praising Lord Lucan's actions immediately previous, but he also inserted a note that began to distance him from the actions taken.

I directed the cavalry, supported by the Fourth Division . . . to move forward, and take advantage of any opportunity to regain the heights; and, not having been able to accomplish this immediately, and it appearing that an attempt was making to remove the captured guns, **the Earl of Lucan was desired to advance rapidly**, follow the enemy in their retreat, and try to prevent them from effecting their objects.

Note the passive voice that Raglan uses to describe the exact order to Lucan. He is also far more specific in his dispatch to his superior than he was in the order delivered to Lord Lucan. Had his order been that specific, the charge of the Light Brigade would probably have never occurred. Raglan's language also seems to suggest that Lucan knew perfectly well which guns Raglan referred to, and that it was a matter of bad luck that the Russians had active artillery at the end of the plain.

In the meanwhile the Russians had time to reform on their own ground, with artillery . . .

From some misconception of the instruction to advance, [Lord Lucan] considered that he was bound to attack at all hazards, and he accordingly ordered . . . Cardigan to move forward with the Light Brigade.

Here Raglan places any blame for the ensuing debacle squarely on the shoulders of Lord Lucan. It was Lucan who misconceived the order, Lucan who ultimately ordered Cardigan to advance with the Light Brigade. At the same time, Raglan seems to want to gain some credit for the spectacular moment, as he relates some details of the charge itself.

This order was obeyed in the most spirited and gallant manner. . . . but the loss they sustained has, I deeply lament, been very severe in officers, men and horses, only counterbalanced by the brilliance of the attack and the gallantry, order, and discipline which distinguished it . . . (Lord Raglan to the Duke of Newcastle, October 28, emphasis mine)

In writing to his superior, Raglan must tell the Duke of Newcastle about the extensive casualties, but he "counterbalances" it by concentrating on the heroism of the men in the charge. The attack

is deemed brilliant, if directed at the wrong target, and Raglan's language is almost that of a coach of a sporting team: playing the game well was more important than winning.

I have quoted Lord Raglan's dispatch at some length (although there are other comments along the same lines that I omitted) because it is important to see the way Lord Raglan was already beginning to shape the perception of the events during the battle, as well as to understand where and how he slips in his own disclaimer. He has based his narrative on Lord Lucan's, but has included a comment that questions the analysis by Lucan of the order as it was delivered. The phrase "bound to attack at all hazards" implies a recklessness with valuable cavalry troops that makes Lucan appear to be acting beyond the intentions of his commanding officer, which would mean that Raglan held no responsibility for the outcome of the charge.

Repeating Lord Lucan's claims concerning the "gallantry" and "brilliancy" of the attack, Lord Raglan nevertheless interjected the damning phrase, "[f]rom some misconception of the instruction to advance." Lord Raglan knew that Parliament would be using the official reports sent by the commanders-in-chief from the Crimea. So he emphasized the good: the gallantry of the men, the brilliancy of the attack, the order and discipline, and then made it clear that it was not his order that had led to the devastating loss of so many men. The performance of the Charge of the Light Brigade had begun.

On November 4, 1854, a report in the *Times* of the actions before Sebastopol, which was under siege and around which the battle of Balaklava had occurred, included the following toward the end of a leading article:

Up to the 25th the state of affairs remained much the same, nothing decisive having occurred. On that day, however, there can be no longer any doubt that the allies suffered a reverse. . . . **Three regiments of English light cavalry, exposed to the crossfire of the Russian batteries, suffered very much.** . . . we may reasonably conclude that by the 27th we had entirely recovered our lost ground. (p. 6, emphasis mine)

It seems at this point that the event would be a footnote in the history of a fairly undistinguished war far from England. Unfortunately for those involved, this was not to be. By November 6, in a second leader, the author attempted to reconstruct the events of the day based on his reading of telegraphic information from the Russians and two dispatches sent from Varna to the English Consul. Here again, the reference to the Light Brigade was slight, but contained more information:

In the course of the engagement, our Light Cavalry suffered serious and most unfortunate losses. Lord Stratford's message represents them as caught between the "cross-fires of the Russian batteries" . . . but the account from Varna describes them as bravely charging a superior force of Russians, and thus suffering considerably, until the Scots Grays and 5th Dragoon Guards came to their support. (p. 6)

The article goes on to speculate which version is more accurate, and laments the lack of substantiated reports and the communications from the front in general. On the same page, in a third leader, the author went further in complaining about communications between the allied forces, citing the moment in which "the Russians [having] gained possession they instantly turned these spiked guns upon the English Light Cavalry and inflicted upon them a severe loss" (Ibid.)

As noted above, the cavalry involved in the charge merited only a mention. This was before Lord Lucan became aware of Lord Raglan's dispatch, and before that dispatch was made public. Once that occurred, the charge became a *cause célèbre*. On November 25, in the *Illustrated London News*, an obituary of Captain Lewis Edward Nolan appeared. The opening sentence runs as follows:

The distinguished soldier, whose premature fate in connection with the late heroic exploit of our Light Cavalry at Balaclava the Army and the Country have now to deplore . . . (p. 528)

The obituary goes on to state that “[w]e are aware that in the first accounts of the disastrous charge at Balaclava, blame was hastily attached to Captain Nolan, who, it was alleged, had gone beyond the terms of an order which he was instructed to deliver to Lord Lucan,” and includes quotations from a General Rules book, written by Nolan, which specifically comments on the inadvisability of charges against vastly superior forces. The conclusion states, “The Light Cavalry galloped, open-eyed, into destruction as complete as if they had fallen into an ambushade.” This is a vastly different account from the earlier ones in the *Times*. Nolan’s death is described in detail and in heroic terms. It is unclear whether the author considered it cowardly to blame the dead when Nolan so obviously could not defend himself, but there is no question that the obituary writer wishes to make it clear that Nolan was in no way responsible. If anything, the entire Light Brigade seems to have been more at fault in this account. If they did gallop “clear-eyed into destruction,” it was not for want of Lucan’s questioning Nolan. But this was only the beginning of the coming media frenzy.

On November 30, 1854, Lord Lucan wrote to Lord Raglan to complain of Lord Raglan’s comment concerning the “misconception” in instructions to advance the Light Brigade. Lord Lucan quoted the significant passage (as cited above) and continued,

Surely, my Lord, this is a grave Charge, and an Imputation reflecting seriously on my professional Character. I cannot remain silent; it is, I feel, incumbent on me to state those Facts which I cannot doubt must clear me from what, I respectfully submit, is altogether unmerited. (Lucan to Raglan, November 30, 1854).

Lord Lucan went on to summarize his orders up to the moment of receiving the new order to advance the Light Brigade. Lord Lucan then quoted the orders concerning Lord Raglan’s wish that the Cavalry advance and attempt to prevent the enemy from carrying away the guns.

Lucan wrote that he “urged the Uselessness of such an Attack and the Dangers attending it” (Ibid.). The Aide-de-Camp, one Lewis Edward Nolan, apparently replied disrespectfully,

insisting on the orders. Lord Lucan finally complied, “against [his] Conviction,” and “did all in [his] Power to render it as little perilous as possible” (Ibid.). Lucan concluded,

My Lord, I considered at the Time – I am still of the same Opinion – that I followed the only Course open to me. As a Lieutenant-General, doubtless, I have discretionary power; but to take upon myself to disobey an Order written by my Commander in Chief within a few Minutes of its Delivery, . . . would have been nothing less than direct Disobedience of Orders, . . . (Ibid.)

Lord Lucan ended by asking that, in the interests of justice, his side of the events be given the same publicity that Lord Raglan’s report had been. Lord Lucan was fighting a losing battle. The original impression of the media had been too widely publicized to stem the tide of public opinion, and Raglan had played his hand well in diverting blame away from himself for the incoherent order. Lucan was in the unenviable position of having obeyed an order that he had actually questioned, only to be told that he should have questioned further. Had he done so, it is very possible that he would have been censured for refusing to carry out a direct command from a superior officer, no matter how confusing. In the course of getting additional information and confirmation, the English guns being taken away would probably be lost beyond recall, and if Lucan had refused to send the Light Brigade against the only guns he could see, there would have been no charge of the Light Brigade, and therefore nothing Lucan could have said would defend his refusal to obey a direct order. It is this very point that Lucan later demanded to have heard by a Court Martial, because (probably correctly) he reasoned that they would have a better understanding of the exigencies of the battlefield.

It was on December 9 that Tennyson’s poem first appeared, and in the second stanza appear the words “someone had blundered.” Copies of the poem were quickly distributed to the soldiers in the Crimea, supposedly to cheer them and urge them on to greater heroism and glory. Obviously, this was the very thing which Lord Lucan feared most: that he henceforth would be held responsible for a military blunder that had cost the Army over half its Light Cavalry.

Lord Raglan, after first suggesting the Lord Lucan withdraw his letter of November 30, was forced to forward it to the Duke of Newcastle, which he did on December 16, with his own version of the events. This account was much more detailed, analyzing the orders and comparing Lord Lucan's use of the word "attack" versus Lord Raglan's use of the word "advance," and criticizing Lord Lucan's subsequent handling of the charge by not bringing in the Horse Artillery as cover (Official Letter dated December 16, 1854, from Lord Raglan to the Duke of Newcastle). The result was that the Duke of Newcastle referred the matter to Viscount Hardinge, of the Horse Guards. On January 26, 1855, the Viscount responded, concurring with Lord Raglan's opinion, and recommending that Lord Lucan be recalled. He included a passing remark on Captain Nolan's "authoritative tone and disrespectful manner," so that Captain Nolan's behavior was reinscribed as a part of the disaster (Viscount Hardinge to the Duke of Newcastle, January 26, 1855), so that Nolan once again entered the picture as a player in the drama.

Meanwhile, there was an ongoing battle raging in the *Times* concerning what and how much news from the front, including soldiers' letters home, should be reported, and in how graphic a manner.

Are we, or are we not, to publish the letters that pour in from the Crimea? The question no longer concerns the graphic narratives of "our Own Correspondent," [Russell] for in this respect, just now, thanks to some amiable eccentricity of the post, we are rather behindhand. The question now concerns letters long and many . . . from everybody, in fact, excepting only the members of that faithful cordon that surrounds each General. Two months ago we could not have seen the letter of an officer containing some trifling reflection on the inevitable mishaps of an army on the march or in the field without being laid under the most solemn obligation not to publish it, . . . Now the whole army rushes into print.

(December 30, 1854, p. 6)

This was the first of many such an article, all concerned with what to publish and what to exclude. These articles appeared almost daily, whether there was actual official news from the

front or not. The *Times*, at least was keeping the war foremost in the public consciousness constantly, and would subsequently play a large role in the very public debate over the actions during the battle of Balaclava. They are also an interesting first taste of the issue concerning censorship in a war situation. In the novelty of the first “mediated” war, obviously many soldiers wrote directly to the papers with the intent of being published, and the *Times* found themselves so inundated with materials that they were questioning what to publish because of the sheer volume of material. From Baudrillard’s perspective, this meant that the *Times* itself was mediating the war simply by its decision-making process in ruling out publishing some accounts and accepting others.

In late January, the Duke of Newcastle received word that the Viscount’s recommendation had been approved by the Government, and that Lord Lucan was to be recalled. He sent the official orders on to Lord Raglan (The Duke of Newcastle to Lord Raglan, Official letter dated January 27, 1855). Lord Raglan wrote an official letter on February 12, but held the letter a day, and on the 13th sent the dispatch and official letter with a personal cover letter (Lord Raglan to Lord Lucan: Official covering letter February 12, 1855 and Private covering letter dated February 13, 1855). Lord Lucan was duly recalled, and defended himself before the House of Lords on March 2, 1855. At this time, Lucan read the correspondence that we have already reviewed, as well as his letter of resignation of his command and his request for a court-martial. Lucan requested the court-martial because this was the body that could most effectively judge his actions, being men of the military themselves (Lord Lucan to Adjutant-General, March 1, 1855, from Hansard report of House of Lords proceedings).

The response from the House, given by the Earl of Granville, was that since Lord Lucan read only a portion of the correspondence, and did not comment personally in any way, the

House could not respond (ibid.). On the 5th of March, Lord Lucan sent a letter asking the Adjutant-General to reconsider his request for a court-martial, and he was again denied on March 12th (Lord Lucan to the Adjutant-General, March 5, 1855, The Adjutant-General to Lord Lucan March 12, 1855, from Kinglake). On March 7th, the *Times* published the entire correspondence under the heading “The Recall of Lord Lucan,” and on March 9th, there was a leading article expressing a clear bias in favor of Lord Raglan’s version of events. Additionally, the *Times* confused the original issue by giving its own interpretation of the orders in question. In the final paragraph, the article states, “[t]he mistake into which Lord Lucan fell is probably to be accounted for, though it cannot be justified, by an ambiguity in the words “the guns” (p. 8). This was wholly interpretive on the part of the author of the article, and yet it was seized on and became part of the debate when Lord Lucan finally appeared before the House of Lords. There is a wide abyss between “accounted for” and “justified,” and the author clearly holds Lucan responsible for the demise of the Light Brigade.

Throughout this period, the reports on proceedings in the Houses of Lords and of Commons were published on a regular basis in the newspapers. As well, they were published as verbatim accounts, and include such theatrical directions as “hear hear,” “oh oh,” and “cheers” in parentheses, indicating the response of the Houses to various speeches. The inclusion of such responses places us squarely in the field of theatrics. What might be construed as a persuasive speech without the side comments can now be regarded as nothing less than a performance of the first order, tailored to a particular audience, which was then re-performed in the papers for a wider audience, including the original audience’s responses. Anyone reading the newspaper in doubt as to how a particular statement should be interpreted was given a clear guide by the verbal response of the House in general. Thus the actions of Lords Lucan and Raglan, as well as

various officers and aides-de-camp on the day of the battle of Balaclava, take on the tone of a performance as well.

Lord Lucan cannot have been ignorant of the fact that his fate was being played out in the newspapers before the general public of Britain, and indeed all who had access to the English papers. When Lucan finally rose in the House of Lords on March 20 to explain his actions at length and salvage what was left of his reputation, he gave a carefully crafted speech, which was reprinted in the *Times* the following day, again replete with “hear hear”s and “cheers.” For example:

It will be necessary for me to trouble your lordship at some length, and in my endeavour to exculpate myself it is my intention and my wish not to inculcate others (hear hear). . . . I cannot allow myself to mention in this house the name of this officer, with whom I was acting in concert for four months, without stating that a more gallant or useful soldier never existed in the army (cheers) . . .

(March 20, 1855, p. 5)

Early in his defense, Lord Lucan introduced a hitherto unmentioned order, and then commented upon it. This order was given before the one concerning attempting to retake the guns that Captain Nolan delivered personally. I quote Lord Lucan’s testimony at length, because it has a bearing on the way history later recorded the actual event:

I received an order (No. 3) from Lord Raglan, which I think will create much discussion. At that moment the heavy dragoons were very much in the position that had been occupied by the Russian columns. The order put into my hands was,

“The cavalry to advance and take advantage of any opportunity to recover the heights. They will be supported by infantry, which has been ordered. Advance on two fronts.”

Here Lucan is painstaking in his detailed account of what the situation was when he received this order, and what the order was. This order is fairly clear, and seems to need no questions. Lucan believed the same:

The original order did not say “to advance,” but it is possible that the word “to” may have been inserted by mistake in the copy which I furnished to Lord Raglan, and I therefore wish to impute nothing to his lordship with respect to it. There was a full stop after the word “ordered,” there was no “to,” and there was a large A to “advance.” It would have made a great difference if “to” had been inserted and “advance” had commenced with a small “a,” so as to make the whole one sentence. But the sentence, “Advance in two fronts,” stood by itself. Immediately on receiving this order, I took up a position to the eastward with nine squadrons of cavalry, the heavy cavalry being in the rear of the fort marked No. 5 on the plan, which was merely a sort of breastwork. When we first mounted our horses the infantry were coming down the hill from the Sebastopol heights, and there were no infantry in the valley. I was anxiously waiting their arrival, as I had been told that they were to support me in endeavouring to recover the heights.

Lucan goes to great lengths to deconstruct the order, in relation to his own position and understanding of the field, because it was that position that ultimately led him to believe that Raglan had ordered him to charge the active guns at the end of the plain. Note how particular he is with such details as capitalization and punctuation. It is clear that on a battlefield, misreading such indications of intent could seriously affect the action which was ultimately taken.

I had been waiting there for 35 or 40 minutes, when Captain Nolan galloped up with what I considered, and with what I think your lordships will consider, as a fresh order, quite independent of any previous order. The order was to this effect:-

“Lord Raglan wishes the cavalry to advance rapidly to the front, follow the enemy, and try to prevent the enemy carrying away the guns. Troop of horse artillery may accompany. French cavalry is on your left.”

This order, as Lucan points out, appears clear, but in fact leaves much to be desired. Raglan says “the guns,” but not whose guns – theirs or the enemy’s? What was the French cavalry’s role to be? If they were on the left, was that merely a way of orienting Lucan to the direction he should take, or was it assumed that he would actively seek their assistance? Lucan goes on to point out a further difficulty with the order:

Lord Raglan when he gave this order was upon very high ground, about a quarter of a mile to my rear, where he could see the Russian cavalry to the north and east, and the infantry on the other side of No. 3 fort. His lordship also fancied that he saw - and he was not the only man who laboured under the same impression - although, in fact, he did not see - the enemy taking our guns out of Nos. 1, 2, 3,

and 4 forts, and moving off, and therefore he sent this order to prevent their being taken. I could produce half-a-dozen men, all of whom say they were under the same impression. I told Captain Nolan that I disapproved very much this movement - that there was great danger attending it; - but if your lordships will allow me I will read my letter explaining what passed. (Hear, hear.) (Ibid.)

This is a very different picture from the one given by the first dispatches and by the original correspondence between Lords Lucan and Raglan. Every historian since has been at great pains to try to explain the discrepancies here, and the personalities of the people involved have been scrutinized in agonizing detail, theories advanced, and set aside. But it is the historians only who are considering the minutiae of the case. After Lord Lucan's detailed (and brilliant) account of himself, he was attacked from all sides, including by Viscount Hardinge. It is these speeches that Alexander Kinglake made use of in writing his history, and he reported them as fact, so that the misrepresentations concerning Lord Lucan survived in the popular idea of what occurred, rather than the further reports made later by those who were actually with Lord Lucan at the time.

The official investigation into the affair of the Light Brigade Charge continued for some months, but all publicity turned against Lord Lucan. In a leading article in the *Times* on March 30, 1855, the author states,

If Lord Lucan, from the day of his return, had held his tongue and spoken nothing, "keeping silence even from good words," he would have had all the world with him and that more and more. His own warm temper and the kindness of his friends are killing his cause. (p. 8)

This article goes on to criticize Lord Raglan at great length, but not for the actual orders concerning the Charge. Rather, it is critical of his unwillingness to discipline or dismiss inefficient officers, and by implication Lord Lucan is included among such men, simply by beginning the article with a reference to his current situation. Only the day before, in the House of Commons, there was a call for Lord Lucan's court-martial, but this time for very different

reasons that the ones Lord Lucan himself presented (Hansard, Col. 1310, proceedings of the House of Commons, March 29, 1855). Lord Raglan was unable to take Sebastopol for a year, and in fact died before taking the city, during which time the tide of opinion turned against him, but never rehabilitated Lord Lucan's reputation.

The heart of the matter – a terrible loss, for a stupid reason (misconception, pig-headedness, bad orders) but described in the most glorious terms, and, most importantly **in contrast to the conduct of the enemy** – the enemy must be inferior at all costs, even if one lost the battle and most of one's light brigade. Lucan's reputation, which he was still defending to Kinglake in lengthy statements ten years later, was destroyed based on public perceptions created by a minute-to-minute press, comparable to Baudrillard's CNN covering the press, which was in turn covering CNN (Patton 2).

The political side of the Light Brigade ran in tandem with the popular side, often intersecting in the early days following the charge. No one seemed willing at any time to condemn the charge out of hand as a pointless waste of life based on the vague language of an aide-de-camp and the suicidal impetuosity of a cavalry captain who refused to go back for clarification. The performance of the events had already taken on a life of their own, and would become the basis for all subsequent narratives.

THE FIRST OF THE EYEWITNESS JOURNALS

The reports from Russell and the coverage of Lucan's recall in the *Times* were public records which were supposedly completely factual reporting as a part of a service to the public (which also raised circulation and hence profits). The public was introduced to the Crimea and the Light Brigade a different way through journals, kept by private citizens or soldiers, who then prepared the journals for publication, carefully editing them, and thus shaping the narrative for public consumption.

We turn now to Mrs. Duberly, who published her account of the Crimea in 1855, before the end of the war. Fanny Duberly was the wife of a junior officer, Henry Duberly, posted first to India (where Fanny also kept a journal, which she later published), and then to the Crimea. Fanny was present against the express orders of Lord Raglan, and had smuggled herself onto the ship at Varna in disguise as a common camp follower (Kelly xix-xx). Her presence in the Crimea was not universally approved, and there has been an enduring legend that she was a common, vulgar and amoral woman who was disapproved of by all the “ladies of quality,” while being despised by the true gentlemen (Kelly xi). The reality, as with the Light Brigade, lies elsewhere.

Her courage and endurance were ignored by those who condemned her unconventional ways (particularly her practice of wearing trousers), and misconstrued her easy friendships with men like Nolan and Poulett Somerset; . . . But appreciative newspaper reports, describing her as the “Heroine of the Crimea” and a “Stout-hearted Lady”, ensured that she remained an object of romantic fascination to those in England. (Kelly xxi-xxii)

She was famous (or infamous) long before she published her Journal in 1855, and had very high hopes for its reception, going so far as to request that she be allowed to dedicate it to the Queen, and soliciting friends in high places to secure this approval for her (Kelly xxxii). The approval was never given, but it demonstrates her high ambitions for the work.¹² In fact, it was widely published enough to earn her extensive, if unkind, reviews, including a full-scale mock pastiche of the journal in *Punch*, which upset her very much (Kelly xxxix).

