

Avalon Recovered:
The Arthurian Legend in British Women's Writing, 1775–1845

Katie Louise Garner
B.A. (Cardiff); M.A. (Cardiff)

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Philosophy

School of English, Communication and Philosophy

Cardiff University

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Summary

While the popularity of the Arthurian myth among twentieth-century and contemporary women writers is well known, earlier female engagements with the legend have remained largely unexplored. By recovering a number of unexamined texts, this thesis aims to offer a more comprehensive account of the rise of British women writers' interest in the Arthurian story between 1775 and 1845. Locating women's engagements with Arthur in Gothic verse, travel writing, topographical poetry, and literary annuals, it argues that differences in the kinds of Arthurian texts available to women writers in the period led to the formation of a distinct female tradition in Arthurian writing. Works by Letitia Elizabeth Landon and Felicia Hemans are discussed alongside those by lesser-known writers such as Anne Bannerman, Anna Jane Vardill, and Louisa Stuart Costello.

The initial chapter examines how Arthurian material was bowdlerised and recast for presentation to the female reader in the Romantic period. This provides the context for a new interpretation of various images of anxiety in early Arthurian texts by women as a symptom of their limited, or often second-hand, access to medieval Arthurian works. The following two chapters explore the prevalence of Arthurian material in women's Gothic verse and travel writing respectively. The fourth chapter investigates the evolution of women's responses to contemporary Arthurian scholarship, from the popular and satirical through to romance editions of their own. The final chapter turns to Arthurian poems by women in literary annuals, culminating in a comparison of women writers' treatments of the Maid of Astolat tale and Tennyson's own. *Annual Arthuriana* informs and anticipates many of the trends that come to dominate the Arthurian revival in the second half of the nineteenth century, which I identify in conclusion as the moment when the imaginative power of female *Arthuriana* becomes fully realised.

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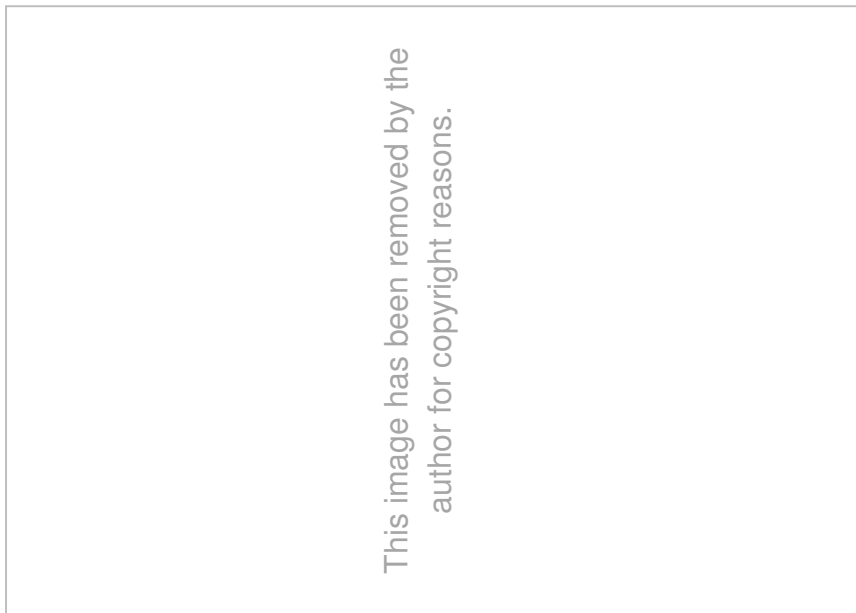


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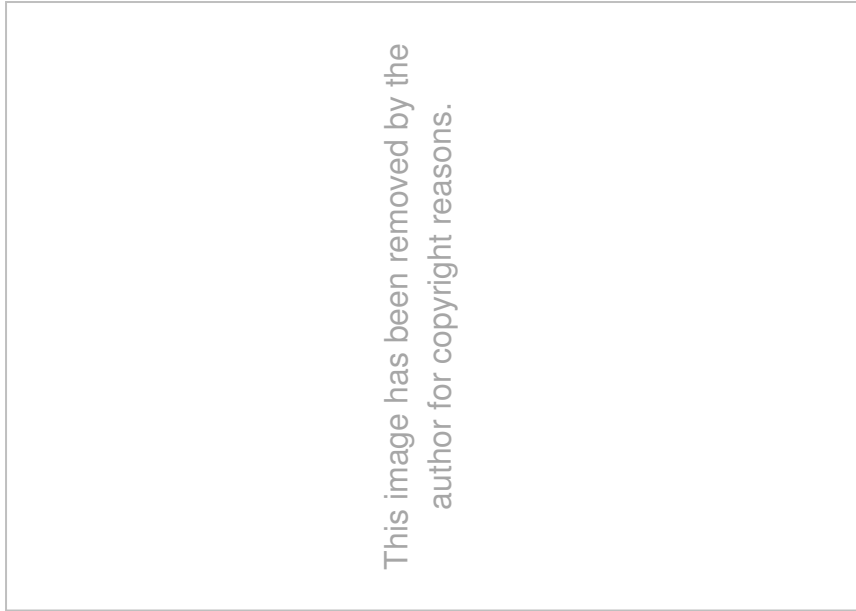


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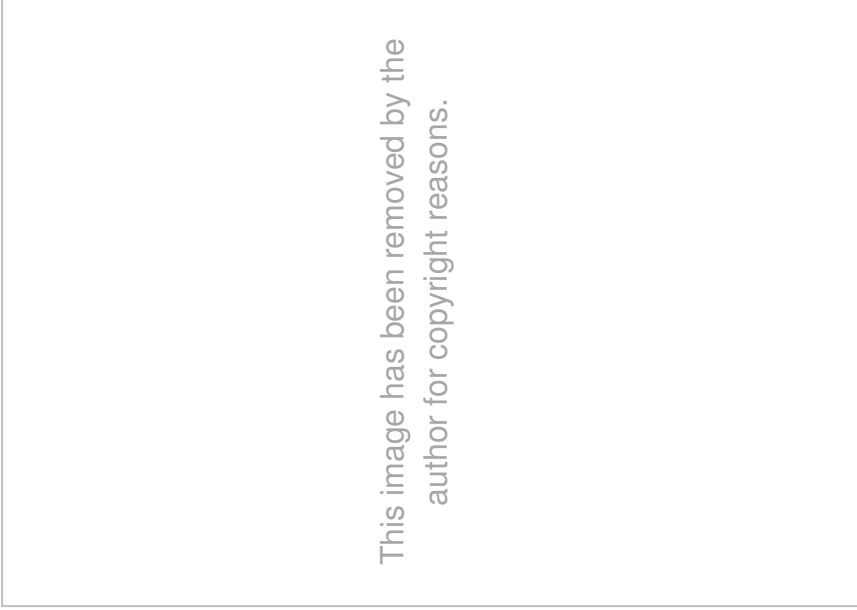


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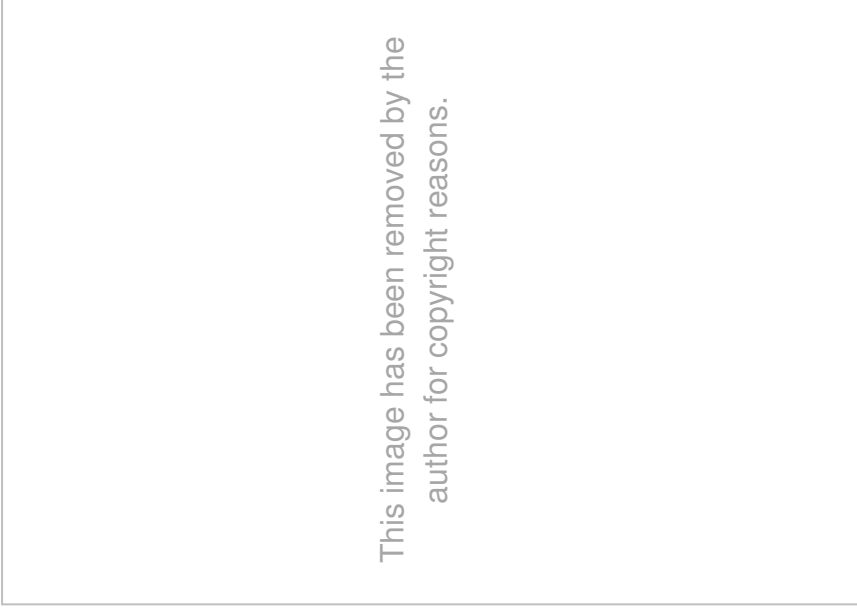


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Figure 8. ‘Lord Fordwich’, in *Fisher’s Drawing Room Scrap-book. MDCCCXLVI. By the Hon. Mrs. Norton* (London: Fisher and Co., [1846]), following p. 26.

Abbreviations

<i>EM</i>	<i>European Magazine, and London Review</i> (London: John Fielding, 1782–1826)
<i>Fisher's</i>	<i>Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap-book</i> (London: Fisher and Son, 1832–54)
<i>History</i>	Geoffrey of Monmouth, <i>The History of the Kings of Britain [Historia Regum Britanniae]</i> , ed. and trans. Lewis Thorpe (c. 1135; London: Penguin, 1966)
<i>LMM</i>	<i>Lady's Monthly Museum; or, Polite Repository of Amusement and Instruction</i> (1798–1828)
<i>Lady's</i>	<i>Lady's Magazine; or, Entertaining Companion for the Fair Sex, appropriated solely to their Use and Amusement</i> (1770–1832)
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> , online edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

A note on Arthurian names

In general discussions of Arthurian characters I have used the most familiar form of the name in English (Lancelot; Gawain; Tristan; Mordred; Guinevere; Isolde; Maid of Astolat). Where variations appear in texts by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writers, I have retained the individual spellings used.

This follows the common practice in Arthurian Studies; see Norris J. Lacy, ed., *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia*, 2nd edn (New York and London: Garland, 1996), p. vii.

Introduction

In 1801, Hester Lynch Piozzi (1741–1821) wrote to her friend Penelope Pennington with the news that her youngest daughter, Cecilia Thrale Mostyn, had just given birth to a son. ‘I hear Mrs. Mostyn has a son *Arthur*’, remarked Piozzi. ‘He will, I hope, fill his round table with knights, and revive the spirit of Chivalry’.¹ Her casual allusion to the Arthurian myth in a domestic letter demonstrates how far King Arthur had travelled by 1801. The earliest reference to the Round Table occurs in the twelfth-century French *Roman de Brut* (1155), but by the turn of the nineteenth century, the Arthurian story had acquired a popular currency largely divorced from the legend’s medieval sources – indeed, much like the circulation of the legend today. Moreover, when Piozzi expresses her future hopes for her grandson by invoking the Round Table, she expects her female correspondent to understand her gesture. Her letter provides one example of the myriad ways in which dialogues about the Arthurian legend were created, exchanged, and circulated by women writers in the Romantic period.

This thesis investigates the popular and scholarly use of the Arthurian legend by British women writers between 1775 and 1845. It has four main aims. First, it seeks to compile a comprehensive account of women’s engagements with the Arthurian legend in this period by re-introducing a number of forgotten texts and allusions. Second, it aims to identify the predominant genres in which women’s Arthurian writing occurs, and investigate why female explorations of the myth are located in these particular forms. Third, it looks comparatively across this corpus to identify similarities and contradictions in how Arthurian material is treated and re-visioned in these texts. Finally, it aims to set female Arthuriana in

¹ Hester Lynch Piozzi to Penelope Pennington, August 1801, in *The Intimate Letters of Hester Piozzi and Penelope Pennington, 1788–1821*, ed. Oswald G. Knapp (London: John Lane, 1914), pp. 228–30 (p. 229; emphasis in original). Cecilia Margareta Thrale (1777–1857) married John Meredith Mostyn in 1795. Thomas Arthur Bertie Mostyn, born 11 July 1801, was the couple’s third son.

context by investigating women's access to Arthurian texts and examining the complexly gendered discourses surrounding the circulation of medieval literature in Romantic Britain.

Between 1775 and 1845, Arthurian writing by women appears across a range of genres and in a variety of locations: Gothic verse, travel narratives, periodicals, and fashionable literary annuals all prove popular haunts for women's treatments of the myth. By drawing attention to how women were discouraged from reading the Arthurian story in its mainstream (male) forms, this study argues that women's Arthurian writing constitutes a different body of work to male Arthurianism, and, as such, has its own set of characteristics and concerns. Images of isolation, obscurity, and violence resonate throughout these texts, often in connection with the experiences of a marginalised female figure. These commonalities, I propose, are symptoms of a general anxiety shared by women writing about Arthur, brought about by their limited, or often second-hand, access to medieval Arthurian texts. Though pervasive, this anxiety can be seen to lessen as new editions of Arthurian romances and developments in women's access to research libraries and museums in the early decades of the nineteenth century brought them gradually closer to Arthurian material. Arthurian writing by women produced before 1845 is often ephemeral – taking the form of fragments, short poems in wider collections, or digressions from the writer's main concerns – but together it forms a significant body of work which anticipates, and provides a foundation for, the growth of women's Arthurian writing in the second half of the nineteenth century.

My methodology focuses primarily on the retrieval and recuperation of marginal literature in the name of achieving a more informed understanding of the post-medieval circulation of Arthurian texts and motifs across a broad spectrum of women's writing. As a substantial proportion of the texts analysed in this thesis have not previously been the subject of critical attention, my approach to this material has first of all been one of close reading. At the same time, I offer a broadly feminist interpretation of women's Arthurian writing. Like

Ellen Moers, who in 1976 defined women's writing as 'a literary movement apart from but hardly subordinate to the mainstream', I see Arthurian writing by women as separate from the dominant tradition of post-medieval (male) Arthurian writing.² More specifically, my identification of an underlying anxiety in women's Arthurian literature is indebted to arguments put forward by Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar in their pioneering study, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Imagination* (1979). Identifying recurrent images of paralysis, illness, and madness in women's poetry and prose, Gilbert and Gubar positioned these tropes as the external symptoms of a central 'anxiety of authorship' experienced by the woman writer. Revising an earlier theory put forward by Harold Bloom, who had suggested that the male poet was subject to an 'anxiety of influence', Gilbert and Gubar proposed that:

the 'anxiety of influence' that a male poet experiences is felt by a female poet as an even more primary 'anxiety of authorship' – a radical fear that she cannot create, that because she can never become a 'precursor' the act of writing will isolate or destroy her.³

More recently, Lucy Newlyn has examined the concept of an anxiety of authorship in relation to Romantic women writers more specifically, and has shown how remarks on writing and publishing by Dorothy Wordsworth, Mary Shelley, Fanny Burney, and others are permeated by a 'culturally induced rhetoric of self-deprecation'.⁴ The texts examined in this study show that writing an Arthurian work as a woman could be a similarly isolating and self-deprecating experience, but rather than an abstract 'anxiety of authorship', I am more concerned with exploring the practicalities and reading practices responsible for bringing about such an anxiety. My attention to the post-medieval afterlife of Arthurian works in the Romantic period draws on aspects of book history, as I read the images of frustration and isolation in

² Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (1976; London: Women's Press, 1980), p. 42.

³ Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Imagination*, 2nd edn (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 49. For Bloom's theory, see *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*, 2nd edn (London: Oxford University Press, 1975).

⁴ Lucy Newlyn, *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism: The Anxiety of Reception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 224.

women's Arthurian writing in relation to women's mediated and culturally conditioned access to medieval works.

To suggest that the Arthurian story acts as the location for contemporary anxieties is not new. As Helen Fulton astutely summarises, 'Arthurian literature of all ages and in all forms' can be interpreted as:

a site of ideological struggle, a place where competing viewpoints engage in complex dialectics, interrogating contemporary concerns. However far in the past it is situated, it inevitably inscribes within itself the anxieties of the present.⁵

In so far as it articulates present day concerns about female Enlightenment through the appropriation of romance and chronicle material from Britain's literary past, women's Arthurian writing produced between 1775 and 1845 is little different from the legend's earliest (male-authored) sources, which, as Fulton reminds us, also voice their own anxieties about their present moment. Yet, I argue that for the women writer, her marginal position on the outskirts of male-dominated antiquarian circles makes her anxieties surrounding the legend ever more acute. Her 'contemporary concerns' include her right to write about the Arthurian legend at all.

This study bears the title 'Avalon Recovered' for a number of reasons. Since Geoffrey of Monmouth's twelfth-century *Vita Merlini* [*Life of Merlin*], Avalon has been known as the mysterious and unmappable island where King Arthur is taken to be healed after his final encounter with Mordred at Camlan. Avalon is also a place heavily associated with women; in the *Vita Merlini*, the island is ruled by Morgan le Fay and her eight sisters,⁶ and in Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur*, Arthur makes his journey to Avalon in the company of three queens and the Lady of the Lake.⁷ As such a feminine, or feminised space, Avalon

⁵ Helen Fulton, 'Introduction: Theories and Debates', in *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, ed. Helen Fulton (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), pp. 1–11 (pp. 2–3).

⁶ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The Life of Merlin* [*Vita Merlini*], ed. and trans. Basil Clarke (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1973), p. 101.

⁷ Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur, or, the Hoole Book of Kyng Arthur and of his Noble Knyghtes of The Rounde Table*, ed. Stephen H.A. Shepherd (New York: Norton, 2004), p. 689.

usefully provides an appropriately Arthurian metaphor for the literary terrain occupied by British women's Arthurian writing in the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Furthermore, the lack of critical attention given to women's Arthurian writing before 1850 means that it, too, is an area that has remained curiously unmapped. The reasons for this are twofold. Firstly, it is only since the 1970s that serious scholarly attention has been given to the uses of the myth in the Romantic period, and, as Alan Lupack summarises, the period between 1634 and 1816 (when Malory's *Morte Darthur* was out of print) is still generally regarded as an 'Arthurian nadir'.⁸ Secondly, feminist work in the realm of Arthurian studies has tended to concentrate on what is referred to as 'images of women' criticism: that is, the analysis of female characters in male-authored texts. Women's own writing about Arthur has only become the focus of critical studies since the 1990s, and as such there is much ground still to explore.

Critics have long taken an interest in the development of post-medieval Arthurian literature more generally; the first study to attempt to outline an Arthurian tradition in British literature was M.W. MacCallum's *Tennyson's Idylls of the King and Arthurian Story from the XVIth Century* (1894). Much more recently, Beverly Taylor and Elizabeth Brewer's *The Return of King Arthur: British and American Arthurian Literature since 1800* (1983) and Inga Bryden's *Reinventing King Arthur: The Arthurian Legend in Victorian Culture* (2005) have offered reliable surveys of Arthurian material in the nineteenth century. Most pertinent to this thesis are two further studies that concentrate on the earlier decades of the century: James D. Merriman's *The Flower of Kings: A Study of the Arthurian Legend Between 1485 and 1835* (1973), and Roger Simpson's *Camelot Regained: The Arthurian Revival and Tennyson, 1800–1849* (1990). By drawing attention to many neglected Arthurian texts, both

⁸ Alan Lupack, 'The Arthurian Legend in the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries', in *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, ed. Fulton, pp. 340–54 (p. 340). James D. Merriman's study, *The Flower of Kings: A Study of the Arthurian Legend in England Between 1485 and 1835* (1973) (discussed in greater detail below) signalled the re-evaluation of this period of Arthurian production.

Merriman and Simpson presented new evidence for a sustained, if not dominant, imaginative interest in the legend throughout the Romantic period. For Merriman, such evidence was unquestionably male-authored: the ‘reawakening of sympathy’ for the Arthurian story in the Romantic age was ‘the response of men who sought (and thought they found) in the Middle Ages solutions to their own age’s grave social, intellectual, and aesthetic problems’, and ‘Arthur and his men [...] symbols of a gentlemanly code’.⁹ In contrast, Simpson’s research two decades later proved that several Romantic women also had their own sympathies with the Arthurian story. By turning his attention to periodicals and annuals as well as novels and poetry, Simpson uncovered Arthurian works and allusions by Letitia Elizabeth Landon, Felicia Hemans, Eleanor Anne Porden, Louisa Stuart Costello, and Anna Eliza Bray, placing them alongside male-authored works in his exploration of historical, topographical, and romance traditions in Arthurian writing.

Yet, despite developments in the awareness of women’s Arthurian writing, essay collections produced since the millennium, such as *Arthurian Women: A Casebook* (2000) and *On Arthurian Women: Essays in Honour of Maureen Fries* (2001), have maintained a strong focus on the presence of women in male-authored texts.¹⁰ As Alan Lupack and Barbara Tapa Lupack point out, ‘[e]ven those who are interested in women’s literature and

⁹ James D. Merriman, *The Flower of Kings: A Study of the Arthurian Legend in England Between 1485 and 1835* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1973), pp. 4–5.

¹⁰ The majority of the nineteen essays in Thelma S. Fenster, ed., *Arthurian Women* (New York and London: Routledge, 2000) analyse male-authored texts, with the exception of Joanne Lukitsh, ‘Julia Margaret Cameron’s Photographic Illustrations to Alfred Tennyson’s *The Idylls of the King*’ (pp. 247–62); Muriel Whitaker, ‘The Woman’s Eye: Four Modern Arthurian Illustrators’ [covering Eleanor Brickdale, Jessie M. King, Dorothea Braby and Annegret Hunter-Elsenbach], pp. 263–86; and Marilyn R. Farwell, ‘Heterosexual Plots and Lesbian Subtexts: Toward a Theory of Lesbian Narrative Space in Marion Zimmer Bradley’s *The Mists of Avalon*’, pp. 319–30. As a festschrift, Bonnie Wheeler and Fiona Tolhurst’s *On Arthurian Women: Essays in Memory of Maureen Fries* (Dallas: Scriptorium Press, 2001), understandably pays homage to Maureen Fries’s work in the ‘analysis of female characters in Arthurian literature’ in male-authored texts (Wheeler and Tolhurst, ‘Maureen Fries: Arthurienne Extraordinaire’, pp. v–xiii (p. xii)). The first part of the collection includes twenty-two essays, two of which examine female-authored works: see Kathleen Coyle Kelly, ‘“No – I am out – I am out of my Tower and my Wits”: The Lady of Shalott in A.S. Byatt’s *Possession*’ (pp. 283–94), and Alan Lupack, ‘Women Illustrators of the Arthurian Legends’ [covering Dora Curtis, Brickdale, and others] (pp. 295–312). In contrast, the second part of the collection, containing ‘biographies and autobiographies of some of the women who have opened up the field of literary studies to Arthurian material’ (Wheeler and Tolhurst, ‘Maureen Fries’, p. xiii), shares much in common with the attention this thesis pays to developments in women’s Arthurian scholarship.

women in literature have been typically compelled to discuss the legend's women as treated by the men who wrote about them'.¹¹ The first full-length study to concentrate specifically on women and Arthuriana inherited this approach, but also gave new and welcome attention to female-authored Arthurian works. In *Women and Arthurian Literature: Seizing the Sword* (1996), Marion Wynne-Davies traces images of Arthurian women as depicted by Chaucer and Malory through to the presentation of women by Lady Charlotte Guest, Julia Margaret Cameron, and Marion Zimmer Bradley.¹² Throughout, Wynne-Davies reads Arthurian literature as a patriarchal discourse which contemporary women writers are still struggling to negotiate. 'At the end', she writes, 'we are still perhaps left wondering if women will ever seize the Arthurian sword'.¹³ Her study has little to say about women writers before the nineteenth century, however. As she explains in her introduction,

it is essential to understand that no women wrote about Arthurian material until the nineteenth century, and that a significant female contribution to the myths did not really begin until the late twentieth century. This is not to say that women were not constantly reworking the material in their own oral tradition [...] but the patriarchal values of the societies in which they lived ensured that female voices went unheard, mainly because these words were never authorised by print.¹⁴

While promoting a strong tradition in women telling oral stories about Arthur, Wynne-Davies is certain that no written female engagements with the myth are to be found before 1800. Women's Arthurian writing is situated as a modern phenomenon, only coming fully into being in the 'late twentieth century'.¹⁵

¹¹ Alan Lupack and Barbara Tapa Lupack, 'Arthurian Literature by Women: The Forgotten Tradition', in *Arthurian Literature by Women*, ed. Lupack and Tapa Lupack (New York and London: Garland, 1999), pp. 3–30 (p. 3).

¹² Carolyne Larrington's later monograph, *King Arthur's Enchantresses: Morgan and Her Sisters in Arthurian Tradition* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006), takes a similar combined approach. Larrington traces the figure of the enchantress through predominantly male-authored works, but includes some discussion of nineteenth- and twentieth-century contributions by Julia Margaret Cameron, Mary Stewart, and Marion Zimmer Bradley.

¹³ Marion Wynne-Davies, *Women and Arthurian Literature: Seizing the Sword* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), p. 13.

¹⁴ Wynne-Davies, *Women and Arthurian Literature*, p. 2.

¹⁵ Wynne-Davies is not the only commentator to hold this view. More recently, Jan Shaw has proposed that '[t]he second half of the twentieth century saw the emergence of women writers as key contributors to contemporary Arthurian literature' (see Shaw, 'Feminism and the Fantasy Tradition: *The Mists of Avalon*', in *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, ed. Fulton, pp. 462–77 (p. 462)).

At the time Wynne-Davies was writing, it was difficult to assess the extent of women's literary interest in Arthur. Simpson had shrewdly demonstrated that many women did write about Arthurian material before 1800, but several developments since her study made the shape and scope of women's Arthurian writing far easier to judge. In 2004, Daniel P. Nastali and Phillip C. Boardman published their vast two-volume Arthurian bibliography, *The Arthurian Annals: The Arthurian Tradition in English from 1250 to 2000*, which contained substantially more entries by women writers than its predecessors (including several for the eighteenth century).¹⁶ But, perhaps most importantly, in 1999 Alan Lupack and Barbara Tapa Lupack produced the first anthology of women's Arthurian writing. *Arthurian Literature by Women* collated over forty texts spanning the twelfth to the twentieth century by British and American women writers, thereby providing evidence, the editors noted, for a 'significant earlier – and ongoing – tradition of Arthurian literature by women' that 'goes back to the nineteenth century'.¹⁷ Like Nastali and Boardman, Lupack and Tapa Lupack were aware of the bibliographical evidence for several Arthurian texts by women prior to 1800, but maintained that before the nineteenth century, 'women wrote very little about the Matter of Britain'.¹⁸

As a result of these developments, Arthurian works by women have received new attention in several recent studies of medievalism in the nineteenth century. Stephanie Barczewski's *Myth and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain: The Legends of King Arthur and Robin Hood* (2000) briefly discusses Arthurian poems by Louisa Stuart Costello, Felicia Hemans, and Letitia Elizabeth Landon, but the most extensive discussion of nineteenth-century female Arthuriana to date occurs in Clare Broome Saunders's *Women*

¹⁶ Nastali and Boardman's bibliography includes entries for Katherine Philips (1664), Eliza Haywood (1733), Jane Brereton (1735 and 1744), Charlotte Cowley (1780), and Matilda Betham (1797). See Daniel P. Nastali and Phillip C. Boardman, ed., *The Arthurian Annals: The Arthurian Tradition in English from 1250 to 2000*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), vol. 1.

¹⁷ Lupack and Tapa Lupack, 'Foreword', to *Arthurian Literature by Women*, pp. ix–xi (p. x).

¹⁸ Lupack and Tapa Lupack, 'Arthurian Literature by Women: The Forgotten Tradition', p. 3.

