MAUD'S WARS: THE POLITICAL MESSAGE

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...the present constitution of society is not in a healthy state. It is not bound together by that order and sympathy which should exist, but on the contrary, discord and dissonance prevail to an extent which seem to threaten its decomposition and destruction. ...One part of society, as well as one part of the mind, is at war with another. (Matthew Allen 1837: 118-19).

To bring these hordes of outcast captainless soldiers under due captaincy? This is the question of questions. (Carlyle 1894: 31).

One of the major stumbling blocks to an understanding of Tennyson's Maud is the deciphering of the battle invoked in its final part. This paper is an attempt to read the controversial pro-war message of the poem as a coherent, well-articulated political proposal which echoes the Carlylean rejection of the dominant social order. By discriminating between the two opposing connotative meanings that a single word -WAR- encompasses in Carlyle's writings, we will reveal which model of social organization the poem implicitly defends.

1. THE WAR-MOTIF IN MAUD: THE CRITICAL INCOMPREHENSION

From its publication in 1855, Maud has aroused a critical controversy due in no small part to the morbidity of its theme (there are two suicides and a murder), the protagonist's unexpected resolution to join the war and, obviously, the formal innovations introduced by the poet. If one of the characteristics of
In Memoriam is a homogeneous metrical pattern (the famous ABBA stanza repeated in more than 3000 lines), Maud, on the contrary, shows a wide range of metrical feet - trochaic for the lyrics, iambic for the rantings and anapaestic for "the direct celebrations" of the beloved (Stokes 1964: 110). Moreover, despite Tennyson's masterly employment of the dramatic monologue techniques in "Ulysses" or "Saint Symeon Stylites", the sudden thematic and tonal shifts in Maud bring about the disintegration of the identity of the character who speaks through the different parts and sections of the poem. Finally, after an extensive production characterized by an almost complete absence of Romantic personifications of nature, Tennyson disputes Ruskin's criterion of poetic objectivity by introducing a great number of pathetic fallacies in Maud.

One of the earliest obstacles to a more accurate comprehension of the darkest parts of the poem has been the almost unanimous acceptance of the character's insanity. This has been the predominant critical tendency not only in the nineteenth century but also in the last decades of the present century. Thus, the obscurity of some passages and the recurrence of certain cryptic images is an interpretive impasse which can be easily overcome, at least temporarily, if we recognize, as did Roy P. Basler in 1944, that "Tennyson presents his hero as a personality whose conscious thought processes are distinctly unstable" (145). An exegesis of this kind would seem to point to the fact that the inconsistencies, the all too frequent repetitions, the systematic associations of semantically incompatible words and the number of pathetic fallacies are linguistic anomalies that reflect the mental instability of a character who is unable to build a textually coherent speech. For the nineteenth-century criticism of the poem, as well as for a number of contemporary scholars, the linguistic obscurity of Maud is a problem which can only be grappled with from an extra-linguistic standpoint: only psychoanalysis, through the careful examination of the character's fragmented, dislocated personality, can illuminate and guide us through the intricate maze of a poem which is at its best defined as the receptacle of "all the sources of mental malaria" (Jump 1967: 218), and which is, therefore, far from the traditional canon of poetry (Luce 1895: 311).
The number of critical responses of Maud has grown significantly in recent decades. Considered by many to be Tennyson's most important work, even above In Memoriam, the poem has been systematically reviewed from multiple perspectives, and much attention has been lavished not only on the novelty of its formal structure but also on the obscurity of its theme. The literature in this respect is so abundant that it is difficult to make even a tentative classification of the main critical strategies which have more or less successfully given an overall account of the poem. In the first place, and emerging as the direct legacy of the nineteenth century, there is a group of interpretations which overtly or covertly draw on psychological premises to explain the thematic force that acts as the unifying element of the jumbled concoction of the parts of the poem. Roy P. Basler, James Walter, Ronald Weiner and Jonathan Wordsworth, amongst others, admit the protagonist's Oedipal neurosis as the matrix of the monodrama. Wordsworth (1974: 357) argues that the major conflict of Maud, "a sophisticated poem about neurosis", is none other than a feeling of "sexual guilt and remorse" (362). Since nothing that happens in the poem is real, everything must be understood as "a further neurotic symptom, not a fact" (362). Kennedy (1977: 177-78) demonstrates, through a detailed examination of imagery and language, that the poem's portrait of a paranoid character mirrors the "dark side of its author's personality" and reveals not "the holy power of love", as Tennyson once suggested, but the destructiveness of language. More recently, Kurata (1983: 370) has analyzed the bizarre plot structure by drawing a line between "actual events" and the distortions of reality and, in particular, of the image of the girl which emerges through the deranged hero's words. For Kurata, "the key to understanding both Maud, the woman, and Maud, the poem, is the recognition of the consistency of the protagonist's madness". Lougy (1984: 409) proves that Maud is "the most haunting and frightening attempt to explore ... those pauses that testify to the madness or unreason Tennyson discloses" (409). The language of the poem is defined by a gradual process of semantic incoherence which reaches its highest point in the famous monologue of the final part. Similarly, for Berglund (1989: 51) the hero's neurosis pivots around a
structural dissociation between the form and the content of the poem: "Maud is an immense oxymoron in which form battles content". The divorce between metrical pattern and the subject-matter of each section overturns the reader's expectations and warns him/her about the speaker's insanity. This structural dissociation runs parallel to one of them, since "Maud fails as form to contain the meaning assigned to her by the hero", and the latter is wrong to assume that she is the content that can fill "the empty form of his life" (50).

