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**THOMAS CAMPBELL, JOANNA BAILLIE,
AND THE *NEW MONTHLY MAGAZINE*:
AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER**

Amy Wilcockson

The letter discussed here, sent early in December 1820 by the Scottish poet Thomas Campbell (1777-1844) to the poet and dramatist Joanna Baillie (1762-1851), links two prominent Scottish writers of the Romantic period. For over a hundred and fifty years, before February 2020, the letter had lain unexamined in the archival collections of the Royal College of Surgeons of England.¹ It is significant as showing the friendship between the two poets and as illustrating Campbell's editorial activity as he took on editorship of Colburn's *New Monthly Magazine*.

Many of Campbell's letters were included in William Beattie's three-volume *Life and Letters of Thomas Campbell*, issued five years after Campbell's death.² However, Beattie edited and censored much of the correspondence he included, and the letter discussed here is one of a great number of letters that Beattie missed or omitted. The letter was preserved, not among Campbell's papers, but among a collection of Baillie's, in a large volume with correspondence from Baillie's other literary friends, including Robert Southey and Amelia Opie. The volume is part of the Hunter-Baillie collection bequeathed by William Hunter Baillie to the Royal College of Surgeons College in 1854. Joanna Baillie's nephew, Hunter Baillie, was the son of her anatomist brother, Matthew, and his wife, the amateur poet and autograph collector, Sophia née Denman. Collecting many of the family's documents, and interested in his own ancestry, Hunter Baillie was close to his aunt, and after her death he had control of her papers.

¹ Archives of the Royal College of Surgeons of England, MS0014/7/191 (H-B 4.2.191). Since 2017, the Royal College of Surgeons' archives holdings have been located at the London Metropolitan Archives. My work on an edition of Thomas Campbell's letters has been funded by Midlands4Cities (AHRC) Doctoral Training Partnership.

² William Beattie, *Life and Letters of Thomas Campbell*, 3 vols (London: Edward Moxon, 1849), cited below in text as "Beattie."

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Dec^r 2. 1820. N^o 62 Margaret Street
 Cavendish Square

Dear Miss Bailey

It is my misfortune in a double sense not to be able to have the pleasure of visiting you instead of troubling you with this letter — You may have possibly heard through our friend Richardson of an accident that befell Mr Campbell & myself in being overtur'd in the Dover Coach — My spouse happily escaped unharmed but I got my ^{left} shoulder so bruised that I was confined at Dartford for five days and am still unable either to walk to any distance or to bear the motion of a carriage —

We have been in Germany for six months where I heard your name ^{often} & was as often proud to tell enquirers about you that I had the honour of being your friend

Thomas Campbell, autograph letter signed, to Joanna Baillie, 2 December 1820, courtesy of the Archives of the Royal College of Surgeons, England

This letter from Campbell to Baillie, only three pages long, is short when compared to Campbell's early letters. There is no address on the verso of the second leaf, although the fold lines indicate that it was folded to be sent, with the lack of an address suggesting it was enclosed in a packet or parcel. A pencilled phrase "X Poet" is written beneath the signature on the third page of the letter, whilst in ink on the back of this otherwise blank leaf is the endorsement "Mr Campbell." Written in Campbell's mature, customarily elegant yet cramped hand, the full letter reads:

Dec^r 2. 1820. N^o 62 Margaret Street
Cavendish Square

Dear Miss Bailey

It is my misfortune in a double sense not to be able to have the pleasure of visiting you instead of troubling you with this letter— You may have possibly heard through our friend Richardson of an accident that befell M^{rs} Campbell & myself in being overturn'd in the Dover Coach³—My spouse happily escaped uninjur'd but I got my <left> shoulder so bruizd that I was confined at Dartford for five days and am still unable either to walk to any distance or to bear the motion of a carriage—

We have been in Germany for six months where I heard your name <often> extolled & was as often proud to tell enquirers about you that I had the honour of being your friend I have return'd to England to fulfil an engagement of being editor of—dont be surprizd or laugh at me—the New Monthly Magazine—A crazy author of Glasgow who became a tobacconist used often to say to his customers <alas> “that all my glory should end in a snuff shop—But I am to be well paid—& I mean to regenerate the character of the work—

And dear Miss Bailey forgive me for asking you an act of charity—The first ~~new~~ N^o of the new series will appear in Jan^y—printed in a new & less magazine like form—More in the genteel manner of a Review!!!—single ~~xxx~~column you observe!!!—Well my own name is to be put at the head of some lucubrations both in prose & rhyme—But I want some protecting name to stand beside me in the first N^o—Any scrap from you would be sufficient – to exalt & glorify my first appearance—I must say no more for I dare not be importunate to one whom I respect so deeply—Two or three stanzas would furnish a gem for me—