Writers and Nineteenth-Century Medievalism (2009). Broome Saunders dedicates three chapters to Arthurian material, incorporating a wide range of texts from Costello's 'The Funeral Boat' (1829) to Charlotte Ainsley Gillespy's *Guinevere; or, The Ladder of Love* (1913).¹⁹ In contrast, while Elizabeth Fay's *Romantic Medievalism: History and the Romantic Literary Ideal* (2002) draws welcome new attention to the medievalising practices of Landon, Anna Seward, Mary Robinson, and Mary Shelley, her chapter on 'The Legacy of Arthur' examines male authors only (Wordsworth, Scott, and Byron).²⁰

This thesis addresses the critical gap that emerges at the intersection of these recent studies. By re-introducing many forgotten texts, it offers a reassessment of women's interests in Arthur before 1800, and looks to supplement critical work by Wynne-Davies, Lupack and Tapa Lupack, Broome Saunders, and Fay by providing a detailed examination of how women writers' widespread interest Arthurian literature developed in the first half of the nineteenth century. The remainder of this introduction comprises a brief (and necessarily selective) summary of the evolution of the Arthurian tradition, followed by an outline of male attitudes to Arthur in the Romantic period and a survey of Arthurian works and allusions by women writers before 1775. All three are intended to provide a preliminary context for the material contained in the thesis proper. Finally, an overview of the thesis is provided.

¹⁹ *Women Writers and Nineteenth-Century Medievalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009) includes two chapters on Arthur's queen: 'Guinevere: The Medieval Queen in the Nineteenth Century' (pp. 133–52), and 'Rereading Guinevere: Women Illustrators, Tennyson and Morris' (pp. 153–83). A further chapter, 'Queenship, Chivalry and "Queenly" Women in the Age of Victoria', incorporates discussion of the representation of Elaine of Astolat in poems by Costello and Landon, culminating in an analysis of Lady Charlotte Guest's treatment of Enid in *The Mabinogion* (pp. 121–32).

²⁰ See Elizabeth Fay, *Romantic Medievalism: History and the Romantic Literary Ideal* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 64–108.

0.1 The Arthurian Legend

From its sparse beginnings in early Welsh poetry and medieval chronicle, the Arthurian story has become a vibrant source of literary and artistic inspiration. One of the earliest references to Arthur occurs in the seventh-century Welsh heroic poem, *Y Gododdin*. During a description of the warrior Gwawrddur's many feats, it is remarked that 'he was not Arthur'.²¹ Already Arthur is celebrated as the epitome of heroic endeavour. Other early references can be found in the *Historia Brittonum* (830), a Latin chronicle commonly ascribed to Nennius, which lists Arthur's twelve battles, culminating with his victory at Mount Badon. Similarly, the *Annales Cambriae* (c. 950) contains two entries concerning Arthur's various battles: one describes Arthur and Modred's fight at Camlan; the other follows Nennius in naming Arthur as the victor at Mount Badon. Also important among the early Welsh material are the *Trioedd Ynys Prydein*, or the Welsh Triads. Arranged in a series of three-line stanzas, the triads make reference to several Arthurian figures, including Arthur, Medrawd (Mordred), and Gwenhywfar (Guinevere). According to one particular triad, Gwenhywfar was the name shared by of all three of Arthur's 'Great Queens'.²²

For the most part, the early Welsh and chronicle sources record only fragments of Arthur's career, but the twelfth century saw the appearance of 'the earliest birth to death "biography" of Arthur' in the form of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* [*The History of the Kings of Britain*] (c. 1135).²³ Geoffrey describes Arthur's miraculous birth assisted by Merlin, his crowning at Silchester, and his subsequent conquests over European territories. His narrative reaches its climax when Arthur is called to defend his kingdom against Rome. The king leaves his nephew, Mordred, in charge of Britain while he

²¹ 'Arthur, Gorddur', in *The Gododdin of Aneirin: Text and Context from Dark-Age North Britain*, ed. and trans. John T. Koch (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), p. 23 (Stanza 102).

²² Rachel Bromwich, ed. and trans., *Trioedd Ynys Prydein / The Triads of the Island of Britain* (1963; Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006), Triad 56 (p. 161).

²³ Elizabeth Archibald and Ad Putter, 'Introduction', to *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend*, pp. 1–17 (p. 9).

goes abroad to fight against the Emperor's forces, only to hear while on the continent that Mordred has betrayed him and seized both the kingdom and Guinevere for his own. He immediately returns and meets Mordred's forces at Camlan; Mordred is killed in the battle and Arthur fatally wounded. Finally, Geoffrey tells us, 'Arthur, our renowned king, [...] was carried off to the Isle of Avalon, so that his wounds might be attended to [...]: this in the year 542'.²⁴

Later in the same century, the French court poet Chrétien de Troyes began to compose his Arthurian romances (1169–81). These number five in total: *Eric and Enide*; *Cligés*; *Lancelot*, or *La Chevalier de la Charrette*; *Yvain*, or *Le Chevalier au Lion*; and the unfinished *Perceval*, or *Le Conte du Graal*. As Douglas Kelly notes (and the nominal titles for Chrétien's works imply), the French poet's romances inaugurated a shift in focus from Arthur's heroic activities to those of his individual knights.²⁵ Yet Chrétien's most influential addition to the Arthurian cycle was arguably his construction of the love affair between Lancelot and Guinevere, first introduced in *La Chevalier de la Charrette*. His romances, in turn, heavily influenced the massive French prose Vulgate (also known as the *Lancelot-Grail*) (1215–30) and the Post-Vulgate (*Roman de Graal*) (1235–40) Cycles. Material from the last part of the Vulgate Cycle, the *Mort Artu*, was later reworked into Middle English verse to form the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur* (c. 1400), while the English *Alliterative Morte Arthure* (c.1380) was based on the chronicle tradition.

However, a defining moment for the English Arthurian tradition came in the next century, when, while serving time in prison (probably for political crimes against the state), Sir Thomas Malory combined a wide range of material from the French and English

²⁴ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain [Historia Regum Britanniae]*, ed. and trans. Lewis Thorpe (London: Penguin, 1966), p. 261.

²⁵ Douglas Kelly, 'Chrétien de Troyes', in *The Arthur of the French: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval French and Occitan Literature*, ed. Glyn S. Burgess and Karen Pratt (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006), pp. 135–85 (p. 135).

traditions to form his *Arthuriad*, *Le Morte Darthur*.²⁶ Completed between 1469 and 1470 and printed by Caxton in 1485, Malory's landmark account of the Arthurian legend in fifteenth-century prose provided an accessible and complete²⁷ English-language version of Arthur's reign that would come to dominate future perceptions of the legend in Britain. For Archibald and Putter, '[s]ince it is Malory who mediated the medieval Arthurian legacy to post-medieval English writers, his importance in shaping the Arthurian tradition can hardly be overstated'.²⁸ Out of print between 1634 and 1816, Malory eventually had his revival in the second decade of the nineteenth century, when no less than three new editions of *Le Morte Darthur* appeared on the market. These would subsequently fuel some of the most substantial and popular Arthurian works of the nineteenth century, including Tennyson's epic poem cycle, *Idylls of the King* (1859–85), William Morris's *The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems* (1858), and the large body of Arthurian paintings by Pre-Raphaelite artists, many now considered iconic for their visual portrayal of scenes from the legend.

²⁶ Malory's chief sources were the French Vulgate and Post-Vulgate Cycles, and the English Alliterative *Morte Arthure* and Stanzaic *Morte Arthur*.

²⁷ The concept of coherence in Malory's *Morte Darthur* has long been a subject of debate by critics. The discovery of the Winchester manuscript containing *Le Morte Darthur* in 1934 (now British Library Additional MS. 59678) prompted Eugène Vinaver to argue that Malory's text was not one coherent text but a collection of eight separate romances. In reflection of his arguments, Vinaver entitled his 1947 edition of the manuscript *The Works of Sir Thomas Malory*, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1947). Scholars have much investigated and deliberated Vinaver's argument for separate texts since; for an astute summary of Vinaver's arguments, as well as their subsequent contestation and limitations, see P.J.C. Field, 'Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*', in *The Arthur of the English: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval English Life and Literature*, ed. W.R.J. Barron (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), pp. 225–46 (esp. pp. 229–32); also Carol M. Meale, "'The Hoole Book": Editing and the Creation of Meaning in Malory's Text', in *A Companion to Malory*, ed. Elizabeth Archibald and A.S.G. Edwards (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1996), pp. 3–17. Subsequent editors have returned to the use of *Le Morte Darthur* as the title for the work: see Malory, *Le Morte Darthur: The Winchester Manuscript*, ed. Helen Cooper (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) and Malory, *Le Morte Darthur, or, the Hoole Book of Kyng Arthur and of his Noble Knyghtes of The Rounde Table*, ed. Stephen H.A. Shepherd (New York: Norton, 2004). It is not the aim of this thesis to debate the coherence of Malory's *Arthuriad*. Shepherd's edition of Malory is used as a source of reference throughout this study.

²⁸ Archibald and Putter, 'Introduction', to *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend*, p. 5.

0.2 Arthur in the Romantic Period

The lack of interest in reprinting Malory's work before 1816 does not mean that the early Romantics were ignorant of his work, but it does tell us something of the Arthurian legend's relative popularity during this time. As Merriman concludes in *The Flower of Kings*, '[m]ost Romantic poets remained untouched by the great theme'.²⁹ In 1833, Coleridge openly rejected Arthur as a suitable focus for a poem, commenting: 'As to Arthur, you could not by any means make a poem on him national to Englishmen. What have we to do with him?'³⁰ Those poets who admitted to being influenced by the legend did so rather reluctantly; in his 'Addition' to the preface of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Cantos I–II, Byron defended Harold's faults by measuring him against Sir Lancelot and Sir Tristram, who were, in Byron's opinion, 'no better than they should be, although very poetical personages and true knights "sans peur", though not "sans reproche"'.³¹ If Harold was a flawed hero, then he inherited those qualities – as well as his profession – from the celebrated knights of the Round Table. Even Southey, a keen admirer of Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* since childhood, felt obliged to make clear the disgust he felt upon reading his 'Tale of Sir Tristram'. 'The characters are in so many instances discordant with themselves', he bemoaned, 'and the fault, so frequent in such books, of degrading one hero to enhance the fame of another is here carried to excess'.³²

²⁹ Merriman, *The Flower of Kings*, p. 132. Merriman's sentiments have been more recently reiterated by Rob Gossedge and Stephen Knight, for whom 'the Romantic poets had no significant interest in the Arthurian myth' (see Gossedge and Knight, 'The Arthur of the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend*, pp. 103–19 (p. 108)).

³⁰ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, general ed. Kathleen Coburn, 16 vols (London: Routledge, 1976–2001), vol. 14: *Table Talk*, ed. Carl Woodring (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 441.

³¹ Lord Byron, 'Addition to the Preface' of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, in *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann and Barry Weller, 7 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980–93), vol. 2: *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 5–6 (p. 5).

³² Robert Southey, 'Introduction', to Sir Thomas Malory, *The Byrth, Lyf, and Actes of Kyng Arthur; of his noble knyghtes of the rounde table, theyr merveyllous enquestes and adventures [...] With an Introduction and Notes by Robert Southey, Esq.*, [ed. William Upcott] 2 vols (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1817), vol. 1, pp. i–lxiii (p. xvi).

Of the six canonical male poets, only Wordsworth completed a singularly Arthurian poem: his fantastical romance, ‘The Egyptian Maid; or, the Romance of the Water Lily’, appeared in 1835. As Beverly Taylor and Elisabeth Brewer observe, the most significant uses of the legend in the Romantic period were produced not by its major poets, but by ‘a coterie of antiquarians’.³³ Texts that make a sustained use of Arthurian material include John Thelwall’s *The Fairy of the Lake* (1801), Sir Walter Scott’s *The Bridal of Triermain* (1813), Henry Hart Milman’s *Samor, Lord of the Bright City* (1818), John Hookham Frere’s *The Monks and the Giants* (1817, 1818), Thomas Love Peacock’s *The Misfortunes of Elphin* (1829), and Reginald Heber’s *Morte D’Arthur: A Fragment* (1830). Assessing this corpus, Rob Gossedge and Stephen Knight argue that the idea of a national Arthur was particularly popular with ‘Scots, Welsh and Cornish scholars and authors’ from 1800 onwards, including Scott and Peacock, who were among those who ‘excavated and reworked Arthurian stories for their own self-consciously national political impulses’.³⁴ While women’s Arthurian writing is differentiated from male Arthurian writing in many ways, it also participates in this general pattern. Even in its earliest forms, the female authors of Arthurian writing are often Welsh, Scottish, or Cornish, or, if not native to those areas, articulate strong connections with them.

0.3 Arthurian Writing by Women Before 1775

Although Arthurian texts by women written before 1775 are few and far between, female authors have been writing about Arthur from as early as the twelfth century. Probably writing shortly before Chrétien de Troyes, in the second half of the twelfth century the Breton poet Marie de France composed a collection of twelve *lais*, one of which is set in Arthur’s reign.

³³ Beverly Taylor and Elisabeth Brewer, *The Return of King Arthur: British and American Arthurian Literature since 1800* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1983), p. 38.

³⁴ Gossedge and Knight, ‘The Arthur of the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth Centuries’, p. 109.

The eponymous protagonist of ‘Lanval’ is a young knight of Arthur’s court who meets and falls in love with a beautiful enchanted lady. Lanval is able to visit his fairy mistress at any time so long as he keeps her existence a secret. Another *lai*, ‘Chevrefoil’, recounts an episode involving Tristan and Yseult which is sometimes treated as Arthurian. The Tristan story was originally an independent mythic cycle, and ‘Chevrefoil’ does not mention Arthur, but on account of Tristan’s later absorption into the Arthurian narrative editors and translators have often emphasised the poem’s Arthurian connections.³⁵

After the work of Marie, it is not until the seventeenth century that the next known allusion to the legend in women’s writing occurs in the form of Katherine Philips’s meditation ‘On the Welch Language’ (1663).³⁶ Looking back to the ‘distant’ ancient British past, Philips (1632–1634) laments loss of the ‘beauty’ of the Welsh tongue, but intimates that Merlin and Arthur would be capable of reviving the language if they were still alive.³⁷ The role of Arthur and Merlin in Philips’s poem is not extensive, but over half a century later, Jane Brereton (1685–1740), another Anglo-Welsh poet (and a keen admirer of Philips’s verse) made much more sustained use of Merlin across her oeuvre. Brereton, who hailed from Flintshire in North Wales, published a small collection of ‘Merlin’ poems in 1735 in praise of Queen Caroline, the wife of George II. The volume was prompted by Caroline’s recent building of a ‘Royal Hermitage’ known as ‘Merlin’s Cave’ in the grounds of the royal estate at Richmond.³⁸ Writing under her pseudonym as ‘Melissa’, Brereton ‘borrow[s] Strength to

³⁵ For Glyn S. Burgess and Keith Busby, the editors and translators of the Penguin edition of Marie’s *Lais*, “‘Lanval’ is Marie’s only truly Arthurian lay’ (see ‘Preface to the Second Edition’, in *The Lais of Marie de France*, ed. and trans. Glyn S. Burgess and Keith Busby, 2nd edn (London: Penguin, 1999), [n. p.]). Yet ‘Chevrefoil’ (translated as ‘The Honeysuckle’) is included in Lupack and Tapa Lupack’s *Arthurian Literature by Women* (pp. 33–34). Similarly, the entry for Marie in the authoritative *New Arthurian Encyclopedia* describes both ‘Lanval’ and ‘Chevrefoil’ as ‘Arthurian lais’ (see *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia*, ed. Norris J. Lacy (New York: Garland, 1996), p. 309).

³⁶ Philips’s poem is the earliest female-authored entry listed in Nastali and Boardman’s *Arthurian Annals*, vol. 1, p. 40.

³⁷ Katherine Philips, ‘On the Welch Language’ (1664), in *Welsh Women’s Poetry, 1460–2001: An Anthology*, ed. Katie Gramich and Catherine Brennan (Dinas Powys: Honno, 2003), pp. 44–45 (ll. 7, 3, 27–34).

³⁸ [Jane Brereton], *Merlin: A Poem, Humbly Inscib’d to Her Majesty. To Which Is Added, The Royal Hermitage: A Poem. Both by a Lady* (London: Edward Cave, 1735). This short pamphlet includes ‘Merlin: A

rise, from *Merlin's Fame* in order to celebrate Caroline's various contributions to female learning.³⁹

The 1730s also saw a very different use of Merlin by the actress and playwright Eliza Haywood (1693?–1756). In 1733, Haywood and her partner William Hatchett produced *The Opera of Operas; or, Tom Thumb the Great* (1733), a comic opera adapted from Henry Fielding's *The Tragedy of Tragedies* (1730–31). Inheriting Fielding's burlesque treatment of the legend and its comical cast of characters, including Arthur, Queen Dollalolla, and the courtiers Noodle and Doodle, Haywood's adaptation added thirty new operatic airs and a revised ending: instead of leaving the cast all dead (as in Fielding's play), Merlin brings the characters back to life by means of a 'magick spell'.⁴⁰ As Stephen Knight points out, the mid-1730s were a time of 'general Merlin mania', and, evidently taking her cue from the recent success of Fielding's *Tragedy of Tragedies*, Haywood appears to have been capitalising on such a fashion, rather than acting on any serious interest in Arthurian material.⁴¹

Several other references to Arthur occur in women's writing before 1775, but these are generally minor and few and far between.⁴² As Claire Knowles points out, 'women took to the pen in unprecedented numbers during the late eighteenth century', and thus we find, quite logically, more discussion of Arthurian material in female-authored texts produced from

Poem, Humbly Inscib'd to Her Majesty Queen Guardian', 'To the Queen', and 'Merlin's Prophecy. Humbly Inscib'd to his R.H. The Prince of Wales', all of which mention Merlin (see Appendix, entries 15–17 for details). Brereton also mentions Merlin as the inspiration for her poetry in 'To Miss W——ms, Maid of Honour to the late Queen', in *Poems on Several Occasions by Mrs Jane Brereton. With Letters to Her Friends, and An Account of Her Life* (London: Edward Cave, 1744), pp. 123–25.

³⁹ [Brereton], 'Merlin: A Poem, Humbly Inscib'd to Her Majesty Queen Guardian', l. 7.

⁴⁰ Eliza Haywood [and others], *The Opera of Operas* (1733), in *Selected Fiction and Drama of Eliza Haywood*, ed. Paula Backschiefer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 171–220 (p. 216). Haywood's other collaborators were John Frederick Lampe and Thomas Arne, who set the text to music.

⁴¹ Stephen Knight, *Merlin: Knowledge and Power Through the Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), p. 128.

⁴² See the entries for Sarah Fielding (1759), Mary Leapor (1748), Charlotte Lennox (1760), and Anne Penny (1771) in the Appendix of British Women's Arthurian Writing between 1700 and 1850 attached to this thesis. Lennox's historical essay is an exception in providing considerable commentary on Arthur and is discussed in the main text (see Chapter 1, 1.1).

1775 onwards simply because more women were trying their hand at writing.⁴³ Yet, it is important to recognise the early uses of the Arthurian myth by Philips, Brereton, and Haywood, not only because they demonstrate that women writers' post-medieval interest in the Arthurian story goes back to the mid-seventeenth century, but because their attraction to Merlin – as prophet, bard, and magician – anticipates the strong interest in the enchanter (in relation to other Arthurian figures) shared by their Romantic counterparts.

The thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter One sets out the terms of the debate by exploring how Arthurian material was bowdlerised and recast for presentation to the female reader in the years covering the first half of this study: 1775 to 1816. To this end, it examines a range of both male- and female-authored texts. In each case, the version of the Arthurian story offered to women readers is compromised, or made obscure in some way, often through the censorship of material deemed to be too lewd or violent for the female reader.

Chapter Two moves into the realms of Gothic literature, and examines seven Gothic poems by women that employ recognisable Arthurian characters or rework Arthurian plots. From the 1790s onwards, Gothic verse offers a suitably terrifying form for the female writer to play out her anxieties surrounding Arthurian material. By drawing on Ellen Moers's classification of the Female Gothic, I propose a new category of 'Arthurian Female Gothic' as a way of conceptualising how these poems combine elements of the typical Female Gothic plot with antiquarian concerns about Arthur. While Gothic writing can be superficial and sensational in its use of medieval trappings, I argue that certain Arthurian Gothic poems by women challenge this assumption through their use of extensive antiquarian annotations.

⁴³ Claire Knowles, *Sensibility and Female Poetic Tradition, 1780–1860: The Legacy of Charlotte Smith* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), p. 2.

Chapter Three turns to women's travel writing and topographical poetry which proves a rich ground for Arthurian allusions. Women's Arthurian writing in this vein draws on a long topographical tradition, and displays the influence of Geoffrey of Monmouth, William Camden, and Michael Drayton. By reading the travel narrative as a malleable literary space, I argue that the flexibility of the genre allowed women to offer antiquarian assessments of Arthurian sites without encountering hostility from critics. In travel writing and topographical poetry, the limits of the writer's vision, or perspective, become the focus for their anxieties about Arthurian material. As part of its attention to places and spaces, the chapter also addresses the nationalist impulse at stake in treatments of the Arthurian myth, and concludes that English women poets ultimately failed to appropriate the legend successfully in their verse.

Chapter Four turns to role of the antiquarian George Ellis as a pivotal figure in women's Arthurian scholarship and explores how his research was put to use by a number of women writers and intellectuals. Yet their relationship with Ellis's work was not always translucent, as various forms of misinterpretation trouble their early responses to his work. Tracing women's appropriation of Ellis's scholarship from the imaginative and the satirical through to serious editions of Arthurian texts, the chapter plots the uneasy rise of the female Arthurian scholar, locating her arrival in the late 1830s.

Chapter Five focuses on popular engagements with the legend which appeared alongside the scholarly Arthurianism explored in Chapter Four. The fashion for literary annuals that emerged in the late 1820s offered female poets a new location for Arthurian verse. While always sentimental, I suggest that women's Arthurian poems for the annuals gradually become more performative (in the sense that they articulate their connections with the legend more strongly) as the annual and gift book market evolves. The chapter moves towards a consideration of the similarities between women's Arthurian annual poetry and

Tennyson's early Arthuriana, arguing that Tennyson's Arthurian aesthetic owes a significant debt to decorative annual treatments of the story by his female contemporaries.

My conclusion draws together the various features of British women's Arthurian writing, and offers some definitions of, and explanations for, the major trends across the corpus. It also looks forward to the cultural explosion of interest in Arthur from the 1850s onwards, and considers what this earlier body of writing can tell us about women's writing produced in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

1. Arthuriana for the ‘Fair Sex’, 1775–1816

The literary landscape of the eighteenth century has long been considered an inhospitable place for Arthur and his knights, remarkable only in terms of the absence of the once and future king. ‘In the palmy days of the early eighteenth century’, writes James D. Merriman, ‘it seemed certain that Arthur would never return to comfort his Britons’.¹ For Rob Gossedge and Stephen Knight, Arthur spent much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the depths of a figurative ‘underworld’, attracting interest only from ‘the lower worlds of popular culture and propaganda’.² Enlightenment thought, with its preference for truth, logic, and rationality, played a significant role in pushing Arthurian material – often characterised by magic, superstition, and textual multiplicity – firmly out of fashionable interest. In the words of Chris Brooks and Inga Bryden, the ‘Matter of Britain’³ had only a ‘marginal currency’ amid society’s greater interests.⁴

Yet, a significant shift began to take place in the second half of the eighteenth century, as foundational works such as Thomas Warton’s *Observations on the Faerie Queene of Spenser* (1754), Richard Hurd’s *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762), and Thomas Percy’s monumental *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765) started to reconsider the

¹ James D. Merriman, *The Flower of Kings: A Study of the Arthurian Legend in England Between 1485 and 1835* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1973), p. 83.

² Rob Gossedge and Stephen Knight, ‘The Arthur of the Sixteenth to Nineteenth Centuries’, in *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend*, ed. Elizabeth Archibald and Ad Putter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 103–19 (p. 105).

³ The ‘Matter of Britain’ [*Matière de Bretagne*] refers to the literary material and romances of Celtic origin emanating from Britain and Brittany. The phrase is taken from a twelfth-century poem, *Les Saisnes*, by the French troubadour poet, Jean Bodel. Alongside the ‘Matter of Britain’, Bodel designates two further categories: ‘The Matter of France’, and ‘The Matter of Rome’. As Norris J. Lacy notes, ‘[t]he usual, though not exclusive, subject of much of the Matter of Britain is Arthur’ (see Lacy, ‘*Matière de Bretagne*’, in *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia*, ed. Norris J. Lacy, 2nd edn (New York and London: Garland, 1996), p. 315).

⁴ Chris Brooks and Inga Bryden, ‘The Arthurian Legacy’, in *The Arthur of the English: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval English Life and Literature*, ed. W.J.R. Barron (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999), pp. 247–64 (p. 249).

value of Britain's medieval romances. Warton drew new attention to Spenser's debt to Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur* (1485) for the composition of *The Faerie Queene* (1590–96). Percy offered the reading public a cornucopia of poetical relics describing the deeds of Arthur, Lear, and Robin Hood, while Hurd, in his *Letters*, issued a general lament for the 'world of fine fabling' lost through the current distaste for 'ancient' romances.⁵

From the second half of the eighteenth century onward, theories about the origins of romance, rediscoveries of medieval texts, transcripts of rare material, and plans for new editions or collections were passed between a network of amateur scholars including Percy, Hurd, Warton, Joseph Ritson, and, later, Sir Walter Scott and George Ellis. All of them, it should be noted, were men: Romantic antiquarianism was, as Susan Manning notes, a 'pervasive homosocial culture'.⁶ As Philippa Levine observes, late-eighteenth and early nineteenth-century antiquarians were '[o]verwhelmingly male and middle class', and most (like Percy and Warton) had university educations.⁷ Women, on the other hand, were excluded not only from the benefits of university study, but also from many of the venues for antiquarian research; Rosemary Sweet has outlined how 'public records in the depositories in London or in the libraries of Oxford and Cambridge were closed to them, except as visitors'.⁸

There is, however, a central paradox underlying the general exclusion of Romantic women from medieval scholarship and the reading of Arthurian texts in manuscript. Since the late medieval period, women have been considered the primary audience for romances, including Arthurian ones. In *The Nun's Priest's Tale*, for example, Geoffrey Chaucer intimates that women are particularly fond of the Prose *Lancelot*:

⁵ Richard Hurd, *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (London: A. Millar, 1762), p. 120.

⁶ Susan Manning, 'Antiquarianism, Balladry and the Rehabilitation of Romance', in *The Cambridge History of English Romantic Literature*, ed. James Chandler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 45–79 (p. 56).

⁷ Philippa Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional: Antiquarians, Historians and Archaeologists in Victorian England 1838–1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 8. Percy attended Christ Church, Oxford; Warton, Trinity College, Oxford. Warton was later Professor of Poetry at Oxford University from 1757–67.

⁸ Rosemary Sweet, *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 71–72.

Now every wys man, lat him herkne me;
 This storie is also trewe, I undertake,
 As is the book of Launcelot de Lake,
 That wommen holde in ful greet reverence.⁹

Of course, as Derek Brewer notes, Chaucer's comment is made 'not without a touch of mockery'.¹⁰ As Lori Humphrey Newcomb points out, rather than being the preserve of women only, it is more likely that 'romance attracted a large audience of both genders, [but] its association with women readers became a powerful convention'.¹¹ When William Caxton composed his preface to Malory's *Morte Darthur* in 1485, the printer universally recommended the text 'unto alle noble prynces, lordes and ladyes, gentylnen or gentylwymmen, that desyre to rede or here redde of the noble and joyous hystorye of the grete conquerour and excellent kyng, Kyng Arthur'.¹² In Caxton's view, the audience for Malory's work may have been elite, but it was certainly not limited by gender.