On the other hand, Platizky (1989: 48-52) posits that the development of the poem is a desperate quest for a principle of stability and harmony in a chaotic world, a principle which the "neurotically dislocated" speaker mistakenly finds in Maud. Slinn (1991: 66-67) also employs psychoanalytical clues to unravel the riddles of the poem: the father's death is a mere symptom of the downfall of the political and moral authority in a world which is on the verge of its own disintegration. This causes a growing feeling of uncertainty which linguistically makes Maud "a drama of representation, rather than the representation of a drama" (76), with everything losing its ontological identity and nothing being what it appears to be.

There have also been attempts to unearth the thematic structure of the poem leaving any psychological trace aside. We have a biographical account of the poem's major thematic forces (Rader 1963); an analysis of its structure in terms of the reformulation of former literary texts, namely The Song of Songs (Chandler 1969) and, eventually, a theory that links Maud with a romantic theatrical genre, the monodrama (Culler 1975). However, none of the readings expounded so far helps to solve in a fully satisfactory way the textual problems presented by the poem's final pro-war cry. In this regard Chandler considers the resolution of Part III as "greatly weakened by being unintegrated with the rest of the poem" (1969: 101), although she does not hesitate to justify its presence as a logical consequence of the development of Parts I and II. Rader, on the other hand, views the hero's belligerent attitude as Tennyson's attempt to release "by transference his own repressed aggressions" (1963: 118), and he concludes by stressing that the poet "shared his hero's enthusiasm for the war"
Dwight Culler finds no problem in understanding the warmongering tone of the final part as a necessary requirement in the denouement of monodrama. Yet, despite making allowance for the aesthetic value of the closing episode, he still criticizes its moral legitimacy (1975: 379).

Undoubtedly, the pro-war ending of the poem has generated substantial controversy since its publication. In general terms, the debate in the nineteenth century, as pointed out above, was to decide whether the hero’s attitude was morally valid and, therefore, whether the poem was aesthetically justifiable. Thus, Brooke (1894: 230) rejected Part III as "radically bad" for it only "disturb[ed] the beauty of the whole". Attempts to solve the problem in twentieth-century criticism have avoided any judgement concerning the poem’s moral value but, far from reaching a consensus, the results cannot be more discouraging. Kening (1979: 156) sees the poem as "nihilist" and its ending as "frustrating". F.B. Pinion (1984: 145) asks the reader to adopt a sympathetic attitude in order to understand the character’s wild ideas: "its central character (the one speaker) [being] so abnormal and psychotic that, until he is sympathetically realized, the work cannot be appreciated as a whole". Kinkaid (1975: 129) judges the tone of the poem as "bleak", its language "not only dark but generically frustrating", its structure as "unfinished" (131), and eventually its solution as "comic" (132). Finally, Ricks (1972: 248) attributes the fiasco of the ending to a "technical" problem which is "related to a failure of Tennyson’s imagination".