I have left my son at the University of Bonn under an excellent tutor—He is now 16 & a half—a great huge fellow whose appearance eternally teaches me the maxim Tempus fugit as morally as if it were written on a sun dial.—

I hope this will find you well—give my kindest respects to your sister & believe me dear Miss Bailey with profound esteem & admiration

Yours truly
 T. Campbell—

³ John Richardson (1780-1864), Scottish-born, London-based lawyer, who acted as Campbell's legal adviser. In the 1790s, when attending the University of Edinburgh, Richardson became close friends with Henry Brougham, Henry Cockburn, and Francis Jeffrey; Richardson's later friendships included Walter Scott and Joanna Baillie.

The letter was sent from 62 Margaret Street, London, an address which Campbell used from December 1820 until late 1822 during the day to work, before returning by coach to his main family residence in Sydenham every night.⁴ Although there is no address leaf present, I am confident that the letter was sent to Baillie at her address in Hampstead, where she lived with her sister Agnes from 1802 onwards.⁵

Campbell and Baillie's relationship was convivial and productive. The pair exchanged correspondence: My research has located five letters from Campbell to Baillie, and it is likely they wrote many more. Two of the five letters are inviting Baillie to dinner, indicating her role as part of Campbell's London social circle. Campbell also knew Baillie's family well, as evidenced in a June 1825 letter to Sophia Baillie, to whom he expressed his thanks after she had copied out for him some verses by Pope and Swift.⁶

Baillie is also mentioned frequently in Campbell's letters. A letter dated October 19 1824, sent to his printers Richard and Samuel Bentley, shows Campbell relying on Baillie for literary advice.⁷ Campbell delayed publishing his poem *Theodric* in order for Baillie to read the proofs, setting back the poem's publication date. Campbell had a similar literary relationship with other writers, including Walter Scott, to whom he also sent poetry for Scott's approval before publication.⁸

The remainder of this essay will now turn to the letter's contents. Campbell travelled to Germany via the Netherlands in May 1820. The purpose of this trip was to assist with research for a series of proposed lectures at the Royal Institution, but also to explore and examine the German university system, which was considered impressive at the time (Beattie, II: 388, 355). Campbell's idea of founding the first university in London germinated from this trip and his conversations with professors at the German universities. This in turn led to Campbell's February 9 1825 letter in *The Times* newspaper to Henry Brougham, in which he proposed

⁴ G.W. Thornbury and Edward Walford, *Old and New London*, 6 vols (London: Cassell, Petter & Galpin, 1872-1878), IV: 459.

⁵ Thomas McLean, ed., "A Chronological Listing of the Letters of Joanna Baillie," *Romantic Circles Online*: <https://romantic-circles.org/praxis/utopia/mclean/chronology/> (accessed 31 March 2021).

⁶ Royal College of Surgeons of England, MS0014/5/84 (H-B 3.2.84).

⁷ National Library of Scotland, MS 2618, f. 89.

⁸ See, e.g., National Library of Scotland, MS 3875, f. 61, dated March 27 1805, in which Campbell sent for Scott's opinion all twenty-seven stanzas of his draft poem "Ballad on the Battle of Copenhagen," subsequently heavily revised for publication as "The Battle of the Baltic."

the idea of a religiously tolerant university like those in Germany.⁹ The University of London was officially founded in 1826, with Campbell recognised as an integral figure in its creation.

Yet, at the time of writing this letter, Campbell's university plans were five years in the future. As he explains, he had returned to England to become editor of *New Monthly Magazine*, for which he was to be paid £500 per annum (Beattie, II: 357). The large wage was the primary reason Campbell accepted the position, as he was paying for his son's education. The publisher Henry Colburn had founded the *New Monthly Magazine and Universal Register* in 1814, to form a Tory-leaning rival to Sir Richard Phillips's *Monthly Magazine*, which advocated peace with the new French leaders. This political orientation changed when Campbell accepted Colburn's offer to become editor. As Campbell predicted to Baillie, he certainly did "regenerate the character" of the *New Monthly*. Under Campbell's editorship the *New Monthly* changed name to become the *New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*. Its new focus was on original works, in the form of poetry, essays, articles and reviews. Campbell was also successful in changing the typographic formatting of the *New Monthly Magazine*, as he outlined in his epistle to Baillie. Where previously the periodical featured a two-column layout, under Campbell the *New Monthly Magazine* became what he considered a "genteel" publication with a single column design.