Yet this had all changed by the Romantic period, which inherited the eighteenth century's preoccupation with taste, virtue, and sentiment, accompanied by a prevailing image of the romances as feminine reading, which, if left unchecked, could produce damaging consequences. Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* (1752) both encapsulates and mocks the dangers of this type of reading. Lennox's heroine, Arabella, is a voracious reader of seventeenth-century French romances, the contents of which consistently encourage her to misinterpret day-to-day events, as 'supposing Romances were real Pictures of Life, from them she drew all her Notions and Expectations'.¹³ As Margaret Anne Doody points out, Arabella's favourite romances, such as Madame de Scudery's *Clelia* (1678) and *Artamenes*

⁹ Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Nun's Priest's Tale, The Canterbury Tales*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), Part VII, ll. 3210–13.

¹⁰ Derek Brewer, 'The Popular English Medieval Romances', in *A Companion to Romance: From Classical to Contemporary*, ed. Corinne Saunders (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 45–64 (p. 52).

¹¹ Lori Humphrey Newcomb, 'Gendering Prose Romance in Renaissance England', in *A Companion to Romance*, ed. Saunders, pp. 121–39 (p. 121).

¹² William Caxton, 'Prologue' to the 1485 edition, in Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur, or, the Hoole Book of Kyng Arthur and of his Noble Knyghtes of The Rounde Table*, ed. Stephen H.A. Shepherd (New York: Norton, 2004), pp. 814–18 (p. 817).

¹³ Charlotte Lennox, *The Female Quixote; or, The Adventures of Arabella*, ed. Margaret Dalziel (1752; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 7.

(1690–91), are descendants of a different branch of the romance tradition to the chivalric (and Arthurian) romances, but the links between romance reading and female folly were pervasive, and, as this chapter will show, had begun to include Arthurian romances by the late-eighteenth century.¹⁴ In her study of women’s reading practices, Jacqueline Pearson has shown how anxieties about women’s reading and misreading of literary texts began to gather pace from the 1750s onwards. By the Romantic period proper, social and cultural discourses were heavily saturated with concerns about ‘girls [...] who read the wrong books, in the wrong ways and the wrong places’.¹⁵ Thus, the revival of interest in medieval texts that began in Britain in the second half of the eighteenth century may have been almost exclusively the province of male antiquarians, but their various publications – scholarly essays as well as reprints of medieval fragments, ballads, and romances – entered a market populated with higher numbers of active women readers than ever before.¹⁶ The concurrent rise in the production of antiquarian texts alongside what Pearson terms the ‘feminisation of the reading public’ was bound to raise new questions about the suitability of medieval texts for female study.¹⁷

This initial chapter surveys the chronological development in women’s access to information about the Arthurian legend, and eventually the romances themselves, from 1775 to 1816. Between these four decades, we find evidence of several Arthurian texts being deliberately withheld from women readers, as well as a number of texts attempting to (re)present Arthurian romance for the ‘fair sex’ in what were considered to be more suitable guises, whether that involved stressing the myth’s historical foundations, emphasising its celebration of female virtues, or censoring its lewdest passages. The chapter begins in 1775 with an examination of a resolute, but flawed attempt by the popular *Lady’s Magazine* to

¹⁴ Margaret Anne Doody, ‘Introduction’, to *The Female Quixote*, ed. Dalziel, pp. xi–xxxii (p. xiv).

¹⁵ Jacqueline Pearson, *Women’s Reading in Britain: A Dangerous Recreation, 1750–1835* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 15.

¹⁶ Pearson, *Women’s Reading in Britain*, pp. 14–15.

¹⁷ Pearson, *Women’s Reading in Britain*, p. 15.

present Guinevere, Arthur's queen, as a virtuous role model for readers. By the following decade, learned women such as Susannah Dobson and Clara Reeve were equally keen to promote the benefits of the Arthurian prose romances to women readers, but, hampered by a separation from the primary texts they were discussing, reviewers soon found fault with their scholarship. The same is true of *Ancient Ballads* (1807), a little-remembered abridgement of Percy's *Reliques*, which offers what would appear to be the first treatment of Arthurian texts under a woman's editorial hand. Careful to retain a high proportion of Percy's Arthurian ballads, the female editor made substantial alterations to their content for the sake of propriety, muddling much of Percy's scholarship as she did so.

Ancient Ballads went on to influence women's imaginative writing about the Arthurian legend, illustrating how differing versions of Arthurian texts for male and female readers could give rise to two bifurcated, but simultaneous, strains of writing about the legend. Largely taking the form of redactions of works of male scholarship, these early Arthurian texts for women readers tended to be set at an increased remove from the legend's primary sources, as well as increasingly censored and expunged. The result is a heightened sense of distance, anxiety, and frustration among women writers' early imaginative treatments of the myth, as the example of Louisa Stuart Costello's 'A Dream' (1815) demonstrates. Costello's poem usefully provides an opening case study for a wider set of characteristics seen across women's Arthurian works and explored in later chapters. The final part of this chapter explores the discourses of gender surrounding the triple republication of Malory's *Morte Darthur* between 1816 and 1817. If we are to believe the editor of one of the 1816 editions, this was a watershed year in women's access to the influential English Arthurian text. In sum, this chapter argues that women's enforced distance from primary Arthurian sources was exacerbated by the production of bowdlerized versions of Arthurian texts for women readers that often treated the story in ways increasingly idiosyncratic and

unclear. The different versions of the Arthurian story available to women writers and readers are responsible for the formation of a distinct female tradition in Arthurian writing characterised by anxiety, separation, and imaginative revision.

1.1 A Queen of ‘suffering virtue’: Guinevere in the *Lady’s Magazine* (1775)

In April 1775, a new series offering a ‘Female History of Great-Britain’ appeared in the *Lady’s Magazine; or Entertaining Companion for the Fair Sex* (1770–1832).¹⁸ Based on the premise that ‘[t]he [female] sex will [...] find themselves more interested in events which happened to females, than they possibly can in such as befall [sic] the men’, the series promised readers sequential profiles of ‘queen consorts, several princesses of the royal blood, and the female favourites of our kings, from the earliest antiquity to this century’.¹⁹ The first instalment described the feats of the Amazon Queen, Boadicea, described by the magazine as ‘a woman of masculine spirit and irresistible eloquence’ (p. 177). When the series was eventually continued five months later, its focus had moved forward to the sixth century. More specifically, the title of the second instalment indicated that its chosen subject from the Middle Ages was ‘King ARTHUR’s leaving his Wife to the Care of MODRED, or MORDRED, his nephew’.

Spanning five columns and accompanied by a specially commissioned engraving, the article’s title refers to an episode which takes place towards the close of Arthurian story in the chronicle tradition, and which was first added to the myth by Geoffrey of Monmouth in his

¹⁸ The *Lady’s Magazine* ran successfully until 1832, whereafter it merged with the *Lady’s Monthly Museum and La Belle Assemblée* to form a combined title which continued until 1847. See Margaret Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Women’s Magazine, 1800–1914* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 17; also Ros Ballaster and others, *Women’s Worlds: Ideology, Femininity and the Woman’s Magazine* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), p. 87.

¹⁹ ‘R—’, ‘The Female History of Great-Britain: King Arthur’s leaving his Wife to the Care of Modred, or Mordred, his nephew’, *Lady’s Magazine; or, Entertaining Companion for the Fair Sex*, 6 (Sept 1775), 483–85 (p. 483). ‘Letter from the Editor/The Female History of Great Britain’, *Lady’s*, 6 (April 1775), pp. 177–79 (p. 177). All further references are to this collated edition of the periodical and are subsequently given in parentheses.

Historia Regum Britanniae [*The History of the Kings of Britain*] (c. 1135). The centrality of Geoffrey's *History* to the article in the *Lady's* is not unusual; as Alan Lupack reminds us, '[t]he ultimate source of most of the post-medieval material up to the eighteenth century is Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia*'.²⁰ When Arthur is called to defend his kingdom at Rome, he places Mordred, his legitimate nephew, in charge in his absence.²¹ As Geoffrey describes it, Arthur 'handed over the task of defending Britain to his nephew Mordred and to his Queen, Guinevere'.²² Here, both Mordred and Guinevere appear to have been given equal right to rule over Arthur's territory: they are, as Maureen Fries puts it, 'co-regents'.²³ In Geoffrey's *History*, both are implicated in the later betrayal, the 'news' of which is delivered to Arthur abroad:

[Arthur] was already beginning to make his way through the mountains when the news was brought to him that his nephew Mordred, in whose care he had left Britain, had placed the crown upon his own head. What is more, this treacherous tyrant was living out of wedlock with Queen Guinevere, who had broken the vows of her earlier marriage.²⁴

Arthur immediately returns to Britain, and upon arrival his forces meet Mordred's: first at Richborough, and then at Camlan.²⁵ Arthur eventually kills Mordred, receiving his own mortal wound in the process and bringing the Arthurian kingdom to an end. The title of the article in the *Lady's* suggests that its treatment of the same episode will allot new attention to the moment when 'Arthur's Wife' is physically exchanged from uncle to nephew, and, in the

²⁰ Alan Lupack, 'The Arthurian Legend in the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries', in *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, ed. Helen Fulton (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), pp. 340–54 (p. 340).

²¹ The thirteenth-century French Vulgate *Mort Artu* was the first text to make Mordred Arthur's illegitimate son. See Raymond H. Thompson, 'Modred', in *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia* ed. Norris J. Lacy, 2nd edn (New York and London: Garland, 1996), p. 461.

²² Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain* [*Historia Regum Britanniae*], ed. and trans. Lewis Thorpe (London: Penguin, 1966), p. 237.

²³ Maureen Fries, 'Female Heroes, Heroines, and Counter-Heroes: Images of Women in Arthurian Tradition', in *Arthurian Women*, ed. Thelma S. Fenster (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 59–73 (p. 62) (first publ. in *Popular Arthurian Traditions*, ed. Sally K. Slocum (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Press, 1992), pp. 5–17).

²⁴ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History*, p. 257.

²⁵ See Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History*, pp. 258–59.

context of a series committed to describing ‘events which happen to females’, perhaps apportion greater attention to Guinevere’s experience.

What is certain is that the article would have reached thousands of eighteenth-century readers. Launched in 1770, the *Lady’s* quickly became the most popular women’s periodical on the market: by 1778, its sales topped 10,000.²⁶ As Edward Copeland puts it, “‘Everybody’ read the *Lady’s Magazine*’.²⁷ Priced at sixpence, it was affordable for most middle-class consumers.²⁸ Like most eighteenth-century miscellanies, the content of the magazine was varied and included essays, letters, and advice columns, as well as fiction in the form of ‘Interesting Stories, Novels, Tales, [and] Romances, intended to confirm chastity and recommend virtue’.²⁹ Although a substantial portion of the *Lady’s* consisted of contributions from its own female readers, the bespoke engravings for the series and the fact that it was launched in a column headed ‘Letter from the Editor’ suggest strongly that the ‘Female History’ was a pre-planned, in-house production, written by one of the magazine’s male editors.³⁰ Unlike several later periodicals for women, such as the *Lady’s Monthly Museum*, the *Lady’s* made no attempt to disguise the fact that it was edited by a man. In the first instalment of the ‘Female History’, the editor spoke openly of how ‘he flatters himself that this new article of knowledge and entertainment will be an additional recommendation to his fair readers’ (p. 177). The second Arthurian instalment is mysteriously attributed to ‘R——’,

²⁶ Robert Mayo, *The English Novel in the Magazines, 1740–1815* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 313.

²⁷ Edward Copeland, *Women Writing about Money: Women’s Fiction in England, 1790–1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 119.

²⁸ Copeland, *Women Writing about Money*, p. 119.

²⁹ ‘Address to the Fair Sex’, *Lady’s*, 1 (August 1770), cited in Alison Adburgham, *Women in Print: Writing Women and Women’s Magazines from the Restoration to the Accession of Victoria* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1972), p. 131.

³⁰ Robert Mayo estimates that ‘from a third to almost half of all the original fiction published in the *Lady’s* from about 1775 to 1815 was contributed by readers of the magazine, mostly female’ (Mayo, *The English Novel in the Magazines*, p. 307). Further evidence that the ‘Female History’ was an in-house production can be found in the address ‘To Our Correspondents’ in the *Lady’s* for February 1775. This mentions that the periodical has ‘in reserve a concise *History of England*, in which every female who has figured either as an heroine, a writer, &c., will be introduced: and that this department may receive all the embellishment which it merits, we shall illustrate the most striking passages by an excellent engraving on copper’ (*Lady’s*, 6 (Feb 1775), n. p.).

a signatory which does not discount the possibility that its author was the periodical's longstanding publisher, George Robinson.

The *Lady's* usually featured four plates per issue in the 1770s (see Figure 1), and therefore the illustration accompanying the 'Female History' marks the series' privileged position as one of the magazine's principal attractions. The editor promised that future instalments would cover 'the most interesting part of the English history, on a new plan, calculated to please and instruct' (p. 177). In line with the series' didactic intentions, readers are directly encouraged to heed what the experiences of Guinevere, Arthur's queen, can 'teach them' (p. 483). The promotion of parallels between women past and present also gave the editor an opportunity to flatter his female readers. '[T]hough all the sex cannot be queens and empresses', he admitted, 'they are capable of practising such virtues as would add lustre to a diadem, and confer dignity upon the throne' (p. 483).

However, despite a strong affirmation of the moral benefits of the 'Female History', the task of arranging a gallery of historical women has the potential to lead the male editor into muddied waters, as he acknowledges upon first commencing the series:

If we are obliged to expose sometimes the crimes of ambition, and the fatal consequences of unlawful amours, we shall contrast them with the heroic virtues and social endearments exemplified by noble instances of courage, fortitude, sagacity, unspotted honour, and conjugal fidelity. (p. 177)

This apologetic introduction to a series dedicated to memorialising a female history closes with the reassertion of the magazine's dominant ideology, emphasising the value of 'fidelity' and 'unspotted honour'; however, as the preceding clause admits, the magazine may also be 'obliged' to recognise a greater – and perhaps more transgressive – range of female historical behaviour, including 'ambition' and 'unlawful amours'.

In a similar way, the editor begins his portrait of Guinevere by imagining that his female readers will shed a delicate 'tear of sympathy' over her situation (p. 483), but soon acknowledges that they may exhibit a far greater range of bodily responses:

Their fears may be more highly alarmed, their horrors more vividly excited, and their virtues more strongly animated, when they find persons like themselves described in that variety of lights, which render them as examples of what they ought to imitate, to detest, or to despise. (p. 483)

Again, the magazine's promotion of female 'virtues' becomes entangled with a broader mix of social values. History, it seems (or perhaps Arthurian 'history' more specifically), has the potential to produce a heavily somatic response from readers and generate darker Gothic 'horrors' and 'fears'. Ros Ballaster and others have noted an 'inconsistency in the interpretation of proper queenliness' in the *Lady's*, and it would appear that the ancient queens of the 'Female History' harboured a particular ability to disturb and disrupt the magazine's otherwise dominant discourse.³¹ Unable to anticipate how readers will respond to the portrait of Guinevere, the editor lists a range of possible responses. This was decidedly uncharacteristic of the *Lady's*; as Markman Ellis points out, such sentimental magazines ordinarily maintained a strict ethos whereby 'scandal and innuendo are rigorously suppressed, and moral reform urged at every turn'.³² Worryingly for the editor, Boadicea's leadership bordered dangerously on 'ambition', and Guinevere's place in history was unfortunately connected to the fatal consequences of her 'unlawful amours' with her husband's nephew.

The editor's difficulty in containing a stable image of Guinevere reflects a wider uncertainty about the morality of Arthur's queen in the late-eighteenth century. As Lori J. Walters notes, Guinevere was 'largely ignored' between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, and when she was occasionally portrayed it was 'typically as a woman of questionable virtue'.³³ Ten years prior to Guinevere's appearance in the *Lady's*, Percy's *Reliques* had popularised a ballad that was strikingly frank about the queen's infidelity. In 'The Boy and the Mantle', a mysterious boy brings an enchanted cloak to Arthur's court that

³¹ Ballaster and others, *Women's Worlds*, p. 72.

³² Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 40.

³³ Lori J. Walters, 'Introduction', to *Lancelot and Guinevere: A Casebook*, ed. Lori J. Walters (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. xiii–lxxx (p. xxxviii).

will fit only a lady who is chaste. When Guinevere fails the test, the boy offers Arthur some bold advice:

king, chasten thy wiffe,
Of her words shee is too bold:

Shee is a bitch and a witch,
And a whore bold:
King, in thine owne hall
Thou art a cuckold.³⁴

The editor's decision to include Guinevere in the *Lady's* 'Female History' as a virtuous exemplar, then, was an oppositional move that reinserted Guinevere into popular public discourse in a way very much against the dominant trend.

In what would seem to be an attempt to dilute Percy's strong counter-image of Guinevere as a 'bitch and a witch', the editor of the *Lady's* chose to adopt an aspect of the Arthurian story preserved in early Welsh material, and which had been popularised earlier in the century by its inclusion in Paul Rapin de Thoyras's popular *History of England* (1726–1731). In the Arthurian section of this work, the French historian noted that '[Arthur] was buried in the Monastery of Glassonbury, by Gueniver, his second wife. He had two others of the same name, the first died in the Country of the Picts, and the third proved false to him'.³⁵ Rapin based his account on a mythic variant originating from one of the Welsh Triads, in which Arthur's three wives are all named Guinevere, or Gwenhwyfar:

Gwenhwyfar daughter of (Cywryd) Gwent,
and Gwenhwyfar daughter of (Gwythyr) son of Greidiawl,
and Gwenhwyfar daughter of (G)ogfran the Giant.³⁶

³⁴ 'The Boy and the Mantle', in *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry; Consisting of Old Heroic Ballads, Songs, and Other Pieces of a Later Date*, ed. Thomas Percy, 3 vols (London: J. Dodsley, 1765), facsimile reprint with a new introduction and notes by Nick Groom (London: Routledge, 1996), vol. 3, pp. 1–11 (ll. 145–50).

³⁵ Paul Rapin de Thoyras, *The History of England*, trans. N. Tindal, 3rd edn, 14 vols (London: John and Paul Knapdon, 1743), vol. 1, pp. 34–40 (p. 39). The editor reproduces an outline of Arthur's career ('1. His ascending to the throne at fifteen years of age; 2. His being created a patrician by Ambrosius in 476; 3. His being elected monarch of Britain in 508; 4. His assuming the imperial royal in 528') that matches the dates and achievements outlined in greater detail by Rapin and suggests that his work was the editor's main source.

³⁶ Rachel Bromwich, ed. and trans., *Trioedd Ynys Prydein / The Triads of the Island of Britain*, 3rd edn (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006), Triad 56 (p. 161).

Clearly the editor of the *Lady's* needed to substantially expand Rapin's brief two-sentence account of Arthur's three wives to generate enough material for the 'Female History'. Thus, drawing on material from Caradog of Llancarfan's *Vita Gildae [Life of Gildas]* (c. 1130), the editor began by describing how Arthur's 'first wife' was abducted by 'Melwas, king of Somersetshire' (p. 484), and eventually returned a year later, without the need for bloodshed. Arthur's peaceful settling of the crime is offered to readers of the *Lady's* as an exemplary moral, for 'he who *forgives* an offence shews himself *superior* to the offender' [sic] (p. 484; emphasis in original). The editor then introduces Arthur's 'second wife, named Guinever, with whom he lived in all the repose he could wish or desire', had it not been for her 'sterility' which was purportedly the cause of much 'superstition' (p. 484). The second Guinever is then replaced by a final, unnamed third wife, who from then on becomes the focus of the article. Placed in Mordred's care when Arthur is 'called into the field of glory', the scene of her parting from Arthur, 'attended with such an extraordinary degree of sympathising agony', is depicted in the commissioned illustration (p. 484; Figure 2).

In accordance with the unfolding of events in both Geoffrey's *History* and Rapin's later account, the editor then describes how Mordred 'burst the ties of matrimony by violence in private, and to add to the enormity of his crime, forced the queen to marry him in public' (p. 484). In contrast to Geoffrey's more ambiguous account, the editor of the *Lady's* is keen to assert how Guinevere was 'forced' to break her marriage vows against her will. Rejecting Rapin's description of Mordred's 'debauching [of] the Queen' (which implies that Guinevere's virtue has been corrupted), the editor plumps instead for a more generalised report of Mordred's 'crime' in order to maintain an impression of her 'suffering virtue' in the face of the 'dangers to which beauty is exposed' (p. 483).³⁷ If these are the 'unlawful amours' that the editor was 'obliged' to mention earlier, they are not examined in detail. For the editor

³⁷ See Rapin, *History*, vol. 1, p. 38.

of the *Lady's*, an increased shrouding of the sexual nature of the relationship between Arthur's nephew and queen was required to comply with the dominant ideology of his periodical.

Other aspects of the medieval story also needed to be suppressed in order to fit the decorous image cultivated by the *Lady's*. The accompanying engraving shows Arthur, Mordred, and Guinevere beneath a typical Classical arch and column; Arthur's helmet and breastplate signal his status as a Roman-esque war leader, thereby effectively bypassing any potential associations between the Arthurian story and a more barbarous 'Gothic' past (Figure 2). Moreover, the artist's arrangement of the three figures reflects their respective importance in the accompanying text. Arthur occupies the centre of the print and directs his gaze towards Mordred to his left. His arms motion towards Guinevere at his right-hand side, the bottom part of her dress cut off by the limits of the engraving's heavy frame. The illustration visualises what the main text suggests: that the figure central to this supposed 'Female History' is really Arthur, who is praised for his virtue and ability to carry out 'justice' by killing Mordred (p. 485). The three versions of Guinevere, in contrast, are briefly introduced and swiftly curtailed. Like the visual image of Arthur's third wife who is partly obscured, they occupy a marginalised space in the accompanying text.

To a certain extent, Guinevere's role in the historical chronicle tradition (where she is not the lover of Lancelot) is always more limited, but the editor's inability to openly discuss Guinevere's one active role (her illicit relationship with Mordred) means that in his 'Female History', she is no more than a pawn passed between two men.³⁸ The anonymity that the editor ascribes to Arthur's third wife adds to her presentation as an object and commodity: the text describes her as a 'charge' with a 'value' which Arthur 'deposited' in Mordred's hands (p. 484). Ultimately, the article in the *Lady's* ratifies what Fries identifies as

³⁸ The love affair between Lancelot and Guinevere was first added to the myth by Chrétien de Troyes in his *Lancelot or La Chevalier de la Charrette [The Knight of the Cart]*.

Guinevere's traditional role as a 'reflector of the male hero's values'.³⁹ After a description of the ensuing 'decisive battle' between 'uncle and nephew' at Camlan leading to the deaths of both men (p. 485), the article offers a final moral. '[I]t should be remembered', writes the editor, 'that enormous crimes, though they may seem to reign triumphant, will be sure, at last, to meet with condign punishment' (p. 485). Apparently referring to Mordred's 'crimes' and his subsequent punishment by death, the fate of Arthur's (third) wife has been conveniently forgotten. As a supposedly 'Female History' with a self-proclaimed interest in 'events which happen to females' (p. 483), the lack of attention that the article finally allots to Arthur's wife (or wives) makes the series an overwhelming failure at telling women's (hi)story, and, after this instalment, the series was abandoned altogether.⁴⁰ Indeed, it could be argued that the discontinuation of the series after Guinevere's portrait signals the magazine's failure in re-appropriating Arthur's queen as virtuous role model for contemporary women.

In its eclectic mix of articles, fashion plates, and fiction, the *Lady's Magazine* is considered to be a 'reflective and accurate index of popular taste' in the late eighteenth century, and so we might expect its endorsement of Arthurian material to reflect a resurgence of interest in Guinevere among women readers.⁴¹ 'King Arthur's leaving his Wife to the Care of Modred' certainly had the potential to define Arthurian history not only for the female reader in 1775, but for considerable longevity: as Copeland points out, the *Lady's* 'not only had an indefinite shelf-life, but it became a magazine of reference'.⁴² Bound copies of monthly issues for each year could be accessed through circulating libraries for those who could not afford to purchase the magazine directly.⁴³ However, as a masculine history

³⁹ Fries, 'Female Heroes, Heroines, and Counter-Heroes', p. 62.

⁴⁰ See Miriam Elizabeth Burstein, *Narrating Women's History in Britain, 1770–1902* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004). Burstein notes that the 'Female History' series in the *Lady's* was 'abortive' (p. 31).

⁴¹ Shelley M. Bennett, 'Changing Images of Women in Late Eighteenth-Century England: "The Lady's Magazine", 1770–1810', *Arts Magazine*, 55 (May 1981), 138–42 (p. 139).

⁴² Copeland, *Women Writing about Money*, p. 119. See also Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own?*, p. 9.

⁴³ Copeland, *Women Writing about Money*, p. 119. See also Jacqueline Pearson, "'Books, my greatest joy": Constructing the Female Reader in *The Lady's Magazine*', *Women's Writing*, 3:1 (1996), 3–15 (p. 4).

masquerading as a ‘female’ one, it seems more likely that the editor’s portrait had the reverse effect. Determined to avoid the potential ‘horrors’ of portraying an adulterous Guinevere, the *Lady’s* introduced women readers to three intangible versions of the queen which they later struggled to incorporate into their own writing. Despite (or perhaps because of) her early appearance in the *Lady’s*, Guinevere makes little mark on women’s Arthurian writing in subsequent decades. When Agnes and Elizabeth Strickland compiled their *Lives of the Queens of England* (1840–48), they explained in their introduction that they could not include ‘Guiniver, the golden-haired queen of Arthur, and her faithless successor and namesake’ on account of them being ‘so mixed up with the tales of the romance poets and troubadours, that it would be difficult to trace a single fact connected with either’.⁴⁴ In popular, as well as scholarly writing, the anonymous and fragmented version of Guinevere in the ‘Female History’ may also help to explain several of the trends that characterise women’s poetic revisions of the legend. Anne Bannerman, for example, in her Gothic ballad, ‘The Prophecy of Merlin’ (1802), pairs Arthur with a mysterious ‘Queen of Beauty’.⁴⁵ A double of Guinevere in many ways, Bannerman’s ‘Queen of the Yellow Isle’ echoes Geoffrey of Monmouth’s description of Arthur’s chosen wife as ‘the most beautiful woman in the entire island’.⁴⁶ Bannerman’s Arthur admires the Queen with ‘raptur’d eyes’, but she later reveals a ‘demon-smile’.⁴⁷ Rather like the three Guineveres in the *Lady’s*, who among them possess ‘beauty’ but also provoke ‘superstition’ (pp. 483–84), Bannerman’s likewise unnamed queen unsettles any clear distinction between a figure to be admired or feared.

Only three years after the portrait of ‘Arthur leaving his Wife’ appeared in the *Lady’s*, a little-known labouring-class poet named Anne Wilson interwove a similar Arthurian tale of

⁴⁴ Agnes [and Elizabeth] Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England, from the Norman Conquest; with anecdotes of their courts*, 12 vols, 4th edn (1840–48; Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1852), vol. 1, pp. xiii–xvi (p. xv).