Fortunately, a far more comprehensive reading of the poem has been carried out in the seminal studies of E.D.H. Johnson (1947), E.F.L. Priestley (1977) and more specifically, concerning the polemical Part III, in James R. Bennet’s excellent analysis (1980). Bennet emphasizes the need to decode the final war into three levels of meaning: historical, the Crimean War; social, the attack on the vices of capitalism, and purely personal, the battle against the enemies of the protagonist’s father. Following the second level, our contention is to interpret the poem as Tennyson’s combined attempt to dramatize the breakdown of a model
of political economy and to propose a new reordering of society through the mechanisms regulating an army.

2. MAUD AND POLITICAL ECONOMY

Is there no value, then, in human things, but what can write itself down in the cash-ledger? (Carlyle 1894: 128)

[B]ecause in trade there cannot but be trust, and it seems also there cannot but also be injury in answer to it, what is merely fraud between enemies becomes treachery among friends: and "trader", "traditor" and "traitor" are but the same word. (Ruskin 1907: 245)

Tennyson's political 1850s poems have been traditionally seen as "patriotic popular songs or jingoistic outburst of hysteria" about Napoleon's coup d'etat and the Crimean War (Thorn 1992: 258). Thus, Tennyson, the laureate, could only "write important, uplifting poems while refraining from expressing any very clear political idea except jingoism" (Inboden 1998: 207). Yet, as Sinfield has convincingly noted, Tennyson's position as the poetic voice of the State was ambiguous from the very beginning (1986: 155-56). Whereas poems such as "The Charge of the Light Brigade", "Enoch Arden" or the 1859 version of Idylls of the King were praised as "highly national", "Christian" and "human" (Jump 1967: 250), others such as Maud or "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After" were immediately rebuked or misconstrued simply because they "exposed the government to questioning" (Inboden 1998, 207). Tennyson's ambivalent political attitude explains why he was forced to publish some of his poems ("The Third of February, 1852", "Hands all Round!" and "Suggested by Reading an Article in a Newspaper") under the pseudonym of Merlin. Coventry Patmore's attack on Maud —"The fever of politics should not have been caught by the Laureate even under the disguise of a monomaniac" (Cf. Sinfield, 159)— reveals Tennyson's fragile position: as long as his work was the direct celebration of the official values and morality of the state, there could be no doubt that his was the voice of the nation. Meddling with public affairs from a marginal position inevitably entailed the moral and
linguistic degradation of his poetry. Scott (1996: 47) has shown how Tennyson's denunciation of the evils of French and Irish politics ("the red fool-fury of the Seine" or the "blind hysterics of the Celts") is linguistically marked by the transgression of the standard English and the return to the Lincolnshire dialect. Tennyson's political attitude is, then, a conflicting critical issue which cannot be reduced to what Patrick Brantlinger calls the "drum-beating jingoism" (1988: 7) of British imperialist culture. Notwithstanding Lynne O'Brien's objection to the assessment of Tennyson as a simple "warmonger" (1994: 171), the fact is that the poems written on behalf of the nation's imperialist activity have eclipsed those he precisely wrote to question the political status quo. If the laureate is, as Sinfield has noted, "the official keeper of the margins" (1986: 155), Maud, one of the most controversial poems from the point of view of its reception, touches on delicate political issues fraught with dangerous overtones and envisages solutions which clearly defy the establishment values.