She has a lengthy entry for October 25, 1854, which includes the following:

Now came the disaster of the day - our glorious and fatal charge But so sick at heart am I that I can barely write of it even now. **It has become a matter of world history, deeply as at the time it was involved in mystery.** I only know that I saw Captain Nolan galloping; that presently the Light Brigade, leaving their

¹² One could not dedicate a book to a member of the Royal family without the family’s permission, and thus Mrs. Duberly was turned down. This was not true for William Simpson’s sketches from the Crimea, as we will see in Chapter 3; the Queen granted her permission to have the book of illustrations dedicated to her royal personage.

position, advanced by themselves, although in the face of the whole Russian force, and under a fire that seemed pouring from all sides, as though every bush was a musket, every stone in the hill side a gun. Faster and faster they rode. How we watched them! They are out of sight; but presently come a few horsemen, straggling, galloping back. “What can those *skirmishers* be doing? See, they form up together again. Good God! it is the Light Brigade!” (Duberly, October 25, 1854, my emphasis)

It is obvious from the highlighted section of this entry that before publication Mrs. Duberly did some editing in her journal. Her choice of words here imply that the charge is actually no longer a mystery, and it is clear that she knew Captain Nolan, the aide-de-camp whose behavior was at least in part responsible for the charge. She does not attribute the quotation at the end of the passage, and it is unclear whether this was her own exclamation, or that of some officer near her. Mrs. Duberly goes on to list those officers she knew among the dead. Later she says that her servant’s husband, serving with the 8th Hussars, died of wounds the next day (October 26, 1855).

Mrs. Duberly’s report synchronizes with Russell’s account in his first dispatches, which suggests that she shaped her original narrative so that her account would seem to be a first person narrative of the same event, with no troublesome discrepancies. She is wholeheartedly admiring of the charge, laments its outcome, and assigns no blame. Although it is possible that she accepted the event without comment or question, when we compare her journal to a private journal that was never published, it becomes more likely that Mrs. Duberly carefully edited her account so that it conformed to predominating public opinion at the time of publication. Mrs. Duberly is therefore contributing to the early performances of Light Brigadeness in her acquiescence to the publicly acknowledged “truth” of the event and the way in which it was to be understood.

By contrast, George Palmer Evelyn’s diary is obviously the collection of the private thoughts of a man who was attached to the Turkish Army, and kept a journal of his involvement in the Crimea, including his journey to and from the theatre of war. Col. Evelyn’s diary was

discovered in the mid-twentieth century in manuscript form by someone researching the family, and it was transcribed, edited and published by Cyril Falls. Falls rightly points out in his introduction that Evelyn was obviously writing for himself, or perhaps a few close friends and family, since he gives no explanation for his involvement in the Crimea, and the subject matter of many of his entries are purely personal, such as where he dined and whom he was with.

Evelyn was not an eyewitness to the charge of the Light Brigade, but he gives an account of what he was told by acquaintances, and his account does not conform to the later published reports, as Mrs. Duberly's does. He lists the number of cavalry officers at about 800, when in fact there were just over 600 men in the charge, and states that it was Lord Cardigan who asked Lew Nolan against whom the charge was directed. Lord Cardigan was in fact the commander of the Light Brigade, but it was Lord Lucan, the commander of the entire cavalry, who had the conversation with Lew Nolan, and who gave the actual verbal order (97).

Yet it is an intimate and personal account that survives in Evelyn's journal – personal in a way that lacks the performative aspect of Mrs. Duberly's account, which she meant for publication. He comments on personal friends who died, those who survived, and mentions one particular friend, Dunne, "who disabled five." (97). It appears in context that Dunne was speaking of the Russian guns, but it is not made clear, which any journal for publication would have done. Evelyn's entry for the following day, October 26, mentions visiting Dunne, who related that he "killed 2 men with his sword and three with pistols," (98), which may be the "five" in the above comment. This confusion is not clarified, nor would it be necessary to do so since this was a private account that was meant for Evelyn's personal use.

In later entries, Evelyn is extremely critical of the general reporting concerning the engagement in the Crimea, stating that the newspapers had got it wrong, and were completely

out of touch with what was happening on the ground (125). This was probably not a reference to Russell's reporting, because as I have shown, he was the one correspondent who reported the real conditions of the men in the camps. Evelyn is also frankly critical of the charge of the Light Brigade:

I shall not attempt to describe . . . how 600 light horsemen, thinking something should be done for the credit of that branch of the service, thought it proper to charge the centre of the Russian Army in position. For which exploit, by the by, their Divisional General and the highly extolled and amiable Brigadier ought both to be shot (126-7)

These are not words which Evelyn would have allowed to be published, since it is forcefully and bluntly critical to an extreme degree of both Lords Raglan and Lucan (the Divisional General and Brigadier, respectively). The statement is evidence of his personal disgust with the handling of the event, and strong sense of the ridiculous about the entire affair. By contrast, there is, in the Appendix to the published journal, a transcript of a letter which Evelyn wrote to the Editor of the *Morning Chronicle* in 1857, which specifically refers to the order of Lord Raglan and is apparently in response to a dispute over whether the order contained the word "charge." Evelyn takes the opportunity to explain the duties of the light cavalry, and finally states that it was Lord Cardigan, the commander of the Light Brigade, who would have had the final decision concerning what direction the brigade rode and towards what guns (142-3).

This consideration is in direct opposition to the public accounts, which mostly condemned Lord Lucan as the officer who gave the verbal order that set the charge in motion, and also is written in language which is much more diplomatic (although still condemnatory of Cardigan) than the expressions used in Evelyn's private journal. Evelyn's journal did have one moment of publicity, however. Alexander Kinglake, who took it upon himself to narrate the entirety of the Crimean War (in eight volumes), apparently consulted Evelyn's journal when preparing to write about the battle of Inkerman (which took place a few weeks after the battle of

Balaclava). Kinglake's letter is also in the Appendix to Evelyn's journal, and specifically refers to Evelyn's narrative as being of "material advantage" to Kinglake, and states that Kinglake has "taken the liberty of making extracts from it." (144). Since this journal was intact as one manuscript, it is fairly certain that Kinglake would have also been able to read Evelyn's comments concerning the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava. Yet no mention is ever made of the journal in connection with Balaclava in Kinglake's published account, and Evelyn's comments were not public knowledge until one hundred years after the event.

As the self-appointed first historian of the Crimean War, Kinglake made an exhaustive study of all materials that he could. He visited the sites of the battles, and had plans drawn up accordingly (Evelyn, 144). He spoke with the officers involved in the charge of the Light Brigade, and included a special Appendix in his own work that is a defense by Lord Lucan concerning his actions. The ultimate narrative, however, was based on what he chose to privilege, and those events or opinions that he chose not to consider in the narrative did not become part of the canonical documentation of the Crimean War. This included Evelyn's candid remarks on the actions of Lords Lucan and Raglan.

When considered as a contemporary document, Evelyn's diary shows that at the time of the charge of the Light Brigade, opinions concerning the event were not unmixed. But the published versions of "diaries" such as Mrs. Duberly's, as well as the accounts by William Russell and the intense debate in Parliament on the rightness of Lord Lucan's actions are consistent in their glorification of the actions of the cavalry in the charge during the battle of Balaclava, and allow no hint of any oppositional voice.

CONCLUSION

In Chapter Two I have set forth the basic facts, as best they are known, concerning the actual charge of the Light Brigade on October 25, 1854. From the day after the event,

participants and observers alike began to shape the event for public consumption and military records. The latter became public because of a dispute between Lords Lucan and Raglan over the original order and who was actually “to blame.” This dispute was in no way settled by the publication of Tennyson’s famous poem just a few weeks later, in which he states that “someone had blunder’d,” and the argument was then carried into the Houses of Parliament, where the conversation was published in the *Times* on a daily basis.

Throughout this initial period following the charge, the Light Brigade quickly took on strongly performative aspects. Russell’s description in the *Times* was suggestive of a reviewer at a theatrical event; while Lucan’s questioning in Parliament became a very public performance in the media. Mrs. Duberly’s journal, although purporting to be a firsthand account just jotted down from day to day, in fact was carefully crafted for publication. The shaping of her narrative can be seen in the editorial comments she makes concerning the charge, as well as in comparing it with a truly private journal, which was never edited for publication in the author’s lifetime.

Kinglake’s exhaustive history caps the initial textual contributions to the creation of Light Brigadeness, for in his work he reinscribes the sense of the gallantry of the men, their heroism and devotion to duty, and their courage in riding to almost certain death because they were obeying an order. Although Kinglake included an appendix in his volume devoted to Balaclava that was Lucan’s continued defense of his actions, Kinglake himself was conspicuously weak in his exoneration of Lucan, and as I discussed in Chapter 1, it was Kinglake’s view of the causes of the charge that held sway until the mid-twentieth century. Kinglake, then, can be said to have codified and made fixed the publicly acceptable version of the events at Balaclava, paving the way for a myopic vision in future interpretations.

Thus the Light Brigade emerged from the Crimean War as a matter of public interest and ongoing debate. Because of Russell's dispatches and Lucan's necessary defense of his actions, as well as the Tennyson poem, the matter was kept current and inspired other poetry, as well as visual and musical representations. I will explore these representations, and how they grew out of the initial reports, in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

It is one thing to have an event that becomes the sensation of the day, taking over the headlines, stirring up controversy, requiring hearings at the top levels of government, and inspiring poetry and heated exchanges in the editorial columns of the largest newspapers. It is quite another to have such a sensation develop into an intrinsic part of the cultural referent. There are many sensational events that have occurred in history, which are now only remembered by certain specialists in that period of time, or that kind of event. What separates momentary sensations, scandalous or otherwise, from events that become legendary is transmission of the event to future generations. The mere fact that an event is singled out to be transmitted to the next generation already designates it as important to those doing the transmitting: Pearl Harbor, the Kennedy assassination, and of course, now, September 11, 2001. It is also essential in the development of a legend that the transmission continues into generations who were not living when the original event took place. “Everybody” today knows that “9/11” is one of the several code referents for the attack on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center, but it will take many years before we know whether “9/11” will actually be privileged in history or culture above other events that have occurred or will occur in the next few decades.

It is not possible to “see” a legend developing as the development happens, but it is possible to look back at the succession of important moments that ended in the event’s legendary status. For the Light Brigade, the initial reports, furor, journals and national attention could have given way to concentration on the next event that was far-reaching enough to capture the audience. That the Light Brigade did not, in fact, yield the spotlight has a great deal to do with the next building block in the development of a legend, which is the transmission to a future generation – not some selective group of that generation, but the populace as a whole. In the case of the Light Brigade, this was accomplished primarily in two ways. The first was through

the dissemination of copies of popular paintings and sketches depicting the Brigade. The second was through drawing room sheet music.

Pictures differ from the written text in several important ways. The visual image can produce much more visceral reactions than even a well-written and vivid description of a moment or event. The visual image can also be gazed upon as an entirety in a way that written text cannot – a reader can acquire a sense of what has occurred only through sequential absorption of words, which then form ideas, and finally can be reconstructed in the mind to give an image or impression. A painting can be viewed as the whole and absorbed as an image without the sequential work needed in reading. At the same time, a painting can also be deconstructed into its parts, so that one may analyze color, light, texture and spatial relationships to interpret meaning from the image. Painting (up to the time of Picasso) is also an arrangement of visual symbols that have an accepted common meaning. This common meaning can be reconstructed to represent and reaffirm the normative social values; but the arrangement of recognizable images can also challenge the “reader” of the painting to “see” something other than the normative or acceptable.¹³

A painting is also a way to transmit values and ideas to a wider contemporary audience, as well as future audiences. Unlike the transitory nature of live theatre, a painting is fixed and immutable, although interpretations of it are not. In the Victorian period especially, as many paintings were mass-reproduced for sale to the general public, the values the paintings expressed were being passed on to younger members of society in a way that would be hard to remove from those members as they grew older. In *Recreating the Past: British History and the Victorian Painter*, Roy Strong revisits Victorian paintings of the “historical” British past to mine

¹³ This may be one reason why the public, even the supposedly advanced art world, were dismayed by the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood, James Whistler, and of course, Picasso. They were being asked to “see” the world in a way that was not the currently accepted normative shaping.

them for an understanding of their value in society at the time they were painted and the effect that this had on Victorian society as a whole. Strong was the director of the Victoria and Albert Museum when he wrote this work in 1977, and brings much of his personal affection for the Victorian History paintings into his writing. This affection is illuminating in that it gives some sense of the way in which the Victorians might have felt about the contemporary paintings of current events as well as historical.

In the old-fashioned way of teaching history, which still lingered a little when I was a child during the Second World War, history began with these heroes and heroines, stories and anecdotes. But it also began with pictures – not those dry-as-dust reproductions of old portraits and tombs, dead artefacts [sic] now in museums and ancient buildings, but something much more powerful, images which swung wide a window into the past, made it human, living and real. (11)

Note Strong's use of the last term, "real." Strong is relying on the modernist concept that history is not interpretive, it is fixed and knowable, and art can reproduce the fixed and knowable so that a viewer can actually "see" the past. He also dismisses the "dead artefacts now in museums," yet he is speaking of paintings that also hang in museums, and were reproduced for public consumption. He makes the distinction between artifacts (admittedly ones that sound quite boring) and artifice – the former is useless in teaching history, the latter is somehow a time traveling machine that allows the viewer to look through Strong's "window" and glimpse reality. Artifice over artifact is completely at odds with the new historical approach, which builds on artifacts that have been overlooked, such as slaves' handicrafts or women's journals in order to offer an alternative to the modernist "great men of history" model. New historians use artifice as well, but they never mistake it for reality; rather, it is another artifact among many that must be interpreted.

Strong, of course, is also interpreting: his recollections of the paintings that most interested him in history shows that he responded to the paintings as one might respond to an exciting performance:

Millais's *Boyhood of Raleigh* (1870), in which the future poet and explorer listens to an old sailor telling of the voyages of his youth, made the Elizabethan age of discovery thrilling to me. Delaroche's picture (1830) of the young Edward V and his brother, the little Princes in the Tower, chilled the spine in anticipation of their imminent and horrible end. Frederick Goodall's *An Episode of the Happier Days of Charles I* (1853), in which the tragic King, his beautiful Queen and even more adorable children said down-river on a summer's day, made me a Cavalier for life. (11)

In the *Boyhood of Raleigh* Strong makes the implicit assumption that Raleigh was responding to the old sailor's story in exactly the same way that Strong responded to "the Elizabethan age of discovery," that Raleigh found the stories thrilling and that it was the stories that sent him off to the New World. Leaving a postcolonialist interpretation of the Elizabethan age of discovery aside, Strong's projection of his own emotions into the painting shows that the painting cannot be conceived as authentic in the very way that Strong believes it to be. As a boy he interpreted what was occurring in the painting – because it was a painting, and the title is the *Boyhood of Raleigh*, there is absolutely no way of knowing what the sailor was actually saying to the young boy. Of course, Millais was probably intending to suggest this, but it is a suggestion alone, and the viewer must read into the painting his or her own interpretation of what is actually happening in the painting.

Delaroche's *The Princes in the Tower* shows two young flaxen-haired boys who look like nothing so much as twins to Little Lord Fauntleroy, against a stone background replete with shadows. The viewer must know *which* Princes are being referred to (more than one Prince spent time in the Tower), and must also know the accepted version (very much based on Shakespeare's *Richard III*) of what happened to the Princes. Again, this painting requires a

reciprocal relationship with the image – the viewer understands the code of the title and the visualization, and then projects his childhood's (in the case of Strong) imagination to produce the spine-tingling effect in the viewer. The viewer is participating not just in the performance of the painting, but in the performance of a particular understanding of English history, and the viewer's place (or non-place) in that history. The painting, therefore, is actually a form of political performance in separating those who understand from those who don't, and implying that those who can "read" the painting are the true Englishmen.

Strong's comments on *An Episode of the Happier Days of King Charles I* are the most revelatory. He speaks of Charles as a "tragic king," presumably because he was executed by Cromwell. His statement that this painting "made [him] a Cavalier for life" has complex overtones that lead into Strong's own political beliefs and loyalties. The Cavaliers, those who supported Charles and fought with him, and went into exile in France until Charles' son Charles was brought back as Charles II, were the seventeenth century equivalent of the Tories: peers or at least large land-owners, unwilling to give the House of Commons any real power, royalist to the core. Strong identifies himself, through his boyhood experience of this painting, with the English hegemony not only of his present day, but also of the hegemonic assumptions made by a mid-Victorian painter. I cannot state with certainty Strong's political views, as he never mentions them. But his willingness to identify with the doomed aristocrats, who made a triumphant return with Charles II (a far from adorable adult), suggests that his romantic vision of the Empire places him firmly on the side of the aristocratic oligarchy.

Strong goes on to explain his own determination to recapture the value of these paintings in the transmission of history, deprecating the "current" (i.e., early post-modernist) trend which renders the paintings suspect:

Until two generations ago, these pictures were part of the visual experience of every child brought up on British history. Now they have long been banished from school textbooks as inaccurate, misleading and unauthentic. The best-selling prints made after them that once-adorned the walls of Victorian and Edwardian nurseries and schoolrooms have been taken down and relegated to the attic. (11)

Strong points out that the paintings were not merely in galleries, but were reproduced “best-sellers,” in fact, that hung not only in the parlor but in the nurseries and schoolrooms. The prints would be constant companions, always there when a child looked up from his lessons, or as she played by the day nursery fire. Since Strong’s intention in his book is to bring the paintings back into good repute, he apparently does not find their banishment on the grounds of being “innaccurate, misleading and unauthentic” to be a meaningful judgment. He takes the position that although they may not be faithful representations of actual events, the feelings that they create are far from unauthentic or misleading.

I have quoted Dr. Strong at some length, because it is important to hear the exact words that he uses to describe the paintings of history that were his introduction to history proper. Paintings that we understand as being heavily encoded with suppositions of empire and natural superiority, among other attributes, Strong sees as creating a vision of the past useful to children so that they would carry the vision of the image with them as a referent, deeply imbedded in their ethos.

The studies which form the basis of this book began for me almost as a personal indulgence. I happened to like this sort of painting. On the lowest level, there is something incredible about an artist’s ability to transport the onlooker back in time, give him glimpses of his heroes and heroines, recapture the modes and manners of distant ages. (11)

Although Strong later discusses the necessity of interrogating the paintings, his first impulse towards accepting them at face value and wholeheartedly is clearly expressed here. He states unequivocally that the artist can “transport the onlooker back in time,” a suggestion that the artist

can somehow represent “reality” or “truth” of an historic event. He also suggests that the paintings give “glimpses of [his] heroes and heroines,” further suggesting that the paintings should be accepted as fact. His use of the term “heroes” is interesting here, because if we take it in conjunction with the earlier passage in his introduction, in which he states that the paintings themselves made the heroes for him, he is presenting his reader with a circular argument. The subjects of the paintings, because so imaginatively and sympathetically represented, made them heroes to Strong; the value of the paintings lies in their representation of his heroes. This kind of argumentation in many ways is quintessential to the implanting of a new myth in popular culture and discourse. Strong’s concentration on the essentialist idea that the one “truth” of history can be fully represented on canvas suggests why it was that Light Brigadeness could be captured by the painters who chose to represent the charge. If, as I propose in Chapter 2, the version of the event had been fixed early by the reports in the *Times*, the journals and above all by Kinglake’s reliance on these other documents, then the monolithic interpretation of the event, that is Light Brigadeness, could be represented with easily-recognizable attributes, in much the way a medieval painting was coded to indicate a particular saint.

Strong himself is not unaware, however, of the profound influence such paintings and reproductions had on the generations of children who understood these pictures as perhaps an imaginative recreation of the past, but certainly unbiased and without agenda. Again, Dr. Strong:

What made them [the Victorians] interested in some periods and not in others?
What was the relationship between contemporary history painting and history writing? What was the impact of Sir Walter Scott and his successors as exponents of the historical novel? What was the connection between the rise of antiquarianism and the increasing pictorial accuracy of the painters of the past?
What, overall, was the role of this national historic mythology in the make-up of the Victorian mind and imagination? (11-12, emphasis mine)

Strong puts his finger directly on the issue that most concerns the iconography of the Light Brigade as a transmission of “history” through the brush of an artist. The paintings of the charge

of the Light Brigade entered into an already-existing Victorian movement that depicted ancient Britain from the apotheosis of empire, so that any “historical” painting of the Light Brigade assumes the traditions of this movement. Strong uses the word mythology, but does not seem to think it a problematic term. He is referring to representations of events that occurred well before the Victorian present, so perhaps he is using the word as a way of collecting the chosen events into one category. But the implications of this statement are extensive and reach into every part of representation and performance of events. I have mentioned the “national historic mythology” in my discussion of the Charles I painting. If the paintings are not actually “true” other than on the level of viewer response, then how can we depend upon the contemporary representations of the charge of the Light Brigade to be different? The post-modernist, new historicist answer is that we can’t.

AUTHENTICITY VERSUS VERISIMILITUDE

In a recent *New Yorker* cartoon, two well-dressed old men, both with drinks, one with a cigar and a large ashtray by his side, sit in large comfortable chairs in front of a large window with heavy drapes, pulled back by large sashes. There is hint of a large painting on the wall behind the man with a cigar. The other man is saying to the one with a cigar, “I aspired to authenticity, but I never got beyond verisimilitude” (*New Yorker*, June 4, 2007). This cartoon speaks to a particular audience who will get the joke: well-educated middle- and upper-class Americans.¹⁴ Because of the representations of the two old men, I believe this to be a joke about the constant use of such words in everyday speech. The cartoon struck me particularly, however, because it spoke so directly to my concerns with the paintings of the Light Brigade. Although great attention to detail was a feature of each of the paintings I will discuss, that attention is no

¹⁴ Just as Strong was a receptive audience for his paintings because he understood the representational iconography of the various histories presented.

guarantee that the paintings themselves can offer an authentic representation of actual events.