⁴⁵ [Anne Bannerman], ‘The Prophecy of Merlin’, in *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* (London: Vernor and Hood, 1802), pp. 125–39 (l. 136).

⁴⁶ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History*, p. 221.

⁴⁷ Bannerman, ‘The Prophecy of Merlin’, ll. 88, 154, 155.

separated lovers into her topographical poem and sole-surviving work, *Teisa: A Descriptive Poem of the River Teese, its Towns and Antiquities* (1778). Though centred on a romantic encounter largely of Wilson's own invention between Arthur's father, Uther Pendragon, and an enchantress named Geneura, this inserted narrative also climaxes with the king's departure. When Uther announces that he is leaving Geneura and her enchanted kingdom to fight the invading Saxons, the enchantress vehemently rebukes him:

Didst thou, ungrateful man! O didst thou know
 What perils wait thee, ere from hence thou go!
 With these neglected charms thou wou'dst dispense,
 Nor thy lov'd country make the thin pretence
 Of basely leaving me ⁴⁸

Geneura's speech presents a challenge to masculine values, as Uther (himself a partial double for Arthur) is held to be at fault, and 'ungrateful'. Wilson's Geneura is another revision of the silent Guinevere left to Mordred and similarly 'neglected' by Arthur, but, importantly, under her new name, she is able to speak against the hierarchy of values that dictate that the female lover must be left at home alone when the call of combat arrives. Though resigned to Uther's return to the battlefield, Geneura offers a counter argument for his public obligation to his 'lov'd country' by drawing attention to the futility of his position as one 'single arm[ed]' individual against the invading 'thousands'.⁴⁹ Here, the Arthurian legend provides the female poet with fertile ground for the exploration of the competing interplay between chivalric loyalties and domestic happiness, which for Wilson are ultimately irreconcilable.

Contemporaneous historical treatments of the myth by women writers also show a similar lack of interest in Guinevere. The *Lady's* may have been the first periodical to offer a portrait of Arthur's wife, but it was not the first to supply women readers with a historical treatment of Arthurian material; in 1761, Charlotte Lennox also broached the subject of Arthurian history in her own short-lived monthly magazine, the *Lady's Museum* (1760–61).

⁴⁸ Anne Wilson, *Teisa: A Descriptive Poem of the River Teese, its Towns and Antiquities* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Printed for the author, 1778), ll. 813–17.

⁴⁹ Wilson, *Teisa*, l. 933.

In her serialised ‘Essay on the Original Inhabitants of Great Britain’ (1761), Lennox describes how Arthur ‘left his patrimonial dominions [...] to the government and care of his nephew Mordred, who proved unfaithful to his trust, and possessed himself of the throne’, but she gives no mention of Guinevere’s role in the kingdom’s downfall.⁵⁰ Guinevere’s absence is all the more notable as it sits oddly in the context of what Judith Dorn has identified as Lennox’s tendency to otherwise ‘challenge the exclusion of women from historical import by printing essays that describe their past agency in historical events’.⁵¹ As Dorn notes, Lennox expands the roles of Rowena, daughter of Hengist, and Boadicea within the same essay series, but despite basing her Arthurian account on the same source as the *Lady’s* (Rapin’s *History*), she chose to exclude Guinevere altogether.⁵²

Despite an early presence in the *Lady’s*, then, Romantic women’s writing remained hostile to Arthur’s queen, and she is allocated very little attention in their imaginative responses to the legend. In this way, women writers’ early experiments with the Arthurian myth contravene several of the trends associated with female responses to the legend more generally. In what is the first attempt to define a female tradition of Arthurian writing in English, Alan Lupack and Barbara Tapa Lupack emphasise ‘the prominence of female characters like Guinevere or Isolt’ in women’s writing, ‘who are allowed to tell their own stories, often in their own voices’.⁵³ In the late-eighteenth century, however, Guinevere was too ill-defined in popular resources available to women readers to provide a concrete model for revision in the way that Lupack and Tapa Lupack describe. As the remainder of this chapter will demonstrate, women readers were actively discouraged from reading Percy’s

⁵⁰ [Charlotte Lennox], ‘Essay on the Original Inhabitants of Great Britain, Continued’, in *The Lady’s Museum, by the Author of the Female Quixote*, 2 vols (London: J. Newbury, [1760–61]), vol. 2, pp. 514–28 (pp. 520–21). [Collected edition].

⁵¹ Judith Dorn, ‘Reading Women Reading History: The Philosophy of the Periodical Form in Charlotte Lennox’s *The Lady’s Museum*’, *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques*, 18:3 (1992), 7–27 (p. 21).

⁵² Dorn, ‘Reading Women Reading History’, 21.

⁵³ Alan Lupack and Barbara Tapa Lupack, ‘Arthurian Literature by Women: The Forgotten Tradition’, in *Arthurian Literature by Women*, ed. Lupack and Tapa Lupack (New York and London: Garland, 1999), pp. 3–30 (p. 4).

‘The Boy and the Mantle’ (in which Guinevere’s role is prominent, if negative) and Malory’s *Morte Darthur*, which meant that Guinevere’s shadowy and narrow portrait in the *Lady’s* remained one of the few available sources for information about Arthur’s queen for a considerable period.

This is not to say, however, that eighteenth-century women writers were not engaged in the act of revising the masculine structures of the legend, but only to emphasise that female characters already extant were not the location for their most radical revisions. By placing new powerful and ambiguous women in correspondence with Arthur and Uther, Bannerman and Wilson perform a re-vision of the masculine structures of an old text, or texts, in the manner defined polemically by Adrienne Rich as ‘the act of looking backwards, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction’.⁵⁴ One of the distinguishing features of Arthurian writing by women in the Romantic age is the plethora of new female figures they create, who, unlike the tripartite Guinevere in the *Lady’s*, are endowed with a passionate agency and a voice that questions masculine structures. Lupack and Tapa Lupack’s claim that ‘women writers tend [...] to emphasise female characters who play a relatively minor part or whose roles are less than ideal in the received versions by men’ only becomes apparent in women’s writing after 1820, when their access to medieval portrayals of the legend’s female figures was substantially increased through newly available scholarship and romance texts edited by George Ellis, Sir Walter Scott, and others.⁵⁵

Informative historical treatments of Arthur as well as translations of Arthurian romances continued to appear in the *Lady’s Magazine*, the *New Lady’s Magazine*, *La Belle Assemblée*, and the *Ladies’ Museum* throughout the Romantic period.⁵⁶ While the regular

⁵⁴ Adrienne Rich, ‘When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision’, *College English*, 34:1 (1972), 18–30 (p. 18).

⁵⁵ Lupack and Tapa Lupack, ‘Arthurian Literature by Women: The Forgotten Tradition’, pp. 14–5. See Chapter 4 for discussion of the research of male antiquarians and its effects on women’s writing.

⁵⁶ See, for example, [Anon.], ‘The Knight and the Sword. An Heroic Tale’, *Lady’s Magazine*, 25 (Mar 1794), 143–46; [Anon.], ‘Exploits of the Knights of the Round Table, with the destruction of the giant by Clairis, and

appearance of Arthurian material within these titles suggests that the ‘Matter of Britain’ was considered suitable reading matter for women, the handling of Guinevere’s presentation in the *Lady’s* illuminates how the version of the legend they received was heavily conditioned. Indeed, in the same manner that the male editor of the *Lady’s* had struggled to compile a virtuous Guinevere suitable for his female readership, in the following decade, Susannah Dobson and Clara Reeve worked hard to recommend Arthurian romance to female readers with varying levels of success.

1.2 A Fraught Romance: Arthurian material in Susannah Dobson’s *Memoirs of Ancient Chivalry* (1784) and Clara Reeve’s *The Progress of Romance* (1785)

In the mid-1780s, two female-authored texts appeared that together made a strong bid for women’s right to write about medieval romance. Little over a year separates the appearance of Susannah Dobson’s *Memoirs of Ancient Chivalry* in March 1784, and Clara Reeve’s *The Progress of Romance* in July 1785.⁵⁷ Arthurian romance is not the central focus of either work, but rather, the ways in which Dobson and Reeve incorporate Arthurian romance into their texts demonstrates both authors’ early attraction to the chivalric romances, and, like the editor of the *Lady’s*, their strong belief in their moral value. Dobson’s *Memoirs* and Reeve’s *Progress* represent a bid on the part of their authors to participate in the romance revival.

the story of Marina, Madoina, Queux &c [...] embellished with an elegantly engraved print’, *New Lady’s Magazine: or, Polite, Entertaining and Fashionable Companion for the Fair Sex. Supplement to Vol. III for 1778* (London: Alex Hogg, 1778), 686–92; ‘E.R.R.’, ‘Bliomberis’ [3 parts], *La Belle Assemblée*, 2 (Feb–Apr 1807), 64–68, 134–36, 187–92; ‘Z.’, ‘Records of Woman – No. 1: The Condition of Women During the Ages of Chivalry’, *Ladies’ Museum*, 1 (Feb 1829), 73–80.

⁵⁷ According to the *Orlando* database of women’s writing, Dobson’s *Memoirs of Ancient Chivalry* was published by March 1784, and *The Progress of Romance* was in circulation by July 1785. (See ‘Susannah Dobson: Writing’, and ‘Clara Reeve: Writing’, in *Orlando: Women’s Writing in the British Isles from the Beginnings to the Present*, ed. Susan Brown, Patricia Clements, and Isobel Grundy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press Online, 2006) <<http://orlando.cambridge.org/>> [accessed 14 December 2009]. However, a review of the *Memoirs* in the *British Magazine and Review* for December 1783 would appear to suggest that Dobson’s text was in circulation slightly earlier. ([Review], ‘Memoirs of Ancient Chivalry [...] by the Translator the Life of Petrarch’, *British Magazine and Review* (Dec 1783), 444–50).

However, their serious but often limited engagements with romance scholarship were not always well received, and the charges critics levied at their texts would affect the shape of women's Arthurian writing in the coming decades.

Susannah Dobson (d. 1795) was best known in her lifetime as the translator of the Abbé de Sade's *Life of Petrarch* (1775). This was her first published work and it 'enjoyed long lasting popularity' (it was in its sixth edition by 1805).⁵⁸ She followed this with a fictional, instructive text (*Dialogue on Friendship and Society* (1777)), but her literary output is otherwise dominated by numerous translations of works of medieval scholarship. In 1779, she published a translation of one of Jean-Baptiste de La Curne de Sainte-Palaye's works as *The Literary History of the Troubadours*, and, five years later, she produced *Memoirs of Ancient Chivalry*, a translation and abridgement of Saint-Palaye's *Mémoires sur l'ancienne chevalerie, considérée comme un établissement politique et militaire* (1759–81).⁵⁹ For Dobson, these two translations of works by the eminent French medievalist, along with her earlier *Life of Petrarch*, formed a triad, which, when 'placed in their chronological order', would represent 'a comprehensive period of ancient customs and manners, and the rise and progress of knowledge that took place therein'.⁶⁰ Divided into five parts describing aspects of chivalry from 'The Condition and Employment of the Page and the Squire', through to 'The Creation of the Knight' and 'Distinctions and Honours in Chivalry, in Life and in Death', the *Memoirs* traced the development of the knight 'from the cradle to the tomb' (p. 2). The stages of knighthood were illustrated throughout by regular examples of knightly conduct taken from various chivalric romances, including the French Vulgate *Lancelot* and *Perceforest*.

⁵⁸ Antonella Braida, 'Dobson, Susannah (d. 1795)', *ODNB* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/7718>> [accessed 29 March 2012].

⁵⁹ Originally published in two volumes in 1759, Sainte-Palaye's *Mémoires* emerged from a series of lectures addressed to the Académie des Inscriptions from November 1746 to August 1750. A third volume was added to the second edition which appeared in 1781. A new edition appeared in 1826.

⁶⁰ [Susannah Dobson], 'Preface', to *Memoirs of Ancient Chivalry, To Which are Added the Anecdotes of the Times, From the Romance Writers and Historians of Those Ages*, [trans. Dobson] (London: Dodsley, 1784), pp. v–xx (pp. vii–viii). All further references are to this edition and are subsequently given in parentheses throughout the text.

Dobson regularly praises the writers of chivalric romances whom she believed (as did Saint-Palaye) should be considered on a level equal to ‘the historians of those times’ (p. xvii).

Like the editor of the *Lady's*, Dobson had a clear audience in mind when she translated Saint-Palaye's *Mémoires*. In her preface to the volume, she expressed her hopes that her translation would be of interest to the ‘youth of both sexes’ (p. xx). In this respect, she was extending onto English soil what Karen O'Brien succinctly describes as Sainte-Palaye's own ‘conservative political purpose [...] directed towards the moral regeneration of French aristocratic youth’.⁶¹ Unlike Saint-Palaye, however, Dobson also wanted her female readers to pay particular attention to the romance material contained in his text. ‘Women, in particular’, writes Dobson, ‘ought to hold these ancient writers in high esteem, for the deference they paid to modesty, and the fame they so liberally bestowed on virtue’ (pp. xviii–xix). For Dobson, the nature of the chivalric romances was primarily instructive, and like the profile of the masculine knight, the portraits of medieval women in the romances could offer contemporary women a complete model of behaviour, from girlhood to death:

They taught generous firmness, judicious observance of superiors, and constant love, to unite in the same hearts: they taught to honour the valiant, to attend the wounded, to relieve the distressed, and to dispense the sweet solace of chearful [sic] and gentle manners to all around them: they taught them to respect themselves, and to prefer others; to be silent, observant, and industrious in youth, graceful and dignified in maturity, venerable in age, and lamented at death. (p. xix)

This model was also largely conservative; though they should ‘respect themselves’, women's roles are otherwise defined in relation to men, who, in the various guises of ‘the valiant’ or ‘the wounded’, consistently require some form of service. As a substantial portion of Saint-Palaye's examples of this behaviour came from Arthurian romances, Dobson's advice to her women readers was in effect much the same as that given earlier by the *Lady's*: contemporary

⁶¹ Karen O'Brien, *Women and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 139.

women should look to the women of the Arthurian legend for examples of appropriately virtuous behaviour.

By choosing to translate Saint-Palaye's works, Dobson demonstrated her awareness of the impact of the Frenchman's scholarship on English antiquarianism. As Arthur Johnston emphasises, 'Sainte-Palaye is the constant source of information about chivalry, not only for Hurd, Percy, and Thomas Warton, but for Gibbon, Joseph Sterling and later even Byron'.⁶² Yet the fact that all these men read Sainte-Palaye's work in his original French has prompted modern scholars to see the impact of Dobson's translations on the cultural consciousness as decidedly limited. Lionel Gossman cautiously notes that Dobson's English translations 'only reinforced Sainte-Palaye's position among English amateurs of the Middle Ages', and, similarly, Alex Davies suggests that Dobson's translation 'merely underlined English interest in Sainte-Palaye's work'.⁶³ This risks underestimating the impact of Dobson's endeavours, and particularly, the influence of her work on women readers. The *Memoirs* was reviewed in all the major periodicals, and more than forty years later, it was still a source of reference and inspiration for women writers: the London-based poet Eleanor Anne Porden was among those who made use of 'Mrs. Dobson's Translation' of Saint-Palaye's *Mémoires* in her epic poem, *Coeur de Lion* (1822).⁶⁴ Others generously recognised the importance of her work and placed her on a par with the male antiquarians of the day. Listing the 'learned' scholars of the ancient romances in her preface to *The Progress of Romance*, Reeve first named 'Hurd, Beattie, Warton, Percy, and Mallet', but finished her list by adding, with 'sincere pleasure',

⁶² Arthur Johnston, *Enchanted Ground: The Study of Medieval Romance in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Athlone, 1964), pp. 23–24. For a detailed account of Byron's engagement with Saint-Palaye's work in the context of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, see Ronald A. Shroeder, 'Ellis, Sainte-Palaye, and Byron's "Addition" to the "Preface" of "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage I-II"', *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 32 (1983), 25–30.

⁶³ Lionel Gossman, *Medievalism and the Ideologies of the Enlightenment: The World and Work of La Curne de Sainte-Palaye* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968), p. 329. Alex Davies, *Chivalry and Romance in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003), p. 211.

⁶⁴ Eleanor Anne Porden, *Coeur de Lion; or, the Third Crusade*, 2 vols (London: G. and W.B. Whittaker, 1822), vol. 1, p. 394. See also Mary Robinson's praise of Dobson's translations in Robinson, 'Letter to the Women of England' (1799), in *Letter to the Women of England; and The Natural Daughter*, ed. Sharon M. Setzer (Ormskirk: Broadview, 2003), pp. 39–88 (p. 84).

the name of ‘a writer of my own sex, Mrs. Dobson, the elegant writer of the *History of the Troubadours* and the *Memoirs of Ancient Chivalry*’.⁶⁵

Reeve’s praise of Dobson as a ‘writer’, rather than a translator, suggests that through the process of their English recasting, her treatment of the Frenchman’s scholarship acquired a relative autonomy. Saint-Palaye’s texts were now not so much his, but attributed to one ‘Mrs. Dobson’. Clare Broome Saunders has noted how ‘Dobson’s translation is also an interpretation, in which she adapts the linguistic translation to reflect her own views on chivalry’.⁶⁶ Yet materially, as well as linguistically, Dobson’s version of the *Memoirs* constitutes a very different text to Saint-Palaye’s *Mémoires*. Not only was hers a substantial abridgement (the *Mémoires* filled three volumes, and Dobson’s text only one), but her text was also arranged very differently. The paratextual elements of the original *Mémoires* rendered it a clear work of scholarship; substantially annotated with footnotes on most pages, Sainte-Palaye also included an index of the notable characters mentioned throughout the text, as well as a separate index for reference. Anecdotes from the ancient romances such as the Vulgate *Lancelot* (called ‘Lancelot du Lac’ by Sainte-Palaye and Dobson) are mainly confined to the footnotes, wherein bibliographic details for the relevant romance manuscripts also appear.⁶⁷ When Dobson undertook her translation, she deliberately interwove these ‘notes into the original’ text, on the premise that ‘these appeared to me peculiarly deserving of attention, as they are quotations from the ancient romances [...] which are most of them very scarce, if at all to be procured in this kingdom’ (p. xx). Elevating the French medievalist’s notes elucidating the content of the Arthurian romances to the main text of her

⁶⁵ Clara Reeve, *The Progress of Romance; and the History of Charoba, Queen of Egypt* (1785; New York: Facsimile Text Society, 1930), pp. xi–xii. Reeve also refers her readers to Dobson’s *History of the Troubadours* (Reeve, *Progress*, p. 21). All further references are to this edition and are subsequently given in parentheses throughout the text.

⁶⁶ Clare Broome Saunders, *Women Writers and Nineteenth-Century Medievalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009), p. 5.

⁶⁷ See, for example, M. La Curne de Sainte-Palaye, *Mémoires sur l’ancienne chevalerie*, ed. Charles Nodier, 3 vols (Paris: Girard, 1826), vol. 1, pp. 30, 107, 116–18, 144, 150.

translation was another way of staking a direct claim for their historical worth, while drawing better attention to their benefits for her prospective female readers.

Recognising the scarcity of romance texts for the ordinary (female) reader, Dobson's promotion of material from the Vulgate *Lancelot* to the main text of the *Memoirs* was a worthy, and in many ways prudent, enterprise. The end result, however, made for a somewhat odd combination. For example, at one point we read how:

Lancelot de Lac describes, in his romance, a young hero seated at table between the king and the queen, so embarrassed and timid, as not to be able to look up, though he had just before won the prize, and had been covered with glory in a tournament. (pp. 131–32)

Elsewhere, it is announced that 'Lancelot de Lac dwells on this point, in the discourse held by Hector with a knight, who had killed his horse under him' (p. 118). With Saint-Palaye's helpful index of characters now gone, there was no explanation as to who Hector was, and what his relation to Lancelot might be. Extracts from the Vulgate *Lancelot* appear with very little, or no context, and are shorn of the bibliographical and scholarly apparatus indicating the manuscript from which the extract was taken. Perhaps most unfortunate, however, was the strong possibility of confusion between the Vulgate *Lancelot* and Lancelot the knight. As Alex Davis has astutely observed, in Dobson's *Memoirs*, "'Lancelot' [...] is often quoted as an authority on things medieval, as if he were a real person'.⁶⁸ Her rather muddled integration of Saint-Palaye's notes did not pass unnoticed by reviewers. 'The translator has most preposterously intermixed [Saint-Palaye's] notes with his text', remarked the *English Review*.⁶⁹ Like the earlier editor of the *Lady's*, Dobson was keen to promote Arthurian romance to women, but did so in ways that were less than transparent.

Once reviewers had identified problems with Dobson's treatment of Sainte-Palaye's scholarship, the criticisms aimed at her work only escalated. Although Mary Robinson would

⁶⁸ Davies, *Chivalry and Romance*, p. 213.

⁶⁹ [Review], 'Memoirs of Ancient Chivalry', *English Review*, 4 (Oct 1784), 297–300 (p. 300).

later praise Dobson's 'purest and best translations from the French', when the *Memoirs* was first published, the *English Review* proposed that Dobson seemed 'not to understand completely the French language', before pronouncing her 'an entire stranger to the elegancies of the English tongue'.⁷⁰ Broome Saunders argues that translation was an 'acceptably feminine domain' for women to demonstrate their interest in medieval studies, but it would appear that even translations of works by a male medievalist could arouse considerable hostility in reviewers.⁷¹ More gracious were those commentators who recognised that the faults in the text were not entirely of Dobson's own making. The *Westminster Magazine* was puzzled by her decision to translate Sainte-Palaye's 'anecdotes, neither very interesting or amusing', and expressed their wish that 'the fair writer had employed herself upon a work likely to furnish more instruction and entertainment'.⁷² Though doubtful about the extent of Dobson's translation skills, the *English Review* nevertheless agreed, remarking 'it does not appear to us, that the book of Mon. De St. Palaye deserved to be honoured with a translation'.⁷³ It was Saint-Palaye, rather than Dobson, who was the subject of the same periodical's harshest criticisms. '[T]he work of Saint-Palaye is not that of a Master', declared the reviewer. 'This writer is confessedly laborious; and he has attended peculiarly to the writers of the old romance'.⁷⁴ As Davies has recognised, even Dobson's rather 'confusing' approach to the romances was largely inherited from Sainte-Palaye, who himself often failed to provide accurate references and interwove instances from various romances unacknowledged.⁷⁵ Dobson's text may be confusing, but it is no less so than Sainte-Palaye's original.

⁷⁰ Robinson, 'Letter to the Women of England', p. 84. [Review], 'Memoirs of Ancient Chivalry', *English Review*, 300.

⁷¹ Broome Saunders, *Women Writers and Nineteenth-Century Medievalism*, p. 27.

⁷² [Review], 'Memoirs of Ancient Chivalry', *Westminster Magazine* (Nov 1784), 603.

⁷³ [Review], 'Memoirs of Ancient Chivalry', *English Review*, 298.

⁷⁴ [Review], 'Memoirs of Ancient Chivalry', *English Review*, 297.

⁷⁵ Davies, *Chivalry and Romance*, p. 213.

By proposing that the old romances ‘are as highly to be prized as the ancient poets so justly were, in the times of the Greeks and Romans’ (*Memoirs*, p. x), Dobson’s preface to the *Memoirs* anticipated the main thrust of Clara Reeve’s arguments in *The Progress of Romance, Through Times, Countries, and Manners* (1785). Though best known for her Gothic novel, *The Old English Baron* (1777), *The Progress of Romance* is, as Lisa Vargo has summarised, Reeve’s ‘sustained theoretical statement about the [romance] genre’.⁷⁶ A review of the work in the *Town and Country Magazine* shows how, under the general banner of ‘romance’, women writers like Reeve could demonstrate their wider interests in medieval texts. Not without a hint of sarcasm, the reviewer opined: ‘as Romance reading is so peculiarly the province of the fair sex, we are not surprised to find our author very elaborate upon the subject’.⁷⁷ In Reeve’s case, the widespread association between women readers and seventeenth-century French romances acted as a useful way into a much more extensive discussion, encompassing Greek, medieval, and Spanish romances, as well as their later French counterparts mocked in Lennox’s *Female Quixote*. As Lisa Vargo points out, ‘romance provided [...] women in the eighteenth century [with] the opportunity to practice literary criticism’.⁷⁸ Reeve herself suggests as much in her introduction to the text, in which she rebukes ‘[t]he learned men of our own country’ who ‘have in general affected a contempt for this kind of writing, and looked upon Romances, as proper furniture only for a lady’s Library’ (p. xi). For Reeve, the gendered nature of romance reading has contributed to its critical neglect, yet this lack of male interest simultaneously sanctions her own critical commentary on the form.

Reeve’s *Progress* takes the form of a dialogue between three characters: Euphrasia, Hortensius, and Sophronia. Upon hearing Euphrasia suggest that ‘Epic Poetry’ can be

⁷⁶ Lisa Vargo, ‘Women’s Gothic Romance: Writers, Readers, and the Pleasures of the Form’, in *A Companion to Romance*, ed. Saunders, pp. 233–68 (p. 236).

⁷⁷ [Review], ‘The Progress of Romance’, *Town and Country Magazine*, 17 (Aug 1785), 428–29 (p. 428).

⁷⁸ Vargo, ‘Women’s Gothic Romance’, p. 236.

considered ‘on an equality’ with ‘old romance’ (p. 2), Hortensius demands that she explain her reasoning, and she accordingly promises to ‘trace Romance to its Origin, to follow its progress through the different periods to its declension’ (p. 8). Present as a witness to the discussion, which takes place over a course of twelve weekly meetings, is Sophronia, herself ‘well read’ in modern romances but ignorant of their more ancient counterparts (pp. 32–33). Beginning with a definition of romance, each evening covers a different period in its development, from Ancient Greek romance through to modern novels.

On the fourth evening the discussion arrives at ‘the most eminent Romances of the *middle ages*’ (p. 41, emphasis in original). This section of the *Progress* draws particularly heavily on Thomas Percy’s ‘Essay on the Ancient Metrical Romances’, published in the third volume of the *Reliques* – a debt that Reeve acknowledges in her preface.⁷⁹ Her main criticism of Percy, Warton, and Beattie, however, is that they have not paid enough attention to romances in prose. ‘Of metrical Romances they have treated largely’, she writes, ‘but with respect to those in prose, their informations have been scanty and imperfect’ (p. v). Euphrasia proposes to emulate Percy’s list of metrical romances in the *Reliques* by providing a list of the prose romances of the Middle Ages, which includes ‘Sir Lancelot du Lake’, ‘The History of King Arthur and his Knights of the round table’, ‘Sir Tristram’, ‘Sir Perceval’, ‘Le Morte d’Arthure’ and ‘Le Histoire de Sangraal’ (pp. 42–44). Showing her awareness that many of these descend from aspects of ‘Geoffrey of Monmouth’s History’ (p. 42), she adds that ‘when the art of printing became established in England, most of the old Romances were re-published that had slept many years’, including Caxton’s printing of Malory’s ‘Mort Arthure’ (p. 45).

Of the content of these romances, however, Reeve gives no further details; in fact, the *Progress* imparts few particulars concerning the romances it refers to. Twenty years earlier,

⁷⁹ See Percy, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765; facsimile repr. 1996), vol. 3, pp. i–xxiv.