Maud begins with a death, the alleged suicide of the hero's father, caused perhaps by the economic ruin of his family for which he felt highly responsible after having lost all his fortune in a speculative scheme. The poem ends with the imminent outbreak of a war, in which the hero expects to find a steadfast hope of spiritual and social regeneration in a world dominated by money-lust and unlawful competition. Between the beginning and the end there appear multiple references to a political and economic system on the verge of self-annihilation, and whose last hope of salvation seems to be glimpsed in the third part. Thus, the initial death, a direct result of speculation, operates as the first symptom of a political and economic disorder which cannot be reformed or mitigated but which must urgently be destroyed. The plot structure is twofold. First, the hero must revenge his father's death by killing those responsible for his tragic end (i.e. Maud's father or, in his absence, her brother). Secondly, given that the father's suicide mirrors the chaotic social situation (Sinn 1991),

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1 See Devereux (1998: 223-41) for a deeper analysis of Tennyson's attitude towards the Canadian emancipation.

2 For Slinn (1991: 66-67) the father's death is the symptom of the
stability can only be achieved through the destruction of the political order, i.e. by calling for a war against the makers of "business fraud" and "the cheaters of 'peace'" (Bennet 1980: 47). This is, as Bennet proves in a line-by-line reading, one of the poem's meanings, a logical consequence of how its most central ideological conflict unravels. If in Part II the hero has fought Maud's brother and killed him in the duel, thus revenging the personal offence, Part III can only deal with the parallel fight against the foundations of the political and economic system which precipitated his father's death, i.e. Mammon-worship and laissez faire capitalism.

This second kind of war is purely symbolic and full of biblical reverberations in the sense that it goes far beyond the Crimean War and seems to hint at an apocalyptic destruction of the dominant social contract. Thus, it is not difficult to find a prophecy which might operate as the textual paradigm of the kind of destruction invoked by the protagonist in the Bedlam scenes of Part II: Nahum's prophecy of the fall of Nineveh. In fact, it is no coincidence that the ancient city emerges as the topos which the hero's ravings constantly bring into focus. First, Nineveh, the capital city of the Assyrian empire, was a flourishing industrial and trade centre, and this explains its connection with the economic power of Maud's family (her brother is, in fact, referred to as "the Assyrian Bull"). Second, Nineveh is the prototype of the city dominated by uncontrolled economic development; an urban centre where economy and morality have definitely taken separate ways and where the worship of riches has become the only standing law.\(^3\) In Letter LXII of Fors Clavigera, John

\(^3\) The Victorians showed a great interest in the decline of the Assyrian empire. The archeological discoveries that took place in the early decades of the century were immediately decoded as unmistakable signs of the fate of those nations that turned their back on God. Tennyson had a copy of A. Henry Layard's *Niniveh and its remains* and of George Smith's *Assyrian Discoveries: an Account of Explorations and Discoveries of the Site of Nineveh*; he was a keen reader of Maurice and Carlyle, both defenders of a providential conception of history, and the number of works on prophecies and apocalyptic visions he kept in his library (now in Tennyson Research Centre, Lincoln, UK) reveals his profound fascination with this
Ruskin (1872: III.129-131) refers to Ham, one of Noah's sons, as "the father of the Carnal and Destructive" and procreator of the Assyrians - "the perceivers of Evil and Nakedness" - whose decline and fall can be perfectly understood in the light of their biblical genealogy. The end of Nineveh is no other than God's anger unleashed upon a nation which is everything but "the known march of the ordinary Providence of God" and which has committed original sin by accepting money-lust as the foundation of its social order. This supremacy of Mammon worship over moral considerations is, for many Victorian thinkers, one of the most conspicuous features of the economic modus operandi of the British Empire in the mid-nineteenth century. If Nineveh's destiny ominously hangs over any social structure affected by similar evils, Tennyson cannot but assume the voice of Merlin, the Arthurian prophet, in his short poem "Suggested by Reading an Article in a Newspaper", in order to warn about the dangers of a "vast Assyrian doom" bursting "upon our race". That there is an intertextual relationship between the protagonist's mad utterances during his reclusion in the mental asylum (II.V.1-11) and Nahum's prophecy is quite unmistakable. Indeed both speakers deploy very similar rhetorical strategies:

issue. Among the latter, we can mention the seven books of Profetia Anglicana Merlini Ambrosii Britannii (1603), Prophecies and the Prophetic Spirit in the Christian Era (1871) by Von Döllinger and Cumming's Apocalyptic Sketches (1849).