Campbell was editor of the *New Monthly Magazine* from 1821 until 1830. Despite disparaging comments made in later years by the magazine's sub-editor, Cyrus Redding, Campbell was an active editor. He made a point of soliciting contributions from his wide circle of literary friends, as demonstrated in this letter to Baillie, requesting her "protecting name" to "stand beside" his in his first issue as editor. Campbell's request was successful, as Baillie's six-stanza poem "To A Child" appears directly after two of Campbell's poems in the first issue of the revitalised *New Monthly Magazine*.¹⁰ "To a Child" appears to be the only example of Baillie's writing featured in the periodical under Campbell's editorship. The common practice seems to have been to anonymize contributions on the title page of each issue, unless they were written by a notable name who would sell copies. Baillie's name only appears on the first issue's title page, indicating that her contribution was brought about purely because of Campbell's entreaty. Campbell's canny tactics worked, however, as it is these contributions from an assortment of Campbell's literary friends and

⁹ Thomas Campbell, *Reprint of Mr Campbell's Letter to Mr Brougham on the Subject of a London University* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1825), 3.

¹⁰ Joanna Baillie, "To a Child," *New Monthly Magazine*, 1 (1821): 18-19.

associates, including Lord Byron, Joseph Blanco White, and Felicia Hemans, that can partly be credited with the *New Monthly Magazine's* emergence as "one of the leading periodicals of its era."¹¹ Indeed, Campbell did repay Baillie's favour: he sent Baillie his short poem "To the Rainbow," originally published alongside "To a Child" in this first issue of the *New Monthly*. In 1823, "To the Rainbow" was published by Baillie in *A Collection of Poems, A Collection of Poems, Chiefly Manuscript, and From Living Authors*, the anthology she "edited for the benefit of a friend."¹²

Campbell's letter to Baillie is also unique in that it mixes family life with discussions of business, when in his correspondence Campbell usually discusses only one or the other. Here, however, there are intriguing references to Campbell's family, including his wife, Matilda née Sinclair, who died in 1828. Campbell also displays his optimistic plans in relation to his son, "a great huge fellow", who had been left studying under the tutelage of a Dr Meyer at Bonn University (Beattie, II: 388). However, in spring 1821, only a few months later, Thomas Telford Campbell returned to England suffering intense fits of aggression and violence. After an initial attempt by Campbell to look after his son at home, in October 1822 Telford Campbell was placed in the care of Dr William Finch at Fisherton House, a private asylum in Salisbury, Wiltshire (Beattie, II: 404). In 1831 Telford moved to the care of Dr. Matthew Allen, in Essex, remaining there until his father's death in 1844.¹³

Despite its relative brevity, this letter touches on several significant aspects of Campbell's and Baillie's literary careers. The letter illustrates the relationship, both professional and personal, between these two writers. Campbell and Baillie exchanged words both privately, through letters such as this, but also publicly, in the exchange of poems intended for the other's publications. This letter comes at a pivotal point in Campbell's life, at the start of the 1820s, his most prolific decade, in terms of his impact on education, philanthropy, and periodical culture. Campbell's editorship of the *New Monthly Magazine*, and his role in the foundation of the London

¹¹ Mary Ruth Miller, *Thomas Campbell* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978), 32.

¹² Joanna Baillie, ed., *A Collection of Poems, Chiefly Manuscript, and From Living Authors* (London: Longman Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1823), 43-45.

¹³ University of Iowa Libraries MsL C191cr. Dr. Matthew Allen (1783-1845), author of *An Essay on the Classification of the Insane* (London: John Taylor, 1825) was a pioneer in identifying and treating bipolar and manic-depressive disorder. By the 1830s, he ran a private asylum at Fairmead House, High Beech, in Epping Forest, only eleven miles away from London, catering to wealthy patients who were given their own sets of keys and allowed to wander in the forest. Patients there included the poet John Clare, from 1837-1841, and Septimus Tennyson, younger brother of Alfred.

University are arguably two of his greatest achievements. This letter gives a valuable insight into each of them. It also gives us a glimpse of Campbell's fraught personal life, directly before his son's mental health condition worsened.

The larger research project of which this is part, creating the first scholarly edition of Thomas Campbell's letters, aims to increase awareness of his potential significance for Scottish and Romantic literary studies. Campbell's correspondence, largely unstudied and forgotten, provides valuable evidence of the Romantic social networks within which he worked. By making these letters more accessible, the edition will, it is hoped, also encourage greater interest in Campbell himself and reappraisal of his importance for his contemporaries.

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