Richard Hurd had freely admitted to not having read any of the ‘barbarous volumes’ of ‘old romances’ cited in his *Letters of Chivalry and Romance*, but the *English Review* leapt upon the lack of details about the content of the romances in Reeve’s text as proof that she had clearly ‘never read’, and at best, ‘evidently misunderstood’ those romances she discussed.⁸⁰ Like Dobson before her, Reeve’s foray into romance scholarship met with some strong reservations from the male critical academy. Although the *Progress* was favourably reviewed elsewhere, the *English Review* was confident that ‘every candid critic’ would subscribe to their view that ‘[t]he ignorance of the author is even extreme’.⁸¹ ‘[G]iddy and petulant vanity, a glaring want of information, and an insipid exuberance of words’ were only a few of the further complaints levelled at the text.⁸² The uneven reception of the *Progress* is reflected in its limited sales: as Richard Maxwell documents, in 1790, 300 to 400 of the 1,000 copies printed apparently remained unsold in Reeve’s possession.⁸³ Her heavy use of long extracts from Percy’s essays (often reproduced without his accompanying notes) undeniably had a negative impact on the clarity of her own arguments, but the reviewer’s insistence on Reeve’s extreme ‘ignorance’ now seem at odds with the general acknowledgement of the strength and originality of her dialogue by modern scholars, as well as the marked influence of the *Progress* on several other contemporary essays, including John Moore’s similarly titled ‘View of the Commencement and Progress of Romance’ (1797).⁸⁴

⁸⁰ [Review], ‘The Progress of Romance’, *English Review*, 5 (Jun 1785), 448–51 (p. 448).

⁸¹ [Review], ‘The Progress of Romance’, *English Review*, 448.

⁸² [Review], ‘The Progress of Romance’, *English Review*, 448.

⁸³ Richard Maxwell, ‘The Historiography of Fiction in the Romantic Period’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Fiction in the Romantic Period*, ed. Richard Maxwell and Katie Trumpener (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 7–22 (p. 10).

⁸⁴ See Monica Santini, *The Impetus of Amateur Scholarship: Discussing and Editing the Romances in Late-Eighteenth and Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), who points out that the structure of Reeve’s arguments anticipates Sir Walter Scott’s later ‘Essay on Romance’ (1834) (p. 81). Laura L. Runge, in *Gender and Language in British Literary Criticism, 1660–1790* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), also draws attention to how ‘dismissive accounts’ of Reeve’s text continued well into the nineteenth century: one such account appears in Lesley Stephen and Sidney Lee’s *Dictionary of National Biography* (see Runge, *Gender and Language*, p. 156).

Among the texts to feel Reeve's influence was Anna Letitia Barbauld's essay 'On the Origin and Progress of Novel-Writing' (1810), attached to first volume of the fifty that made up her *British Novelists* collection. Barbauld echoes Reeve's sentiments by considering various romances as 'epic[s] in prose' and giving over a portion of her discussion to 'Arthur and the knights of the Round Table' and the 'medley of historical songs, traditions and invention' associated with them, including Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History* and Wace's *Roman de Brut* (1155).⁸⁵ Overall, however, Barbauld allots little discussion to the content of the Arthurian romances, beyond noting that 'Merlin is the principal character' in the *Brut*.⁸⁶ As Richard Maxwell recognises, Reeve's *Progress* was a work of 'sustained intellectual adventurousness', and the attention it paid to the chivalric romances encouraged later writers like Barbauld to include Arthurian material, however cursorily, in their own scholarship.⁸⁷

Moreover, the *English Review* was perhaps rather too eager to announce Reeve's 'ignorance' regarding the romances she discussed. Her historical novel for children, *The Memoirs of Sir Roger de Clarendon* (1793), published eight years after the *Progress*, provides confirmation of her detailed knowledge of Malory's *Morte Darthur*. Set in the fourteenth century, Reeve's description of a medieval wedding feast features a 'harper of the West country' who provides entertainment for the company in the form of series of 'airs':

He sung the noble acts of Arthur King of Britain, and of his knights of the round table; the valiant actions of Sir Gawaine his nephew; the story of Sir Tristram and the fair Isotta; of Sir Lancelot du Lake; Sir Lukyn, and Sir Kaye: the treason of the base Sir Mordred, and the death of the great Arthur: the prophecy of Merlin, that Arthur himself, or one of his name, should one day restore the honour of Wales, and the glory of Britain, and that this blessing shall long be expected before it shall arrive.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Anna Letitia Barbauld, 'On the Origin and Progress of Novel-Writing', in *Anna Letitia Barbauld: Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft (Ormskirk: Broadview Press, 2002), pp. 377–432 (p. 382). Barbauld also mentions Reeve's *Memoirs of Sir Roger de Clarendon* (1793) and her translation of Barclay's romance, *Argenis* (1771) (pp. 393, 400).

⁸⁶ Barbauld, 'On the Origin and Progress of Novel-Writing', p. 382. Barbauld calls it the 'Brut d'Angleterre' and incorrectly gives the date of composition as 1115, rather than 1155.

⁸⁷ Maxwell, 'The Historiography of Fiction', p. 9.

⁸⁸ Clara Reeve, *Memoirs of Sir Roger de Clarendon, the natural son of Edward Prince of Wales, Commonly Called the Black Prince; With Anecdotes of Many Other Eminent Persons of the Fourteenth Century*, 3 vols (London: Hookham and Carpenter, 1793), vol. 1, pp. 36–37.

From this description, which follows broadly the order of the tales in Malory's *Arthuriad*, it would appear that Reeve had read, or at least seen enough of the *Morte Darthur* to provide a cogent summary of its contents. Later Romantic women writers would come to know very little of Malory's text, and Reeve's desire to expose young readers to Arthurian material in her fiction, as well as her promotion of the prose romances 'of the Middle Ages', signals her early superior knowledge of the Arthurian tradition.

Dobson and Reeve were both keen to foster interest in the Arthurian prose romances among their female readers, especially in relation to the Vulgate *Lancelot* and the *Morte Darthur*, but their efforts to provide a clear path to knowledge were hampered by a particularly debilitating combination of the inheritance of idiosyncratic scholarship from male predecessors and vicious attacks from the critics. Through little fault of their own, they failed to provide a set of clear instructions setting out how women could begin to access and seriously study Arthurian romances. Despite their admiration for the chivalric romances, familiar warnings about the dangers of female romance reading still remained: through the figure of Euphrasia, Reeve cautions her readers that '[i]f read indiscriminately [romances] are at best unprofitable, frequently productive of absurdities in manners and sentiments' and even 'sometimes hurtful to good morals' (p. 7). Reeve was far from suggesting that the *Morte Darthur* and other medieval romances were ideal reading for 'the female sex' (p. 101). The list of recommended 'Books for Young Ladies' positioned at the end of the *Progress* is tellingly devoid of older literary material, comprised instead of conduct books, educational tracts, and a few seventeenth-century romances (pp. 103–04).

Yet, despite the limits to the extent of Arthurian material contained in both the *Memoirs* and the *Progress*, Reeve and Dobson nevertheless contributed to the wider dissemination of the legend among female readers. Both women were remarkably aware of Arthurian texts and their position within an historical framework in ways that were seldom

replicated by another woman writer until the early decades of the nineteenth century. Finally, in more aesthetic terms, Reeve's work anticipated how women's responses to the myth would subsequently develop. By situating her text as a metaphorical journey through 'the land of Romance' (p. 9), the rationale underlying the *Progress* motions towards how, in the decades that followed, women's scholarly engagements with Arthurian material would seek the protection of the travel narrative in order to avoid the kind of critical attack to which her own work had been subjected.⁸⁹

1.3 Arthurian Ballads for Young Ladies: *Ancient Ballads* (1807) and Percy's *Reliques* (1765)

In *The Progress of Romance*, Euphrasia encourages her listeners to consult 'Dr. Percy's Essay on the old *Metrical Romances*, in which he has treated this subject, in so clear and judicious a manner, that nothing I can say is worthy to come after it' (p. 18, emphasis in original). Prefacing the third volume of the *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, Percy's 'Essay on the Ancient Metrical Romances' offered theories pertaining to their origins, form, and development, accompanied by an annotated bibliography of the thirty verse romances he knew to exist. Reeve was right to recognise the pioneering quality of Percy's essay; it was, as Arthur Johnston notes, the 'first survey in English of medieval romances' by an amateur antiquarian and clergyman, who, through the combination of his independent research and access to a large number of verse romances contained in his folio manuscript, had amassed a great deal of knowledge about them.⁹⁰ Before the turn towards republishing medieval romances in the first decade of the nineteenth century, the information pertaining to the Arthurian metrical romances in Percy's essay, as well as the six Arthurian ballads contained

⁸⁹ See Chapter 3.

⁹⁰ Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, p. 89.

in his three-volume anthology, represented some of the most accessible Arthurian material for women readers.

In 1753, the Northumberland Oxford graduate and rector Thomas Percy (1729–1811) notoriously salvaged ‘a seventeenth-century commonplace book’ from the fire of his friend, Humphrey Pitt.⁹¹ This contained numerous romances, ballads, songs, sonnets, and fragments, including four Arthurian ballads in varying states of completeness: ‘The Marriage of Sir Gawaine’; ‘The Legend of King Arthur’; ‘The Boy and the Mantle’; and ‘King Arthur’s Death’. In the course of preparing the *Reliques* for publication, Percy gathered two more Arthurian pieces, ‘Sir Lancelot du Lake’ (which, as Merriman notes, had been printed earlier in the century in a precursor to Percy’s collection, *A Collection of Old Ballads* (1723–25)), and ‘King Ryence’s Challenge’, a fifteenth-century song performed as part of the entertainments presented to Elizabeth I at Kenilworth in 1575.⁹² In addition, Percy’s ‘Essay on the old Metrical Romances’, which Reeve so admired, contained a full summary of *Libeaus Desconus* (spelt *Libius Disconius* by Percy), a fourteenth-century romance set in Arthur’s reign with Gawain’s son as its protagonist. Percy also tantalisingly revealed that his ‘folio MS.’ contained ‘many Songs and Romances about King Arthur and his knights’, adding:

In these old poems the same set of knights are always represented with the same manners and characters [...] [s]o Sir Gawain is ever courteous and gentle, Sir Kay rugged and disoblinging. &c.⁹³

By reminding readers that these texts were preserved, often in a very ‘imperfect’ form, the wider relic of the folio manuscript acted as the authorising object for the rehabilitation of

⁹¹ Nick Groom, *The Making of Percy’s Reliques* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), p. 6.

⁹² Merriman, *The Flower of Kings*, p. 94; also p. 233, n. 60.

⁹³ Percy, ‘Essay on the Ancient Metrical Romances’, in *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765; facsimile repr. 1996), vol. 3, pp. i–xxiv (pp. xix–xx).

such fragmented texts.⁹⁴ As Inga Bryden puts it, the *Reliques* ‘relegitimated the Arthurian legends as historical artefacts’.⁹⁵

In December 1807, almost fifty years after the publication of Percy’s *Reliques*, a rather less impressive-looking duodecimo volume appeared on the literary market announcing itself as *Ancient Ballads; Selected from Percy’s Collection; with Explanatory Notes, taken from Different Authors, for the Use and Entertainment of Young Persons*. Containing only a slim seventeen of Percy’s 180 pieces, *Ancient Ballads* is a fraction of the size of the *Reliques*’s weighty three tomes. This single-volume redaction was the work of an anonymous ‘lady’ who felt compelled to compile a ‘selected’ version of the influential anthology after hearing her benefactor repeatedly complain that she was ‘under the necessity of refusing [her] daughters the pleasure of reading Percy’s Collection of Ancient Ballads, on account of the great number amongst them which were unfit to meet the eye of youth’.⁹⁶ Indeed, modern readers might be inclined to agree with lady’s decorous patron. As Nick Groom has strikingly put it, ‘[t]he *Reliques* [...] welters in gore: the bloodiness of death and dismemberment incarnadines the entire three volumes, and if occasionally watered by humour or levity, it is more often deepened by a colossal amorality’.⁹⁷ For the lady editing Percy’s ballads in 1807, so pervasive was the amorality and violence that even those poems that passed her strict selection process were subject to further bowdlerization in her edition. ‘I believe you will not meet with any thing to disapprove of in this little volume’, the lady reassured her patron in the introduction to her collection, ‘for I have selected my ballads with the greatest care, and have omitted all objectionable passages’ (p. iv).

⁹⁴ Percy, ‘Essay on the Ancient Metrical Romances’, *Reliques* (1765; facsimile repr. 1996), vol. 3, p. xix.

⁹⁵ Inga Bryden, *Reinventing King Arthur: The Arthurian Legends in Victorian Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 17.

⁹⁶ “Dedication – To Mrs. ****.,” in [‘A Lady’], *Ancient Ballads; Selected from Percy’s Collection; with Explanatory Notes, taken from Different Authors, for the Use and Entertainment of Young Persons. By a Lady* (London: Vernor, Hood, and Sharpe, 1807), pp. iii–iv (p. iii). All further references are to this edition and are subsequently given in parentheses throughout the text.

⁹⁷ Groom, *The Making of Percy’s Reliques*, p. 45.

Addressed to a reading audience of ‘young persons’, the *Ancient Ballads* would appear to be, as Steve Newman notes, ‘the earliest redaction of Percy [...] for children’.⁹⁸ As well as being the first of its type, *Ancient Ballads* is also distinctly unusual in comparison to its better-known successors, such as John Gilbert’s *The Boy’s Book of Ballads* (1861) and Sidney Lanier’s *The Boy’s Percy* (1882), both of which firmly connected Percy’s texts with the growth of a boy’s ‘manful’ character.⁹⁹ In contrast, by virtue of its being edited by a ‘lady’ and produced in response to the needs of a mother and her daughters, contemporary reviewers largely assumed that the *Ancient Ballads* was directed towards young women. *The Monthly Review* considered it to be a ‘very pretty as well as very innocent’ book that would ‘appear to great advantage in any young lady’s library’.¹⁰⁰ Likewise, the *Anti-Jacobin* admired the lady’s ‘very judicious selection from Percy’s Ancient Ballads’ and thought it altogether a ‘very elegant volume’, as well as one with clear educational benefits:

These Ballads will be found very proper for young ladies, to convey to them some knowledge of the style and manner of life of their forefathers, as they will probably interest their feelings enough to prevent their modern artificial blandishments from mocking the simplicity and innocence of ancient language and sentiment.¹⁰¹

Under the umbrella of the separation between past and present, the reviewer arranges a number of further oppositions: between ‘ancient’ and ‘modern’, simplicity and artifice, ‘forefathers’ and ‘young ladies’. Masculinity is associated with simplicity and the innocence of a natural past, whereas femininity is linked to modernity, artifice and flattery. For the reviewer, women readers are naturally inclined to ridicule ancient texts on account of their gender; the ballads themselves, as the work of patriarchal ‘forefathers’, are inadvertently positioned as part of a masculine literary tradition that modern women will struggle to

⁹⁸ Steve Newman, *Ballad Collection, Lyric, and the Canon: The Call of the Popular from the Restoration to the New Criticism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), p. 259.

⁹⁹ John Gilbert, ed., *The Boy’s Book of Ballads* (London: Bell and Daldy, 1861). Sidney Lanier, ed., *The Boy’s Percy: Being Old Ballads of War, Adventure and Love from Bishop Thomas Percy’s Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1882), pp. vii–xxxi (p. xxx).

¹⁰⁰ [Review], ‘Ancient Ballads; selected from Percy’s Collection’, *Monthly Review*, 58 (Feb 1809), 212.

¹⁰¹ [Review], ‘Ancient Ballads, selected from Percy’s Collection’, *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine*, 31:123 (Sept 1808), 57–58 (58).

understand. This is why the lady's carefully managed collection of medieval ballads – selected particularly to appeal to ladies' 'feelings' – is deemed to be 'very proper'.

Advertised as containing texts 'selected from Percy's Collection', the full title of *Ancient Ballads* placed the roots of its origin firmly in the bishop of Dromore's earlier work. The lady's choices for *Ancient Ballads* show that she, like Percy, held an immediate preference for the martial, Northern ballads. Like the *Reliques*, the *Ancient Ballads* opens with 'The Ballad of Chevy-Chase', and retains a further two poems describing the exploits of the Northumberland Percys ('The Rising in the North' and 'Northumberland betrayed by Douglas'). Ballads connected to the romance tradition also dominate the lady's slimmed-down collection which contains 'King Estmere', 'Valentine and Ursine', 'Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne', as well as four of Percy's original six Arthurian poems. The lady also seems to have been keen to preserve the hidden national diversity in Percy's ostensibly 'English' collection, and includes two popular Scottish examples: 'Hardyknute' and 'Sir Patrick Spence'.

When arranging the *Reliques*, Percy had carefully positioned 'more modern attempts in the same kind of writing' at the end of each volume in order to 'atone for the rudeness of the more obsolete poems'.¹⁰² In her much shorter collection, the lady abandons Percy's chronological structure in favour of a more thematic arrangement. As a single-volume work, it is inevitable that items which previously appeared in separate books in Percy's three-volume anthology achieve new and greater proximity in the *Ancient Ballads*, but it would appear that the editor carefully rearranged Percy's items to highlight similarities between

¹⁰² Thomas Percy, 'Preface', to *The Reliques of Ancient English Poetry: consisting of Old Heroic Ballads, Songs and other pieces of our earlier poets; together with some few of later date*, 4th edn, 3 vols (London: John Nichols for J. and C. Rivington, 1794), vol. 1, pp. viii–xx (p. xiv). As Groom notes, this edition was published in 1795, though 1794 appears on the title page (see Groom, 'The Formation of Percy's *Reliques* [Introduction]', in Percy, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, with an introduction by Nick Groom, 3 vols (1765; facsimile repr. 1996), vol. 1, pp. 1–68 (p. 2)). The 1794 fourth edition of the *Reliques* is hereafter used for reference throughout this section of the chapter, as it was the most recent at the time when the lady was compiling her version (a fifth edition appeared in 1812). The presence of editorial material from this edition in the *Ancient Ballads* strongly suggests that the 1794 edition was the lady's working text. All further references to the *Reliques*, unless otherwise stated, are to the 1794 edition and are given in parentheses in the text.

individual texts. For example, ‘The Heir of Linne’ (from Percy’s first volume), a cautionary tale that describes how the ‘unthrifty’ laird of Linne loses and eventually regains his estate, appears immediately before the avaricious tale of ‘Gernutus, the Jew of Venice’ (from volume two), an analogue to the pound-of-flesh plot told in Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*. When Percy compiled the *Reliques*, he placed ‘Sir Lancelot du Lake’ in his first volume under the category of ‘Ballads that illustrate Shakespeare’, separated from the other ‘Ballads on King Arthur, &c.’ which otherwise appeared all together in volume three. In her edition, the lady simply collates her Arthurian specimens, uniting ‘Sir Lancelot’ with ‘The Marriage of Sir Gawaine’, ‘King Ryence’s Challenge’, and ‘King Arthur’s Death’ to form one group at the centre of her volume (pp. 88–130). In the *Reliques*, the reader does not encounter Percy’s main group of five Arthurian ballads until almost the end of the anthology, but in the lady’s abridgement the Arthurian specimens are given pride of place and account for almost a fifth of her content.¹⁰³ Their centrality in her redaction for ‘young persons’ in part reflects a general association between the Arthurian story and childhood reading that was already in evidence; as Roger Simpson points out, Robert Southey read Malory when at Westminster school between 1788 and 1792.¹⁰⁴ Southey, however, held a firm conception of *Le Morte Darthur* as a ‘book for boys’, whereas the lady’s strong preference for Arthurian material in her collection for her patron’s daughters suggests that she deemed the legend to be equally suitable reading matter for young ladies.¹⁰⁵

Alongside the ballads themselves, the *Ancient Ballads* also includes what the lady describes as ‘a few explanatory notes for the information of [...] young readers’ (p. vi). In her

¹⁰³ Arthurian material covers forty-two of the 211 pages of *Ancient Ballads* (pp. 88–130), equating to 20%, compared with 4%, or forty-eight pages out of 1324, in Percy’s three-volume *Reliques* (vol. 1, pp. 214–19, vol. 3, pp. 1–41). (Figures based on the 1794 edition.)

¹⁰⁴ Roger Simpson, ‘“Revisiting Cramalot”: An Arthurian Theme in the Correspondence of William Taylor and Robert Southey’, *Studies in Medievalism*, 4 (1992), 143–60 (143).

¹⁰⁵ Robert Southey, ‘Introduction’, to [Sir Thomas Malory], *The Byrth, Lyf, and Actes of Kyng Arthur; of his noble knyghtes of the rounde table* [etc.], 2 vols (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1817), vol. 1, pp. i–xxxix (p. xxviii). See also Chapter 1, 1.5 below for further discussion of Southey’s conception of *Le Morte Darthur* as a boy’s text.

detailed analysis of Lanier's editorial approach to *The Boy's Percy*, Marya DeVoto points out that the substantial scholarly apparatus of essays, footnotes, and often lengthy headnotes to individual ballads in the *Reliques* clearly advertised Percy's volumes as an 'antiquarian recovery project', but that such a myriad of paratextual additions were considerably 'less appropriate for the modern child'.¹⁰⁶ Quite logically, then, *Ancient Ballads* contains far less critical material and apparatus than the *Reliques*: gone are Percy's introductory essays to each volume, as well as a substantial proportion of his footnotes and introductory headnotes. Percy systematically prefaced each item in the consciously erudite *Reliques* with some form of commentary (sometimes a single paragraph, but often stretching to several pages) elucidating details of the poem's origin, content, location, and editorial treatment. In the lady's text, only ten of her seventeen ballads merit their own scholarly introductions, which are compiled by extracting select passages from Percy's equivalents. The *Monthly Review* noticed another missing paratextual feature: *Ancient Ballads* appeared without a contents page.¹⁰⁷ Hence Percy's scholarship was not only substantially reduced, but the lady's entire text was far less searchable and readable. Occasional glosses of archaic words and phrases were added to help younger readers with some of the more challenging Middle English, but this, like the lady's approach to headnotes, was an uneven practice. While up to six words might be glossed on a page for 'The Ballad of Chevy-Chase', only three words are given similar treatment throughout the entirety of 'King Arthur's Death'. Admittedly, the Northern dialect of 'Chevy-Chase' makes it a more challenging text for any reader than 'King Arthur's Death' and thus the poem may be deserving of more glosses, but reviewers still felt that *Ancient Ballads* needed to do far more to make Percy's texts fully accessible for younger readers, pointing out

¹⁰⁶ Marya DeVoto, 'The Hero as Editor: Sidney Lanier's Medievalism and the Science of Manhood', *Studies in Medievalism*, 9 (1999), 148–70 (152).

¹⁰⁷[Review], 'Ancient Ballads; selected from Percy's Collection', *Monthly Review*, 212.

that ‘for children, indeed, [the *Reliques*] was never designed; but neither is this selection, in which the old orthography is preserved, by any means level to their comprehensions’.¹⁰⁸

While the reduction of some of Percy’s more copious notes and annotations was undoubtedly necessary to fit the material for a younger audience, the lady’s contractions in the pursuit of simplicity often produce rather confusing results. When Percy edited ‘The Marriage of Sir Gawaine’ he added a note to the ballad’s description of the loathly lady ‘clad in red scarlette’ observing that this was ‘a common phrase in our old writers’, and citing as proof the similarly ‘scarlet red’ clothing of the Wife of Bath in Chaucer’s prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* (*Reliques*, vol. 3, p. 15).¹⁰⁹ In the *Ancient Ballads*, a footnote appears at the same point in the poem, but its meaning and function are less than clear: the female editor’s equivalent merely reads ‘so the original’ (p. 102). It is possible, perhaps, that rejecting Percy’s (incorrect) hypothesis that the ballad was Chaucer’s source, the female editor wished to assert the *Wife of Bath’s Tale* as the ‘original’ upon which the ballad was based, but ultimately the brevity and obscurity of the note renders it comparatively useless to a child reader.

In addition to the truncated and often unclear notes, indications of any ‘supplements’ or additions that Percy had made to the ballads he found in his mutilated folio were also rendered invisible in the lady’s edition. Without Percy’s headnote to ‘The Heir of Linne’, young readers of the poem in the *Ancient Ballads* encountered the text unaware that several ‘breaches and defects’ in the manuscript had ‘rendered the insertion of supplemental stanzas necessary’ (*Reliques*, vol. 2, p. 128). Also printed without a headnote, ‘Hardyknute’ appeared simply subtitled (as it is in Percy) ‘a Scottish fragment’, without the attribution of the poem to Lady Wardlaw that accompanied the poem in the *Reliques* from 1767 onwards (*Reliques*,

¹⁰⁸ [Review], ‘Ancient Ballads; selected from Percy’s Collection’, *Annual Review and History of Literature*, 7 (Jan 1808), 474.

¹⁰⁹ See Geoffrey Chaucer, ‘The General Prologue’, to *The Canterbury Tales*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), Part I, l. 456.

vol. 2, p. 96). The treatment of ‘The Marriage of Sir Gawaine’ provides another good example of the lady’s lack of interest in either the origin or the authenticity of Percy’s texts. Following repeated complaints from an outraged Joseph Ritson, Percy had finally added a transcript of the fragmentary Arthurian poem to the fourth edition of the *Reliques* published in 1794.¹¹⁰ Yet despite having access to the now-published fragment, when the female editor published her version of the text in 1807, she simply presented Percy’s former version (presumably less objectionable because more complete). Like ‘The Heir of Linne’, ‘The Marriage of Sir Gawaine’ appears without an introductory headnote in the *Ancient Ballads* and so again none of the ballad’s complex textual history was explained.

In her volume’s dedication, the editor had openly advertised that some of her selections had warranted close editing to ensure the removal of ‘all objectionable passages’ (p. iv). Made mostly for the sake of propriety, often these changes were minor and of little consequence to the overall narrative of the ballad; for example, in ‘King Ryence’s Challenge’, the poem’s original description of ‘Guenever the gay’ (*Reliques*, vol. 3:, pp. 26–27, l. 3) becomes, in the lady’s edition, ‘Guenever the royall’ (p. 116). Other modifications, however, were both more manipulative and more subtle. In ‘Sir Lancelot du Lake’, which describes Lancelot’s fight against the villainous knight Sir Tarquin, Lancelot eventually gains the victory when he strikes his opponent’s ‘necke in two’ (*Reliques*, vol. 1, pp. 214–19, l. 121). In the lady’s version of the poem, Tarquin’s gruesome beheading is cleverly reconfigured: the problematic ‘in two’ is replaced with the homonymous ‘into’ (p. 96). Subsequently, no heads are cleaved from bodies in the *dénouement* to the lady’s version of ‘Sir Lancelot du Lake’, as Lancelot achieves his victory by delivering his foe a slightly more restrained stab in the neck.

¹¹⁰ See Groom, *The Making of Percy’s Reliques*, p. 227; also Bertrand H. Bronson, *Joseph Ritson: Scholar-at-Arms*, 2 vols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1938), vol. 2, p. 567.