Elizabeth A. Francis (1976: 114) provides an illuminating analysis of the apocalyptic tone of Tennyson's political poems. Her words summarize the major conflict: "France is the explicit enemy and her armies are presented as an image of historical apocalypse... Britain, then, is as Babylon bending the Assyrian hordes, and France is conceived, through image, as the destroyer of Babylon and Egypt". Yet the gist of Tennyson's argumentation is not simply the need to fight Napoleon III or Nicholas I but to give the British nation an opportunity to demonstrate her heroic virtues and attachment to spiritual values so that she can escape the providential doom of those countries blinded by commercial progress and Mammonite interests. The last chance to prove Great Britain not a nation sunk into a state of "Babylonian bondage" (Dale 1980: 165), as Trench affirmed on one occasion, was to take part in the war.

The only exhaustive study is Robinson's Tennyson's Use of the Bible (1968). Robinson's thesis is that Tennyson, unlike Bunyan and Milton, limited his use exclusively to the English Bible, as she makes evident in an exhaustive chart which comprises all the biblical lines which appear in his poetic production. In relation to Maud, Robinson points out up to twenty-five different textual uses of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. However, she does not include Nahum as one of the possible sources present in the poem of 1855. A plausible explanation for this omission may be Robinson's interest in tracing only those direct and verbatim quotes consciously included by the author in his work.
(i) In the first place, the prophet describes the city as a city of the dead, a place where unburied corpses are heaped on the street: "...there is a multitude of slain, a great number of carcasses; and there is none end of their corpses; they stumble upon their corpses" (Nahum 3.3). Even more important, Nineveh is dominated by four apocalyptic symbols: "The noise of the whip, the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing of the horses, and of the jumping chariots" (Nahum 3.2).

(ii) Similarly, Maud's protagonist believes he inhabits the "world of the dead" (II.V.iii.278); a place where the bodies are not even buried ("They cannot even bury a man", II.V.ii.260), and where some of them, including that of the speaker, are crushed by chariots and horses:

And the wheels go over my head,
And my bones are shaken with pain,
For into a shallow grave they are thrust,
Only a yard beneath the street,
And the hoofs of the horses beat, beat,
The hoofs of the horses beat,
Beat into my scalp and my brain,
With never an end to the stream of passing feet,
Driving, hurrying, marrying, burying,
Clamour and rumble, and ringing and clatter ...
(II.V.i.242-251)⁴

(iii) In chapter 2 of Nahum the tragic destiny of the rich and powerful is announced by means of the lion metaphor. The prophet foresees the end of the abuse of power in lines 11 and 12:

Where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feedingplace of the young lions, where the lion,
even the old lion, walked, and the lion's whelp,
and none made afraid?
The lion did tear in pieces enough for his
whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and

⁴ All quotes of Maud included hereafter have been taken from the annotated edition of Christopher Ricks The Poems of Alfred Lord Tennyson (1969). For a detailed examination of the corrections and changes Tennyson introduced into the poem, see Susan Shatto's Tennyson's 'Maud' (1986).
filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin.

The tyrants' downfall is prophesied by means of the rhetorical question and the use of verbal forms in the past tense (walked, made did tear, strangled and filled). Both devices clearly hint not at a hypothetical disappearance of the oppressors, but at a factual destruction of them.

(iv) In Tennyson's Maud the protagonist does not use the lion metaphor to refer to the powerful but, in turn, he employs another animal image with clear Hobbesian echoes to depict the girl's father: "that gray old wolf" (II.V.v.291). What is striking, however, is that the extended metaphor alludes to the predator's feeding habits in almost identical terms to those we found in the Book of Revelation:

Not that gray old wolf, for he came not back
From the wilderness, full of wolves, where he used to lie;
He has gathered the bones for his o'ergrown whelp to crack;
Crack them now for yourself, and howl, and die.
(II.V.v.291-294)

In Nahum the image of the lions hunting prey for their offspring as a symbol of the aggression of the powerful against the underprivileged is not entirely different from the image of the wolf -the girl's father- that kills its victims to feed its whelp. In both cases, the message is the predators' unavoidable destruction. In Maud the omen is linguistically marked by the use of three imperative forms: crack, howl and die.