The three paintings are by artists who were not present at the charge, and who based their representations on oral or written accounts of the event, already making any claim to authenticity suspect. Additionally, each painter did a certain amount of stage-managing in the production of his paintings.

The paintings of the Light Brigade are not mere artworks for the delectation of the contemporary public at a gallery showing. Instead, they are visual representations of the embodiment of a particular way of reading history, and a particular privileging of a specific event that supports a discourse of the dominant British empire and, q.e.d., the dominance of the British male in particular. In his book on the painted representations of Manhood in Victorian art, Joseph Kestner links the representation in particular of the “valiant soldier” with Foucault’s “intensification of the body” in his *History of Sexuality*, so that he can say,

Victorian imperial battle painting represents the intensification of the male body as the site for negotiating masculinity through empowering political, economic and racist programmes: thus *Machtpolitik* intersects with formation of ideologies of masculinity. Some of the elements negotiated in such iconography include the following: . . . the heroic male body; comradeship; the inscription of the heroic code (*andreia*, which in Greek means both manliness and courage); . . . the classist depiction of men in the ranks, and the ambiguities of the wounded male body in representations of veterans (189-190).

Kestner’s point is that, since the nineteenth century was an intensely military century (189), the battles were a natural source of material for artists, but the paintings also served a purpose for an imperialist agenda, whether intentionally or not (190). And an agenda, by its very nature, implies a continuation of a program or value system into future generations, sometimes through active promotion, but most often through assimilation into the hegemonic ascendancy.

And what better way, as Rashna Singh points out, to encourage such an assimilation than through childhood experience?

Suffice it then to say this: representation trumps reality, fictions supercede facts, language shapes event, and sign governs information. . . . the best propaganda is that which is not recognized as such, where the matrix is so deeply embedded in the consciousness and what is not said takes on more significance than what is said. . . . Patterns of sublimation begin in childhood. . . . The child must be trained . . . through representational modes . . . The story of nation and people, race and culture, begins as the bedtime story (xxxiii).

In this statement, Singh is in agreement with Dr. Strong concerning the power of the early imagination. Singh's book examines children's literature, but Strong makes it clear that visual representations make a lasting impression on the young as well, and Kestner rightly points out that the battle paintings of the Victorian period are visual representations not so much of the male soldier but of the ideal of British manhood in its military embodiment, and thus laden with a value system specific to time and place.

Kestner builds on the work of Susan Casteras, in her analysis of paintings depicting Victorian childhood, when he analyzes two specific paintings that represent boys modelling adult behavior in the specific depiction of warfare. The first, *Just as the Twig is Bent, So is the Tree Inclined*, by William Maw Egley in 1861, focuses on two little girls representing two different types of womanhood, but they are watching a little boy playing with soldiers. The supposedly "flirtatious" little girl holds a soldier doll in her hand, and the supposedly "serious" little girl has a sheet of paper at her feet that says "See the Conquering Hero Comes"; there is a portrait above the fireplace of a soldier who may be an ancestor of the little boy (193). Kestner says "the canvas was painted at the period of the Crimean conflict," although the war had been over seven years by the time Egley painted this picture. Kestner implies that for Egley, the Crimean War was not an isolated event that occurred between two dates, but rather an ethos that influenced both the childhood games of little boys and the representation of these games on canvas. The representation of these games played by boys to other boys serves as a form of modelling as well. Another painting, by John Collinson done in 1856, is called *The Siege of Sebastopol, by an*

Eyewitness. In the painting “two boys mimic military exploits, while a sketch of print inscribed ‘Alma’ alludes to the famous battle during the Crimean War” (Kestner, 193).

In Susan Casteras’ analysis of this painting, she refers to the painter as being like the boy because “Collinson himself never traveled to the Crimea, but, like his young protagonists, is reacting to the Victorian hero worship and fantasies of bloodless war”(*Victorian Childhood* 59). In this the painter is like the majority of the artists who took as their subject the charge of the Light Brigade. The act of the painter, in creating the event in his imagination, is akin to the abilities of the small boys to play out “war” without the inconvenience of anyone actually being hurt or dying. When the artist chooses to represent only certain aspects of a particular event that seem most exciting or heroic, he creates a representation that the child audience accepts as real (just as Strong does), and gives the child further material for his imaginative play that has little resemblance to actuality, but creates the impression in the child that he is enacting an event as it took place and embodying the heroic iconography represented in the painting.

Because the child accepts the iconography as reality, the iconography in fact becomes the reality. We base our actions upon our previous experience, and cultures base their actions on collective previous experiences, otherwise known as “history.” What we call history, however, is more akin to a carefully produced docu-drama than an unedited reel of footage from a stationary video camera. When a painting, such as those described above, influences a child’s perception of reality, then the painting influences reality itself. And the children who learned the “reality” from the painting grow up in turn to transmit this reality to the next generation. Thus the painting is both the raw transmission of the beginning of a legend and the vehicle used by future generations to continue to transmit the legend.

The Eastern Church has always maintained, against would-be image-smashers, that the icon is not an object of worship, the end in itself, but rather a path or doorway into true worship, the means to an end. It is fitting that we have borrowed the language of Eastern Christianity when we describe something as an icon, or speak of the iconography of a body of art. The artifacts are means to an end: Strong says that seeing the historical paintings allowed him to glimpse his heroes (the reality beyond the representation). Iconoclasts (image breakers) recognize that the danger of the image lies in stopping with the image and imagining it to be the reality, as Strong, also, so clearly does. When art becomes icon, viewers tread the narrow path on the edge of the abyss, always in danger of accepting the canvas at face value. Legend owes its creation, at least in part, to the painters and audience who embrace the representation to the neglect of the reality that lies beyond it.

How does the idea of transmission of legend apply in the case of the charge of the Light Brigade, and what complications had to be overcome in order to transmit the legend in a fashion acceptable to the public and easily understood? The greatest problem of using the event of the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava is that the event was originally considered a complete disaster. As one soldier wrote in a letter home only two days after the event, “Out of nearly 800 only about 100 returned from that fatal Charge. Yesterday about as many more turned up. Our Light Cavalry in fact no longer exists” (Dallas 40). As I have argued in Chapter 2, this disaster was in the process of being mitigated from the very beginning by the popular press and the published journals through their representations of the cavalymen themselves as heroic figures, even though the charge itself resulted in catastrophe. The paintings of the Light Brigade underwent a similar transformation from early sketches through later representations.

The Paintings Themselves

I focus on three well-known works, spanning a period of about forty years, specifically because they were well-known and because they were frequently reproduced. The first is a sketch called “The Charge of the Light Brigade” by William Simpson.¹⁵ Simpson was the artistic equivalent of Russell the war correspondent. He arrived in the Crimea three weeks after the battle of Balaclava on his first war art assignment (Johnson 19, 21), sent by the London printmakers Colnaghi. The first two battles he was required to “document” were Balaclava and Inkerman, which had also occurred before Simpson arrived. What Simpson did to recreate the charge at Balaclava was to first survey the ground with an aide of Lord Raglan’s (the commander of the army); that gave Simpson the topographical information he needed. The second thing Simpson did was to interview as many people as possible about the charge, getting a wide range of descriptions and opinions from both those who rode in the charge and those who had seen it (Johnson 21).

Not surprisingly, one of Simpson’s main sources was Russell’s description in his dispatch to the *Times*, which I have discussed at length in Chapter 2. Other sources included two men who had apparently ridden side by side but gave completely different accounts. As Peter Johnson points out in *Front Line Artists*, “on such spikily disputed ground and in the charged atmosphere of allegation and counter-allegation after the battle, Simpson felt obliged to submit his drawing to the man who led the six hundred, Lord Cardigan” (21). Colnaghi was paying Simpson to bring back detailed sketches that could be turned into a large book (the equivalent of what we call a coffee-table book today), which was eventually published in 1855 as *The Seat of the War in the East*. (Lamborne 361). As such, Simpson would probably not wish to have his

¹⁵ This is not the first sketch that appeared of the Charge, but it is the first important one, because of its later publication in watercolor on a large scale both separately and in a collection of other sketches, because it was presented to Queen Victoria by the commander of the Charge, and because it was considered to be “historically accurate.”

accuracy disputed by someone who was actually present at the time. The result of Simpson's submission of the sketch to Cardigan is an indicator of what was to come in the way of art concerning the Light Brigade. According to Simpson in his autobiography, he brought three successive sketches to Cardigan (on board his yacht in the harbor of Balaclava). The first two were summarily rejected as being inaccurate without Cardigan stating why they were wrong. The third sketch was accepted with praise. What was the difference between that sketch and the first two? Simpson credits his final success to the fact that "in the last sketch I had taken greater care than in the first two to make his lordship conspicuous in front of the brigade" (Johnson 18, quoting Simpson's *Autobiography*).

Thus the first significant representation of the charge of the Light Brigade was already tainted with the effort to please the man who led the charge. "Simpson's works are often dismissed as being visual records of historic but not artistic merit" (Lamborne 361), but it is clear from Simpson's account of the matter that his sketch was not in fact a visual record at all. It was based on description by others and influenced by someone who was far from unbiased in his desire to have the sketch "correct." *The Seat of War in the East* was duly published in 1855, with some eighty water color lithographs, many of which had been printed and sold separately prior to being collected in the one volume (Colnaghi, dates at bottom of each plate). A copy of Simpson's "The Charge of the Light Brigade" was brought by Cardigan when he was invited to meet with Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, and Cardigan used the sketch as an illustration when describing the charge (Johnson 19). Simpson's sketch was thus introduced into the visual vocabulary of none other than the monarch herself, so that it became a part of the discourse of the Light Brigade as surely as Russell's dispatches did.

The link between Russell's dispatches is made stronger by the publisher quoting Russell's description of the charge at great length in the descriptive material for each plate placed at the beginning of *The Seat of War in the East*.

We have elsewhere attempted to describe the theatre of this magnificent charge, and it is merely necessary to add, in further explanation of this drawing . . . We shall now leave the reader in the hands of Mr. Simpson and of "Our own Correspondent" (Russell). (Colnaghi 4).

The publishers then proceed to quote Russell's entire description of the charge, beginning with "Lord Lucan, with reluctance," and ending with "at 35 minutes past 11 not a British soldier, except the dead and dying, was left in front of these bloody Muscovite guns" (Colnaghi 4-5). A reader of the book of lithographs might therefore assume that Simpson's sketch was the visual version of Russell's description. The sketch itself is interesting (see fig. 1).



Fig 1. Simpson, William. "The Charge of the Light Brigade." *The Seat of War in the East*, Plate 15. (London: Colnaghi 1856)

Simpson was a seasoned artist when he went to the Crimea, but had not been a war artist until that time. “The Charge of the Light Brigade” is one of his first attempts at war art, and it differs greatly from two other plates also in the collection. They are “Charge of the Heavy Cavalry Brigade” (Colnaghi plate 6) and “Second Charge of the Guards at Inkerman” (Colnaghi plate 7). Simpson presents the charge of the Light Brigade as if the viewer were standing on a hill overlooking the mass of men moving from the right to the left of the canvas, toward the Russian guns in place, and behind the crossfire that was picking off horsemen as they trotted down the field. There is smoke belching from all the guns to the left flank of the cavalry (in front of the viewer), and smoke coming from the Russian emplacement of guns at the end of the valley. The smoke obscures most of the figures firing the guns, but the Light Brigade is clearly on view. They are moving down the field in an orderly fashion in three ranks, with Cardigan well to the fore of the first rank, and two horsemen directly behind Cardigan but ahead of the first rank. The ranks of horsemen are in tight formation, with no sign of the havoc the cross-fire was wreaking on the Brigade. The only sign of loss are the bodies that are lying on the ground between the first and second ranks, between the second and third ranks, and behind the third rank. Note how the orderliness of the cavalry give the sketch a curiously static quality, as if the Brigade were suspended in time. This is an important feature of the sketch because of the implications concerning how the Brigade would be represented in future.

The sketch shows the Brigade well before it was cut to bits. The casualties are minimal compared to the body of horsemen riding toward the guns, and the scale of the sketch, representing not only the entire Light Brigade but also the topographical context of the charge, distances the viewer from the action, similar to the effect of tiny dioramas displayed in battlefield museums. The viewer is insulated from the disaster through distance and time. Because

Simpson chose to represent the charge prior to the destruction of the Brigade, he has frozen the moment in time. The horsemen who approach the Russian guns are not yet dead, and paradoxically will remain forever charging the guns without the lethal consequences. In contrast, the fallen horsemen appear to be already dead; there is no in between, no one in the act of falling or dying. The relatively few bodies stretched on the ground are so small compared to the scale of the drawing that the viewer cannot see individual characteristics so the fallen become a faceless number rather than differentiated individuals. The Light Brigadeness emphasized here is the aspect of heroism and undeterred determination to carry out orders – the brigade sweeps down the plain without faltering, and because of the distance, there is no chance to register any individual emotions.

Simpson's two other representations of charges in the lithographic series on the Crimea are quite different. The charge of the Heavy Cavalry Brigade occurred early in the morning of the battle of Balaclava, and was a success. Simpson chose to sketch that engagement (see fig. 2) as if the viewer were barely ten feet away in a slightly elevated position above the action. There is much more movement, especially in the foreground, although Simpson again sketches the troops so that they appear to stretch on into the far distances – thousands of men rather than hundreds. Note especially the commanding officer in the foreground whose uniform, combined with his headgear and the position of his sword, are represented in a way that suggests a medieval knight at a tournament. The horses appear to be at full gallop, but lack individuation. Simpson chooses in this sketch to foreground several instances of personal combat. The central mounted figure is in the process of skewering his enemy, who is on foot. On either side there are other examples of hand to hand combat. It is interesting to note that all of the victims are Russians; all the victors British. Because the charge was a success, Simpson has no need to

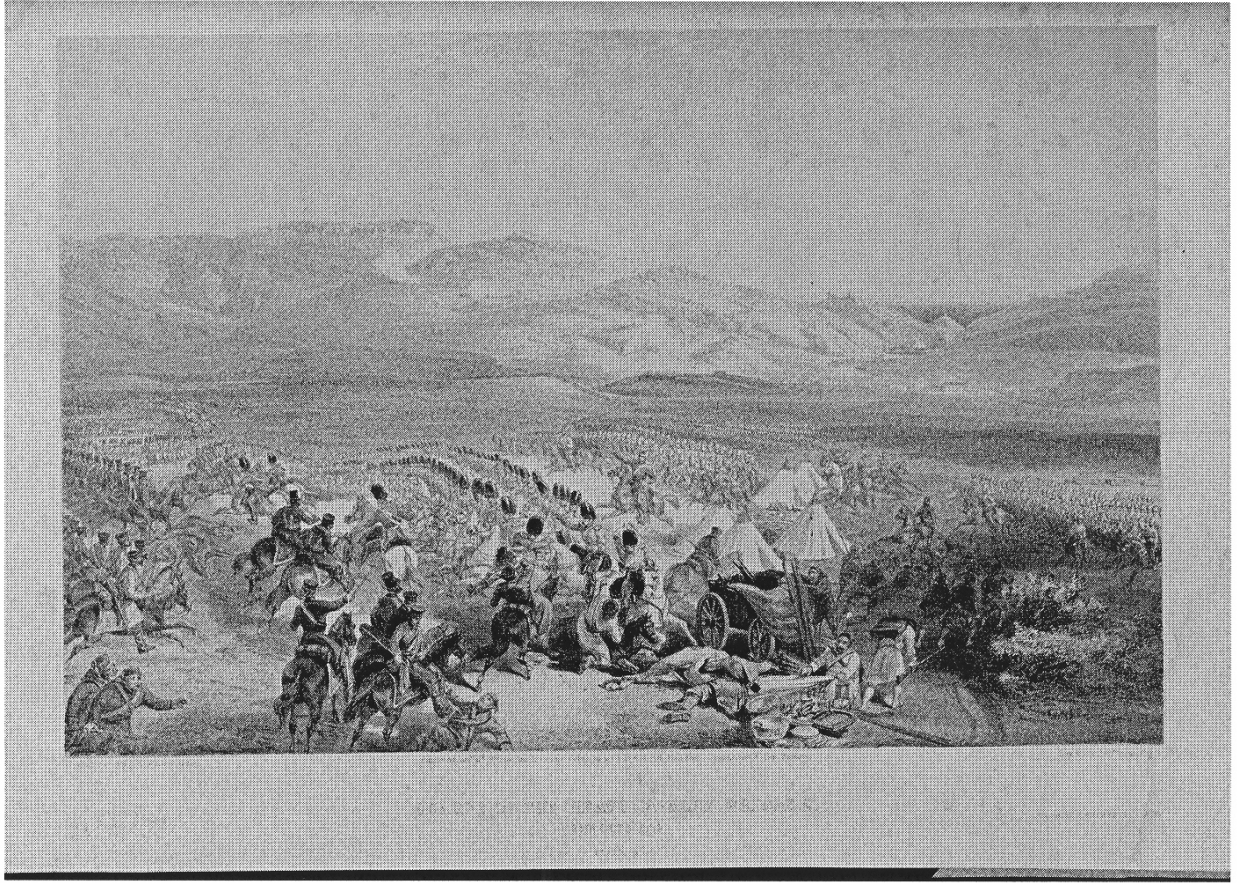


Fig 2. Simpson, William. “The Charge of Heavy Cavalry Brigade”. *The Seat of War in the East*, Plate 6. (London: Colnaghi 1856)

distance the viewer, nor to spare the viewer’s sensibilities by representing killing on the battlefield.

The final representation of a charge in the collection is the “Second Charge of the Guards when they retook the two gun battery at Inkerman.” Inkerman was neither a success nor a defeat, but this moment is a moment of success: the guards are attempting to retake a gun battery, which according to the title of the print, they subsequently succeeded in doing.¹⁶ (see Fig. 3)

¹⁶ It is not without irony that this latest example of Simpson’s “charge” sketches concerns retaking guns, which was the intended objective of the order which sent the Light Brigade against the active Russian guns.



Fig 3. Simpson, William. “The Charge of Heavy Cavalry Brigade”. *The Seat of War in the East*, Plate 7. (London: Colnaghi 1856)

This final sketch is the most active of the three sketches, and is sketched in great detail. There is action over the entirety of the canvas, and the action is much more ferocious. The combat is entirely hand to hand and the viewer is presented with bayonettings, dead and dying soldiers littering the ground, and the victims are not just the enemy – in this sketch there are British dead as well as Russian or Turk. Again, Simpson is able to present the violence of the day in an almost intimate way – the viewer of this sketch is barely two feet beyond the men in the foreground. This sketch gives a sense of immediacy to the action in a way that Simpson’s “The Charge of the Light Brigade” can never do. It may well also be a moment frozen in time,

but it is anything but static, and the men are clearly fighting for their lives as well as surrendering to death.

The three “charge” plates are in the minority in the series of plates. There are more representations of non-battle scenes than there are of battles; most are of landscapes or glimpses of behind the lines. A brief sample of these titles will suffice. “A Quiet night in the Batteries” (plate 24); “A Christmas Dinner on the Heights before Sebastopol” (plate 30); and “The Monastery of St. George and Cape Fiolente looking West” (plate 39) represent the wide variety of scenes that Simpson chose to sketch, which also included quite a few of the commanding officers at their headquarters. One of the most interesting sketches is “Graves at the Head of the Harbour of Balaklava,” (plate 21) because of its unusual subject matter. These graves are not of those fallen on the battlefield, but rather those who died of disease or cold or both. The publishers describe them as ones “who sacrificed their lives to their country as surely and not less heroically than the soldier who falls at the summit of the breach he has mounted, and with the shout of victory ringing in his ears” (Colnaghi 7). The plate represents a graveside service, with the coffin being lowered into the ground and a few soldiers standing around the open pit. It is winter and there is snow on not only the ground but also the rigging of the ships in the background. There is a kind of even-handed fair play in the epitaph the publishers create for these men, as if Colnaghi were trying to heroicize everyone serving in the Crimea equally, so that those who rode in the “magnificent charge,” as the publishers put it, were brothers not just in arms but in glory with those who died in miserable beds.

Simpson’s lithograph was among the first of many representations of the Light Brigade. Most of the art that followed immediately in Simpson’s wake chose to concentrate on either the moment that the guns were breached by the British (a moment of triumph ignoring the cost, and

when the outcome could still be thought to be in the balance);¹⁷ or the fallout from the charge in the way of injury or death.¹⁸ One painting by Thomas Jones Barker “The Charger of Captain Nolan bearing back his dead master to the British lines,” (1855 National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, reprinted in Herrington 140) may have been meant to engender grief, but the representation has its drawbacks. Nolan is supposed to be dead, but he still has his sword in one hand and the front of his uniform in the other, and appears to merely have been wounded, while behind him are flanked row upon row of British backs and horses’ buttocks, hurrying toward the Russian guns. Nolan appears to be more a coward than an iconographic dead hero. Again, interpretation is left to the viewer. The title tells the viewer what to see, but those who know the background information, and the equivocal position that Nolan’s reputation occupied, the painting may be viewed as an ambiguous representation of heroism at best.

Simpson’s work also was woven into the fabric of the iconography of the charge when James Sant painted a canvas in 1856 entitled “The Earl of Cardigan explaining to the Royal Family the incidents of the Battle of Balaclava,” which was part of a larger rehabilitation of the Earl of Cardigan after being in disgrace for several years over the loss of the Light Brigade (Harrington 152). As I discuss above, Cardigan had taken a print of Simpson’s sketch with him when he was invited to visit the Queen and Prince Albert, and used the sketch to explain the action of the Light Brigade at the battle of Balaclava. Cardigan’s use of a representation of himself when in the presence of royalty is a complex form of performance. He is at once storyteller and hero, historian and the object of his own history. He is the living image of the

¹⁷ George Jones *Balaclava 1854 – conflict at the guns* 1855 (Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, reproduced in *British Artists and War*, Herrington 139); Thomas Jones Barker, work only known through a catalog description from a show in 1856 at the Royal Hibernian Academy in Dublin (Herrington 147) among others.