Indeed, the violence endemic to ‘Sir Lancelot du Lake’ makes it somewhat surprising that the lady chose to retain such a high proportion of the Arthurian ballads from the *Reliques* in her sanitized collection. Recent commentators have tended to emphasize the ‘coarseness’ of Percy’s Arthurian ballads; Groom summarises their content as a lively mix of ‘sexual politics and adultery, sexual misdeeds (lewdly described), and cat fights’.¹¹¹ The lady chose not to include the lewdest ballad of the set, ‘The Boy and the Mantle’, in which a courtly chastity test ends with Arthur pronounced a ‘cuckold’ and Guinevere ‘a bitch and a witch / And a whore bold’ (*Reliques*, vol. 3, pp. 1–11, ll. 150, 147–48). ‘The Legend of King Arthur’ was also left out, though probably more for reasons of space than on account of any particularly objectionable content.¹¹²

Just as bawdy as ‘The Boy and the Mantle’, however, was ‘The Marriage of Sir Gawaine’, which rather more surprisingly was retained in the lady’s ‘instructive and entertaining’ edition (p. iv). Beginning with a typical interruption at court by a damsel abused by a villainous baron, the first part of the poem describes Arthur’s quest to appease his aggressor by uncovering what ‘women most desire’ (p. 101; *Reliques*, vol. 3, pp. 11–24, l. 70). The baron’s dialogue is pitted with crude language that the editor felt it imperative to censor. Single words are regularly substituted for more agreeable alternatives; the baron calls Arthur a ‘cuckold kinge’ in Percy’s version (*Reliques*, vol. 3, p. 13, l. 39), which is changed to ‘boasting kinge’ by the lady (p. 99), and similarly ‘swore’ (*Reliques*, vol. 3, p. 17, l. 150) becomes the more polite ‘sayd’ (p. 106), and ‘whore’ (*Reliques*, vol. 3, p. 17, l. 152) the more acceptable ‘jade’ (p. 106). As the spelling of the inserted ‘sayd’ suggests, the lady both antiquated and modernized the spelling of Percy’s texts as she thought appropriate.

The second part of the ballad required the most pervasive changes due to its increasingly sexualized content. After the marriage takes place between Gawain and the

¹¹¹ Groom, *The Making of Percy’s Reliques*, p. 55.

¹¹² ‘The Legend of King Arthur’ provides a first-person summary of Arthur’s life; thus, the poem’s latter stanzas overlap to a certain extent with the narrative of ‘King Arthur’s Death.’

loathly lady who provides Arthur with the answer to the riddle, the narrative culminates in a climactic scene set in their ‘wed-bed’ (*Reliques*, vol. 3, p. 22, l. 93). Determined to avoid such a backdrop of sexual intimacy, in the lady’s text, Gawain and the lady simply converse at ‘home’, (p. 111) where, rather than ‘lying’ next to her newly wedded knight (*Reliques*, vol. 3, p. 22, l. 110), she is more properly ‘sitting there by his side’ (p. 112). Omitted altogether from the *Ancient Ballads* is the stanza describing the couple’s enjoyment of one another between the sheets:

Sir Gawaine kiss’d that lady faire,
Lying upon the sheete:
And swore, as he was a true knighte,
The spice was never soe sweete. (*Reliques*, vol. 3, p. 22, ll. 105–08)

Presumably, this stanza was so riddled with sexual references that the lady came to the conclusion that its problematic four lines were best left out altogether.

These changes to the narrative of ‘The Marriage of Sir Gawaine’, made in pursuit of the amelioration of its sexual content, result in a very different poem. The lady’s appeal to Gawain to choose whether to see her beautiful either ‘by night, or else by day’ (*Reliques*, vol. 3, p. 23, l. 119) becomes, in the *Ancient Ballads*, a choice between her appearance ‘at home or else abroad’ (p. 112). Couched in these terms, Gawain’s deliberation between having her appear ‘foule still in my house’ or ‘foule in companie’ (p. 112) (in Percy ‘foule still in the night’ and ‘foule by daye’ (*Reliques*, vol. 3:, p. 23, ll. 121, 124)), is recast in terms that do more to reflect eighteenth-century ideas about the privacy of the home against more public spaces, than the original ballad’s more coarse association of the night with sexual freedom, and the day with public propriety.

The various scholarly weaknesses of the lady’s edition did not pass unnoticed by contemporary reviewers. The *Eclectic Review* remained sceptical about the educational benefits of the collection: ‘We do not think [...] that this particular species of reading is peculiarly adapted to improve the minds of youth, either by exalting their sentiments,

expanding their conceptions, or refining their taste; and better ways unquestionably will be found of providing for their amusement'.¹¹³ Unsure whether children, of any gender, should be exposed to Britain's early poetry, the comments of the *Eclectic Review* are unusually devoid of any of the preconceived ideas about 'proper' feminine reading that characterise much of the critical commentary on the volume. A particularly savage account in Arthur Aiken's *Annual Review* began by classifying the *Ancient Ballads* as a 'very foolish and paltry book' compiled 'for the benefit of some very delicate lady'.¹¹⁴ The remainder of the review pointed up various further shortcomings: '[n]either taste nor judgement is displayed in the choice of pieces inserted', proclaimed the reviewer, while 'the notes are very trifling, and the printing very inaccurate'.¹¹⁵ Finally, the very appearance of *Ancient Ballads* was declared 'injurious to the memory of the late respectable Bishop of Dromore'.¹¹⁶ Holding the lady's text up to the standard of Percy's *Reliques*, the *Annual Review* found it distinctly wanting.

Yet to dismiss the lady's *Ancient Ballads* on account of its faulty scholarship would, in many ways, repeat the anti-feminist criticisms of the writer for the *Annual Review*. While the above discussion illuminates some of the limits of the lady's scholarship and her 'selections', it distracts attention away from the numerous similarities between Percy's and the lady's editorial approaches. Percy's late acquisition of the Countess of Northumberland as patron for the *Reliques* in 1764 had immediately prompted him to consider his 'ancient' content in a new light. As he explained in a letter to Sir David Dalrymple, Lord Hailes: 'After a lady had accepted of the Book I was obliged to cancel all the more indelicate pieces and substitute others more inoffensive'.¹¹⁷ In a bid to temper some of the collection's more lewd

¹¹³ [Review], 'Ancient Ballads; selected from Percy's Collection', *Eclectic Review*, 5:1 (1809), 489.

¹¹⁴ [Review], 'Ancient Ballads; selected from Percy's Collection', *Annual Review*, 474. Emphasis in original.

¹¹⁵ [Review], 'Ancient Ballads; selected from Percy's Collection', *Annual Review*, 474.

¹¹⁶ [Review], 'Ancient Ballads; selected from Percy's Collection', *Annual Review*, 474.

¹¹⁷ Percy to Dalrymple, 16 December 1764, in *The Correspondence of Thomas Percy and David Dalrymple, Lord Hailes*, ed. A.F. Falconer (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1954), vol. 4 of *The Percy Letters*, general ed. Cleanth Brooks and David Nichol Smith, 16 vols, vol. 4, pp. 91–92. Also cited in Groom, *The Making of Percy's Reliques*, p. 223.

content, Percy made the last-minute decision to cut fifteen already-printed poems from the anthology.¹¹⁸ He also embarked on some significant restructuring. The group of five Arthurian ballads that were originally due to appear at the front of the first volume were now moved to the beginning of the third, with the dual benefit of privileging the ballads concerning the Countess's ancestors, the Northumbrian Percys, and lessening the prominence of the bawdy Arthurian poems.¹¹⁹ With the cancellations and this new structure in place, Percy could confidently assure his readers that 'great care has been taken to admit nothing immoral or indecent' (*Reliques*, vol. 1, p. xx). Nearly fifty years later, the editor of the *Ancient Ballads* made the same claims for her 'selected' edition.

There are yet further parallels. In her dedication, the lady was careful to mention that she had compiled her 'little volume' in her 'leisure hours' (p. iii), but before judging this as evidence of the lady's lack of scholarly ambition, it is worth remembering that Percy had made much the same apology for the *Reliques*. Towards the end of his own preface the bishop confessed: '[t]o prepare [the *Reliques*] for press has been the amusement of now and then a vacant hour amidst the leisure and retirement of rural life, and hath only served as a relaxation from graver studies' (*Reliques*, vol. 1, p. xx). The lady's substantial 'omissions' and alterations to her texts also pale in comparison to Percy's more numerous and sustained 'improvements' from his mutilated folio. As Groom summarises:

Percy [...] compiled single texts of ballads from a variety of unacknowledged versions, and liberally rewrote these collages to suit the taste of a late eighteenth-century readership. Although noteworthy interpolations were often pinned with quotation marks (thus “”), many minor revisions, and some major rewritings, were rendered completely invisible.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Groom, *The Making of Percy's Reliques*, pp. 223–25.

¹¹⁹ Groom, *The Making of Percy's Reliques*, p. 223. Similarly, David Matthews surmises that 'the change may have been made because Percy felt that it was important to spare the countess finding, in what was originally to have been the anthology's opening poem, a stanza on Queen Guenevere describing her as "a bitch and a witch, / And a whore bold."' David Matthews, *The Making of Middle English, 1765–1910* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 11.

¹²⁰ Groom, *The Making of Percy's Reliques*, pp. 8–9.

In fact, one of the changes Percy made to the end of ‘Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne’ altered the climax of the narrative in much the same way as the lady’s later adjustments revised the ending of ‘Sir Lancelot du Lake’. In the folio copy of the ballad, Little John shoots an arrow at the Sheriff that ‘did cleave his head in twinn’, yet in the printed *Reliques* the same line declares that Robin’s right-hand man ‘shott him into the “backe”-syde’ (*Reliques*, vol. 1, pp. 81–95, l. 236).¹²¹ (The more prudent lady opts simply for ‘he shott him into the side’ (p. 60).) Multiple scholars have observed how Percy’s position as a ‘man of taste’ dictated the shape of the *Reliques*.¹²² His own alterations were very much in accordance with the type of changes that the female editor of his text, fifty years later, deemed necessary in order to make the same ballads fit for her patron’s daughters. Both Percy and the lady handled and selected their texts based on similarly discerning principles.

Rather than interpreting the lady’s limited scholarship as imposing a limit on the usefulness of her text, it is perhaps more productive to read her departure from the familiar structures of the eighteenth-century ballad collection, with its dense textual apparatus of ‘introductions, headnotes, footnotes, appendices, dissertations, [and] commentaries’, as a move towards a new or different kind of (feminine) antiquarianism.¹²³ Ann Wierda Rowland has suggested that such paratextual elements perform an important consolatory as well as elucidatory function: ‘The impressive scholarly apparatus that the ballad revival bequeaths to British literature is, in fact, a way of *not* reading or responding to the contents of popular

¹²¹ This alteration is examined in detail by Bronson in *Ritson: Scholar-at-Arms*, vol. 2, p. 572. For a transcript of the poem in the original folio, see *Bishop Percy’s Folio Manuscript*, ed. John W. Hales and Frederick J. Furnivall, 3 vols (London: N. Trübner and Co., 1867–68), vol. 2, pp. 227–37 (p. 237).

¹²² As well as Groom’s work, see Leah Dennis, ‘Thomas Percy: Antiquarian vs. Man of Taste’, *PMLA*, 57:1 (1942), 140–52; Gwendolyn A. Morgan, ‘Percy, the Antiquarians, the Ballad, and the Middle Ages’, *Studies in Medievalism*, 7 (1995), 22–32; and Matthews’s chapter, ‘“Barbarous Productions: The Making of Thomas Percy”, in *The Making of Middle English*, pp. 3–24.

¹²³ Maureen N. McLane, *Balladeering, Minstrelsy, and the Making of British Romantic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 45.

literature'.¹²⁴ *Ancient Ballads*, on the other hand, inherits a portion of this scholarly apparatus, but also substantially reduces it. Thus, the lady's collection illustrates the other side of Rowland's statement: without a reinforcing structure of scholarly appendages, *Ancient Ballads*, as the less 'impressive' ballad collection, forces its young readers to read and respond to the often sensational material of Percy's most popular ballads.¹²⁵

In particular, the *Ancient Ballads* is responsible for bringing young woman readers into greater proximity with the Arthurian ballads in the *Reliques*. Marion Wynne-Davies credits Lady Charlotte Guest with 'the first female rewording of the Arthurian narrative in English'; however, though not translations *per se*, the substantial editorial changes that the anonymous lady makes to both 'Sir Lancelot du Lake' and 'The Marriage of Sir Gawaine' demonstrate that women were 'rewording', and taking an interest in the presentation of, Arthurian texts several decades before the first of Guest's *Mabinogion* instalments appeared in 1838.¹²⁶ The new centrality of Percy's Arthurian ballads in the *Ancient Ballads* impressed the importance of these poems upon the volume's young female readers, and encouraged at least one young woman writer to pen her own poetical reflection on the legend in response.

1.4 The Legacy of the *Ancient Ballads*: Louisa Stuart Costello's 'A Dream' (1815)

Did young women read the *Ancient Ballads*? Certainly, not all parents and guardians hid Percy's *Reliques* from their young daughters in quite the same manner as the lady's prudish patron.¹²⁷ With her father's permission, Mary Russell Mitford (b. 1787) began reading

¹²⁴ Ann Wierda Rowland, "'The fause nourice sang": Childhood, Child Murder, and the Formalism of the Scottish Ballad Revival', in *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism*, ed. Leith Davis, Ian Duncan and Janet Sorensen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 225–44 (p. 227). Emphasis in original.

¹²⁵ McLane, *Balladeering, Minstrelsy, and the Making of British Romantic Poetry*, p. 45. Rowland, "'The fause nourice sang'", p. 227.

¹²⁶ Marion Wynne-Davies, *Women and Arthurian Literature: Seizing the Sword* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), p. 111.

¹²⁷ This is not to say that the policing behavior of the lady's benefactor was completely isolated. In 1881, the American editor Sidney Lanier told a very similar anecdote to his publisher, Charles Scribner, pertaining to his

Percy's 'charming volumes' at the very young age of 'four or five'.¹²⁸ 'King Estmere', 'The Children of the Wood', and those ballads describing 'the Loves of King Arthur's Court' subsequently became her favourite childhood reading.¹²⁹ Indeed, in the course of reviewing the *Ancient Ballads*, the commentator for the *Annual Review* defended Percy's volumes by affirming that 'it does not appear to us that his collection is likely to be at all injurious to young women of correct and really virtuous minds'.¹³⁰ Percy himself also encouraged a female readership of his work. When the Scottish poet Anne Bannerman drew on the *Reliques* for her collection of Gothic ballads, *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* (1802), which includes her Arthurian poem, 'The Prophecy of Merlin', Percy sent her a 'superbly bound' copy of the *Reliques* as a token of his appreciation.¹³¹

As well as the ballads themselves, Percy's scholarship had an equally influential effect on women's literary criticism, including their knowledge of Arthurian literature. In her essay entitled 'Cursory Remarks on the Spirit of the Old Ballads' (1825), the writer and poet Maria Jane Jewsbury referred to Percy's two versions of 'The Marriage of Sir Gawaine' to illustrate that many of the 'old ballads' were 'considered abridgements of the longer metrical romances'.¹³² The *Reliques* could even function as a touring lady's guidebook to British sites; when the American poet Lydia Sigourney visited the English border town of Carlisle on 31

decision to compile *The Boy's Percy* (1882): 'I recently discovered my three boys reading this book [Percy's *Reliques*] with the uttermost avidity, – even in the old form – and had much grief in finding myself obliged to hide it from them, because it contained so much matter that no-one, boy or man, should read' (Sidney Lanier to Charles Scribner, 19 April 1881, in *The Centennial Edition of the Works of Sidney Lanier*, ed. C.R. Anderson and A.H. Starke, 10 vols (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1963), vol. 10, p. 302; also cited in DeVoto, 'The Hero as Editor', 162). Contrary to the earlier practices of the female editor of the *Ancient Ballads*, Lanier actually increased the scholarly apparatus accompanying the ballads in his redaction. For a detailed discussion of Lanier's editorial treatment of Percy's text, see DeVoto, 'The Hero as Editor', 148–70.

¹²⁸ Mary Russell Mitford, 'My Earliest Recollections: Percy's *Reliques*', in *Recollections of a Literary Life; or, Books, Places and People*, new edn, 2 vols (London: Richard Bentley, 1857), vol. 1, pp. 1–17 (p. 3).

¹²⁹ Mitford, 'My Earliest Recollections', vol. 1, p. 13.

¹³⁰ [Review], 'Ancient Ballads; selected from Percy's Collection', *Annual Review*, 474.

¹³¹ [Anne Bannerman], *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* (London: Vernor and Hood, 1802), p. 142. Percy's 'present' of the *Reliques* to Bannerman is recorded in the correspondence between Percy and the editor Robert Anderson. See Anderson to Percy 26 July 1804, in *The Correspondence of Thomas Percy and Robert Anderson*, ed. W.E.K. Anderson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), vol. 9 of *The Percy Letters*, general ed. Cleanth Brooks and A.F. Falconer, 16 vols, vol. 9, p. 153.

¹³² Maria Jane Jewsbury, 'Cursory Remarks on the Spirit of the Old Ballads', in *Phantasmagoria: or, Sketches of Life and Literature*, 2 vols (London: Hurst, Robinson and Co., 1825), vol. 1, pp. 279–309 (p. 289).

August 1840, she immediately connected the place with the ‘sacred festivities of olden time’ she had read of in Percy’s ‘The Boy and the Mantle’, the revised version of which begins: ‘In Carlisle dwelt King Arthur [...] and there he kept his Christmas’.¹³³ This range of responses would seem to confirm that Percy’s *Reliques* was a largely accessible text for women writers from the 1780s onwards, as well as a popular source of information about the Arthurian legend.

However, for other women (who were not as lucky as Bannerman was to receive a copy of the *Reliques* direct from the author), Percy’s volumes were harder to come by. The writer and translator Mary Howitt had to wait until her marriage in 1821 to gain access to ‘Percy’s Relics of Ancient English Poetry’, which she had tantalizingly ‘heard of but till then never seen’.¹³⁴ Substantially smaller than the *Reliques*, and relatively affordable at four shillings and sixpence, the *Ancient Ballads* was a well-placed cheaper alternative to Percy’s full anthology (in comparison, as Groom notes, the 1765 edition of the *Reliques* sold for half a guinea).¹³⁵ Born in the same year, both Howitt and her contemporary Louisa Stuart Costello (1799–1870) were part of a second generation of Romantic women writers who were ideally placed to encounter the lady’s abridged version of the *Reliques* in their formative years. In particular, we know that Costello read the *Ancient Ballads* closely because she included an extract from the text in her debut volume of poetry, *The Maid of the Cyprus Isle and Other Poems* (1815), published when she was just sixteen years old. Material from the *Ancient Ballads* provided the young poet with the inspiration for ‘A Dream’, a fifty-seven line

¹³³ Lydia Sigourney, ‘Carlisle’, in *Pleasant Memories of Pleasant Lands* (Boston: James Monroe and Co., 1842), pp. 56–64 (p. 62). ‘The Boy and the Mantle, as revised and altered by a modern hand’, *Reliques*, vol. 3, pp. 340–49 (ll. 1–6).

¹³⁴ Mary Howitt, ‘Preface’, to *Ballads, and Other Poems* (London: Longman, Browne, Green and Longmans, 1847), pp. v–viii (pp. v–vi). The *Reliques* became the first book Howitt borrowed from her husband’s library.

¹³⁵ See [Review], ‘Ancient Ballads; selected from Percy’s Collection’, *Monthly Review*, 212, and Groom, ‘The Formation of Percy’s *Reliques* [Introduction]’, in Percy, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (facsimile repr. of 1765 edition; 1996), vol. 1, pp. 1–68 (p. 2).

narrative poem in which a somnolent narrator is magically transported to an aerial world and given a rare glimpse of King Arthur.

‘A Dream’ is prefaced by an introductory note alerting readers to the ‘popular tradition in Wales, that King Arthur did not die, but was carried away by fairies to some place, where he will remain some time, and then return to earth again, and reign in as great authority and power as ever’.¹³⁶ Bar a few slight variations and additions, these words are lifted straight from the explanatory headnote to ‘King Arthur’s Death’ in *Ancient Ballads*. They also appear in the same position in Percy’s volume, as it was from there that the female editor extracted them for her edition. In both the lady’s and Percy’s texts, the lines are attributed to Raphael Holinshed, but, where Percy’s fellow antiquarians would have been able to decode the citation of ‘Holinshed, B.5. C.14’ (p. 56; *Reliques*, vol. 3, p. 28), the lady’s younger readers would have had little idea what text was being referred to.¹³⁷ By the time Holinshed’s words are attached to Costello’s poem, the extract has been thoroughly divorced from its original authorship and attributed solely to the *Ancient Ballads*. The unattributed quotation that prefaces Costello’s poem demonstrates how intermediary texts like the *Ancient Ballads* – marketed specifically towards ‘young ladies’ – placed women readers and writers at an increased distance from Arthurian sources. Given this context, it is hardly surprising that Costello’s poem also situates itself at a distance from the medieval, or Arthurian world.

‘A Dream’ makes no attempt to portray its medieval subject in an archaized style; rather, it is a composition firmly in the tradition of the Romantic visionary poem. Written in heroic couplets, the poem begins with a lyrical description of its first-person speaker lying languidly on the bank of ‘a wandering stream’ amidst a meadow of ‘buds of scarlet poppy’ (ll. 1, 4). In the idealized surroundings of this opium-heavy Eden, the speaker is coaxed into

¹³⁶ Louisa Stuart Costello, ‘A Dream’, in *The Maid of the Cyprus Isle and Other Poems* (London: Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1815), pp. 56–58 (p. 56).

¹³⁷ For the original text, see Raphael Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, 2nd edn, 6 vols (London: [Henry Denham], 1587), vol. 2, p. 92.

sleep by the lulls of ‘Sweet Morpheus’ (l. 3). The parallels with the narrative, if not the form, of Coleridge’s later ‘Kubla Khan’ (1816) continue as Costello’s somnambulant dreamer experiences a fantastic vision: a mysterious ‘fairy form’ rises from the nearby stream and escorts the dreamer to ‘distant worlds unseen by mortal eye’ (ll. 8–10). Their destination is a Romantic fairyland populated by nymphs and sylphs where ‘soft airs of music play’ (l. 14). There is little of the medieval in Costello’s poem, but this is perhaps partly understandable considering that the Arthurian texts in the *Ancient Ballads* had been shorn of much of their medieval language and mood in the process of the lady’s modernization.

Now magically ‘suspended in the skies’ by an ‘airy chain’, the dreamer spies a warrior asleep on an idyllic ‘flowry plain’ below (ll. 11–12). When asked about the identity of the sleeping man, the guide answers:

The knight thou see’st is well to mortals known,
 And once in triumph sat on Britain’s throne;
 By friends admir’d, and dreaded by his foes –
 What infant but the name of Arthur knows? (ll. 21–24)

The guide’s observation that King Arthur is well known to young children again seems to reflect the fact that Costello herself encountered Percy’s Arthurian ballads in a text produced for the ‘amusement’ of ‘children’ (p. iii). Her version of Arthur, then, was already strongly associated with childhood reading. Indeed, much is infantilized in the first half of the poem, including the sleeping Arthur. As the dreamer watches, the king’s disturbed ‘slumbers’ are ‘sooth’d’ by an ‘attending train’ of nurse-like sylphs who mind him until he ‘clos’d his eyes and sunk to rest again’ (ll. 17–18). In the same way that *Ancient Ballads* placed Arthurian material in a new juvenile context, Costello places Arthur in a nursery-like environment in her poem.

As well as an infantilised figure, Costello’s Arthur is also intangible, located in ‘distant worlds’ (l. 10) and only observed by the dreamer from a distance set and maintained by the ‘beauteous fairy guide’ (l. 19). The guide continues to speak on the subject of Arthur’s

death, but offers the dreamer little in the way of definitive answers, proclaiming: ‘none below know how the hero died; / Conjecture only has the tale supplied’ (ll. 25–26). But instead of recounting, from ‘King Arthur’s Death’, Arthur’s mysterious departure ‘from the lande’ in a ‘barge [...] of ladyes’ (p. 130; *Reliques*, vol. 3, p. 36, ll. 180–81), Costello’s guide offers a number of more fantastical possibilities:

By some ’tis said he yet on earth remains,
And in the figure of a raven reigns;
And some believe, by mermaids borne away,
In Neptune’s court he lives beneath the sea (ll. 27–30)

While Costello is drawing on Cornish beliefs (well known to contemporary antiquarians) that Arthur may have taken up a posthumous existence in the form of a raven, the prospect of an underwater Round Table seems to be entirely her own invention. As Alan and Barbara Lupack have cogently pointed out, ‘while the taking of liberties with the Arthurian stories is not exclusive to women [...] it seems clear that women, by virtue of being outside the mainstream of Arthurian tradition, have been more inclined to radical interpretations and innovative reworkings of it’.¹³⁸ An offshoot of Percy’s *Reliques*, the *Ancient Ballads* demonstrates how the source of Costello’s Arthurian inspiration already placed her in a position ‘outside the mainstream’ of antiquarian Arthurian texts. In particular, the unmooring of ‘King Arthur’s Death’ from its scholarly context in the *Reliques* seems to have actively made space for a more imaginative interpretation of Arthurian material in ‘A Dream’.

Soon, however, the guide’s lively indulgence in imaginative ‘conjecture’ is swiftly curtailed (l. 26), and the dreamer strongly reminded that ‘unto mortals ’tis not given to know / How he [Arthur] forsook their transient realms below’ (ll. 31–32). With this authoritative voicing, the fairy guide’s educational role becomes most readily apparent; throughout the poem, the guide is employed in didactically releasing and setting the limits of the dreamer’s knowledge of the Arthurian legend. In this way, the relationship between the guide and the

¹³⁸ Lupack and Tapa Lupack, ‘Arthurian Literature by Women: The Forgotten Tradition’, p. 4.

dreamer reflects the wider didacticism of the *Ancient Ballads*, whose ‘young readers’ receive the poems as they have been selected and censored according to the lady’s ‘judgement’ (p. iii). After failing to resolve the ‘mystery’ of Arthur’s death by quizzing the equivocal guide (l. 49), the dreamer is violently ‘seized by hands unseen’ and ‘hurl’d’ to earth (l. 53). Simpson calls the poem a ‘playful enquiry’, but this downplays the unsettling ‘fear’ that the dreamer experiences when they find themselves so swiftly dispatched (l. 51).¹³⁹ The poem ends with the brief return of the voice of the dreamer, who, reflecting on their somnambulist journey, concludes: ‘I woke [...] lamenting that my dream was vain, / Resolv’d to drive King Arthur from my brain / And live, content in darkness to remain’ (ll. 54–57). Though it tentatively attempts to create an imagined dialogue with Arthur, ‘A Dream’ ends with a frank withdrawal from the legend. Banished to a metaphorical darkness, the dreamer ends the poem less enlightened than they were at its beginning. The narrative of the poem encapsulates Costello’s compromised encounter with ‘King Arthur’s Death’ in *Ancient Ballads*, which, lacking any clear sources for its notes on Arthur’s death, similarly left the young female reader with no scholarly leads to follow. *Ancient Ballads* thus provides an important context for the poem’s final inability to contemplate almost anything Arthurian.