In fact, since the Book of Revelation provided both poets and commentators with "predictive structures to signal the immanence of the storm that would soon break over the heads of the world's sinful nations" (Korshin 1982, 339), it is hardly surprising that Tennyson, who held a providential conception of history, as Henry Kozicki (1979) has so convincingly proved, can but voice an apocalyptic message in Part II, after the detailed exposition in Part I of the vices and evils of the
capitalist system. However, the end of Maud is not Part II but the controversial Part III and the resolution here is not a reiteration of the prophetic message of the Bedlam scenes but the war against the unjust and tyrants which the protagonist embraces as the solution to social problems. The crucial point is to find out which meaning can be attached to this ideal of an almost sacred war in which the virtues of the heroes must prevail over the vices of the wicked. In order to answer this question we must start from the following premises:

1. The speaker’s battle cry takes on a symbolic meaning which is of paramount importance to the semantic realization of the political message implicit in the work. This war does not only mean a fight against a foreign enemy (Czar Nicholas I, for instance) but also a rebellion against certain domestic evils.

2. The war as the remedy and end to all political and economic problems is ideologically operative in many contemporary writers’ political doctrine. The war arises as the metaphorical vehicle to embody the idea of a state free from all the contradictions of the capitalist system. Similarly, the army becomes the paradigm of the perfect social structure since, unlike the constitution of a modern society, it is a hierarchical, unified and leader-controlled group.

3. Used as analogs of the ideal political order, these images-army and war- imply a direct negation of liberalism and democracy. By definition an army involves the subjection of personal liberty to the rule and control of a few, i.e. the deprivation of one’s will and liberty and the obedience of a single authority in order to achieve not an individualistic but a collective goal.

Obviously enough, this is the theory of “herocracy” (“a Corporation of the Best”) put forward by Carlyle, and our assertion is that Maud does nothing other than support and adhere to this political proposal. References to this conception of WAR in the political

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Joseph Sendry (1995; cf. Hughes 1996: 620-21) argues that the passages of cosmic annihilation found in section 127 of In Memoriam echo the Book of Revelation. The apocalyptic tone involves not only catastrophic destruction but also the dawn of new truth. Much like the God of Revelation, Hallam and Maud incarnate the “morning star” which announces a message of hope and promise after the final cataclysm.
writings of the Scottish philosopher are abundant. In *Past and Present* we come across six allusions at the very least. However, in order to avoid misunderstandings it is necessary to draw a line between two distinct, almost opposing meanings of WAR in Carlylean thought:

(i) First, WAR can refer to the chaos of the capitalist system. It is one of the most widespread Victorian metaphors to describe how the social evils of the dominant mode of production —competition, infanticides, exploitation, class struggle, Chartist insurrections...— gather momentum.

We call it a Society; and go about professing openly the totallest separation, isolation. Our life is not a mutual helpfulness; but rather, cloaked under *due laws of war*, named 'fair competition' and so forth, it is a mutual hostility. (Carlyle 1845, 198) [Emphasis added]

In opposition to the bourgeois ideal of *commercial* Pax, many Victorians can only see hostile competition, uncontrolled violence and the breakdown of any kind of rule in the game of social relations. There can be no real peace in a society which does not acknowledge the political and spiritual direction of its superiors and whose only law is the absence of rules in the economic sphere, the so-called *laissez-faire*, and the disappearance of an authoritative figure on the political level. It is the same message voiced by the hero in Part I of *Maud*:

Why do we prate of the blessings of Peace? We have made them a curse, Pickpockets, each hand lusting for all that is not its own; And lust of gain, in the spirit of Cain, is it better or worse Than the heart of the citizen hissing in war on his own hearthstone?  
(I.I.vi-vii.21-24)