¹⁸ Rebecca Soloman, “Story of Balaclava” of a veteran with his arm in a sling describing the charge (Herrington 140), and F.B. Barwell, “The ‘London’ Gazette” of a young woman collapsing on reading the casualty list (Herrington 140) are two of many.

representation, and acts as a mediator between the Royal family and the painting itself. Since he had already influence Simpson's early concept of the painting, Cardigan's claim to authenticity is shaky at best; he cannot even be said to reach an approximate verisimilitude.

Simpson's painting vindicated Cardigan as a hero, at the forefront of the charge, fearlessly facing death and leading his men into battle. Sant's use of the Simpson painting in his own work makes clear that there is no distinction between the reality of the charge of the Light Brigade and its representations. The painting is accepted as completely authentic, and therefore can be relied upon as true history. The authentication of Simpson's painting was part of a larger revitalization of Cardigan as the hero of the charge. He was generally praised, and as I discuss later in this chapter, various musical interpretations of the charge were dedicated to him. There were so many representations of Cardigan at the time, that a critic for the *Athenaeum* referred to the phenomenon in his review of the Sant painting (Harrington 152-3, quoting from the *Athenaeum* 8 August 1857). This phenomenon passed, however, and the representations of the Crimea and of the Light Brigade moved into a new phase.

In 1876 Elizabeth Thompson, Lady Butler, exhibited a painting at the Society of Arts for the first time. It was entitled simply "Balaclava," and instead of being a depiction of the charge of the Light Brigade, or other moments that had been committed to canvas, it was of a straggling band of soldiers at the top of a hill or ridge, some mounted, some on foot, some prone on the ground, others being supported or carried. This was Lady Butler's vision of the remnant of the Light Brigade returning from the charge. She made this clear in the catalogue for the exhibition by quoting Tennyson's poem (Manchester City Galleries website), and her painting obviously focuses on the final stanzas rather than the beginning or middle. Unlike Simpson and others,

Butler chose to portray the outcome of the charge rather than either the charge itself or the actual engagement with the Russian guns.

It was not the first time that Lady Butler had painted such a scene. Two years earlier in 1874 she created a stir at the Royal Academy when her painting “The Roll Call (Calling the Roll after an Engagement, Crimea)” drew the praise of the Prince of Wales at the Royal Academy dinner, and a bidding war for the painting. All potential buyers were trumped, however, when the painting was bought by Queen Victoria herself (Lamborne 122).¹⁹ Butler became a painter of reknown, and went on to recreate many military encounters on canvas. “The Roll Call” is assumed to take place after the battle of Inkerman, which was the next major engagement after Balaclava, and took place at the beginning of winter. Because there is snow on the ground in the painting, it was taken for granted that it could not represent the aftermath of Balaclava, when no snow had fallen as yet.

The painting captures not the glory of war but the cost of it. There is a discarded helmet in the right foreground, with blood bright against the snow trailing away from it. Many of the men are bandaged, one has fallen forward from the line, and another soldier is leaning down to touch him. All the men are on foot except one mounted man, the one taking the roll. Next to this, a bareheaded man has his head in his arms, supported by his rifle. The men are bundled against the cold, most with busbees on their heads. Some men at the right have their backs to the line, and there are a few flags to the back of the group. Above the head of the mounted figure, far in the background, are birds circling. They are too indistinct to recognize what kind of bird, but the implication is certainly gruesome. The men are not in parade ground formation, but rather bunched together as if they were a mob. The sky is a bleak yellow-gray, a dirty reflection of the snow on the ground. Although the figures are distinct and individuated, there is no one

¹⁹ The painting remains in the Royal Collection to this day, as do several other Butlers.

man that draws the viewer's attention; the mounted figure's face is shadowed by his busby and his black horse melts into the dark cloaks worn by almost every man.

"The Roll Call" is a grim prospect; a reminder of what the "day after" actually looks like. The painting is an indication of future work; "Balaclava" takes the pathos of "The Roll Call" and increases it exponentially (see fig. 4).



Fig. 4 Butler, Elizabeth Thompson, Lady. "Balaclava" 1876. By permission of the Manchester City Galleries.

The Manchester City Galleries describe the painting as follows:

Battle scene at Balaclava, depicting the return of survivors of the charge of the Light Brigade. Soldiers on horseback and on foot make their way up a hill, towards the viewer, in various states of injury, some still carrying standards. In the foreground, centre, a soldier stands gazing into the distance, an expression of shock on his face, carrying a bloodied sword in his right hand. On the left, mounted survivors and men on foot are gathered together, some of the wounded being helped along. More soldiers make their way up the hill on the right. To the right of the central figure, a mounted soldier rides forward carrying an injured trumpeter in his arms. The distressed horse of the wounded rider next to him is lead [sic] forward by a man on foot. In the right corner a soldier lies on the ground, badly wounded. Plumes of smoke rise in the distance (Manchester City Galleries website).

Although the Galleries' description is fairly accurate, it makes certain assertions that cannot be completely supported by the actual painting. Neither the soldier on the ground nor the boy carried by the mounted cavalryman can be unequivocally identified as either injured or dead. The man on the ground makes no gesture that would indicate he was still alive, and the boy is equally motionless. The boy's face is turned away from the viewer, and the man on the ground's is almost totally in shadow. Although a viewer may accept the expression on the face of the central figure as shock, others have described him as "frenzied and dazed" (Pennington 150), and one "a dazed and possibly deranged participant climbing out of the valley with bloody sword" (Kestner 200). The painter uses other techniques that make other than "The Roll Call" redux. In her first work, Butler represents a mass of men, clearly not at their disciplined best; in "Balaclava" she breaks up the line to the extent that there no longer is one. The outline of the groupings against the sky rises, falls, rises again and then dips into nothingness with one more figure just beyond. The gaps strike the viewer visually with the brokenness of the Light Brigade, the loss of so many men and horses. Again, although the Galleries' description does mention a struggling horse to the right of the painting, it does not mention the white horse that is clearly on the ground, which shares the center of the painting with the single figure in the foreground. All the other horses in the painting are dark; it is the white horse (without its knight) fallen at the center.

Butler's painting is remarkable in that it focused with such detail on the outward signs of utter destruction and defeat. In *Masculinities in Victorian Painting* Kestner claims that

[t]he exhaustion of defeat, sacrifice, and despair are reflected in the collapsing figures in the middle distance. In Butler's *Balaclava*, the code of *andreia* [manliness-courage] is intensely conflicted with as the only victory appears to be survival, a tension and disequilibrium introduced into the dominant fiction particularly by the figure of the dazed hussar (200).

The tension and disequilibrium of this painting do not rest in the canvas alone. The models whom Butler chose in creating this painting create a tension between what appears to be an almost anti-war painting and the soldiers who sat for her. One model in particular introduces complexities into the interpretation of the representation that cannot be answered in a simple way. The central figure, the “dazed hussar,” is a man named William Henry Pennington, who survived the charge of the Light Brigade, went on to become a reasonably successful actor, lauded by no less than the Prime Minister William Gladstone, and whose star recitation turn became Tennyson’s famous poem.

Pennington’s memoirs, *Sea, Camp and Stage*, do not mention when Lady Butler, then Elizabeth Thompson, first met Pennington, or when she first asked him to sit for her for “Balaclava.” It does record a convoluted intersection of art, life and theatre surrounding the gala reunion dinner commemorating the twenty-first anniversary of the charge. This was first suggested by a journalist (Pennington 143), and then taken up by newspapers, and a committee was formed (Pennington 145), so that it became a largely publicized fete that took place at the Alexandra Palace. The day became a kind of unofficial “Light Brigade” day, and there were

[v]aried entertainments, both musical and theatrical, in addition to which a collection in the Central Hall of British and Russian relics from the field of battle attracted crowds . . . Miss Elizabeth Thompson (now Lady Butler, the renowned painter of scenes from military life), to whom I was about to give sittings for the central figure of her “Balaclava,” entered thoroughly into the spirit of the promoters of the fete, and her pathetic picture, “The Roll Call,” . . . was not among the least of the attractions offered to the admiring gaze of the throngs gathered from far and near (145).

The first point is that the painting exhibited was not originally intended to represent any part of the battle of Balaclava at all. The painting was apparently chosen by the promoters as a way of emphasizing the dire situation in which many survivors of the charge found themselves in 1875. Since the day was both a celebration and a reminder to the nation of the sacrifice of so many

men, the pathetic painting was interspersed with more celebratory features, including Pennington's declamation of Tennyson's "Charge of the Light Brigade" after the reunion dinner (146).

As the reunion of the Balaclava heroes was carefully staged (as I discuss in Chapter 4), so the painting was carefully staged as well. Lady Butler used actual soldiers as her painter's models, although it is not clear whether all of them had originally participated in the charge. She arranged them in a carefully placed tableau, as described above, and then created the painting called "Balaclava." If there is any authenticity about such a work, it would be in a faithful rendering of the tableau, rather than a representation of a real event. The painting is even more of a performance than Simpson's print. Lady Butler, although interested in the accuracy of the detail of costume, was creating a mood painting: a recreation of a moment that did not look exactly like her tableau, but was rather representative of the general feel of the moment.

Butler's painting is thus a performance of her own interpretation of the meaning of the charge of the Light Brigade. She represents the pathos in the aftermath, rather than the glory of the charge itself. It is not that she never painted charges. She is famous for several other military paintings that represent heroic moments, such as "Scotland Forever," painted in 1881, representing the charge of the Scots Greys at Waterloo (Lambourne 321). In this painting, the viewer is about to be run down by the advancing cavalry. The colors are intense, and the canvas full of action. This is in stark contrast to both "The Roll Call" and "Balaclava." She chose in the paintings of the Crimea to represent the cost of battle rather than the heroics. In this she was probably influenced by William Russell's dispatches, discussed in Chapter 2, which would have been in circulation when she was a young girl (she was 11 at the time of the charge). The painting of the aftermath of the charge echoes Russell's despair and frustration at the loss of so

many men, no matter how gloriously he described the charge. This painting cannot be called “reality” in contrast to the more heroic paintings, however. It was carefully staged, painted, and offered as a still-life performance of Butler’s vision of the aftermath of the battle.

Lady Butler’s painting is significant because it is one of the few paintings given wide circulation and reproduction that represents the heartbreaking, rather than the heartlifting, aspects of the charge of the Light Brigade. As Simpson strove for historical accuracy, interviewing participants and spectators alike, Butler evoked mood, which she then presented as reality. The final painting I discuss moves beyond either attempts at historical accuracy or deliberate pathos, towards a mythic representation that is the primary artistic evocation of the charge of the Light Brigade. Unlike Simpson, Lady Butler chose to present the darker aspects of Light Brigadeness. This is the sacrificial side of the heroism, the “do and die,” that is represented by the suffering, the pitifully few survivors, and the general confusion which Lady Butler captures on the canvas.

Butler’s painting, however, was an anomaly in representations of the Light Brigade, and by the late nineteenth century there had been a number of representations that combined Butler’s close-ups with Simpson’s simplicity of action. One of the best known from this time period was from a well-known military artist. Richard Caton Woodville, Jr. was the son of a painter, and was born two years after the charge of the Light Brigade took place. Woodville would be like Dr. Strong, whose championship of the “historical” Victorian paintings I discussed in the opening of this chapter. Woodville grew up on the poetry, the music, and the early representations of the Crimean War. In 1894, he painted the first in a three-part series of paintings depicting the Light Brigade. Simply entitled “Charge of the Light Brigade,” Woodville represented the 17th Lancers (now the Queen’s Royal Lancers) in full gallop. Chronologically, this would be in the final moments before the Brigade broke through the Russian guns, and

Woodville has taken care to have Lord Cardigan well to the fore of the charge. Joseph Kestner, in his *Masculinities in Victorian Painting*, suggests that Cardigan's prominent presence betokens an affinity with the officers rather than the men of the ranks (200); however this seems less likely than the fact that he grew up surrounded by representations of Cardigan as the hero of the charge, as discussed above.

Woodville represents a transitional figure in the transmission of the Light Brigade and the creation of its mythic status. He is both a painter and one who was influenced as a child by the paintings and literature that surrounded him. He absorbed the encoded messages of these representations, accepting, as Dr. Strong did, the authentic nature of the artifice, and when he chose to recreate the charge of the Light Brigade, he did it in the most heroic vision possible (see fig. 5).



Fig. 5. Woodville, Richard Caton, Jr. "The Charge of the Light Brigade." 1894. By kind permission of the Queen's Royal Lancers.

This painting represents the 17th Lancers at full gallop. Their lances are up and appear to be lowering for the moment of confrontation with the Russian guns. Are all airborne, suggesting

furious forward movement; the shadow of Cardigan's horse is projected directly beneath him, showing the time of day. The lancers ride in tight formation, with no suggestions of any gaps in the ranks. At the right side of the painting there is one fallen horse, which the rest of the company is riding around rather than over (which is much more likely to have happened). The colors are vivid, and the terrain is defined in some detail. There is no suggestion that any of the Brigade have fallen as yet.

There are no other military present in the picture. No Russian guns to the front, no cannon to the left or right. The painting glorifies the 17th Lancers and the 17th Lancers alone. The sole representation of the charge being embodied in one particular regiment is problematic. The title of the painting is "The Charge of the Light Brigade," but the painting is "The 17th Lancers participating in the Charge of the Light Brigade." Caton Woodville's specificity in the details of the representation of the regiment does not allow for the participation of any other group in the heroic charge. Since the representation places the viewer perhaps 10 feet from the nearest horse, the intimacy of the painting is not conducive to the grand sweep that Simpson attempted. The 17th Lancers, however, have certainly capitalized on this representation; although the King of Spain owns the painting, the now Queen's Royal Lancers own the reproduction rights.²⁰

As with Simpson, Caton Woodville chose to represent the Light Brigade in a moment of great energy and movement, captured in heroism without the resulting aftermath. He did, however, paint two companion pieces. The second piece, from 1897, represents the battle at the Russian guns and the relief of the Light Brigade by the Heavy Brigade. The final piece, entitled

²⁰ While I was obtaining the necessary permissions to use the painting in this work, I spoke to several officers in the Royal Lancers. They were happy to give the permission, and one asked what the subject of my dissertation was. When I told him it was the charge itself, he said, "Good. It's a really important moment. You are mentioning the 17th Lancers?" To which question I responded that I was. I will discuss the Colonel's comments in the Conclusion.

“All That Was Left of Them,” (a direct quotation from Tennyson’s poem), is clearly based on Butler’s earlier “Balaclava,” as Joseph Kestner points out (200). Caton Woodville’s primary emphasis, however, is on the “commencement of the action and the best version of its conclusion [the encounter at the guns], emphasiz[ing] the heroism of the magnificent blunder” (Kestner 200). The first two paintings are the paintings that are most often reproduced (catalogs and websites for military painting offer these two, and rarely the last). Caton Woodville’s *Light Brigadeness* returns to the triumphant heroism, emphasizing the determination of the men, their unhesitating ride toward the guns with speed and energy, and their unity in carrying out their orders.

Although Butler attempted to capture the loss of war in “Balaclava,” the triumphant “Charge of the Light Brigade,” by Caton Woodville is our legacy, imitated and suggested on the cover of Pennington’s memoirs, and on many sheet music covers. When the child growing up in the ethos of the Light Brigade had a choice among the representations, the choice to decide which was most authentic, it was the image of Caton Woodville’s furiously galloping horses that won the day. That choice played out many times in the piano sheet music of the day, intended for the parlors of the middle and upper classes.

THE MUSIC OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE

If the paintings of the Light Brigade spoke mostly to boys, as the gender that would most likely emulate the actions of the cavalry in their adulthood, the music of the Light Brigade spoke primarily to the young girls, who were expected to be able to sit down at the piano when anyone requested it, and play with at least a modicum of capability, if not talent (Solie 86-9). In her book, *Music in Other Words*, Ruth Solie is writing specifically about Victorian music as it

appears in literature, and as such devotes an entire chapter, “‘Girling’ at the Parlor Piano,” to the ubiquitous young lady seated at the keyboard in so many nineteenth century novels.²¹

I borrow the term “girling” from Judith Butler, who coined it to describe a two-way process that marks girls’ lived experience of their culture’s values. On the one hand, girling is the social process that forms girls appropriate to the needs of the society they live in; on the other, it is their own enactment – or, in Butlerian terms, their performance – of girlhood, both to satisfy familial and social demands on them and, . . . to satisfy needs of their own either to resist those demands or to reassure themselves about their own capacity to fulfill them (86).

I would argue that there is, in fact, a third process that goes on at the keyboard, and that is the transmission of cultural identity through the music that is played. Both the performer and the listeners are participating in a social interaction that brings pleasure in the privacy of their homes, but also passing on particular hegemonic mythologies in their choice of sheet music, which is encouraged by the writers of such sheet music. So the girl at the piano is performing her girlhood at the piano and being formed, as Solie points out, “appropriate to the needs of the society they live in,” (86). But part of that formation is also the embedding of specific national and cultural identity, in this case British identity, and at the piano this formation takes the form of the music that is played. As Solie also points out,

[A] project like this, . . . can help flesh out much of the cultural theorizing that has been so interesting to musicology as well as to other disciplines in recent years; it adds specificity to our understanding of the bourgeois family as the real engine of larger-scale cultural developments . . . (87).

The ubiquitous aspect of the “girl at the piano” is testified to in many Victorian texts, not solely novels, and some of the texts are less than complimentary about the phenomenon (Solie 88). These texts speak of girls “devoid of all musical ability,” who still have to play the piano because “all young girls ought to be able to play,” (M.A.E.L. quoted by Solie 88); girls whose

²¹ One of the best-known among those figures is probably Mary Bennet, who is the “plain” and studious sister in *Pride and Prejudice*, and who is, as Solie points out, condemned to a life at the keyboard for the amusement of others.

playing is tolerated by their own father, but whose attempts at music destroy the peace and concentration of others (Arthur Helps, quoted by Solie 89); and the young lady who cannot play with any feeling but who is forced to the piano rather than doing something either useful or amusing (Thomas Carlyle, quoted by Solie 88). The positive versions of these girls are most often found in novels, where their music is soothing to the father and brothers of the family, as well as entertaining to their friends.²² The girl at the piano, then, is both being formed by, and forming for others, particular musical representations of emotions, historical moments and cultural identity.

So the young lady sits down at the piano, ready to entertain her family of an evening. She goes through the large quantity of sheet music at hand, and chooses a variety of pieces. After 1854, there were a number of compositions concerning the Crimea in general, Balaclava and the charge of the Light Brigade in particular. In investigating these pieces, I focus on their titles, the type of work (vocal, piano only, piano with other instrument), and the musical directions found in the piece – the directions on the style and tempo of playing that should be used when performing; as well as the nature of any artwork on the cover, and any particular dedication or quotation used at the beginning of the music. Each of these pieces of information suggest how the music was to be interpreted, and therefore suggest how the music was to be received. I take the pieces chronologically as they were published. The chosen pieces are those collected at the British Museum; they indicate a wide sampling of the types of music that came out of the Crimea.

²² Again, one thinks of all the Austen novels in which one girl or another sits down to the piano, and her femininity is tested in her rendering of a piece; women at the piano appear in George Eliot novels as well, later in the century, and one moment in *A Christmas Carol* in which Scrooge begins to thaw occurs when he hears his niece-in-law playing a piece his sister used to play.

The first work is a short piece, only three pages long, entitled “Balaclava Galop” by Isabel Carter in 1856. It is for piano, with an optional cornet accompaniment, and inscription on the first page states that it was published for the author by W. Blagrove, who also published music by the composer’s sister. This piece is unusual in the collection of parlor pieces, because the music also indicates that at one point it had been played by Mr. Charles Blagrove’s Band (presumably a relation of the W. Blagrove who published the work). The version in the British Library collection, however, is very definitely for one piano. There are three sets of repeats, which would render the piece longer than the three short pages originally appear. The movements are an Introduction, marked *allegro vivace*, a Galop, a Trio (with repeat), and a Coda. The Introduction is to be played at a quick tempo, in a lively manner, which fit with the title of the piece: a Galop is a brisk piece fit for dancing. It is unclear whether the piece is meant as an homage to the soldiers, but the publication date is 1856, which is the year the Crimean War ended, and only two years after the battle of Balaclava, so it is at least a topical reference, and reminder to both the pianist and her (by default) listeners of that battle. Just as there are fads in styles that reference a particular traditional ethnic identity (chinoiserie, for example), or capitalize on a particular phenomenon (the “Flashdance” look of the early 1980s), so a piece of music may capitalize on the current events of the day by referencing such events through its title. Thus the performer and the listeners are invited to “hear” the battle through a spirited piece of music that requires the same reciprocity of composer and listeners that the paintings did of canvas and viewer. Simply by entitling the piece “Balaclava Galop,” Ms. Carter invokes a particular set of circumstances that encourage a particular response in the listeners: a recollection of the battle, and by inference, the most famous portions of that battle, which would

include the charge of the Light Brigade. Through this music, the listeners are not allowed to let the charge fade in their memories; rather the piece makes the memory fresh and immediate.

The second piece is also published in 1856, and is a much lengthier work. Dedicated to the Earl of Cardigan (the leader of the charge, who was lionized after an initial fall from grace, as discussed above), “The Balaclava Charge” was written by a Mrs. Beauchamp Cole, and is designated as a “Description piece for the pianoforte.” Mrs. Cole, then, is attempting to put into musical expression all aspects of the charge, from beginning to end. In dedicating the piece to the Earl of Cardigan, Mrs. Cole is naming him definitively as the primary hero of the charge, which is complementary to the many images of Cardigan that were appearing at that time (see above).