The complex line of literary inheritance that connects Percy’s *Reliques*, via the lady’s *Ancient Ballads*, to Costello’s poem based on ‘King Arthur’s Death’ demonstrates how women writers’ responses to Arthur were often filtered through an additional stage of representation, and as such, their own literary works echo those same filtrations and separations. Often encountering medieval texts second-hand through a range of feminised texts, women were encouraged to read a different account of the Middle Ages and it is appropriate to recognise how the differences in their access to manuscripts and scholarship forged an alternative tradition. Clare Broome Saunders has recently proposed a theoretical

¹³⁹ Roger Simpson, *Camelot Regained: The Arthurian Revival and Tennyson, 1800–1849* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1990), p. 158.

model whereby nineteenth-century ‘female’ medievalism is distinct from the dominant ‘male’ medievalisms of Tennyson, Morris, Scott and others.¹⁴⁰ For Broome Saunders, female medievalism ‘demands the right to hold and express an alternative view’, as women writers use medieval tropes and subjects as a screen or shield for commentary ‘on contemporary socio-political issues [...] not considered their sphere’.¹⁴¹ Broome Saunders’s model both chimes and conflicts with early patterns in women’s Arthuriana, for texts like the *Ancient Ballads* and the portrait of Guinevere in the *Lady’s Magazine* demonstrate how women encountered a feminine recasting of Arthurian romance material that was increasingly regulated to the point that it deserves recognition as a separate female tradition. Meanwhile, however, the early explorations in medieval scholarship by Dobson, Reeve, and the anonymous editor of the *Ancient Ballads* suggest that to enter the hyper-masculine world of eighteenth-century antiquarianism was, in itself, to trespass into a field ‘not considered their sphere’ and expose oneself to ruthless critical attack. Rather than participating in a radical female medievalism, these more conservative texts – *Ancient Ballads*, the article in the *Lady’s*, Reeve’s *Progress* and Dobson’s *Memoirs* – promote a particular kind of feminine Arthurianism, suitable for the virtuous female reader.

1.5 ‘No longer secreted from the fair sex’: Gender and Early Nineteenth-Century

Editions of Malory

When Costello’s juvenile Arthurian poem appeared in 1815, Arthurian interest had been gathering pace for some time: the following year saw the first reprinting of Malory’s *Morte Darthur* since William Stansby’s black letter edition in 1634. Between 1816 and 1817, no fewer than three separate editions of Malory’s text appeared on the market. Both Scott and

¹⁴⁰ Broome Saunders, *Women Writers and Nineteenth-Century Medievalism*, pp. 2, 5.

¹⁴¹ Broome Saunders, *Women Writers and Nineteenth-Century Medievalism*, pp. 182, 7, 6.

Southey independently hatched plans to republish Malory's text as early as 1807, but their progress was held up by a number of complications, not least of which was the search for a copy of Caxton's 1485 edition from which to print.¹⁴² In the end, two other popular printers beat them to the post. First to reprint Malory's romance was the London printing firm Walker and Edwards, who published the text in two volumes edited by Alexander Chalmers as part of their British Classics series in 1816.¹⁴³ Priced at nine shillings, these 'unassuming little volumes' were popular and affordable; Barry Gaines notes that many copies of this edition were 'literally read to pieces'.¹⁴⁴ Wordsworth, Keats, and Tennyson all owned copies of the Walker and Edwards edition.¹⁴⁵

Hot on its heels was another 1816 edition, this time published by R. Wilks in three volumes, and priced slightly higher at twelve shillings. The text was edited by Joseph Haslewood, one of the founding members of the Roxburghe Club.¹⁴⁶ The two 1816 editions were similar in many ways. As Marylyn Parins summarises: 'both [were] inexpensive, both show[ed] signs of hasty editing and both [were] based on the more accessible edition of 1634'.¹⁴⁷ Gaines estimates that the Walker and Edwards edition was the more popular of the two, although when Thomas Wright prepared his edition of Malory in 1858, he intimated that

¹⁴² For a more detailed account of Scott and Southey's progress towards a new edition, see Barry Gaines, 'The Editions of Malory in the Early Nineteenth Century', *Papers of the Bibliographic Society of America*, 68 (1974), 1–17; also Gaines, *Sir Thomas Malory: An Anecdotal Bibliography of Editions, 1485–1985* (New York: AMS Press, 1990), pp. 17–18; Marylyn Parins, ed., *Sir Thomas Malory: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 6–7; and Merriman, *The Flower of Kings*, pp. 129–31.

¹⁴³ I follow the majority of Arthurian critics in classifying Malory's text as a romance, though I recognise that it also straddles generic distinctions between epic, tragic, and historical modes. For a clear and astute summary of differing critical views on the genre of Malory's text, see Fiona Tolhurst, 'Why Every Knight Needs his Lady: Reviewing Questions of Genre and "Cohesion" in Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*', in *Re-viewing Malory's Le Morte Darthur (Arthurian Studies LX)*, ed. K.S. Whetter and Raluca L. Radulescu (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005), pp. 133–48 (esp. pp. 133–34).

¹⁴⁴ Gaines, *An Anecdotal Bibliography*, p. 16.

¹⁴⁵ Gaines, *An Anecdotal Bibliography*, p. 14. Beverly Taylor and Elisabeth Brewer note that Wordsworth used the Walker and Edwards edition for 'The Egyptian Maid' (1835); see Taylor and Brewer, *The Return of King Arthur: British and American Arthurian Literature since 1800* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1983), p. 64.

¹⁴⁶ Gaines, *An Anecdotal Bibliography*, pp. 15–16; 'The Editions of Malory in the Early Nineteenth Century', 11. See also Yuri Fuwa, 'Malory's *Morte Darthur* in Tennyson's Library', *Studies in Medievalism*, 4 (1992), 161–69. Fuwa argues that the R. Wilks edition (rather than the Walker and Edwards copy) was Tennyson's working text for the compilation of the *Idylls of the King* (Tennyson owned copies of both 1816 editions).

¹⁴⁷ Parins, *The Critical Heritage*, p. 7.

both 1816 editions were now equally ‘rare’.¹⁴⁸ Southey eventually agreed to compile the introduction and notes for a further edition by Longman and Company, which appeared in 1817 (the main text was edited by William Upcott). Southey’s ‘sumptuous quarto’ was a much more expensive enterprise (it sold for eight pounds eight shillings), as well as a more scholarly one: the laureate’s explanatory introduction and notes ran to sixty-three pages.¹⁴⁹

As Gaines points out, a copy of the Southey-endorsed Malory was purchased second-hand by William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones, and also used by Algernon Charles Swinburne and Matthew Arnold.¹⁵⁰

It is notable, though not altogether surprising, that all the known readers of the various early nineteenth-century editions of Malory are men. Southey would have been strongly in favour of Sidney’s Lanier’s later juvenile edition of *The Boy’s King Arthur* (1880), for in 1817, the current poet laureate speculated that were the *Morte Darthur* ‘modernised [...] and published as a book for boys, it could hardly fail of regaining its popularity’.¹⁵¹ In his lengthy ‘Preface’ to the text, Southey informed readers how his interest in Malory stemmed from the fond memories attached to a ‘wretchedly imperfect’ copy of *Le Morte Darthur* he had owned as a ‘schoolboy’.¹⁵² ‘[T]here was no other book’, he wrote, ‘except the Faery Queen, which I perused so often, or with such deep contentment’.¹⁵³ The idea that Malory’s text was a ‘book

¹⁴⁸ Gaines, *An Anecdotal Bibliography*, p. 16. Thomas Wright, ‘Introduction’, to *La Mort D’Arthur: The History of King Arthur and the Knights of the Rounde Table. Compiled by Sir Thomas Malory, Knt. Edited from the text edition of 1634, with introduction and notes by Thomas Wright, Esq.*, 3 vols (London: John Russell Smith, 1858), vol. 1, pp. v–xvii (p. xiv).

¹⁴⁹ Merriman, *The Flower of Kings*, p. 130.

¹⁵⁰ Gaines, *An Anecdotal Bibliography*, p. 19.

¹⁵¹ Robert Southey, ‘Introduction’, to Malory, *The Byrth, Lyf, and Actes of Kyng Arthur*, vol. 1, pp. i–lxiii (p. xviii). Sidney Lanier, ed., *The Boy’s King Arthur: Being Sir Thomas Malory’s History of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1881). Lanier’s efforts to construct a masculine reading tradition for the *Morte Darthur* are established early on in his introduction to the text, in which he asserts that ‘the Arthurian romances [...] enchanted all the grown men of Europe in the Middle Ages’ (p. iii). For Lanier, Malory’s text documents ‘changes [...] in the general stature of man’s spirit’ (p. iii).

¹⁵² Southey, ‘Introduction’, to *The Byrth, Lyf, and Actes of Kyng Arthur*, vol. 1, p. xxviii.

¹⁵³ Southey, ‘Introduction’, to *The Byrth, Lyf, and Actes of Kyng Arthur*, vol. 1, p. xxviii.

for boys' is therefore as much a Romantic concept as a late-Victorian idea.¹⁵⁴ Though it is often noted that Lady Charlotte Guest conceived of the *Mabinogion* as tales for children, her dedication to the first volume – containing the Arthurian Romance, 'The Lady of the Fountain' – more strictly recommends the tale to her sons only: Ivor (b. 1835) and the newborn Thomas Merthyr (b. 1838). Her firm wish is that they may inherit 'the chivalric and exalted sense of honour, and the fervent patriotism for which [Wales's] sons have ever been celebrated'.¹⁵⁵ When later writers such as Mary Howitt and Charlotte Mary Yonge began to make reference to Malory's text in their juvenile fiction in the second half of the nineteenth century, they perpetuated the general impression of Malory as masculine reading matter for boys. In Howitt's *Treasury of Old Favourite Tales* (1860), Benjamin reads to his friend John from 'a reprint of old Caxton's *King Arthur*' while the two girls, Rosamund and Florence, capture the event from the outside by taking a 'beautiful photograph'.¹⁵⁶ Similarly, in

¹⁵⁴ Also citing Southey, Arthur Johnston agrees that 'the Stansby edition of 1634 was often a boy's book' (Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, p. 189), and, similarly, Taylor and Brewer note that Malory was largely confined to 'the extracurricular reading of schoolboys' (*The Return of King Arthur*, p. 38).

¹⁵⁵ Lady Charlotte Guest, 'To Ivor and Merthyr', in *The Mabinogion, from the Llyfr Coch o Hergest and Other Welsh manuscripts: With an English Translation and Notes*, ed. and trans. Lady Charlotte Guest, 3 vols (London: Longman, Orme, Browne, Green, and Longmans; Llandoverly, W. Rees, 1849), vol. 1, n. p. Guest had four children by the time that the first volume of her *Mabinogion* translations appeared, including two daughters: Charlotte Maria (b. 1834) and Katherine Gwladys (b. 1837). Revel Guest and Angela V. John observe that '[h]onour, bravery and public service were applauded as masculine virtues, and therefore the dedication did not include the eldest child Maria (though it is only fair to add that she had been born in England and was not as closely identified with Wales as the Welsh-born children)' (see Revel Guest and Angela V. John, *Lady Charlotte Guest: An Extraordinary Life*, 2nd edn (Stroud: Tempus, 2007), p. 101). This addendum cannot be equally applied to Katherine Gwladys, however, who was born in Wales. In reality, Guest seems to have read the tales to all her children, not only her sons (see Guest and John, *Lady Charlotte Guest*, p. 101; also Guest's journal entry for 18 February 1843, cited in D. Rhys Phillips, *Lady Charlotte Guest and the Mabinogion* (Carmarthen: W. Spurrell and Son, 1921), p. 35). Marion Wynne-Davies also points out the patriarchal nature of Guest's dedication and concludes: 'Initially, it would appear that the reader of *The Mabinogion* could only have been a nineteenth-century English man, or perhaps, boy' (Wynne-Davies, *Women and Arthurian Literature*, p. 115). I feel that it is important to point out here, however, that I disagree with Wynne-Davies's argument that Guest was writing primarily for English readers. Guest included modern Welsh translations of the tales – placed *before* the English translations – in the first serialised editions and 1849 collected version and planned from the outset to present the texts in both Welsh and English. Wynne-Davies uses the 1877 edition of Guest's *Mabinogion* as the basis for her analysis, by which point the Welsh texts had been dropped.

¹⁵⁶ Mary Howitt, *A Treasury of Old Favourite Tales, introduced in the Story of Rockbourne Hall* (Edinburgh: Gall and Inglis, 1860), p. 331.

Yonge's *The Heir of Redclyffe* (1853), Guy, Charles, and Philip show differing levels of appreciation for 'the Morte d'Arthur' but all agree that it is 'a book so studied in boyhood'.¹⁵⁷

In contrast, in the early decades of the nineteenth century, young girls were not only less likely to participate in formal education and therefore go to school, but before the appearance of the Wilks edition in 1816, Malory's text appears to have been deliberately hidden from women readers. In a tone very similar to that adopted by the female editor of the *Ancient Ballads*, Joseph Haslewood's advertisement to the Wilks edition describes how his carefully censored version of *Le Morte Darthur* will grant women and children new access to the romance:

Some sentences highly needed pruning, to render the text fit for the eye of youth; and that it might be no longer secreted from the fair sex. This has led to a very careful revisal of the whole Work; every indecent allusion has been carefully expunged; and the work may now, with confidence, be placed in the hands of the most scrupulous.¹⁵⁸

Editions such as Haslewood's and the lady's not only demonstrate how women and child readers were offered a different, sanitised version of medieval poems and romances in contrast to the wider (masculine) reading public, but they also involuntarily indicate the existence of a vibrant interest in the Middle Ages among women readers. The recurring refusal by the lady's patron to let her daughters read the *Reliques* is a powerful demonstration of their desire to encounter older texts, just as Haslewood's claim that Malory's book was 'secreted' from women readers before 1816 suggests that they were keen to read his Arthurian. After all, there is little need to hide books from a social group who has no interest in reading them.

¹⁵⁷ Charlotte Mary Yonge, *The Heir of Redclyffe* (1853; London: Gerald Duckworth and Co., 1964), p. 117. As late as 1894, M.W. MacCallum repeated the same connection in his critical study, *Tennyson's Idylls of the King and Arthurian Story from the XVIIth Century* (Glasgow: James Maclehose and Sons, 1894), remarking that Malory's 'style has a quaint and stately charm that school boy and critic can feel and respect' (p. 90).

¹⁵⁸ [Joseph Haslewood], 'Advertisement', to [Sir Thomas Malory], *La Mort d'Arthur: The Most Ancient History of the Renowned Prince Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table* [ed. Joseph Haslewood], 3 vols (London: R. Wilks, 1816), vol. 1, pp. iv–v.

While Clara Reeve's knowledge of Caxton's printing of the *Morte Darthur* is a reminder that Haslewood's advertisement records a general impression of the cultural availability of Malory's text for women rather than a rule, his comments nevertheless help to explain the paucity of references to Malory's text by women writers across the Romantic period. The availability of Malory's text before 1816 is a broader bone of contention among medievalists and Romanticists. For Helen Cooper, the lack of an eighteenth-century reprinting of Malory's text can be explained by the fact that the 1634 Stansby edition was still 'widely available'.¹⁵⁹ Indeed, Scott, Southey, and William Hazlitt all owned copies of the 1634 Stansby.¹⁶⁰ On the other hand, David Fairer proposes that when Thomas Warton published his *Observations on the Faerie Queene* in 1754, Malory's text was 'virtually unknown',¹⁶¹ and Debra N. Mancoff similarly claims that pre-1816, 'copies of Malory's text were rare'.¹⁶²

For Mancoff, Walter Scott's remarks on Malory's text in his edition of *Sir Tristrem* (1804) are indicative of the text's scarcity, for Scott refers to extant copies of Malory being 'in the hands of most antiquaries and collectors'.¹⁶³ Scott goes on to warn that '[t]hose, unaccustomed to the study of romance, should beware of trusting to this work [*Le Morte Darthur*], which misrepresents the adventures, and traduces the character of Sir Gawain, and other renowned Knights of the Round Table'.¹⁶⁴ Without going so far as to suggest that Malory's text was or should be hidden from women readers, Scott nevertheless cultivates an exclusive readership for the *Morte Darthur* composed of specialised antiquarians with the

¹⁵⁹ Helen Cooper, 'Malory and the Early Prose Romances', in *A Companion to Romance*, p. 106. Cooper notes that the 1634 Stansby 'had never been impressive and [...] it had none of the rarity of the earlier prints' (p. 106).

¹⁶⁰ Gaines, *An Anecdotal Bibliography*, p. 13.

¹⁶¹ David Fairer, 'Introduction', to *Spenser's Faerie Queene: Warton's Observations and Hurd's Letters* [facsimile reprints], 2 vols (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001), vol. 1, pp. v–lvi (p. xv).

¹⁶² Debra N. Mancoff, 'Reluctant Redactor: William Dyce Reads the Legend', in *Culture and the King: The Social Implications of the Arthurian Legend*, ed. Martin B. Shichtman and James P. Carley (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), pp. 245–73 (p. 259).

¹⁶³ Sir Walter Scott, 'Introduction', to *Sir Tristrem: A Metrical Romance of the Thirteenth Century, by Thomas of Ercildoune, called the Rhymer* (Edinburgh: Constable, 1804), pp. iii–xciv (p. lxxx).

¹⁶⁴ Scott, 'Introduction', *Sir Tristrem*, p. lxxx.

funds to invest in a sought after collector's item. Other 'unaccustomed' (and perhaps female) readers should be wary of its 'misrepresentations'. As David Matthews suggests, '[b]y 1800, it must have been difficult for readers of ordinary means to get hold of a copy of Malory'.¹⁶⁵ Elizabeth Fay's claim that Malory's 'half-British half-French' compilation was 'widely available', and an essential part of the Arthurian legend 'as the Romantics would have known it', requires some qualification in terms of gender and class privileges.¹⁶⁶

Nor, it would seem, were women readers quick to take up Wilks's 'expunged' edition of Malory's text in 1816. One of the first women to acknowledge 'Caxton's Morte Arthur' after what Parins appropriately calls the 'flurry' of reprintings in 1816 and 1817 was none other than Louisa Stuart Costello, who made reference to Malory's treatment of the Tristan legend in her *Specimens of the Early Poetry of France* (1835).¹⁶⁷ Ten years later, in 1845, Caroline Norton quoted from Malory's romance in a literary annual, but evidence of women writers falling directly under the influence of his *Morte Darthur* remains scarce before 1850.¹⁶⁸ Eighteenth-century and Romantic women were not reading Malory, and his text was far from their main source of information about the legend. While this does not challenge Helen Cooper's carefully qualified claim that *Le Morte Darthur* has 'served as the direct or indirect basis for almost every Arthurian work in any medium', it requires us to take note, and look closely at, Arthurian works by Romantic women writers as a body of work that falls largely outside the main trajectory of the post-medieval tradition.¹⁶⁹ Indeed, Roger Simpson has identified the development of 'Malorian orthodoxy' in Arthurian studies, and warns against 'an over preoccupation with the influence of Malory' at the cost of ignoring other

¹⁶⁵ David Matthews, 'Scholarship and Popular Culture in the Nineteenth Century', in *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, ed. Fulton, pp. 355–67 (p. 355).

¹⁶⁶ Elizabeth Fay, *Romantic Medievalism: History and the Romantic Literary Ideal* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 68.

¹⁶⁷ Parins, *The Critical Heritage*, p. 8. Louisa Stuart Costello, *Specimens of the Early Poetry of France; From the Time of the Troubadours to the Reign of Henri Quatre* (London: William Pickering, 1835), p. 67. See Chapter 4, 4.4 for a detailed discussion of this text.

¹⁶⁸ See Chapter 5, 5.5 for discussion of Norton's poem.

¹⁶⁹ Helen Cooper, 'Introduction', to Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur: The Winchester Manuscript*, ed. Helen Cooper (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. vii–xxvi (p. ix).

equally pervasive treatments of the legend.¹⁷⁰ As the following chapters on women's Gothic and travel writing about Arthur demonstrate, other influences and literary texts were much more important to women's perceptions of the Arthurian story than Malory's long 'secreted' romance. Across the other strands in which the legend becomes manifest in women's writing – in Gothic verse, travel narratives, and literary annuals – the pattern seen in Costello's 'A Dream' is often repeated in one form or another. Poems and other Arthurian works by women produced between the 1770s and the 1820s are characterised by a play of anxieties and frustrations, while later works (from the 1830s onwards) appear much more at home with the Arthurian material they discuss.

¹⁷⁰ Roger Simpson, *Camelot Regained*, pp. 2–3.

2. Women's Gothic Verse and King Arthur

As part of his Christmas celebrations for 1770, Horace Walpole saw a performance of John Dryden's *King Arthur* (1691) at Drury Lane. It was not an experience that he was particularly eager to repeat. 'I was tired to death', Walpole complained to a friend in a letter, 'both of the nonsense of the piece and the execrable performance'.¹ 'The scenery', he noted, was 'little better', but he did single out one particular aspect for praise: a 'Gothic church with windows of painted glass', which provided the backdrop for a scene where 'the devil officiates over a kind of high mass!'² Walpole's evident dislike of the Arthurian 'dramatick opera' is typical of the generally dismissive attitude towards Arthurian material in the eighteenth century, largely brought about by stage adaptations of the legend such as Dryden's. Yet as nonsensical as the Arthurian story might have been in its current formations, Walpole nevertheless saw some role for the legend in the rise of the Gothic aesthetic.

As the interest in ancient manuscripts and fragments of Britain's literary past grew in the second half of the eighteenth century, so did a general vogue for Gothic writing.

Walpole's hints at the potential for a positive relationship between Arthuriana and the Gothic mode were distilled not long after in Thomas Warton's 'The Grave of King Arthur' (1777).

The poem opens with a survey of a 'rough castle' in tempestuous weather, and later invites the reader to '[d]ive into the vaults of death' and view Arthur's 'gigantic' corpse.³ The same themes were echoed by Richard Hole in his seven book epic, *Arthur; or, The Northern*

¹ Horace Walpole to Hon. H.S. Conway, 25 December 1770, in *The Letters of Horace Walpole, Earl of Oxford*, ed. J. Wright, 6 vols (London: Samuel Bentley, 1840), vol. 5 (1765–1778), p. 292. John Dryden, *King Arthur: The British Worthy: a Dramatick Opera* (London: Tronson, 1691). The music for the work was composed by Henry Purcell.

² Walpole to Conway, 25 December 1770, in *Letters*, vol. 5, pp. 292–93.

³ Thomas Warton, 'The Grave of King Arthur', in *Poems. A New Edition* (London: T. Beckett, 1777), pp. 63–72 (ll. 35, 140, 142).

Enchantment (1789). Hole drew on ‘old Gothic fables’ of Scandinavian and Celtic descent to enrich his tale of Arthur’s exploration of Lapland and the ‘horror visible’ arising from the Arctic landscape.⁴ As the commentator Nathan Drake observed a decade later in his essay ‘On Gothic Superstition’ (1798), the vivid construction of Arthur’s exploits in the North in *Arthur; or, The Northern Enchantment* drew renewed attention to the ‘fertile sources for invention’ offered by the Arthurian legend.⁵ Though he saw faults in Hole’s composition, Drake suggested that his choice of subject was one particularly suited to ‘leave a lasting impression, [of] both pity and terror’, and, ‘[s]hould Arthur [...] in a future edition be enlarged, a more frequent introduction of the pathetic would, most probably, seal it for immortality’.⁶

It was a combination of observations like Drake’s, together with the explosion of Gothic writing, which led to King Arthur’s frequent appearance in mass-market Gothics by women writers in the 1790s. In what has been termed ‘the decade of Gothic fiction’, three female-authored novels published by William Lane’s Minerva Press made a cursory nod to King Arthur within their dramatic and tangled plots. Mary Pilkington’s *Rosina* (1793), Mary Elizabeth Parker’s *Orwell Manor* (1795), and Mary Ann Hanway’s *Andrew Stuart; or, the Northern Wanderer* (1800) all use aspects of the Arthurian legend as part of their general effort to foster a medieval atmosphere.⁷ As might be expected from novels that strive to appeal to a broad popular taste, these were not serious considerations of Arthurian material. Rather, their knowledge of things Arthurian appears most likely drawn from the predominantly burlesque eighteenth-century presence of the legend on the popular stage. In

⁴ Richard Hole, ‘Preface’, to *Arthur; or, The Northern Enchantment* (London: Robinson, 1789), p. v; Book 6, p. 173.

⁵ Nathan Drake, ‘On Gothic Superstition’ (1798), in *Literary Hours, or Sketches Critical and Narrative*, 2 vols, facsimile of 2nd revised edn, 1800 (New York: Garland, 1970), vol. 2, pp. 353–62; repr. in *Gothic Documents: A Sourcebook, 1700–1820*, ed. E.J. Clery and Robert Miles (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 155–60 (p. 159).

⁶ Drake, ‘On Gothic Superstition’, *Gothic Documents*, p. 159.

⁷ Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 62.

Parker's *Orwell Manor*, for example, the heroine, Julia, attends a costume party, for which her companion, Sir Theodore, dresses as 'Merlin'.⁸ The increased appearance of Arthurian material in female-authored Gothic novels suggests that Walpole's earlier hint – that the Arthurian legend could produce pleasing Gothic effects – was, by the 1790s, beginning to infiltrate popular perceptions of what could immediately signal 'Gothic'.

That Parker, Pilkington, and Hanway's novels do not engage with the Arthurian legend in any substantial or sustained way would not come as a surprise to most modern commentators on the Gothic mode; as Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall point out, 'most Gothic novels have little to do with the "medieval world"'.⁹ Similarly, Diane Long Hoeveler refers to the '*faux* medievalism' of the Gothic, characterised by a 'nostalgic conservatism that cloaked itself in a variety of medieval and chivalric poses and props – King Arthur and his round table, damsels in distress, and mad monks, either lecherous or gluttonous or both'.¹⁰ Hoeveler's choice of theatrical language ('poses and props') motions towards the superficiality of Arthurian stage productions like Dryden's *King Arthur* and Henry Fielding's comic *Tragedy of Tragedies* (1730–31), both of which remained popular in the late-eighteenth century. Anne Williams also carefully qualifies her assessment that Gothic texts share an 'antiquarian enthusiasm for the medieval (or rather for eighteenth-century fantasies

⁸ Mary Elizabeth Parker, *Orwell Manor: A Novel*, 3 vols (London: Printed for the author, at the Minerva Press, 1795), vol.1, pp. 208–11. The Arthurian allusion in Mrs. [Mary] Pilkington's *Rosina: A Novel*, 5 vols (London: William Lane [Minerva], 1793), is deployed with similar mock-seriousness, when Sir Gregory bemoans: 'if King Arthur had been my great-grandfather and all his worthies my near relations, now that they are all dead and rotten in their graves, I do not see what good it would do me' (vol. 1, p. 90). The author of *Rosina* should not be confused with Mary Pilkington (1761–1839), the better-known writer of *Memoirs of Celebrated Female Characters* (1804); see S.J. Skedd, 'Pilkington, Mary Susanna (1761–1839)', *ODNB* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22273>> [accessed 10 January 2011].) Mary Ann Hanway's *Andrew Stuart; or, The Northern Wanderer. A Novel*, 4 vols (London: Minerva Press, 1800), makes the most serious mention of the myth, but even here it seems associated with incredulity: a Scottish castle is lauded as 'a place of great strength in feudal times, and was even now capable of withstanding the attack of King Arthur, and all the knights of the Round Table!' (*Andrew Stuart*, vol. 2, p. 294).

⁹ Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall, 'Gothic Criticism', in *A New Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Oxford: Blackwell, 2012), pp. 267–87 (p. 272).

¹⁰ Diane Long Hoeveler, 'Gendering the Scottish Ballad: The Case of Anne Bannerman's *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry*', *Wordsworth Circle*, 31:2 (2000), 97–101 (98).

of those “Dark Ages”)¹¹ Gothic texts engage closely with the emerging fashion for antiquarianism and the ‘reliques’ of past times, but, as Williams reminds us, they also take a double perspective, adopting an imaginative – and often fantastical – distance from any such medieval, or Arthurian past.