(ii) Secondly, and paradoxically, WAR can turn into the symbol of the ideal social state. If the model of peace safeguarded in a capitalist society is radically rejected, for it is only an unsuccessful attempt to disguise a number of social injustices, the only solu-
tion is an open fight against the regulating principles of this mock peace. In Chartism the motto is "War and not peace, unless we call waste vacancy peace" (1842, 79). Likewise, in Past and Present the world of feudal knights and loyal retainers is nostalgically evoked. Clearly, what Carlyle seeks, through this regression to former historical times, is the overthrow of the social order of capitalism, based merely on the "cash-payment nexus" between employer and employee. Hence the urgency of converting the state into an army. The first step towards a radical transformation of political rules is the creation of "a Fighting Service" (1845: 352) led by the best and whose aim is to do away with the problems derived from erroneous political and economic praxis. Given that society must struggle against its evils and men are not born equal, it is the figure of the soldier and no other that is presented as the model citizen that this new social contract requires, mostly because he fulfills two essential conditions: (i) He is disciplined; (ii) he has been trained to take up a position in a society rigidly ordered in a hierarchy and defined by blind obedience to the superior.

Briefly, two major antithetical meanings are conflated in such a polyvalent word as WAR in Carlyle's political theory. First, WAR symbolizes the chaotic social order of capitalism, defined by class struggle and hostile competition (WAR₁). Second, the word may also epitomize the blueprint of ideal society, one which has been ordered and works according to the mechanisms and regulations of an army (WAR₂). If these two distinct connotations are kept separate, a more accurate interpretation of Tennyson's poem is possible. In Maud much of the difficulty arises out of this semantic shift: WAR₁, as the image of the atrocities of capitalism, dominates Parts I and II, whereas WAR₂, as the emblem of the new social order based upon the government of the heroes, is the kind of "signifié" displayed in Part III. The poem plays with these two opposing meanings of a unique signifier and it has been precisely this semantic bifurcation that has caused most of the critical confusion. In the poem of 1855 there are three textual references to war:

Thomson (1986: 163) is wrong when he states that the final war is a return to "the style of the beginning". There cannot be
a) The first is found in the opening sections of Part I. Here we find the speaker inveighing against the injustices and social turmoil of the political economy of his age in a discourse which very closely follows the rhetorical structure of Carlyle's political writings.

b) The second appears later on in section V of the same part. The protagonist hears, for the first time, the beloved singing: "an air that is known to me,/ A passionate ballad gallant and gay,/ A martial song like a trumpet's call!" (I.V.i.164-66). The girl's song triggers the semantic potentialities of WAR. In stark contrast to the vices of an oppressive chaotic world, the "martial song" gives way to the vision of a social state in which knightly virtues become the rule: "Singing of Death, and of Honour that cannot die,/ Till I well could weep for a time so sordid and mean,/ And myself so languid and base" (I.V.ii.177-79). Later on, the character remembers again "the chivalrous battle-song/ That she warbled alone in her joy!" (I.X.iv.383-84) and longs to be transformed into a hero: "And ah for a man to arise in me,/ That the man I am may cease to be!" (I.X.vi.396-97). Maud's battle-song thus stresses the spirituality of warfare and operates as a cataphoric referent of the war that dominates Part III. Since a "musical thought is one spoken by a mind that has penetrated into the inmost heart of things" (Carlyle 1926: I.101), the girl's melody prophesies the inevitable substitution of the extant political order by a new social model built upon hero-worship. From the first time the protagonist hears the martial tune until the moment he decides to go to war, Maud has been nothing other than the careful exposition of the political incompetence of what Carlyle would have called "the sham Aristocracy" (Maud's brother and suitor) and "the sham Priesthood" (the Quaker). Given their incapacity to rule as well as the cheating ideal of peace they intend to perpetuate, war appears to be the only means to achieve a new social order led by heroes i.e. men invested with genuine spiritual and military gifts; a "Pontiff-King" as Carlyle (1845: 324) once remarked.