Mrs. Cole divides her work into a number of movements, or sections, each with a title that represents a different moment in the action of the Light Brigade, from beginning to end. Unlike other pieces or the paintings, Mrs. Cole sought to render the entirety of the engagement. The first section is entitled “Order to Advance and Remonstrance,” and is to be played *maestoso*, with majesty, or solemnly. This encompasses the giving of the order to Lord Lucan, along with his reaction to the order and “remonstrance” with Capt. Lew Nolan, the ADC who brought him the order and gestured so disastrously towards the guns Lucan could not see. The *maestoso* notation suggests that the piece begin with the aural foreshadowing of a catastrophe – the opening moments of the work are somber. The next section is a brief moment for “trumpets and bugle”, marked *allegro e ff.* swiftly and loudly. Lucan, having accepted the order, has told Cardigan to advance, and Cardigan has the call sounded on the bugle. The Order and Remonstrance are a total of four staves, immediately followed by 2 bars of repeated “ta-ta **TA**”, all in the treble clef. The bugle itself is represented by rapid eighth and sixteenth notes – a real

bugle call rendered on the piano. Mrs. Cole used the piano as creatively as possible to suggest a real trumpet and bugle to herald the next section. Recall Russell's description of the opening moments of the charge – here is the brief exchange he describes, conveying the order to Cardigan, and the bugle call that signals the men to form up and begin riding toward the Russian guns.

The next two sections are the “Advance” and the “Charge.” It is interesting that Mrs. Cole separates the two moments, suggesting that she is well aware of the fact that a cavalry “charge” actually consists of an ever-quickenening movement of the cavalry: from a walk to a trot, a trot to a canter, and a canter to a gallop. The “Advance,” therefore, is the initial movement of the Brigade down the slopes toward the guns, and is to be performed *con energia*, with energy, or in a spirited fashion. Mrs. Cole here reflects the descriptions in the papers – the Brigade went forward with spirit towards the guns. Again, Russell described the men as determined, their sabres flashing, and presented an image suggesting speed, dust and pounding hooves. The pace and style of the section is more than just a reflection of how the cavalry in fact advanced. It is a statement concerning the mindset of the men who rode – they went forward briskly, without hesitation. Mrs. Cole's Light Brigadeness here emphasizes the devotion to duty and the panache with which the men rode down the plain.

In this way Mrs. Cole's piece offers something like a soundtrack to a mental image of the charge itself. As with films today, the background music for a scene often sets the tone of the scene and signals to the viewer what emotions s/he should be feeling. If a love scene is played against a musical backdrop that is poignant, for example, the viewer might be cued to see the moment as bittersweet. In the same way, the listener should hear the Light Brigade stepping forth at a quick pace, with no on hanging back or slowing the advance.

The Charge is dictated as *furioso* – furious, but also with the suggestion of an attack at the keyboard itself. Loud crashing chords crescendo to *fff* – as loudly as possible. This is a long section, which builds to another trumpet call. The listener here is invited to imagine the furious pounding of the horses’ hooves as the cavalry bears down on the Russian guns, as well as the cannons on either side firing on the cavalry as it goes. There are quick trumpet blasts (“Trumpets”) and then there is a short section entitled “Wounded.” This is comprised of two long measures of half notes, ending in a ½ note rest. By comparison with the other sections of the piece so far, this short section slows the pace considerably, with only two long chords per measure. The final half rest suggests the gap in the ranks left by the “wounded” as well as the dead. This moment coincides with the point at which the Brigade has breached the Russian guns and is on the other side, having cut their way through at great loss to the Brigade. Although Mrs. Cole makes the section “Wounded” very short, it is a sudden change from the long furious crescendo of the previous section, and an abrupt reminder to the listener what the cost of the charge actually was in men and horses. The final half rest of this section acts as a moment of silence, just as might be called for at a gathering to remember the Brigade and those who didn’t come back.

The “Wounded” is quickly followed by “The Rally,” which is *vivace* – lively. This section corresponds to the rally that took place at the rear of the Russian guns, when the Brigade realized it would not have the support of the Heavy Brigade to complete its break through the lines, and had to “rally” and form up again to retreat from the guns. The moment of silent remembrance is broken by the necessity of getting the survivors back to camp, and proceeds quickly. The “Return to the Camp” is the longest section of the piece – longer than the “Charge” itself. It is *adagio* – slowly, but not as slowly as the *andante* of the “Wounded.” It is interesting

that Mrs. Cole makes this section so long; the listener is kept in suspense for quite some time as to whether the cavalry make it back, and it reflects the weariness of the cavalry by this point, as the final part of the section calls for two *ritards* – slowing down even more. Again, the listener is invited to see the remnants of the Brigade as they straggle back to their own lines, belatedly supported by the Heavy Brigade, and still being shot at from both sides and from behind.

The “Return to Camp” ends in another bugle call, signalling the return of what was left of the Brigade, and it is immediately followed by “The Cheer,” to be rendered *con spirito*. The Cheer is the second longest section of the piece, and is punctuated as if there were men crying huzzahs – brief spurts of chords, followed by short rests. After the slow regrouping and return of the Brigade, there is one final moment of victorious cheering, but it seems hollow after what has gone before. The final two sections, “Returning to Quarters” and “The Muster Roll,” round out the complete representation of the charge of the Light Brigade. Unlike the paintings, Mrs. Cole attempted to capture the essence of the entire event, including its immediate aftermath. Each painting discussed above could certainly be represented in one of the sections, and the final “Muster Roll” seems to be a musical representation of Elizabeth Thompson’s “Balaklava.” The final tempo is *andante* – slow and stately – and the piece ends with lots of chords and an octave tremolo (a quick shifting across octave keys between the lower and higher notes – it can sound like a musical rumbling), as well as syncopation in the bass.

Mrs. Cole’s detailed instructions as to the sections, the tempi and the styles for each section, along with her attempts to recreate actual battle sounds such as the bugle, indicate a desire to represent the charge musically as fully as possible. This is not a piece meant to be played in the background. It is a performance piece that would demand attentive listeners. As such, this piece represents a much more serious transmission of the Light Brigade myth. The

pianist attempting this piece would read all of the instructions as she practiced it, before attempting it in front of an audience. The audience, in turn, is invited into the charge of the Light Brigade in its totality, rather than being offered a vague impression or homage to the event. The different section titles would remind performer and audience alike of the sequence of events that made up the charge, including the recognition of the wounded (and dead), and the disheartening return to camp followed by a muster roll that would have many gaps. Thus Mrs. Cole musically embodies the qualities of Light Brigadeness in her piece, both the light and the dark sides. She recognizes the devotion to duty and the cheerfulness with which the men rode out against the guns, but she also gives voice to the moments when the sacrificial price becomes evident in the large gaps in the ranks (the long rests in the “Wounded” section and the slow tempo of the section in which the remnants are regrouping).

The next three pieces are all musical versions of Tennyson’s poem. The first, entitled “The Charge of the Light Brigade,” by John Blockley, was published in 1860. The illustrated cover is a representation of a single horseman in a busby (the particular headgear of the Hussars, as opposed to the Lancers, similar to what the Buckingham Palace guards wear) brandishing a sword, whose horse is evidently racing across the field, since all four legs are in the air. In the foreground are dead soldiers and a downed horse; cannon balls are exploding around the figure and puffs of smoke obscure some of the figures. Behind the horseman are the cavalry, cutting their way back to their lines. The frontispiece contains an explanation of the Tennyson poem, its first publication in *The Examiner* and later reprinting in August of 1855 for the soldiers at Sebastopol. The composer and publisher clearly wish to make as many connections between the music and the event as possible. The cover would be an ever-present reminder of the charge to

the owner of the sheet music, and to all who were present whenever the piece was played and sung.

Since this is a vocal piece, it is possible that the performer would accompany herself on the piano, or accompany another singer. The music is written in a key that would be easily adaptable for either a male or a female voice. It is probable that a piece such as this would be played as much for company as for the family's private entertainment, and so it would get a wider listening audience. The directions call for *maestoso* in the introduction, with trumpets being represented as in Mrs. Cole's piece, in the upper register of the piano with brief tatos. The rest of the piece calls for *risoluto* – resolute. As with Mrs. Cole's *con energia* for the Advance, Blockley makes it clear that the cavalry are resolute in the face of almost certain death, and advance majestically to their doom. Each stanza of the poem is to be played *molto espresso e piu lente* – very expressively and a little slowly, while the final stanza is to be slower, recognizing the loss that was endured by the Brigade.

As a vocal piece, the singer would be performing the Light Brigade in a unique way – not only reciting the poem, but giving it added expression through the musical rendition of it. This participatory action would act as a reinforcement of the myth of the Brigade, and continue its transmission to the younger members of society through a combination of text and music. Since this would be a live performance, the listeners would also be influenced by the performer's expressions and reactions to the text as well as the music, further embedding the image of the hero of the Light Brigade by embodying the myth in someone the listeners knew.²³ If it was the “girl at the piano,” the listeners would be invited to compare the relative frailty of the female body with the rough and tumble world that the cavalryman was experiencing in the charge. This

²³ The back of this particular piece of sheet music advertises other pieces by John Blockley, including a musical version of “Jessie's Dream,” an almost certainly fictitious story concerning the relief of Lucknow during the Sepoy mutiny in 1857, as well as other Tennyson poems and several other war poems.

would create a pathos emphasizing the frailty of the cavalrymen as well, since they were not, in fact, proof to cannon shell and the high casualty rate proved. If it were a young man singing the piece, the listeners would be invited to experience the piece in a different fashion, perhaps seeing the singer as the embodiment of all the men who rode in the charge – young, whole, and beloved to the audience of family members.

An 1867 setting of the poem by William West is much more straightforward – there is less repetition in the text and the sole direction for the playing of it is *agitato con espresso* – excitedly with meaning. “The Balaclava Charge” was published in 1877, also a setting of Tennyson’s poem. This piece of sheet music has on the cover linked shields: Agincourt October 25, 1415, and Balaclava, October 15, 1854. At the head of the music is a quotation from *Henry V* – the St. Crispin’s Day speech: “[a]nd gentlemen in England, now abed. . .” (IV.iii.64). The composer of this piece chose to use the text flexibly, so that the phrase “theirs but to do” is repeated three times before coming to “and die,” and then that phrase is repeated in its entirety. The listener would be forced to pause in the flow of the text and listen especially for those words, as they stopped the usual progression of the poem to linger on this specific text. This emphasized the “doing” of the charge – the carrying out of one’s duty without “reasoning why”, which leads to dying in the end. This is reemphasized by the repetition of the entire phrase. Again, both the accompanist and the performer, if they were two different people, would be forced to take this repetition into account when rendering the piece, as it would be emotionally ineffective to simply sing the phrase in exactly the same way three times over, with a repeat. Additionally, there is a long segue from the next to last stanza into the final verse, wherein the music switches from *allegro con fuoco* – swiftly with fire – to *allegro maestoso* – quickly and

majestically. This forces the listener to pay particular attention to the final stanza, since s/he has been made to wait for its appearance.

All of these musical pieces, which are but a few in a list of many, serve to show that the transmission of the Light Brigade took place not only among young men who might aspire to the heroic deeds of the Brigade, but also for young women in their role as musician and accompanist for the family. If the “girl at the piano” is being formed not only by sitting at the piano to provide music for her family, but also by the music she plays, then the music of the Light Brigade is being implanted in her cultural identity through the performance of the music in her home. The listeners also have absorbed the cultural lesson in identity along with the music, so that the Light Brigade is constantly reinscribed in the discourse of home entertainment.

The female body as a site of transmission for Light Brigadeness presents an interesting conundrum. The body is at once the recipient of the music, since she is reading the sheet music in order to play it, but she is also a conduit for the music as she interprets it on the piano and perhaps vocally. As a Victorian girl, being shaped into a model Victorian woman, the girl at the piano was learning appropriate behavioral discourse in order to fit into the society around her (as Butler points out). Part of that discourse would include her role as the vessel into which Victorian domestic values were poured, the acolyte of those values, and the transmitter of those values in turn to her children. In many ways the Victorian girl-woman was the female equivalent of the Light Brigade cavalryman – hers not to make reply or reason why, hers but to pass on the discursive practice to the next generation. As such, the girl at the piano is both subject and object of the Light Brigadeness discourse. She is transmitting the essence of the values through the music she interprets, yet she is also the recipient of those values as handmaiden to the

Victorian ethos, which through her own performance along with many like hers, came to include Light Brigadeness itself.

CONCLUSION

After the initial exposure to the event of the charge of the Light Brigade, the public could have turned to the next sensation in either the Crimean War or some other arena. Instead, artists, especially painters and musicians, kept the memory of the charge fresh in the public's imagination through new paintings and their reproductions, and sheet music intended for parlor performances. The visual transmission of the Light Brigade myth to the next generation focused primarily on the early moments of the charge, representing the cavalry in full charge before any disastrous results are apparent. There are notable exceptions, Elizabeth's Thompson's "Balaclava" being the most prominent one. Her depiction of the aftermath, with the straggling line of wounded and dying, evoked the pathos of the event, rather than the glory. Nevertheless, her painting is a staged a performance as the other visual images, based on her own interpretation of the event and modeled by real soldiers, including one who became an actor. The audience who was most influenced by these paintings were the younger generation, especially the ones who had no recollection of the actual event. Instead, their "memory" of the charge of the Light Brigade was of carefully edited visual representations that guided the viewer to see the charge as a positive and integral part of the British heritage. As Strong so clearly shows, paintings such as these were influential in how children, especially young boys who might have the chance to emulate such heroes, perceived their own history.

The music of the period reached a slightly different audience. The girl at the piano, in Victorian reality as well as Victorian literature, was the primary interpreter of sheet music intended for the parlor pianoforte. Her "girling" at the piano, which formed her identity as a Victorian woman, was also her performance of that womanhood. In performing pieces such as

the ones discussed in this chapter, she was also the transmitter of the cultural icon through music, as well as absorbing the icon herself through her musical interpretation.

In the next chapter I will deal with the intersection of the visual, textual and aural on the Victorian stage, and how the Light Brigade was both performed and already understood to be part of the cultural discourse.

CHAPTER 4

War is a major subject of popular art; its connotations and associated values – the notions of heroism, daring, stoicism, acclaim, victory, comradeship, patriotism – are created, and reinforced, between the sword and the song. When Percy met the Douglas met, the job of the singer who reported and immortalised the conflict was comparatively simple. His public expected the details of the fight, and those he gave them were in the expected form, carrying the expected assumptions and they were accepted as a record of facts. The function of the reporter was not separate from that of the artist: he delivered and shaped reality. (Bratton, “Theatre of war,” 119)

Jacqueline Bratton, a nineteenth-century theatre scholar, argues that as a subject of popular art, war is accompanied by certain expectations in the audience, based on shared assumptions and values, in a particular form that is recognizable to the audience and somehow therefore branded as “true.” So far I am in agreement with her. She goes on to state, however, that previous to the outbreak of the Crimean War, “the function of the reporter was not separate from that of the artist,” (119), implying that from the Crimean War forward, there has been such a separation. It is possible to think of the role of the artist versus that of the reporter as being different in intent or delivery, but as Foucault and later Baudrillard have pointed out, it is the ultimate result that matters. Language, whether ballad or telegraph, epic or newsbrief, shapes reality just as surely as the singer “delivered and shaped reality” in Ms. Bratton’s description of the balladeer (119). The difficulty comes in disentangling where and how the shaping of reality takes place. After all, Bratton describes the hypothetical artist as delivering his material in the “expected” form. She implies that the audience has shaped its own reality as much as the reporter of events shapes the events to meet in turn the already-created audience reality. The two seem to exist and indeed feed from each other until there is little to distinguish between the two. In this the ballad (poetry or otherwise) becomes like Strong’s historical paintings: the paintings created heroes for him, and therefore later the paintings recalled historic heroes.

It is reasonable to assume that this phenomenon at least in part leads to what seems to be a false dichotomy in our understanding of the performance of history. New historicism sought to take away a monolithic model of the great events of history, as told by the winners with perhaps the few pathetic ballads of the losers thrown in for good measure. Instead, new historicism looks to the everyday, the outcast as well as the general, and for the forgotten and marginalized in narrating history as much as to such events as Napoleon's defeat at the battle of Waterloo, for example. This fresh approach to the examination of history has afforded a new light on many aspects of society that were hitherto ignored, and has certainly gone some measure towards the restoration of those non-hegemonic figures who problematize a strictly evolutionary model of cultural progress. The restoration of individuals whose influence on history has been ignored is to be welcomed and is essential in our own understanding of how we "do" history.

Borrowing from performance theory and our understanding of the performative nature of both identity and culture, historians have been able to re-examine events from the perspective of performance and understand better the interrelated nature of major historical events and popular culture as a reflection of the ethos of the age. The difficulty arises when these historians attempt to construct a non-mainstream narrative from events that were occurring at the same time as the traditionally-regarded "great" events that, prior to new historicism, shaped the narrative of general history as it is presented to the general public. These other narratives can be fascinating; they may even be important and sometimes shed new light on the actions that led to certain events. What makes these non-traditional narratives problematic is that there are actual events that alter the lives of most people at a given time, and actually do have a greater impact on what a particular culture thinks and self-performs than other events. I think specifically of such moments in Anglo-American history as disparate as Henry VIII's choice to break with the

Roman Catholic church, Americans forming a Continental Congress in order to formalize their armed conflict with Great Britain, the defeat of the Confederacy by the Union forces, and the outbreak of major diseases over the course of several centuries that significantly altered populations. It would be difficult to argue that these events did not shape a particular trajectory of history, progressive and evolutionary or otherwise.

So although new historicism is helpful up to a point in attempting to reconstruct the trajectory of the movement of the event of the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava from twenty-five minutes of senseless slaughter to immortal icon, it is only up to the point when it must be admitted that whatever points of resistance there may have been to representing the charge in such purified, sanitized terms, those points of resistance were ultimately defeated by the interwoven mirroring of accepted reality between the general public as a body, and the official necessity of preserving a national identity which could only support Britain's way forward in Empire. The pressure was overwhelmingly in favor of the heroic icon over reality. The monolithic attributes of Light Brigadeness would help to give substance to the heroic icon, so that he could be embodied not only in paintings, but in life on the stage.

Thus in a later article when Bratton states,

Those who confuse fiction with life have often enough been made the subject of derision; there is no reason to assume that the experienced and sophisticated urban audiences of the nineteenth century were any less able to recognise convention than were the readers of Cervantes (Introduction *Acts of Supremacy* 7).

she puts a great deal of faith in an audience's ability to recognize convention without commenting on whether or not those conventions were *accepted* as reality – not as actuality, but rather as a representation of some Platonic ideal of what the “truth” of the matter being represented really was. Additionally, whatever might have been felt individually and privately was not often expressed publicly when those feelings went against what was promoted most

vigorously and most often publicly. This difference of expression extends beyond any opinions of the value of the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava to most other hegemonically-promoted supposed “public mores,” as Bernard Shaw was to biting point out in play after play at the beginning of the twentieth century.

What we can know from the plays concerning or referring to the Light Brigade at Balaclava, then, is not so much what individuals thought of the charge, or of the battle of Balaclava or even of the War in the Crimea. What we gain from these plays is a sense of the publicly acceptable way of understanding the charge of the Light Brigade and how that understanding had been incorporated into public discourse. Thus even though there are comments in plays later in the century about the disgrace of old heroes of the charge living in poverty, these comments are actually part of a wider discourse that actually supports the concept that the charge was indisputably heroic, and the public admission of such heroism should in fact prompt a response that would remove the war veteran from his impoverished circumstances.

When it comes to the question of presenting the Light Brigade in a theatrical setting, combining the earlier documentary presentations with the secondary visual and aural presentations through paintings and musical representations, it is possible to identify an increasing uniformity of iconography. Whereas in the days and months following the actual event of the charge, there were many conflicting representations of the event through testimony in the Houses of Parliament, reporting in the newspapers, and publication of private journals, by the time the narrative of the charge of the Light Brigade had become imbedded in the ethos of Empire, the representations had become almost completely synoptic. By the 1890s, for example, it was possible to put on a short piece called *Balaclava Joe* in the sure knowledge that the audience would immediately identify the title character as a survivor of the Light Brigade

charge, and would in consequence imbue him with certain attributes that had accreted to the single iconic figure of the Light Brigade survivor. In that sense the Light Brigade survivor becomes the late-nineteenth century equivalent of the pre-Crimean Jack Tar:

[T]he glorification of British fighting men, . . . was given a focus in the generic figure of Jack Tar, as recognisable as a king in his known attributes. He was, in semiotic terms, a heavily overcoded image: stepping on stage he carried with him a large statement of intent and many interwoven meanings, before he so much as moved or spoke. (Bratton, "British Heroism and Melodrama," 34)

Before that moment is reached, however, various representations of the charge of the Light Brigade or references to it make their appearance on the stage. These representations may be divided into two categories: those which took place mostly as spectacles concurrent with the actual events of the Crimean War, cashing in on the currency of the subject matter with a public enthralled by Russell's dispatches from the Crimea; and those which, after some distance in time, were brought to the stage as plays that used the Light Brigade as part of a larger plot. The first kind of representations do not suggest how the event itself would ultimately embed itself in the British culture, since there were representations of many other battles of the Crimea that are now forgotten by all but historians. Instead most of the concurrent representations were a reflection of the immediate events, much as the many documentaries concerning Hurricane Katrina and the flooding of New Orleans lack the perspective of time that would allow for an understanding of the event in a wider cultural context.

THE THEATRICAL LIGHT BRIGADE

The early representations of the Light Brigade occur from 1855 through 1856, which marked the end of hostilities in the Crimea. There is a marked cessation of theatrical representations of the Light Brigade between 1856 and the early 1870s, suggesting that the earlier productions had been mounted as novelties reflecting current events, and that the later

productions were dependent on audience interest because of a continued remembrance of the charge of the Light Brigade through other popular arts.

Tracing the history of the charge of the Light Brigade on the stage is a difficult task because so many of the early pieces were spectacles or brief pieces or plays that only were performed outside London. Additionally, some of the plays which were actually licensed by the Lord Chamberlain, and are even in the catalog of the British Library collection of such plays, currently appear to be lost.²⁴ They could not be found when I ordered them from the Lord Chamberlain's collection, and the research librarians assisting me said that the plays could be actually lost, or the card catalog could have been mislabeled. Either way, they were inaccessible to me during the course of my research. I do have, however, a list of play titles and dates from Allardyce Nicoll's formidable documentation of theatrical productions, and it is possible to have some sense of the trajectory that the event of the charge took through the late nineteenth century on the stage.

There are some plays whose titles reflect the possibility that they are in reference to the Crimean War in general and possibly the battle of Balaclava; even if they were not referring to the Crimean War, the titles at least suggest the tendency of the country at war to present war-themed plays. *Home from the War* first appeared on January 22, 1855 at the Strand Theatre. Since the Crimean War did not end until 1856, the homecoming referred to might possibly of someone who was wounded at the battles of the Alma, Balaclava or Inkerman, although the last is unlikely since the battle of Inkerman took place in early November of 1854 and the length of time to get a wounded soldier home would probably be too great to feature in such a performance. It is also possible that the play actually hearkened back to the earlier wars of the

²⁴ Jacqueline Bratton currently has a research assistant who is working on recataloging the Lord Chamberlain's collection for the 1850s, and has experienced the same problem; hence the recataloging project.

century, especially the ones with Napoleon. Whatever the actual war is referred to in the title, the play brought the current war forward in the consciousness of the audiences who attended the performances.

Later that year, on the fifth of November (a notorious date in English history when the order of the realm was threatened by a plot to blow up Parliament, and celebrated in England as Guy Fawkes Day), *Love and Honour, or Soldiers at Home – Heroes Abroad* was presented at the Surrey Theatre. Again, without the actual text it is not possible to know what event or war the play refers to, but the title points to a cultural reading of the Crimean War. The first title, *Love and Honour*, are linked through the second title with the military, and then those virtues in the soldier are made into heroes when the British soldier goes into the world. There are several variations on mid-Victorian melodrama plot structure that might be used in a play with such a title; in the available play texts there are several plots which could very well have had “love and honour” as a secondary title.

In the spring of 1856, on March 17, either a spectacle or a drama entitled *Balaclava Day* was presented at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. As the battle of Balaclava was fought in October, this was obviously not an anniversary celebration or performance. Although there were other performances referencing the Crimean War, this is one of the few that actually mentions Balaclava. These original plays appear to have been presented with the intention of capitalizing on current events, so that when the event was superseded by another battle, or the siege of Sebastopol, the topic of the play moved with the event. The fact that there was a presentation in March of 1856 of an entertainment called *Balaclava Day* suggests that this particular battle would be remembered long after the excitement of the Alma or Inkerman had faded.

One other play must be mentioned in this account of the contemporaneous theatrical presentations. That is a spectacle drama presented at Astley's entitled *The Battle of the Alma*. Because of the title, I did not review a manuscript of this drama.²⁵ In reading Jacqueline Bratton's article "Theatre of war: the Crimea on the London stage 1854-5," I discovered that it had been restaged to include the battles of Balaclava and Inkerman, and apparently featured the "Thin Red Line" and the charge of the Light Brigade. In my correspondence with Dr. Bratton, she has stated that the event appeared to her to be a response to the current events rather than linked to any particular political event of the time. In point of fact, the production occurred in February of 1855, at the time of Lord Lucan's recall to England and spectacular day-to-day accounts of his appearance in the House of Lords as reported in the *Times*.²⁶ Lucan was recalled in mid-February, and began his defense on March 2. Thus the theatre-goers who saw the revival of *The Battle of the Alma* could well have been reading of Lucan's recall and defense with the charge freshly revived in their imaginations.

Balaclava Day in 1856 is the last of the contemporaneous presentations to claim the battle of Balaclava in the title or subtitle until 1878, when J.B. Johnstone mounted a production called *Balaclava* on October 6 (19 days before the twenty-fourth anniversary of the event). The production of *Balaclava* itself is one of the most convoluted examples of the mirroring that went on between stage and public life concerning the Light Brigade. The piece starred a minor tragedian who was popular in his lifetime and won the interest of Prime Minister Gladstone; and it was written specifically to capitalize on the fact that William Henry Pennington had actually

²⁵ In my search for plays concerning Balaclava, I concentrated my focus on plays that were written after the battle of Balaclava. The battle of the Alma occurred before Balaclava, and hence I did not request this manuscript for review.

²⁶ In my future work on this subject I will, of course, be looking at this remounted production closely, as well any newspaper coverage of the production in relationship to Lord Lucan's recall and subsequent grilling by the Houses of Parliament.

served in the cavalry in the Crimea and had ridden in the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava. The program for the production made much of this fact.

The typeface size for the description of Pennington as an “eminent tragedian” is equal to the typeface declaring him to also be “[o]ne of the Surviving Heroes of the Memorable” and the typeface for “Charge of the Light Brigade” is several points larger, in full capital letters, and is positioned in the vertical center of the notice, so that the visual impact on the reader at a quick glance gives “Balaclava – Mr. Pennington – Charge of the Light Brigade.” These three ideas: the play, the tragedian and the charge, are being linked together to create interest in the piece, but this concatenation of battle, person and event took place in real life as well. Not only was Pennington involved in a production in which he played a survivor of the charge at Balaclava, he also was the model for the central figure in Elizabeth Thompson’s “Balaclava,” as discussed in Chapter 2. Additionally, Pennington was often called upon to recite Tennyson’s poem at public recitations as well as at curtain calls after his performance in various roles.

Most information concerning Pennington comes from his own memoirs, published in 1906, entitled *Sea, Camp and Stage*.²⁷ His participation in the charge of the Light Brigade is confirmed by his name on the list of those present at the charge compiled by the Balaclava Commemorative Society and included in the book of *Rules* for the Society (10). The list was compiled to define exactly who could be a member of the society (only those who were survivors of the charge) and who was excluded from membership (*Rules*, 3); although the Society was especially formed for all ranks below those of commissioned officers.

Pennington’s recollections of *Balaclava* as a theatrical piece are not complimentary to the writer.

²⁷ The cover of the book states that these are the memoirs of W.H. Pennington of the Balaclava Light Brigade and the illustration is of a military figure on horseback, galloping down a field with sword raised, leaning over the neck of his horse, with other figures similarly portrayed in the background.

I believe it was in the autumn of 1878 that a drama entitled *Balaclava*, which had been somewhat hastily contrived by my old colleague J.B. Johnstone, was most inadequately presented at the Standard Theatre upon the off-chance of a few successful nights, but not a penny was expended on the piece. The title was possibly expected to achieve everything. The plot, perhaps, suggested a too striking resemblance to that of *The Lady of Lyons*.

It is curious that Pennington refers here to *The Lady of Lyons*. This was a piece first produced in 1838 by Edward Bulwer-Lytton. It is based on an earlier comedy, and involves a young lady of good family in France immediately following the Revolution, who is tricked into marrying her self-educated gardener by a rejected suitor. The play is primarily about worth through merit rather than birth, and perhaps in that way may have suggested itself to Pennington. Otherwise it bears no resemblance to *Balaclava* at all. It is definitely to this specific play that Pennington refers, because he later states that his is the “Claude Melnotte” character, who is the self-educated gardener in Bulwer-Lytton’s play. Instead, the plot of *Balaclava* is strongly reminiscent of Douglas Jerrold’s *Black-Ey’d Susan*, first produced in 1829 and a perennial favorite of the London stage. In it William is forced to go to sea with His Majesty’s Royal Navy, leaving the Susan of the title behind. Her loyalty and honor are challenged by the local wicked squire, who wishes to have Susan as his own wife. William returns in the nick of time to rescue Susan and uphold the reputation of the British Tar. Just as Light Brigadeness had crystallized into a set of recognizable values, so in an early time the British Tar had come to represent certain values: honesty, bravery and a bluff and hearty open nature.

It is much more likely that it is to this play that Pennington means to refer. As I discussed earlier in this chapter, Bratton has pointed out that Jack Tar was the quintessential British hero of the stage from the time of Trafalgar until the Crimea. He was not an officer, but rather a man of the ranks, although upright and honest as his supposed betters were not. William of *Black-Ey’d Susan* was a perfect example of Jack Tar, and presumably the author of *Balaclava*,

by keeping close to the overarching plotline of *Black-Ey'd Susan*, intended the audience to make the connection and see the cavalry hero of Balaclava as the new Jack Tar. This correlation would suggest a conscious choice on the part of the playwright to place the hero of *Balaclava* squarely in the tradition of William and other Jack Tars. As such, this is a direct and overt effort to write the charge of the Light Brigade into the myth of the British warrior hero, especially one from the ranks.

Pennington was further upset by the fact that although the program and bills linked him to the charge itself, and the play was entitled *Balaclava*, no real effort was made to enact the charge itself. He considered this to be an imposition on the public, who had come in all likelihood to see the charge reenacted, especially since it had been over twenty years since the original charge took place and there would be a large number of the audience who had never seen any of the original attempts to stage the event.

There was no attempt to realise (sic) the “Charge,” and in this impossibility, of course, lay much of the weakness of the play. The advance of the “Six Hundred” was described by George Byrne (who appeared as a military correspondent posted upon an elevation near the R.U.E.) in spasmodic shouts in the intervals between the heavy discharges of artillery and musketry, which threw the people in the vicinity of the theatre into a fever of alarm: (166-67)

Although Pennington was obviously concerned by the presentation of the charge as simply reported, the fact that this is the only way the audience can “see” the charge is a direct parallel to the way the original audience, the British public back home, were able to envision the charge. They were forced to do so through the sketches of Simpson and the descriptions of Russell in his dispatches, which were already one step removed from the event itself and shaping the reality of the event into a legendary image.

Pennington was disturbed enough about the staging of the battle of Balaclava that he discussed it at some length in his memoirs. He quotes extensively from the section of the play in which the charge is reported, and goes on to say

There were several cruel inconsistencies in the matter of costume. Perhaps the most noteworthy . . . were the *busbies* worn by the 17th *Lancers*!²⁸ And several survivors of that regiment were seated in the front! Nothing was “according to Cocker,” and the only military uniform at all near the mark was my own. The numbers upon the stage doing duty for the heroic “Six Hundred” were by no means worthy representatives of that historic band. No doubt the public expected to see that which was only spoken of, “The Charge of the Light Brigade.”

Pennington seems to have wanted a reenactment à la Astley’s rather than what he got, but the fact that the play could be written in such a referential way suggests that the event of the Light Brigade had been translated to mythic status by 1878. It was possible to write a play that assumed universal knowledge of an event, as well as universal admiration for the survivors of such an event.

The plot is a simple one: Frank Walton, a middle-class farmer, and his widowed mother are auctioned out of house and home because of his dead father’s generosity to another, making himself surety for Squire Harold’s debts. Squire Harold borrows the money to meet Frank’s debt from Frank’s sweetheart, Annie’s, father on the condition that Harold marry Annie. Frank refuses to take the money under those circumstances; and makes a deal with Harold that he can try to win Annie while Frank is gone but may not marry her for a year. Frank goes for a soldier to redeem the family name and fortune, leaving his sweetheart Annie behind, with a year to prove to her father that he can keep her, having released her from their engagement.

The action of the first act takes place far from the battle front of the Crimea, in a pastoral setting that supposedly represents all that is good in England. As Frank prepares to leave for the

²⁸ Busbies were worn by the Hussars, of which he was one. Other headgear was worn by the Lancers. Since busbies are large black furry hats that are unmistakable, it was especially ludicrous that the management chose to put the Lancers in such recognizably wrong attire.

Crimea, he gives several set speeches about the liberty of England being set against the tyranny of other nations. His final statement is

True, mother, it is the madness that sends forth the power and strength of England to contend against the depotic and barbarous tyranny that would oppress and destroy. It is the madness that bands men in the holy cause to curb and check ambitious selfish sway. It is the madness that protects the weak and defies the strong. (*Balaclava*)²⁹

Act II takes place at the Crimean front, just before, during and immediately after the battle of Balaclava. During this scene Frank discovers that Squire Harold forged the bills for which his father stood surety, so that Harold collected Frank's father's money for himself. He has the packet of the forged bills with him when he is called to ride with the Light Brigade, and staggers on stage badly wounded after the charge. His friend takes charge of the packet of forgeries, and Frank collapses. There are frequent echoes throughout this scene of the language first used immediately after the actual event in the public records. Frank's friend, Munro, describes a "gentleman on horseback" who "seems in a great hurry," who is later identified through his actions as Lew Nolan, the man who brought the ambiguous order to Lord Lucan, commander of the cavalry. When Frank arrives back from the charge wounded, he declares

We did not shrink, although the odds to look upon were fearful, on every side a flood and smoke and flame, no halt, no check but speed, speed heedless of the dying and the dead. . . . on we rushed with sabres flashing we rode upon the gunners and cut them down as they stood.

The description which the playwright gives to Frank is closely allied to the original reports which Russell sent back to the *Times*, especially in the reference to flashing sabres. Almost all representations of the charge that include the Hussars show them with sabres drawn and with the sunlight glinting off the metal. It is as if this is now a stock symbol that says "Light Brigade"

²⁹ There are no page numbers in the manuscript of *Balaclava* held by the British Library in the Lord Chamberlain's collection.

when combined with other elements such as booming cannons and smoke as well as speeding horses.

Frank has one last comment as he gazes down at his comrades fighting their way back to the lines:

Ride 'em down or there won't be one of us back to tell the tale of our mad and blundering charge.

Some might consider the echoes to be lazy playwriting, but Johnstone is doing more than borrowing. When he draws on a combination of Tennyson's poem (the "blunder," the terrible odds, the speed of the riders, the flashing sabres) and Russell's dispatches, he attempts to evoke the memory of the original thrill that the English public may have felt on first reading the poem and the descriptions of the charge. Further, he has placed his hero front and center as the embodiment of the charge itself – one man standing for the many who rode against the Russian guns. Johnstone has given the audience a living, breathing embodiment of Light Brigadeness in the person of Frank Walton.

Consciously or not, Johnstone is reinscribing the iconic attributes given to the riders in the charge, and then, through Frank's earlier patriotic speeches, uniting the icon with an idealized vague sense of what "England" means. Thus, when Frank speaks early in the second act about his frustration because the Light Brigade has seen no action, he can say "We shall make up for it one of these days I dare say sooner maybe than we expect but come when it will or where it may it won't lack ready hands to do English work after English fashion," and the audience will then understand at the end of the act that the mythic icon of the cavalry rider in the charge of the Light Brigade is equivalent to Englishness itself in all its beneficent goodness.

Johnstone drives this point home in the third act when Frank returns from the Crimea. As the scene opens, Frank's mother and his sweetheart, Annie are reading the newspaper which

contains Tennyson's poem, "The Charge of the Light Brigade"³⁰. They are convinced Frank is dead and are both in mourning. Squire Harold arrives to say he will pay the entire sum owing to Frank's father only when Annie has married him, which she refuses to do. Harold now tries to force the marriage because Annie's father has speculated with his money at Harold's advising and Harold holds everything Blair has as security. Blair tries to prevent his daughter from marrying Harold and regrets that he has caused all the misery.

Into this scene comes Frank, accompanied by his friend Munro, who still has the packet of Squire Harold's forgeries, but unbeknownst to Frank. Frank is suffering from amnesia because of the loss of the packet. Every question or plea addressed to Frank results in his quoting a stanza from Tennyson's poem.

Mrs. W: Frank! (Frank lights up and looks at her) your mother. (Frank starts and puts hand to head, pause).

Frank: "Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward
All in the valley of death
Rode the six hundred.
"Forward, the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns!" he said
Into the valley of death,
Rode the six hundred."

Mun: This is all we've heard for a month.

Har (aside): His coming back isn't likely to cross my purpose.

Here Frank begins the poem with the first stanza, establishing the idea that he is still back in the Crimea, reliving the charge. Although it may be humorous on today's stage, the idea of being stuck in the memory of some horrific event is a sobering one. This is the basis on which many people are diagnosed with post-traumatic shock, or as the Great War had it, shell-shock. Frank's

³⁰ This is difficult to swallow since the poem came out only a few weeks after Balaclava, and it would have taken much longer for Frank to recover from his wounds and be sent home.

condition is pitiable, and the fact that Harold is willing to take advantage of a man in such a state reveals him to be the true villain of the piece.

Frank's companion next tries Frank's sweetheart, hoping that she will jog his memory.

Blair: Annie speak to him (She goes to Frank, who looks vacantly at her)

Annie: Frank! (He sinks into thought, looks at her and shakes his head) Am I forgotten Frank (He makes a sudden movement and seems about to speak) he recognizes me. Frank! Frank! Speak to me to me your Annie.

Frank: "Forward the Light Brigade!"
Was there a man dismayed?
Not though the soldiers knew
Someone had blundered.
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die,
Into the valley of death
Rode the six hundred. (Relapses)

This stanza represents Frank as one of the men who was not dismayed, who made no reply and who did and almost died. This stanza is addressed to his sweetheart, and it is an affirmation of why Frank is worthy of Annie and Harold is not: Harold has never espoused decent morals (by the play's standards) but Frank went willingly to his death because it was his duty.

All present (except Harold) attempt to find what it is that Frank has lost, in the hopes of him regaining his memory.

[business over finding whatever it is Frank used to have in his pocket – the chances for him getting his memory back. Harold tries to get Annie to marry him anyway, but Annie is adamant. Harold goes for her]

Har: Then I know my course. (Moves towards Annie. Frank darts between them looks fiercely and threateningly at Harold. His face changes after a pause to that of heroic determination)

Frank: Cannon to the right of them,
Cannon to the left of them,
Cannon in front of them,
Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot & shell

Boldly they rode and well:
Into the jaws of death,
Into the mouth of hell,
Rode the six hundred. (Relapses)

Here Frank is the hero who braved the mouth of hell, so Harold is little threat to him after such an ordeal. Johnstone carefully shapes each moment of the action to fit the stanza that Frank is about to recite. Thus,

Blair: But one thought and of one thing all else forgotten.

Mun: Little wonder at that, when we call to mind the desperate bravery of the devoted six hundred.

Frank (Started very marked)

Flashed all their sabres bare;
Flashed as they turned in air,
Sabring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
All the world wondered:
Plunged in the battery smoke,
Right through the line the broke:
Cossack and Russian
Reeled from the sabre stroke,
Shattered and sundered
Then they rode back – but not,
Not the six hundred.

Mrs. W: Frank!

Annie: Frank!

Frank (Slightly understanding) Who are you?

[business with showing Frank the bible]

Frank (reads slowly) Frank Walton born, died, died
All that was left of them,
Left of six hundred. (relapses)

When Frank is displayed on stage as an amnesiac, with only the poem as his means of communication, that is also “all that is left” of him, of the personality of Frank Walton. The play conjures an image that is even more bleak than Tennyson’s: what of those who returned

damaged, who perhaps felt it would have been better if they had died in the Crimea? There is no answer in the play, but the final act is not as straightforward as it originally seems.

In the end, of course, Frank's memory is restored and he is able to force the Squire to agree to repay all the money. Once he has bested Harold, Frank offers him the hand of friendship, saying

Heaven has been with me in this as it was in its mercy in the October fight where
England's honour was maintained by English hearts, for the living we can but say
as men they did their duty – for the dead reverence & respect (removes hat)

When can their glory fade
Oh, the wild charge they made
All the world wondered.
Honour the charge they made
Honour the Light Brigade
Noble Six Hundred. (Curtain)

Throughout this incredible scene, Johnstone deftly weaves the Tennyson poem about warfare and cavalry charges into the fabric of a more ordinary life. The poem is epic in nature, but the family Bible that is presented to Frank is a tangible artifact that belongs specifically to Frank's family, and records his birth and (supposed) death. The specificity of the object brings the epic into the sphere of the homely. When Harold threatens Annie and Frank intervenes, the stage directions indicate that Frank wears an expression of "heroic determination." Thus when Frank quotes the stanza from Tennyson concerning the cannons, the boldness of the riders and the jaws of death, Johnstone presents Frank as the protector of the feminine purity of English women, in the person of Annie, and makes that equivalent to the bravery that the cavalry showed in the charge. At the same time, in his final words, Frank deprecates what he has done with the "gallant six hundred," as being only his "duty" as a man – thus presenting the English hero as a modest person.

These, then, are the qualities that Johnstone gives to Frank: his heritage as an Englishman inextricably linked to the actual soil of England through his being a farmer, and his standing in a long tradition of such Englishmen who fought “for England” on foreign soil (especially through the use of the family Bible); an honorable man who will protect helpless women from treacherous bullies (such as Squire Harold) and by extrapolation weaker countries threatened by evil foreigners (such as Russia); and a humble and modest man who will when praised for his outstanding heroism, proclaim it to have been merely his duty.³¹ Although completely unaware that he was doing so, Pennington along with Johnstone, presented to the audiences who saw *Balaclava* the complete triumph of the iconic cavalryman of the Light Brigade Charge over the historic one. Light Brigadeness trumped the Light Brigade in the stage representation of Frank Walton. Pennington’s involvement with this iconic representation did not end with the final curtain of *Balaclava*. Instead, he was drawn more and more into a kind of living intertextuality that in many ways shaped the rest of his career.

According to his memoirs, Pennington went to Bath, to a Roman Catholic college called Prior Park, in 1878, to do a performance of *Julius Caesar*; Pennington as Caesar with the senior students performing in the secondary roles. This play was an interesting choice, and Pennington is never clear whether it was his or the College’s. Although *Julius Caesar* can be interpreted in a variety of ways, it is at least in part the story of a war hero who returns to a faction at home that fears his popularity because of his military feats and assassinates him accordingly. Certainly Pennington’s scathing assessment of the treatment of his brothers in arms in later years points toward one who was at least a little embittered at being so easily forgotten while the heroic image of the Light Brigade hero continued to ride in the public vision. He apparently fascinated

³¹ Remembering especially at this particular moment that the Light Brigade was destroyed because Lucan did his “duty” and followed the apparent orders of his commanding officer, just as Cardigan followed Lucan’s order and the cavalry followed Cardigan.

the students as a real live survivor of the legendary charge: “The collegians were jubilant, and could hardly make enough of me. The Light Brigade at Balaclava had a great fascination for them, and is there not something infinitely refreshing to the jaded toiler in the simplicity and trust of youth and the ingenuousness and sincerity of its regard?” (164-5).