anything more radically different, both formally and thematically, than the two wars which appear in Part I and III.
c) The last allusion to war is found throughout Part III. Only two analyses have thrown light on the correct way to decode the ideological implications of the speaker's pro-war declaration: Valerie Pitt's classic study (1962) and, more recently, James R. Bennet's exhaustive reading (1980). Pitt (1962: 174) is the first to stress the profound influence exercised on Tennyson's work by the political thought of Thomas Carlyle and F.D. Maurice: "Maud is Tennyson's first attempt to represent the state of society, and it is also his central political poem". Yet her brief study seems to overlook the final war's symbolic overtones:

For Tennyson and his generation the Czar of all the Russias was the symbol of despotism, and though many saw the Crimean War as a political and military blunder, costly in money and suffering, many saw it as a fight against Tyranny. (1962: 180)

Bennet takes a step forward by elaborating an analysis which welds both literal and symbolic meanings, as we pointed out earlier. He correctly decodifies the poem's thematic argumentation and sees the war-motif as its only possible denouement but, oddly enough, still finds the poet's underlying intention problematic: "To find unity with Maud, England, and God simultaneously through war- this is the absurd attitude Tennyson wished to dramatize in the last lines" (1980: 49) [my italics].

In fact, the rhetorical and thematic structure of Maud rewrites the sequence of the exposition in Book I of Carlyle's Past and Present: a description of the evils of the political economy dominates chapters I and II ("Midas" and "The Sphinx") as well as Part I of the poem; a prophetic message pervades both the chapter entitled "The Manchester Insurrection" and the second part of Maud; and, finally, an eradication of the conflicts through the piecemeal transformation of society into a symbolic army is suggested in chapters V and VI ("Aristocracy of Talent" and "Hero Worship") and Part III. Thus, Carlyle's symbol of the ship guided by a "Loadstar" mirrors the resolution embraced by Tennyson's hero after discovering his spiritual banner in the vision of Maud:
The Heaven's Loadstar once clearly in our eye, how will each true man stand truly to his work in the ship; how, with undying hope, will all things be fronted, all be conquered. Nay, with this ship's prow once turned in that direction, is not all, as it were, already well? Sick wasting misery has become noble manful effort with a goal in our eye. (1845: 49)

The political metaphor of the ship of state is the most perfect paradigm of the imperative laws which must govern a nation. Navigation implies a hierarchical arrangement of the crew as well as their blind acceptance of the captain's commands. If there is no recognition of who controls the crossing and what the destination is, the ship either goes adrift or sinks. The analogy illustrates at its best the desired political target: the social structure also needs the leadership of someone able to take his country to glory and to subdue his inferiors. Without a supreme authority who dictates the rules, there is no ship which can weather the cape, and no society which is not bound to turn into a chaotic anarchy.

Maud's protagonist, much like Carlyle's archetypal hero, distorts empirical reality, creates a vision of the world based upon symbols, is able to read prophetic messages in the elements around him (the girl's ballad, for instance) and has revelations in his dreams, like the one we find towards the end of the poem: the image of the maid that, "like a silent lightning under the stars" conveys the hope of the world "in the coming wars" (III.VI.i.11). When he decides to enlist in a glorious army he is but following one of the maxims of the Carlylean political program: abolishing the perpetual state of "civil war" which he had portrayed and decried in Part I and supporting a kind of social order in which men obey their superiors and extol heroic virtues. Unfortunately, there is nothing absurd, comic or impracticable in his resolution. Nor are his words pure nonsense; an example of a "lobotomized jingoism",

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9 Not in vain is Maud etymologically connected with war. It is a name derived from German Uathildis, a compound that can be divided into Naht (might) and hildi (battle, strife). See Hughes (1987: 171) and Slinn (1991: 69) for an explanation of the name in these terms.
as Tucker (1993: 192) suggests. On the contrary, through these political utterances it is not difficult to recognize an early attempt to voice a militaristic proposal which will be regrettably endorsed and implemented by twentieth-century Fascisms.

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