Several events leading up to the production of *Balaclava* were probably contributing factors in the performance that became Pennington, the actor, survivor of the charge of the Light Brigade. During his career as a leading actor in tragedies, he came to the attention of William Gladstone, the Prime Minister. In 1872 he was asked to give a recital at the Prime Minister’s home, and the audience included the Princess Louise. He gave Tennyson’s poem as a part of his recital, and when the Princess inquired as to his history the next day, Gladstone discovered that Pennington had actually ridden in the Charge (*Sea, Camp and Stage*, 117).

Calling next morning, by appointment [after his recital at the Gladstones in 1872], I learnt from Mrs. Gladstone that the Princess [Louise] had given expression to a wish to be furnished with some account of my antecedent career. In the brief sketch submitted for Her Royal Highness’s perusal, of course mention was made of my Crimean service with the Light Cavalry Brigade, and it was from this source that Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone became possessed of the fact of my participation in the celebrated “Charge,” and of which they had not hitherto been apprised. I think Mr. Gladstone was pleasantly surprised, for he said many nice things to me at a subsequent interview. (118)

According to Pennington, from then on Gladstone took a lively interest in Pennington’s career. Although Pennington does not state outright that this connection increased his favor in the eyes of Gladstone, the terms in which Pennington speaks of further conversations with the Prime Minister imply that the connection was not insignificant to Gladstone’s continuing patronage.

With the view, doubtless, of bringing me into touch with such influence as Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone supposed might be of service in advancing my professional interest, I had been invited to breakfast to meet Mr. Tom Taylor, the dramatist, who held a post of some distinction in the Education Department of the Civil

Service, and who was, I believe, personally known to the Prime Minister. (119-120)

When commenting on his reception in the role of Frank Walton later in 1878, Pennington stated that he felt others in his profession were jealous of the attention the Prime Minister always gave him.

I am of the opinion that the profession (with exceptions) had undoubtedly resented the recognition by Mr. Gladstone of what he was good enough to describe as my “powerful grasp of the characters of Shakespeare” . . . and of “Hamlet” afterwards wrote, “I have never forgotten your striking representation of the character”, and were fain to ascribe the expression of his approval and interest in my professional life to any cause rather than to my deserving.

. . .

But perhaps the reason commonly accepted (but certainly one impossible to have weighed for an instant in the judgment of such cultured and critical acumen) had been the accident of my presence as one of the Light Brigade at Balaclava. (197)

Pennington goes on to protest once again that Gladstone only discovered his participation in the charge after Gladstone had already seen him in *Hamlet*. This is quite possible, even probable, but it is naïf of Pennington to assume that his association with what had become a heroic icon had no power over a man politically ambitious enough to become Prime Minister. If Johnstone’s vision of Pennington as the embodiment of the Light Brigade myth were at all persuasive, someone in the position of Gladstone would be at some pains to appropriate that symbol to himself (and his party), and by doing so appropriate the Light Brigade into the panoply of symbolism that the British Empire had at its command to stir the populace.

Pennington’s involvement with the Light Brigade and the transmission of Light Brigadeness continued with a remarkable performance of the essence of the Light Brigade at an historic reunion dinner. In October of 1875 Pennington became involved in the organization of the first reunion dinner of the survivors of the charge of the Light Brigade.

The celebration was arranged to take place at the Alexandra Palace, on Monday, October 25, 1875. An influential committee had been constituted, who devised a grand fete day of varied entertainments, both musical and theatrical, in addition to which a collection in the Central Hall of British and Russian relics from the field of battle attracted crowds of sympathetic admirers . . . Miss Elizabeth Thompson . . . entered thoroughly into the spirit of the promoters of the fete and her pathetic picture “The Roll Call,” kindly lent for the occasion by Her Majesty the Queen, was not among the least of the attractions . . . (145, see Chapter 2)

The St. Crispin “band of brothers,” those “happy few,” were suddenly in the spotlight. All the survivors, individually forgotten for 20 years, found themselves the center of attention, and Pennington was the actor, in the most literal sense, that became the focus of the performance. He was called on to recite the Tennyson poem at the dinner itself, although he had expected to be asked to give the poem during the afternoon as well (146). Pennington was, at the time, performing in *Rebecca* (an adaptation of *Ivanhoe*) in Manchester, and received special leave to go to London for the dinner, because the manager of the theatre saw an opportunity to increase ticket sales because of the free publicity Pennington’s appearance would create (146).

The manager wasn’t wrong – Pennington returned to Manchester a hero, and described his first night back on stage in his memoirs:

Having recited “The Charge of the Light Brigade,” an excited and enthusiastic house loudly demanded its repetition, and after an interval became so clamorously persistent in their requirement that I was reluctantly compelled to repeat it. (147-8)

Note that in his own (published) memoirs, Pennington is quick to take on the attributes that Johnstone gave Frank in *Balaclava*: modesty kept Pennington from an immediate second encore, and duty ultimately compelled him to go on.

The anniversary dinner for the survivors of the Charge received royal attention, and the gathering of the survivors became an annual event, including the formation of the Balaclava Commemorative Society. Pennington’s memories of the first anniversary dinner are charged

with bitter irony. After recording the outpouring of effusive praise of the Light Brigade that accompanied the first dinner in the press reports, Pennington states

It is thirty years since this was written, but despite the enthusiastic furore raised by such admiring eloquence, many of the survivors since that eventful year have only been spared the ignominy of the poorhouse by the practical philanthropy of Mr. T.H. Roberts, proprietor of *Illustrated Bits*, and to those upon his relief roll he is constrained to administer the barest pittance. The amount lately subscribed during one month to Mr. T.H. Roberts's Light Brigade Relief Fund was one shilling . . . (144)

In 1889 H.P. Bruce wrote and presented a “spectacle/drama” called *Duty, or, Balaclava Heroes* which played at the Sunderland beginning December 30th. Interestingly, this spectacle, although it appears to have played the Theatre Royal, the Avenue and the Lyceum, receives no mention in Pennington’s memoirs, nor is there an extant script in the Lord Chamberlain’s collection. The next record of a production involving the Light Brigade is a reflection of Pennington’s own condemnation of those who glorified the “heroes of the charge” and left the actual heroes to starve. In 1892 a brief piece probably meant for a curtain-raiser entitled *Balaclava Joe*, was licensed to C.P. Emery. It appeared at the Variety on June 12, 1894. The plot is as follows: Balaclava Joe, a veteran of the Charge, lives in a small cottage with his grandson, whose father is believed dead while serving in the British Army. He sends the grandson, Young Joey, with his last medal – the one from the Light Brigade – to Portsmouth to sell (they have no wood, coal, or food). Young Joey meets a murderer and smuggler, Crafty Crowther, along the way, but is saved by his father, Joseph Trueman, returning from Egypt to surprise Balaclava Joe. Trueman is tipsy, and gets involved with Crowther, who tries to steal his knapsack with seven years pay in it. Crowther takes Trueman back to his shanty, and gives him drugged brandy.

Before Trueman can drink it, Sallie Blossomly, a young woman who tries to help Balaclava Joe, arrives looking for Young Joey. Joey is hidden in the shack, where Sally upbraids

both men, then leaves. Joey replaces the drugged brandy with good brandy, and then when his father drinks, Crowther finds out that the drunk he's trying to rob is Balaclava Joe's son, as Joey discovers the man is his father. Sally re-enters and there's a fight over the knapsack, with Trueman finally pulling a pistol on Crowther. All ends well, "saved from the jaws of death" (the alternative title to the piece). The piece is no more than 40 pages hand-written and described as a burlesque.

The stage directions indicate Balaclava Joe as a white-haired, one-armed veteran, first seen with a walking stick coming in from a deep snow. Just as Bratton describes the Jack Tar figure as "a heavily overcoded image," Balaclava Joe flashes signs to the audience at every turn. Not only is he a veteran, he is one-armed; not only one-armed, but in need of a walking stick; not only on a walking stick, but using one in deep snow. His white hair suggests that he was not a young man twenty years previously at the battle of Balaclava. Additionally, the opening words of the scene are spoken by Sally Blossomly, as she arrives to discover the old man has been served a "notice to quit," or in American modern terms, an eviction notice. Before he hobbles on stage, Sally says,

"Notice to Quit!" – an old soldier's reward for having spent the best years of his life in defence of his Queen and country! . . . I must see what little good I can do for Old Balaclava Joe, who has done so much good for others.

So the audience already knows before Balaclava Joe ever appears onstage, that he has done good for others – he is a generous man; and that he has been served an eviction notice. It would be difficult to imagine a more pitiable visual image of an old soldier if this soldier were to be presumed to survive through the end of the play. His conversation with his grandson evokes more pathos:

Balaclava Joe (to grandson): I'm going to Portsmouth, my boy, to sell my last remaining medal – the only relic that brings back to my memory the brilliant, famous charge at Balaclava.

Young Joey: Let me go, grandfather? See, it is quite fine now and I shall run so hard over the crisp white snow that I shall be quite warm before I am half way there.

Balaclava Joe (giving him the medal and paper): Then go, my boy; you'll know the place; it is where we sold your dead grandmother's wedding ring.

Here the audience receives more information about Balaclava Joe: he is not only a survivor of the charge, he won a medal because of his actions there; he won more than one medal over the course of his military career, and has kept the Light Brigade medal after pawning all of his other valuable items, including his dead wife's wedding ring. Thus he values this remembrance even over the remembrance of his dead wife. His statement also acknowledges the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava to be part of the cultural knowledge of the audience, since he is able to refer to it without mentioning the Light Brigade specifically, and also calls it famous.

In the person of Balaclava Joe the audience is given an iconic image that is not the same as the heroic portraits which hung in public galleries – rather they are given the bright young man on his charger reduced to the impoverished lengths of selling the very medal that represents the honor of the charge itself. The pathos of the image itself asserts the unquestionable glory of the Light Brigade, and the shame of a nation in allowing its shining heroes to be found in such circumstances. Although the veteran himself is a shabby and downtrodden figure, the opening exchange of the piece evokes the heroism of the charge, the glory reflected on those who rode in the charge, and the debt the nation owes to one who created an icon of its Empire.

The formal dinner that Pennington helped arrange, and the subsequent formation of the Balaclava Commemorative Society may have brought the real life survivors of the charge into the public notice for a short while, but the public appeared to prefer the static beauty permanently preserved on canvas to the actuality of a one-armed lame and aging veteran. Light

Brigadeness was preferable to the Light Brigade, since Light Brigadeness was a collection of qualities that could be visually, musically and theatrically not only represented, but controlled, whereas the actual veterans were too much a reminder of the outcome of the charge.

THE CHARGE AS A SOURCE OF MOCKERY

One test of an event having passed into the ethos of society and become completely part of the culture is whether or not a joke can be made of it. In the case of the Light Brigade, at first the ability to make any kind of joke concerning the senseless deaths of so many hundreds of men seems ludicrous, if not in extremely poor taste. But risking the charge of poor taste was meat and drink to playwright George Bernard Shaw. Shaw sought throughout his career to puncture the pretensions and hypocrisies of society, and did so not only through impassioned pamphlets, speeches and articles, but through the particular kind of humor that could be found in a milder form in the operettas of Gilbert and Sullivan and later in the works of Oscar Wilde. He used the common forms of the theatre of his day to set accepted “reality” against his own perception of truth.

Shaw was born in 1854, the same year as the battle of Balaclava and the charge of the Light Brigade. Thus the initial shock and horror which greeted the news from the Crimea would not be a part of his memory. He was himself one of those who was indoctrinated over the years through the public transmission of the legend of the Light Brigade in art, literature and music. As a music critic and member of middle-class London life, he would probably have been familiar with at least some of the parlor piano pieces which I have discussed in Chapter 3, and was certainly aware of the vast military paintings of the charge which were displayed in public galleries.³²

³² This will become more apparent through the discussion of the first act of *Arms and the Man*.

Shaw was a disciple of Ibsen, and had written a pamphlet defending his work, especially *A Doll's House (The Quintessence of Ibsenism)*. As a theatre critic, Shaw was well aware of the common genres found in the London theatre, and in his criticism took the opportunity to expound his own ideas about what should be presented on the stage (*Our Theatre in the Nineties*). When he began writing his own plays, he wrote, as did Ibsen, from the styles and genres which had shaped him in youth and early adulthood, but he wrote always with the acute perception of the flawed representational aspects of stock characters, situations and “inevitable” outcomes. As a philosopher, Shaw was perhaps a post-modernist before the modern had even taken root, although he also was formed by the society which he criticized.

As I have discussed in Chapter 3, the representation of the Light Brigade made a slow journey from the written eye-witness accounts, which at least were based in some small part on an attempt at accuracy, through a romanticization which removed the more unpleasant aspects of warfare. The paintings which I have used to illustrate this journey from the horrific particular to the glorified generic presented to the public an appearance of reality and truth that were several Platonic removes from the event itself. Shaw recognized the propaganda inscribed in these glorifications of death, and set out to argue against such a glorification through a play concerning a Swiss mercenary soldier fighting in a Balkan dispute.

In his writing, Shaw chose nationalities and types very carefully. The fact that Switzerland was a neutral country emphasizes the disconnect between the pure version of a national standard and the shadow side of that standard. A mercenary is by definition one whose loyalty is bought rather than commanded through duty, honor or a sense of patriotism. Thus a Swiss mercenary is a paradox – neutrality which is not neutral. A mercenary is also, because his services are bought, the only true professional soldier. Although the commanding officers at the

battle of Balaclava considered the army to be their career, they also claimed to be serving their country. Shaw allows no such blending of motives in the character of Bluntschli.

Shaw then sets this Swiss mercenary as a rival to someone who might have stepped out of one of the paintings of Balaclava. Sergius, a nobleman who is fighting idealistically for his country, constantly postures about the high calling of the military, and the sanctity of the cause for which he fought. When a treaty is established between the warring Bulgarians and Serbs, brokered by the true powers in the region, Austria and Russia, Sergius resigns from the army in disgust.

The play takes place in Bulgaria, during and immediately following a conflict between the Serbians and the Bulgarians. The reasons for the beginning of hostilities are unclear, and the cessation of the conflict does not seem to gain either side any benefit. Each side is “supported” by a major European power – the Serbs by the Austrians and the Bulgarians by the Russians. In the Crimean conflict, Austria was an ally of the English and Russia was the enemy – note that Shaw chose to reverse these roles by placing the action with a Bulgarian family. If this is a systematic dismantling of the myth of the Light Brigade, Shaw strikes at the foundation. He suggests that the parties at war with each other are interchangeable, that alliances can be as easily broken and forged and an enemy this week will be a blood brother the next. In this sense Bluntschli is perhaps the nobler of the two men, because he at least makes no pretense that he is fighting some predestined and permanent enemy. As Baudrillard points out in *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, the supposed justice of the cause disappeared at the end of the first Gulf War in a cloud of re-membering of the event through media manipulation (74). In *Arms and the Man*, Bernard Shaw makes this same argument through a scathingly witty exposure of the performative aspects of Sergius’ character.

In the opening moments of the play, Raina (the heroine) is in her bedroom and her mother rushes in with news of a battle and of Sergius, who is Raina's fiancé.

Catherine: A great battle at Slivnitsa! A victory! And it was won by Sergius.

Raina: Ah!

Catherine: You can't guess how splendid it is. A cavalry charge – think of that! He defied our Russian commanders – acted without orders – led a charge on his own responsibility – headed it himself – was the first man to sweep through their guns! Can't you see it Raina; our gallant splendid Bulgarians with their swords and eyes flashing, thundering down like an avalanche and scattering the wretched Servian dandies like chaff. (Act I)

Note that Sergius is described as acting without orders and charging a gun battery. Also note that the commanding officers are Russian – the enemy side during the Crimean conflict. The reference to flashing swords and eyes recalls the Tennyson poem: "Flash'd all their sabers bare, /Flash'd as they turn'd in air /Sabring the gunners there /Charging an army" ("The Charge of the Light Brigade," stanza 4), which I have shown in Chapter 2 to have been strongly influenced by William Russell's firsthand account published shortly after the event.

Here Shaw exploits the form of the theatrical device of reporting huge battle scenes that occur offstage. He is able to at once report the incident, and at the same time expose the bias that creates the moment into a splendid and heroic one. Defiance of orders (a court-martial offense, as pointed out in the original testimony concerning the charge of the Light Brigade) is made to seem an expression of romantic individuality, and an opportunity for Sergius to gain glory on the battlefield. Shaw also makes it clear that cavalry armed with sabres charged a stand of guns. This does not seem to be a foolish or risky choice to either Catherine or Raina. Also, Catherine calls on Raina to "see it" – to use her imagination to create the idealized version of the event in her head. Making the event into spectacle, rather than first-hand experience, is a step toward making it the perfect Baudrillard simulacrum. Just as the television during the Gulf War

distanced the audience and performed carefully chosen moments, so Catherine asks Raina to “see” Sergius’ charge rather than hear, smell or feel it. Although it would have been unthinkable that a young lady would ride in a cavalry charge, nevertheless Raina is invited into the event at a romantic remove that allows subtle erasures to take place.

At the same time, Shaw deconstructs Raina’s participation in the event through a wry undercutting of her romantic outlook. Raina is suitably impressed, but Shaw has her express her doubts as to such romanticism as Mrs. Duberly once expressed,

Raina: [speaking of her farewell to Sergius] Well, it came into my head just as he was holding me in his arms and looking into my eyes, that perhaps we only had our heroic ideas because we are so fond of reading Byron and Pushkin, and because we were so delighted with the opera that season at Bucharest. Real life is so seldom like that – indeed never, as far as I knew it then. (Act I)

Shaw was well aware of the phenomenon that Rashna B. Singh so clearly describes: It is not necessarily the great literature that forms us and our outlook on life, but rather the literature that we like the most and read most often (*Goodly is Our Heritage*, xxxvi). Singh points out that much of British India’s identity was formed not through pamphlets or lectures but through enjoyable childhood reading, such as the plenteous number of novel series set in fictitious public schools in England, following the careers of a set of girls (or boys) from their early days through the sixth form. Raina is similarly influenced by her romantic literary choices, and Shaw makes a joke on the fact that she believes that this insane charge that Sergius has made somehow “proves” that Byron and Pushkin were actually “right.” Here Raina expresses Shaw’s thoughts – that much of what the world calls gallant bravery and heroic ideals are brought on by reading too many Romantic writers and being pleased with the fairy-tale world of the opera.

Shaw does not allow Raina to believe this for long. The carefully edited version of Sergius’ charge, creating a heroic image for Raina, is destroyed by Bluntschli’s arrival in Raina’s bedroom. Bluntschli is on the run from vindictive Bulgarians who, having scattered the Serbian

troops, are now hunting them down in the streets. He hasn't slept in days, he is dirty, he hasn't shaved recently, and he hasn't had anything to eat since before the battle started. The audience and Raina are forced to grapple with the reality of warfare when it climbs through the bedroom window. Raina is frightened, but seeing that he is a defeated enemy, decides to behave according to the romantic principles she has just been extolling and offers him sanctuary.³³

But most outrageous to Raina is Bluntschli's insistence on the stupidity of the very cavalry charge she has heard described so recently by her mother, featuring the heroic Sergius.

Man: Why, how is it that you've just beaten us? Sheer ignorance of the art of war, nothing else. I never saw anything so unprofessional.

Raina: Oh, was it unprofessional to beat you?

Man: Well, come, is it professional to throw a regiment of cavalry on a battery of machine guns, with the dead certainty that if the guns go off not a horse or a man will ever get within fifty yards of the fire? I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw it.

Bluntschli's description might be an abrupt summation of the actions of Lords Lucan and Cardigan when they ordered the Light Brigade to charge the Russian emplacement of active guns. Shaw twists the words of Tennyson, "all the world wondered," meant to be an expression of awe and respect, so that Bluntschli's comment "I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw it," becomes an expression of a professional soldier's contempt for stupidity in warfare. Additionally, he calls into question the act of "seeing": Raina was called upon by her mother to "see" the charge in the most romantic of visions. Bluntschli, who actually did see the charge, cannot convert what he saw into an iconic image. Instead, he is the practical realist who reminds Raina what might have happened. His words are also a reminder of what actually did happen at Balaclava, when the Brigade charged a battery of live guns. His expression "dead certainty" is a

³³ This has an echo of *Don Carlo*, which Shaw would have been familiar with as a music critic, as well as with the original play by Victor Hugo.

grimly humorous gesture toward the men and horses who, in fact, never did get near the Russian guns.

Raina asks for a description, without telling Bluntschli why she wants to know. He offers her his own version from the standpoint of a professional soldier, and it is not what she wanted to hear.

Raina: Tell me, tell me about him! (referring to the man leading the charge)

Man: He did it like an operatic tenor – a regular handsome fellow, with flashing eyes and lovely moustache, shouting a war-cry and charging like Don Quixote at the windmills. We nearly burst with laughter at him; but when the sergeant ran up as white as a sheet, and told us they'd sent the wrong cartridges, and that we couldn't fire a shot for the next ten minutes, we laughed at the other side of our faces. . . . And there was Don Quixote flourishing like a drum major, thinking he'd done the cleverest thing ever known, whereas he ought to be courtmartialled for it. Of all the fools ever let loose on a field of battle, that man must be the very maddest. He and his regiment simply committed suicide – only the pistol missed fire, that's all.

Bluntschli's references to the Light Brigade charge are too obvious to miss: "is it professional to **throw a regiment of cavalry on a battery of machine guns**, with the dead certainty that if the guns go off not a horse or a man will ever get within fifty yards of the fire?"

As Chapter 2 demonstrated, the original reports and subsequent publications concerning the action of the Brigade at the battle of Balaclava described the event as sending a regiment of cavalry against a battery of guns. Shaw duplicates the exact language of this common summation of the charge of the Light Brigade, emphasizing again how it went against all common sense and rules of warfare.

In Chapter 2 I discussed the role of Lew Nolan in the misunderstanding that brought about the disaster at Balaclava. He was the young, impulsive ADC to Raglan who was impatient for a cavalry charge, dismissive and contemptuous with Lucan, who decided to ride in the charge and was in fact the first person killed. There was much discussion following the charge that

suggested he held some culpability for forcing the issues with Lucan when Lucan would have asked for more clarification in the order. If he had lived, many historians speculate that he would have been court-martialled. Since he was dead, his family sought to keep his name pure and several portraits of him, based on a photograph, were circulated. These I discussed in Chapter 3. He was dark, lean and had an unusually luxuriant long mustache. Sergius himself, when he appears, is described as,

A tall, romantically handsome man, with the physical hardihood, the high spirit, and the susceptible imagination of an untamed mountaineer chieftain. But his remarkable personal distinction is of a characteristically civilized type. The ridges of his eyebrows, . . . his jealously observant eye, his nose, thin, keen and apprehensive . . . his assertive chin, would not be out of place in a Paris salon. . . . and the result is precisely what the advent of nineteenth century thought first produced in England: to-wit, Byronism. (Act II)

As Shaw has Bluntschli describe Sergius in the charge, “He did it like an operatic tenor – a **regular handsome fellow, with flashing eyes and lovely moustache**, shouting a war-cry”. According to several of the reports discussed in Chapter 2, Nolan rode out at the head of the cavalry with Lord Cardigan. There was some discussion as to whether he actually realized the mistake that was about to be made and rode in front, shouting and waving his sword, but since he was killed almost immediately, there is no certainty as to his purpose. But Bluntschli’s description of Sergius certainly calls Lew Nolan to mind, as well as many of the paintings and illustrations done of the charge as discussed in Chapter 3. Shaw also delivers the sly reminder of Raina’s earlier remarks about the opera, positioning Sergius as a performative person, demonstrating his attempts at a larger-than-life persona through his gestures and his actions.

As well, Sergius represents just the sort of actor that Baudrillard refers to in his assessment of Saddam Hussein’s “performance” during the first Gulf War. The posturing is as much for the camera as the men in his army, and the performance intended equally for American and Iraqi consumption. So with Sergius – his movements are always with one eye to the effect

he will create, and the desire to convey a particular impression on his audience. By equating Sergius so carefully with Lew Nolan, Shaw deftly pointed out the performative aspects of Nolan's character, which led to such disastrous consequences. If Sergius is the hypocritical upperclass Victorian Miles Gloriousus, then Shaw indicts not only the commanding officers for their lack of perception, but all of the rapt audience for such spectacles.

Shaw also brings the audience back to the original event of the charge of the Light Brigade before the poems, the music and the paintings. "There was Don Quixote flourishing like a drum major, thinking he'd done the cleverest thing ever known, **whereas he ought to be courtmartialled for it**"; and "He and **his regiment** simply **committed suicide**" (emphasis mine). Lord Lucan, the officer ultimately responsible for carrying out Lord Raglan's orders as he understood them, was quoted often as saying that such a charge would send his men to certain death, and Lord Cardigan, who led the charge, always referred to it as "suicidal."

Shaw gives us the full implications of the irony: Sergius' heroic charge only succeeds because the opposing side has the wrong kind of ammunition and cannot fire their guns. Later, Sergius claims that his hope of promotion in the army has been destroyed because he didn't follow the rules (Act II). Although Shaw took great pains to align the fictitious Bulgarian charge with the facts and representations of the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava, he was writing a comedy, and thus he allows Lew Nolan and the rest of the regiment to survive, rather than be almost completely exterminated. At the same time, he is fully aware of the pitfalls of theatrical representation even when it attempts to undercut the overblown public representations elsewhere.

I cannot think that Shaw saw the loss of the Light Brigade as in itself humorous. Instead, he attempted through very dark humor to point out how truly appalling the event actually was. Unfortunately, as with the first Gulf War and Baudrillard's accurate predictions, the play became

a classic romantic comedy, downplaying the criticism of warfare and emphasizing the romance – just as Raina and Sergius did. Responses to the play varied, but they focused almost exclusively on Sergius’ and Raina’s relationship, and the unexpected twist of Raina giving up the supposedly perfect romantic hero for Bluntschli. There was no apparent mention of any resemblance of Sergius’ charge to that of the Light Brigade, no mention of Shaw’s irreverence at all. Indeed, the play became his first commercial success, and enabled him to leave his job as music critic and focus on writing plays. It appears that the public simply could not equate Shaw’s coldly factual deconstruction of the Charge with its own romantic image so firmly entrenched in the engravings, paintings and popular theatre of the day. Shaw ran up against the indestructibility of Light Brigadeness as a set of values and iconography because he brought the reality of the event of the charge back onto the stage, and the public could no longer recognize a connection between the event and the quality of Light Brigadeness – by 1894 the two had been too completely sundered. Shaw’s play made its debut the same year as Caton Woodville’s famous painting of the 17th lancers was first put on view, and it was ultimately Woodville’s adherence to Light Brigadeness that won out over Shaw’s attempt to remind the public of the actual event.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have sought to show, through several very different examples of theatrical productions, the way in which the icon of the Light Brigade had entered into the mainstream of cultural knowledge within a few years of the actual event. When the Light Brigade participant can be put on stage as an amnesiac, an ancient wounded soldier down on his luck and the subject for bitter commentary on the follies of war, the Light Brigade has truly become a universal icon that is accessible for all audiences, and the resulting icon can then be put to other uses as a reference point. It is at this moment that the charge of the Light Brigade has become Baudrillard’s complete simulacrum, having travelled through initial descriptions which

were gradually trained into one synoptic vision of the event, through representations of that synoptic vision, to end with the image itself no longer actually representing the real men who rode in the charge, but rather some cultural referent that can be used in ordinary discourse to symbolize a way of thinking (the soldier doing his duty), the stupidity of warfare (the commanding officers' blunder), or the exciting and heartbreaking vision of hundreds of healthy young men riding cheerfully to their deaths. In my conclusion I will offer a summary of how this occurred and some observations on the recurrence of the Light Brigade in today's world.

CHAPTER 5

In early October, my dissertation chair and I were having a breakfast meeting at Louie's Café. As we each sat reviewing documents, I heard "cannon to the left of them, cannon to the right of them." Fearing that I had momentarily lost my grip on the real world, I looked at Leigh, who was staring back at me. We both turned toward the speaker, who said "What?! If the 800 [sic] had been frycooks this [indicating the space between the grill and the counter] would have been the Valley of Death!" Although it is common enough for someone immersed in a project to see the project all around her, in this particular case I really did witness someone quoting from "The Charge of the Light Brigade." Not only was he quoting, he obviously knew more than those few lines, since he knew the context of the cannons. I didn't pursue the matter further, so I don't know whether or not he actually knew when the event took place or in what war. In this conclusion I will draw together the threads of my argument to reflect on how Light Brigadeness came into being, and how it is with us still.

SUMMARY OF THE TRAJECTORY

The iconography of the Light Brigade developed from a fiasco during the battle of Balaclava in the Crimea to reach far beyond the scope of the Crimean War and even the nineteenth century into our world today. The charge of the Light Brigade began as a military matter, the loss of a large number of cavalry troops because of a misunderstood incoherent order, which the officers at the time would probably have been happy to report before moving on to the next battle. Because of the new presence of the press, in the person of William Howard Russell, the matter could not be overlooked. Russell's stirring and disturbing detailed account of the charge was soon in wide public circulation back in England, and the reading public were in an uproar, thanks in part to Alfred, Lord Tennyson's seizing upon Russell's account and writing a stirring if brief epic poem about the event. Matters came to a head when Lord Lucan was

recalled to London to answer for his conduct during the charge. The subsequent hearings were published on a daily basis in the *Times*, along with commentaries, letters from readers, and letters from editors. William Simpson sent back his sketches of the charge, the one finally approved by Cardigan because it clearly showed Cardigan leading the charge, and the Light Brigade had become the subject of images as well as text.

Fanny Duberly became the first among many to publish her “eyewitness” accounts of the Crimean War shortly after it ended in 1856, and composers began writing sheet music while painters added the Light Brigade to a list of heroic subjects that an artist could count on as a surefire hit. The theatre then took up the theme with a range of productions that used the Balaclava hero as a symbol of something more than simply a soldier from the latest war.

This is a bare recitation of the rough chronology of moments that shaped the Light Brigade, but it is in the process of shaping that we see how the image was recreated in public discourse to stand for gallantry, heroism and courage. Ironically, it was the very fact that “someone had blundered” that made the charge that much more heroic and gallant. The cavalry riding to almost certain death was much more romantic an image than the usual sorties in a battle. The formation of the icon of the Light Brigade resulted from the application of certain assumptions that were already inherent in British Imperial culture. Russell’s diatribe against the savage Russians for firing on the retreating troops is one instance in which we can see the automatic placing of the Briton at the top of the hierarchy of gallantry and all other conduct only to be measured against the British conduct and found wanting.

In the original texts, the reports and the hearings and the journals, each author had already formulated the event in a way which downplayed the disastrous aspects while emphasizing the spectacular ones. Even in the official (and confidential, until made public

through hearings in Parliament) glossed over the losses in order to praise the (mostly dead) cavalymen who had fearlessly ridden against active Russian guns. There is a distinct disconnect, which continues to this day, between the stupidity of the action and the manner in which it was carried out. To be in no way critical of the bravery of the men who rode out that day, I yet believe that it was a matter of necessity, in order to turn a major fiasco into some kind of triumph, that such early groundwork was done, which facilitated the rapid development of the Light Brigade as icon.

In its second incarnation, as an image in paintings and music, the Light Brigade took the shape that had already begun to be formed through the texts. The artists, musicians and painters, chose to glorify the event even more, dwelling completely on the charge itself and omitting the confusion that surrounded the order. These paintings and piano compositions in turn influenced an entire new generation of young Britons, who accepted the representations as authentic, because they were emotionally appealing (as Dr. Strong did with the painting of Charles I), who then proceeded to perpetuate the myth through further generations in children's stories, reproductions of paintings, and in the theatre.

The theatrical moment of the Light Brigade brings us to the point where the image had become so iconic already it could be used as symbolic code for a variety of referents. The old soldier in *Balaclava Joe* was the hero who was left to common charity once his glory was over, while the culture idolized the image of a permanently young horseman galloping across a plain. He is the epitome of the men that Pennington describes who have been left to their own resources and are being pitifully supported by meagre subscriptions to a fund thirty years after the event. Frank Walton of *Balaclava* can return home reciting Tennyson's poem with a stanza for all occasions, represented as one who also was damaged in the charge, but who fortunately

regains his memory. And Bernard Shaw can take the ubiquitous presence of the image of the charge so for granted that he sends up example after example in his play *Arms and the Man*, a play which he wrote to be passionately against the folly of warfare, and which ended up as an operetta called *The Chocolate Cream Soldier*. Just as several other Shaw protagonists were interpreted counter to Shaw's intentions, so Bluntschli became the romantic hero that Shaw tried so desperately to explode.

INTERPRETATION OF THE PROCESS

Just as paintings are able to present a whole vision that circumvents the sequential nature of textual description, so it would be easier, perhaps, to present the development of the Light Brigade into Light Brigadeness as a diagram, showing a chronological movement forward in time, but also representing the time overlaps and intersections of the major ways in which the Light Brigade was transformed. I began with a sense of the final product, the Light Brigadeness that was pervasive in the iconography of today's understanding of the charge of the Light Brigade. But starting with the event itself, the charge of the Light Brigade at Balaclava, I realized that the event bore little or no relationship to the Light Brigade that I had experienced up to that point.

The Light Brigade was reinvented as a collection of values and traditions that could be held out to the British population as an icon to emulate, one which reinforced the superiority of the British Empire and at the same time called upon its citizens to continue in the superiority through sacrifice and heroism. The reinvention came about through a series of identifiable practices that developed into one form of discourse. The textual interpretation through Russell and the media at the time, as well as the private journals of the day which were carefully edited for publication, relied on the assumption that although the order that sent the men charging against the Russian guns may have been faulty, the execution of that order was magnificently

accomplished. It was the way in which the men carried out the order that was commendable, rather than any outcome of the charge; and so it was possible to dissociate the disastrous aspects of the charge from the action of the charge itself.

As visual representations began to be distributed, alongside the first textual accounts as well as in later paintings, the artists were able to call upon an already-established iconography of war paintings, focusing on the descriptions that were glorious and exciting, giving life and color to the viewer, and at the same time insulating the viewer from any sense of the reality, through sound or smell. Even such paintings as Lady Butler's "Balaclava" set disaster at a remove, so that what was left was the sentimental pathos of the situation, rather than outrage at the waste. This was also true of musical representations. The music was interpreted most often by young women sitting at a parlor piano, so that the plain of Balaclava would have been a distant imagining, and the female body would evoke tenderness rather than anger against the bungling commanding officers. These two forms of representation served to further codify Light Brigadeness in the public consciousness, and were permanent artifacts that remained when memory of the charge itself would fade as the survivors died off.

The theatrical representations served to further separate reality from the created world of Light Brigadeness. Drama intersected with the textual, visual and oral early practice of the Light Brigade, and so created the final and ultimate simulacrum, whereby the actual charge was relegated to the past and books, but the "Charge of the Light Brigade" as a performance became a very present and constant influence in the discourse of British identity. That discourse has now pervaded the Anglophone world and is with us still.

PRESENCE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE

Well into the early twentieth century, the Light Brigade continued to be a subject both for music and art. A number of pieces were written and published well into the twentieth century

with the charge of the Light Brigade as their theme. The composer and publisher E.T. Paull, known for his exciting lithograph covers, meant to stimulate interest, published a “Charge of the Light Brigade March” in 1896, a reproduction of which currently hangs in my living room. It is a highly stylized version of Caton Woodville’s painting of the 17th Lancers, from a frontal perspective, in garish blues green and reds, with the addition of cannon shell and smoke surrounding the riders. As a “pick me up and buy me” ploy, this would surely have been reasonably successful. There were marches composed as late as 1911 and 1915, the latter during the First World War, perhaps in an attempt to invoke earlier days of glory in order to blot out the reality of the trench warfare.

The bifurcation of the image from reality is still played out in historical documentaries and romantic artifacts. On the one hand, the new program “The History Project” on PBS began its series with an investigation of the Light Brigade charge. Various military historians and independent scholars “reconstructed” what “must have happened” that day at Balaclava. The program promised to reveal “new evidence” that would point to a startling discovery. The program did nothing of the sort. Instead it advanced several preposterous theories (the most outlandish of which is that Nolan *meant* for the Brigade to charge the Russian guns, counter to the actual order he carried to Lucan) and even suggested that had the Heavy Brigade been in better time, the charge “would have succeeded.” Succeeded at what was not made clear. What the program did make clear was that the producers attributed the ongoing interest in the Light Brigade completely to the art that was created because of it, specifically Tennyson’s poem, and the paintings the were based on it.

By contrast, an episode of Battlefield Mysteries on the History channel that aired several years ago sought to prove that the “true” heroes of the battle of Balaclava were the Turkish

soldiers who held out at their redoubts for hours while waiting for the British and French to get their troops together and relieve them. This show also attempted a re-enactment, based on Simpson's sketch, but did not leave out Elizabeth's Thompson's painting of the aftermath either. One of the most interesting aspects of this program was one advertisement: it was for an upcoming showing of Kenneth Branagh's version of *Henry V*, and the clip was of the Agincourt speech on St. Crispin's day.

In yet another interesting intersection of art and life, when the charge of the Light Brigade was remembered on the 150th anniversary, Royal Doulton offered a special commemorative figurine. The figure is of a 17th Lancer, as if he had stepped straight from Caton Woodville's painting: leaning over the neck of his horse, head down and lance at the ready. This figurine, in its small version, was offered for sale at £995, about \$1900 US. Even today the Light Brigade is a source of revenue for artists.

A recent (September 23, 2007) article by syndicated columnist Dale Dauten, who writes on business practices, chose to use the charge of the Light Brigade, specifically Tennyson's poem and Cecil Woodham-Smith's *The Reason Why*, to demonstrate poor managerial skills in the persons of Cardigan and Lucan. As Dauten related it, the disaster of the Light Brigade is a cautionary tale that warns against allowing managers to disregard the needs of their employees and their employees' best interests for the sake of their own prestige and comfort.

The Light Brigade is always with us, it seems. How does this eternally present conflicted icon speak to today's political dilemmas regarding the US's military involvement overseas? As Baudrillard pointed out in *The Gulf War did not Take Place*, we are susceptible to media manipulation as the mid-Victorians were. Although it is almost impossible for us to prevent the media from generating its own spin on stories, it is our responsibility to look for the truth

elsewhere. Above all, if a detailed study of the process by which a disaster can become an icon can tell us anything, it is to be wary of those in power who seek to control the images we see, and to interpret them on our behalf. But most of all, to be wary of the little daily insinuations into our imagination. We can usually recognize the large-scale attempts to either divert our attention or reinvent the image. It is the postcard of the World Trade Center, the car flags that are handed out free with some purchases, the use of terms such as “axis of evil.”

I do not wish in any way to disparage either the courage of the men who rode in the charge at Balaclava, nor the enormity of the destruction at the Pentagon and of the World Trade Center. The risk we run in allowing images to go unquestioned is their unquestioning reception by future generations as the authentic version of what “really happened.” The history we have of the Light Brigade is no longer the event; it is the event as it was shaped, remembered and encoded into the discourse of Britishness. We reshape our history daily by what we transmit to the younger members of society through images. I would hope that the transmission is tarnished as little as possible with the wishful thinking of today’s Lords Cardigan, Lucan and Raglan.

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APPENDIX A: THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE

Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
'Forward the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns!' he said:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

"Forward the Light Brigade!"
Was there a man dismay'd?
Not tho' the soldier knew
Someone had blunder'd:
Their's not to make reply,
Their's not to reason why,
Their's but to do and die:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of Hell
Rode the six hundred.

Flash'd all their sabres bare,
Flash'd as they turn'd in air
Sabring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
All the world wonder'd:
Plunged in the battery-smoke
Right through the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reel'd from the sabre-stroke
Shatter'd and sunder'd.
Then they rode back, but not
Not the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them
Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell.
They that had fought so well
Came thro' the jaws of Death,
Back from the mouth of Hell,
All that was left of them,
Left of six hundred.

When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made!
All the world wonder'd.
Honour the charge they made!
Honour the Light Brigade,
Noble six hundred!

Note of Lord Tennyson: This poem (written at Farringford, and published in *The Examiner*, Dec. 9, 1854) was written after reading the first report of the *Times* correspondent, where only 607 sabres are mentioned as having taken part in this charge (October 25, 1854).

APPENDIX B: PERMISSIONS

Elizabeth Cawns

From: Tracey Walker [t.walker@manchester.gov.uk]
Sent: Monday, November 12, 2007 3:46 AM
To: ecawns@cox.net
Subject: Balaclava by Lady Butler
Attachments: Balaclava by Lady Butler.jpg

Dear Elizabeth Cawns,

Thank you for returning the completed application form. Please find enclosed a jpeg of "Balaclava" by Lady Butler for use in your dissertation which is being lent in accordance with our standard terms & conditions.

regards,

Tracey Walker,
Picture Library Manager,
Manchester Art Gallery,
Mosley Street,
Manchester. M2 3JL
UK

e-mail address: t.walker@manchester.gov.uk

direct tel +44 (0)161 235 8863
fax +44 (0)161 235 8805

Income generated by the Picture Library goes directly towards supporting the activities of the gallery

<http://www.manchestergalleries.org>

Internal tel 804 8863

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No virus found in this incoming message.
Checked by AVG Free Edition.

Version: 7.5.503 / Virus Database: 269.15.29/1124 - Release Date: 11/11/2007 10:12 AM

Elizabeth Cawns

From: Mick Holby [jmh.qrl@btinternet.com]
Sent: Monday, October 22, 2007 3:33 AM
To: ecawns@cox.net
Subject: RE: Request for permission to use image

Dear Elizabeth,

Thank you for your e-mail in respect of permission to use "Caton Woodville's" image of the "Charge of the Light Brigade" for your dissertation.

I can confirm that The Queen's Royal Lancers are content for you to use the above image, also with the wording for the credit.

Your Stirling check should be made payable to QRL Museum and sent to HHQ QRL, Lancer House, Prince William of Gloucester Barracks, Grantham, Lincs, NG31 7 TJ.

Good luck with your dissertation,

Regards,

Mick Holtby

Capt JM Holtby
Curator The Queen's Royal Lancers Museum

-----Original Message-----

From: Elizabeth Cawns [mailto:ecawns@cox.net]
Sent: 19 October 2007 15:20
To: jmh.qrl@btinternet.com
Subject: Request for permission to use image

Thank you so much for your help during our phone call this morning. As I said, I would like to use the image of Richard Caton Woodville's "Charge of the Light Brigade," which of course features the 17th Lancers, now the Queen's Royal Lancers. This image will be used in my dissertation, which will be available through the Louisiana State University Library as an electronic document, but is not intended for wider publication.

I understand that I will be acknowledging permission as "By kind permission of the Queen's Royal Lancers" and I will be sending a donation to the museum in pounds sterling.

I would appreciate your answering this email as an official representative of the Queen's Royal Lancers, giving me permission to use the image.

Again, thank you so much for your assistance.

Best Regards,

Elizabeth Cawns
PhD Candidate
Louisiana State University
ecawns@cox.net

VITA

Elizabeth Cawns received her Bachelor of Arts in English from Webster University in 1991. She holds a Master of Divinity and a Master of Sacred Theology from Yale University, received in 1998 and 1999 respectively. Her thesis for the Master of Sacred Theology concerned the theology of George Bernard Shaw as represented in his plays. Elizabeth is a member of Actors' Equity, the professional stage managers and actors union, and has worked extensively in regional theatre and opera companies. The degree of Doctor of Philosophy will be conferred on Elizabeth at the May 2008 Commencement.