However, while this reading of the Gothic’s ultimately superficial medievalism might hold true for many novels, verse experiments in Gothic mode – like Warton’s ‘The Grave of King Arthur’ – often engage much more deeply with Arthurian themes and antiquarian scholarship. Indeed, Warton’s poem is a discernible influence on several of the female-authored poems discussed in this chapter, each of which deploy various familiar Gothic motifs (the absent mother; a hidden manuscript; a prophecy; the castle) in combination with elements of the Arthurian myth to create atmospheres of terror and horror. The most popular form for women’s haunting visions of the Arthurian past is that of the literary ballad, a tripartite response to the rising popularity of German terror ballads, the pervasive influence of Wordsworth and Coleridge’s *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), and – perhaps most of all – the continuing potency of Percy’s *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765). Like Warton and Percy, several of these women writers provide antiquarian notes to their poems that offer partial explanations for their Arthurian allusions. Through this practice, the ballad form could incorporate the popular themes of Gothic sensationalism, but also accommodate and facilitate the performance of the female writer’s scholarly investment in literary antiquarianism and Arthurian romance in a period when more open engagements (such as those by Clara Reeve and Susannah Dobson) had been heavily criticised.¹²

Any attempt to analyse trends within Gothic texts by women is indebted to Ellen Moers’s polemical but broad definition of Female Gothic as ‘work that women writers have

¹¹ Anne Williams, *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 13.

¹² See Chapter 2, 2.2.

done in the literary mode, that, since the eighteenth century, we have called the Gothic'.¹³ While Moers's original focus was firmly on Gothic prose, and particularly novels by Ann Radcliffe and Mary Shelley, by reading women writers' Arthurian poems through the lens of Female Gothic, I hope to show how the patterns and motifs central to Female Gothic are replayed and adapted in Romantic Arthurian verse. In fact, both Radcliffe and Shelley make mention of the Arthurian legend in their Gothic works, prompting a reassessment of Arthurian details as a more prevalent feature of Female Gothic writing than has so far been recognised.¹⁴ Despite the plethora of critical discussions since Moers's coinage, much more still remains to be said on the subject of the Female Gothic's often very specific relationship to the medieval past.¹⁵ Over two decades have elapsed since Cora Kaplan called for the 'insistent nature of fantasies for men and women' to be recognised and – perhaps more importantly – for 'the historically specific forms of their elaboration [...] to be opened up',¹⁶ and yet her appeal continues to resonate, not least in regards to the complexly gendered fantasies connected to what I shall term Arthurian Female Gothic.

Arthurian Female Gothic replays the 'Radcliffean Female Gothic narrative of the persecuted heroine in flight from a villainous father figure and in search of an absent mother',

¹³ Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (1976; London: Women's Press, 1980), p. 90.

¹⁴ Both Radcliffe and Shelley make use of Arthurian material in their Gothic prose works, though not until much later than many of the verse writers examined here. As part of her revisions to *Frankenstein* in 1831, Shelley added the 'Round Table of King Arthur' to the list of games played by the young Victor Frankenstein and Henry Clerval (Shelley, *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus. The 1818 Text*, ed. Marilyn Butler (1818, revised 1831; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 209). Radcliffe's posthumously published novel, *Gaston de Blondville* (1826), opens with a rediscovery of a long-buried ancient manuscript, which prompts comparison with copies of 'Sir Tristram' and 'Merlin's Prophecies' held in Peterborough library (see Anne [sic] Radcliffe, *Gaston de Blondville; or the Court of Henry III. Keeping Festival in Ardenne, A romance [and] St Alban's Abbey. A Metrical Tale; With Some Poetical Pieces*, 4 vols (London: Henry Coburn, 1826), vol. 1, p. 62). For a further reference to 'Merlin', see *Gaston de Blondville*, vol. 2, p. 24. A trumpeter and guardsman named Lancelot also makes an appearance in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), but this is probably, like the references in *Gaston de Blondville*, a stylistic choice based on the function of the Arthurian legend as a quick route to a 'medieval' atmosphere. (See Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, ed. Bonamy Dobrée (1794; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 333, 369–70).

¹⁵ Some of the most prominent critical discussions of Moers's term include those collected in the 'Female Gothic' special issue of *Women's Writing*, guest ed. Robert Miles, 1:2 (1994), *The Female Gothic*, ed. Juliann E. Fleenor (London: Eden Press, 1983), and most recently, *The Female Gothic: New Directions*, ed. Andrew Smith and Diana Wallace (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009).

¹⁶ Cora Kaplan, *Sea Changes: Essays on Culture and Feminism* (London: Verso, 1986), p. 146.

but it combines this with an articulation of the same anxieties of separation from Arthurian knowledge seen in Louisa Stuart Costello's 'A Dream', reconfigured in more violently Gothic ways.¹⁷ What is truly terrifying in Arthurian Female Gothic is not so much the threat of the villain (though, as we shall see, the Arthurian legend provides plenty of these) but the powerlessness and frustration experienced by the female protagonist when she cannot affect the outcome of the narrative. Arthurian Female Gothic is, then, but another manifestation of the women writer's separation from the mainstream Arthurian story. In particular, Scottish and Anglo-Welsh women poets are drawn to voicing their desire to know more of Arthur in the Gothic mode, perhaps in response to their dual marginalisation and isolation as women poets from border nations. Particularly for these poets, the prophetic and supernatural figure of Merlin becomes an enabling voice, often representing the site where the most overt rewriting of the Arthurian myth occurs. If, as Lauren Fitzgerald argues, '[i]n naming Female Gothic', Moers 'initiated women's claim to the Gothic', by naming *Arthurian Female Gothic*, I hope to initiate Romantic women's claim to Arthurian Romance by locating it in their Gothic verse.¹⁸

This chapter is divided into five parts, which together chart the ascendancy of Arthurian Female Gothic. The style of the earliest published Gothic engagement with King Arthur, Matilda Betham's 'Arthur and Albina' (wr. 1794, pub. 1797), emphasises the dual debt of this subgenre to the sentimental Gothicism of Ann Radcliffe's enormously popular novels and the rise of the literary antiquarian's annotated poem. Another early poem, Elizabeth Smith's 'A Supposed Translation of a Welsh Poem' (wr. 1792; pub. 1808), also has a strong foundation in antiquarian pursuits. Based on its author's excavation of ruins on her family's land in Wales, it demonstrates how Gothic verse provided Smith with an available

¹⁷ Andrew Smith and Diana Wallace, 'Introduction: Defining the Female Gothic', in *The Female Gothic*, ed. Smith and Wallace, pp. 1–12 (p. 4).

¹⁸ Lauren Fitzgerald, 'Female Gothic and the Institutionalization of Gothic Studies', *Gothic Studies*, 6:1 (2004), 8–18 (p. 14).

form of creative expression that enabled her to (re)construct her own lived environment. The next part of the chapter is dedicated to a more extended exploration of Anne Bannerman's Gothic ballad, 'The Prophecy of Merlin' (1802). Of all the Arthurian Female Gothic writers I examine here, Bannerman's knowledge of Arthur is the most visibly extensive, yet contemporary commentators repeatedly ignored her scholarship, preferring instead to place her poetry firmly in the realms of the domestic Gothic. The potential for Gothic sensationalism in Arthurian settings is most evident in the three poems that complete the chapter. Janetta Philipps's 'Edmund and Bertha' (1802, rev. 1811) describes a brutal murder by the common villain of the Arthurian story, Mordred. Finally, in two poems by Anna Jane Vardill and E.H. McLeod, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 'Christabel' (1816) provides an intertextual frame for horrific revisions of Arthurian (and Coleridgean) material.

2.1 The Emergence of Arthurian Female Gothic: Matilda Betham's 'Arthur and Albina' (wr. 1794, pub. 1797)

The beginnings of Arthurian Female Gothic originate in a short poem by (Mary) Matilda Betham (1776–1852), a poet and miniature-portrait painter much admired by Coleridge, Southey, and the Lambs.¹⁹ Her debut volume of verse, *Elegies and Other Small Poems* (1797), opens with 'Arthur and Albina' (wr. 1794), a dramatic lyric centring on Arthur's death in combat against the invading Romans.²⁰ The action is conveyed through the agonies of Arthur's 'destined bride': a symbolic 'British Maid' named Albina who 'awaits the arrival

¹⁹ See Elaine Bailey, 'Matilda Betham: A New Biography', *Wordsworth Circle*, 38:3 (2007), 143–46, and Jonathan Wordsworth, 'Matilda Betham', in Wordsworth, *The Bright Work Grows: Women Writers of the Romantic Age* (Poole: Woodstock Books, 1997), pp. 202–08 (p. 203). (First published as the introduction to the Woodstock facsimile of Betham, *The Lay of Marie* (Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1994)).

²⁰ Though the poem has received little attention from Arthurian scholars, it is listed in the most exhaustive bibliography of Arthurian literature to date, *The Arthurian Annals: The Arthurian Tradition in English from 1250 to 2000*, ed. Daniel P. Nastali and Phillip C. Boardman, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), vol. 1, p. 70. A rare discussion of the poem is included in Stephen Knight, 'The Arctic Arthur', *Arthuriana*, 21:2 (2011), 59–89 (pp. 73–74).

of her lover from the battle, on a hill'.²¹ The poem begins with Albina's passionate invocation to the heavens to '[b]ring back my hero, crown'd with glorious spoils' (l. 6), but it is not long before her optimism begins to wane, and she wonders:

Perhaps my vows have never reach'd the skies,
Nor heav'n, propitious, smil'd upon my pray'r;
And ah! to morrow's crimson dawn may rise
To plunge me in the horrors of despair! (ll. 29–32)

For this impassioned address to the fates, Albina is surrounded by a vast and exposed landscape couched in the aesthetics of the Burkean sublime, where grand landscapes force the human subject to 'shrink into the minuteness of our own nature'.²² The heroine's elevated position on the hill contrasts sharply with her vision of a psychological descent into the 'horrors of despair' (l. 32), and her exposure to the elements in the 'blackest gloom of night' (l. 143) shares much in common with the experiences of Ann Radcliffe's numerous heroines whose diminutive forms are repeatedly profiled against dark landscapes inspired by the continental painters Salvator Rosa, Claude Lorrain, Gaspard Dughet, and Nicolas Poussin.²³

Betham was an enthusiastic admirer of Radcliffe's novels, and praised the author as the 'enchantress' who had made her 'heart glow / With transport, oft with terror start / Or sink at strains of solemn woe!' in her poem 'Lines to Mrs. Radcliffe, On first reading the *Mysteries of Udolpho*' (1807).²⁴ *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) would become Radcliffe's best-selling novel and was published in the same year that Betham wrote 'Arthur and Albina'. Displaying an enthusiasm for the novel on par with that expressed by Austen's fictional Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey* (1818), Betham idealises Radcliffe's novel

²¹ Matilda Betham, 'Arthur and Albina', in *Elegies and Other Small Poems* (London: W. Burrell, 1797), pp. 3–13, l. 92, and [headnote], p. 2. All further references are to this edition and subsequently appear in parentheses throughout the text.

²² Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. Adam Phillips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 63.

²³ See Alison Milbank, 'Introduction', to Ann Radcliffe, *A Sicilian Romance*, ed. Alison Milbank (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. xv–xviii.

²⁴ Betham, 'Lines to Mrs. Radcliffe, On first reading the *Mysteries of Udolpho*', in Betham, *Poems* (London: J. Hatchard, 1808), pp. 11–14 (ll. 1, 6–8). The poem was also published 'with the exception of a few lines' in the *Athenaeum*, 2:7 (1807), 50–51 (see Betham, *Poems*, p. 14).

for its ability to combine ‘Gothic gloom’ with the ‘high-wrought fiction of romance!’²⁵ ‘Arthur and Albina’ naturally offers a far more pared-down narrative than Radcliffe’s novel, but her poem nevertheless attempts to blend a similar romance framework with Gothic shadows and the passions of sensibility. Albina’s experience of a singular but eventful night on a hillside veiled in ‘drear darkness’ (l. 54) positions her as both the ‘persecuted victim and courageous heroine’ in the manner that Moers sees as central to the Female Gothic mode.²⁶

Arthur eventually returns from battle and is reunited with Albina on the hilltop, but he is dying and almost ghostly. He has only a brief moment to explain to Albina that, having defeated the Romans,

I go, while now the victory is warm,
The just reward of valour to obtain;
Soon I return, clad in a nobler form,
Again to triumph, and again be slain. (ll. 77–80)

After this short but loaded speech he expires, and Albina is left clasping ‘her hero’s valued corse’ (l. 137). However, Arthur’s allusion to his probable ‘return’ signals the wider significance of his death beyond Albina’s personal grief: the repetition within the line ‘Again to triumph, and again be slain’ echoes the syntactic patterning of *rex quondam rexque futurus* [the once and future king].²⁷ Arthur is never directly named as the King of the Britons in Betham’s poem, but in one of her later works, *The Lay of Marie* (1816), she makes keen mention of ‘British Arthur’s [...] reign’.²⁸ As Betham has her narrator, Marie de France, say in the *Lay*, ‘the feats of that diviner man [Arthur]; / [...] Gave wilder license to my hand’.²⁹ Appearing to Albina as an apparition with strong connections to druid lore, the Arthur of ‘Arthur and Albina’ is similarly divine, but also capable of private intimacy with a human form. The poem has a dual resonance as both Albina’s personal elegy for her lover and an

²⁵ Betham, ‘Lines to Mrs. Radcliffe’, ll. 37–38.

²⁶ Moers, *Literary Women*, p. 91.

²⁷ Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur, or, the Hoole Book of Kyng Arthur and of his Noble Knyghtes of The Rounde Table*, ed. Stephen H.A. Shepherd (New York: Norton, 2004), p. 689.

²⁸ Betham, *The Lay of Marie: A Poem* (London: Rowland Hunter, 1816), p. 44.

²⁹ Betham, *The Lay of Marie*, p. 44.

allegorical treatment of Arthur's death in battle and its impact on the nation (symbolised by Albina, the poem's 'British maid').

After Albina has spoken of her loss of Arthur in impassioned laments, a ray of light announces the appearance of a druid '[w]hose shrivell'd fingers grasp'd [...] a flaming brand' (l. 147). He brings the poem to a formal conclusion by addressing the distraught Albina:

Ah then, presumptuous! question not the skies,
Nor more with vain laments his loss deplore;
Attend to this, and cease your fruitless sighs,
You soon shall meet where you can part no more. (ll. 161–64)

In an odd mixture of Christian and pagan philosophy, the druid encourages Albina to end her lamentations and she dutifully accepts his 'sacred wisdom [...] / Which pour'd sweet consolation on her mind' (ll. 165–66). Stephen Knight suggests that Betham was influenced by 'the bard-druid hybrid' depicted by Thomas Gray in 'The Bard' (1757), and visualised in Thomas Jones's later painting of the figure.³⁰ Indeed, Betham creates a very visual *tableau*: Albina lies in a position of reverence at the druid's feet, with her 'blood-stain'd hands upon her breast, /And [...] her humble, grateful head, resign'd' (ll. 166–68). We are encouraged to infer that Albina experiences feelings akin to what Edmund Burke defines as the inferior effects of the sublime: a mixture of 'awe, reverence, and respect'.³¹ Her 'blood-stain'd hands' are a final reminder of her suffering, but also her single-mindedness, in her devotion to Arthur.

Albina's futile desires that Arthur, now expired, will 'bid me once more, a long adieu' are sadly destined to remain a fantasy (l. 104). In this early Gothic narrative, Arthur is always tantalisingly outside of Albina's reach, and, in a manner not unlike the experience of the poet in Louisa Stuart Costello's 'A Dream', her enquiries are violently cut short: the druid calls Albina 'presumptuous' and chastises her for her 'vain laments'. 'Arthur and Albina' is

³⁰ Knight, 'The Arctic Arthur', 74. See Thomas Gray, 'The Bard: A Pindaric Ode', in *The Complete Poems of Thomas Gray: English, Latin and Greek*, ed. H.W. Starr and J.R. Hendrickson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), pp. 18–24.

³¹ Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, p. 123.

accompanied by seven brief notes, the majority of which refer to aspects of Roman warfare. Betham observes that the eagle is the ‘Roman standard’, emphasises the importance of the Roman shield in battle, and notes that the Britons often stained their skin blue (Betham’s notes, pp. 5, 7, 10). Yet none of her notes shed light on the poem’s Arthurian themes, and it remains unclear from the poem alone what prompted Betham to pair Arthur romantically with the figure of Albina. It is quite possible that she was simply drawing on a current fashion for the name Albina in mass-market Gothic writing: the previous decade had seen the publication of *Albina. A Novel* (1786) by the Minerva Press, a work chastised by the *Critical Review* as ‘the vilest trash’ which ever disgraced the shelves of the circulating libraries.³² A later chapbook, *Edmund and Albina; or, Gothic Times* (1801), more firmly positioned ‘Albina’ within the pulp market.³³ Albina’s name also incorporates *alba*, Latin for ‘white’, which suggests her conventional role as a typical Gothic heroine; as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick observes, often ‘women’s names suggest the blank, the white, the innocent and the pristine’.³⁴

However, another possibility is that Betham was drawing more directly on medieval material. Through the work of her father, William Betham, a notable antiquary, she may have gained an awareness of Albina’s role in the fourteenth-century English foundation myth, *De Origine Gigantum* (1330s).³⁵ It describes how Albina and her sisters are exiled by their father, a Syrian or Greek king, and escape to an unknown island. Time passes and the women are visited by a devil or incubus and give birth to giants who continue to rule the land, named

³² [Review], ‘Albina: A Novel in a Series of Letters’, *Critical Review, or, Annals of Literature*, 62 (Aug 1786), 149.

³³ [Anon.], *Edmund and Albina; or, Gothic Times. A Romance* (London: J. Ker, 1801). Fredrick S. Frank notes that the plot of *Edmund and Albina* draws heavily on Clara Reeve’s *The Old English Baron* (see Frank, *The First Gothics: A Critical Guide to the English Gothic Novel* (New York and London: Garland, 1987), p. 99, n. 118).

³⁴ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, ‘The Character in the Veil: Imagery of the Surface in the Gothic Novel’, *PMLA*, 96:2 (1981), 255–70 (261).

³⁵ See Ruth Evans, ed. and trans., ‘Gigantic Origins: An Annotated Translation of *De Origine Gigantum*’, *Arthurian Literature XVI*, ed. James P. Carley and Felicity Riddy (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1998), pp. 197–217. J.T. Gilbert, ‘Betham, William (1749–1839)’, rev. Colin Lee, *ODNB* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2301>> [accessed 8 Sept 2012].

Albion after Albina, up until its conquest by Brutus.³⁶ Nowhere does Betham show her awareness of this particular story, but the myth was known to other eighteenth-century antiquarians.³⁷ If this was indeed the case, the poem bears no traces of this knowledge, suggesting that while Betham was confident enough to articulate her knowledge of Roman battle formations and British history more generally, she felt differently about publicising her awareness of either Arthur or Albina in medieval legend. Through its lack of attention to its own Arthurian contexts, ‘Arthur and Albina’ pays homage to the superficiality of the Gothic’s interest in romance, but it also serves as a reminder that what was perceived to be ‘Gothic’ often had a genuine, if unacknowledged, role to play in the medieval literature of Britain’s past.

2.2 ‘Great Merlin’: Elizabeth Smith’s Ossianic Reinvention of History

While Betham was the first woman writer to publish an Arthurian Gothic poem, she was not technically the first to write one. In 1792, Elizabeth Smith (1776–1806), a young scholar in languages, composed ‘A Supposed Translation from a Welsh Poem, lately dug up at PIERCEFIELD, in the same spot where LLEWELLYN AP GRYFFYD was slain, Dec. 10th, 1281’. Smith’s early death meant that much of her work, including her ‘Translation’ remained unpublished until her friend Henrietta Bowdler edited a posthumous collection entitled *Fragments in Prose and Verse by Miss Elizabeth Smith, lately deceased* (1808). As a self-conscious ‘supposed’ translation, Smith’s title reflects her passion for Ossian – whom she ‘support[ed] [...] against all other poets’ – as well as her belief that a cultivated

³⁶ Anke Bernau, ‘Beginning with Albina: Remembering the Nation’, *Exemplaria*, 21:3 (2009), 247–73 (248).

³⁷ Sir William Jones planned to write a ‘national epic poem’ which was to be an allegorical rendering of King Arthur as ‘a perfect king of this country’ and end with the monarch’s symbolic marriage to a female presence also named ‘Albina’. See Sir William Jones, ‘Britain Discovered A Poem in Twelve Books’, in *Memoirs of the Life, Writings and Correspondences of Sir William Jones*, ed. Lord Teignmouth (Philadelphia: W.M. Poyntell and Co., 1805), p. 66.

authenticity could give gravitas to an otherwise imaginative work.³⁸ Smith's record of the poem's genesis conveys a fascination with the Gothic plot of the discovery of an antiquated manuscript. A repeated feature in Gothic writing ever since Walpole's claims for the authenticity of *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), the alleged possession of a physical remnant of the past was equally central to Macpherson's legitimising of the Ossian poems.

It was also important to Smith (who was not native Welsh herself, but born in Scotland) that her forged poem appeared to come directly from the Welsh soil as this would consolidate her own mixed national identity with that of Wales. When Smith's family moved to Piercefield Park, near Chepstow in Monmouthshire in 1785, her antiquarian investigations led to the discovery of what she thought were the remains of a castle in the wooded grounds of the estate. After preliminary research reading William Warrington's *History of Wales* (1786) and some correspondence with a local historian, Smith was convinced that the ruins were those of the castle of Buillt (modern day Builth Wells), where Llewellyn ap Gryffyd, Prince of Wales, reputedly died.³⁹ All this she excitedly relayed to a friend, Miss Hunt, in a letter, which culminated in a keen request that:

you would write a poem on his [Llewellyn ap Gryffyd's] death, and place it in our wood. You must say that it is translated from an old Welsh bard, and that will set the matter beyond a doubt.⁴⁰

Unfortunately, Miss Hunt did not share her friend's enthusiasm and failed to take up the proposal, leaving Smith with no other option but to 'try my hand at it'.⁴¹

After compiling notes on 'the illustrious court of King Arthur' and 'Kair-Lheon',⁴² Smith composed an ode dressed heavily with the familiar conceits of the graveyard school: in

³⁸ Smith to Miss Hunt, 7 July 1792, in *Fragments in Prose and Verse: by Miss Elizabeth Smith, lately deceased. With some account of her life and character*, ed. H.M. Bowdler (1808; London and Edinburgh: Printed by Richard Cruttwell; sold by Cadell and Davies, and S. Cheyne, 1809), p. 6.

³⁹ Smith, *Fragments in Prose and Verse*, p. 11. William Warrington, *The History of Wales: In Nine Books with an Appendix*, 2 vols (London: J. Johnson, 1786).

⁴⁰ Smith to Miss Hunt, 27 July 1792, in *Fragments in Prose and Verse*, p. 9.

⁴¹ Smith to Miss Hunt, 12 December 1792, in *Fragments in Prose and Verse*, p. 17.

⁴² Smith, *Fragments in Prose and Verse*, p. 13.

the first two stanzas, ‘thunder rings’ round ‘rocky shores’, eventually summoning ‘the spirits of the dead’.⁴³ Radcliffe’s novels again seem to have been an underlying influence; several months before writing the poem, Smith recommended *The Italian* (1797) to another correspondent as the ‘one book which you may and must read *directly*’.⁴⁴ The poem begins with its speaker making a dark, stormy visit to ‘Merlin’s cave’ (l. 5) in order to address its inhabitant:

Great Merlin, thou, the chief of Prophets, hear!
To thy own cave ’mid stormy winds draw near;
Pour on my darken’d soul thy light divine,
And give it in fair truth’s bright blaze to shine. (ll. 25–28)

Merlin appears ‘in mist array’d’ (l. 29), and ‘while he speaks, the earth stands still, / List’ning to his mighty will’ (ll. 31–32). Powerful but moral, Smith’s ‘divine’ Merlin is an affirmative presence, and her chosen embodiment of respected knowledge: Merlin proceeds to make a prophecy that ‘Cambria shall fall’ (l. 36). Crucially, he also speaks the history of Llewellyn’s death, offering a passable onomastic back-story for the Piercefield site: ‘Pierc’d with a spear ingloriously’, Llewellyn will ‘fall’ and ‘future times that spot shall Piercefield call’ (ll. 39–40). Merlin then departs, leaving the speaker to call successively on the ‘DAUGHTERS’ and ‘WARRIORS’ of Cambria to mourn the passing of ‘our country’s fatal end!’ (ll. 65, 75, 100). At the end of the poem, Smith’s speaker retires to his own Merlin-like cell in ‘Piercefield’s Cliffs’ to do the same (l. 89).

Judith Hawley has dismissed Smith’s poetry as ‘graceful if unremarkable’ in comparison to her translations.⁴⁵ Yet Smith’s investigations into the ruins on her family’s

⁴³ Elizabeth Smith, ‘A Supposed Translation from a Welsh Poem, lately dug up at PIERCEFIELD, in the same spot where LLEWELLYN AP GRYFFYD was slain, Dec. 10th, 1281’, in *Fragments in Prose and Verse*, pp. 20–23 (ll. 14–15, 20). All further references are to this edition of the poem and are subsequently given in parentheses throughout the text.

⁴⁴ Smith to Lady Isabella King, 13 January 1797, in Smith, *Fragments in Prose and Verse*, p. 65. Emphasis in original. Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Other Works*, ed. James Kingsley and John Davie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 25.

⁴⁵ Judith Hawley, ‘Smith, Elizabeth (1776–1806)’, *ODNB* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/37978>> [accessed 29 June 2012].

land and her correspondence with a local historian provide an important and unusual record of a woman's endeavour to investigate the Welsh medieval past connected with her lived environment. Significant, too, is Smith's belief that poetry is the vehicle through which she can consolidate and construct her own (version of) history.⁴⁶ Roger Simpson identifies the speaker in Smith's poem as the poet herself, yet mid-way through the poem, Merlin addresses the speaker as 'Heav'n-favour'd Bard' (l. 33), suggesting that its writer remained committed to her plan to present the poem as if it was the product of an 'old Welsh bard', as she had originally proposed in her letter to Miss Hunt.⁴⁷ Smith's use of Merlin as an authoritative poetic voice who can challenge and (re)present Wales's topographical history picks up the earlier use of Merlin's prophetic voice by the Welsh poet Jane Brereton, where Merlin is directly positioned as the inspiration for her poetic song.⁴⁸ As Knight describes, the bard was a 'figure whom the Romantics, drawing on the new energy in Welsh scholarship, would often condense with Merlin'.⁴⁹ In Smith's poem, the figure of the Welsh bard who visits Merlin becomes a foil, or Gothic double of the Arthurian enchanter, as he retreats into his own cave at the end of the poem.

Combining her reading of Radcliffe, love of Ossian, practical antiquarian research and reading of history books, Smith's poem reflects the eclecticism of Arthurian Female Gothic. She consulted several historical writers including Smollett, Carte, and Camden in her research for her poem, but she remained sceptical of the value of their conclusions in terms of her own project:

All those old authors copy after each other, and make nothing but confusion. I prefer my own way of making history just as I please, without consulting one of them; and

⁴⁶ Smith, *Fragments in Verse and Prose*, p. 17.

⁴⁷ Simpson, *Camelot Regained*, pp. 26–27.

⁴⁸ See Introduction.

⁴⁹ Stephen Knight, *Merlin: Knowledge and Power* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), p. 131. See also Gossedge and Knight, 'The Arthur of the Sixteenth to Nineteenth Centuries', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend*, ed. Elizabeth Archibald and Ad Putter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 103–19 (p. 108).

upon that principle, I intend to put the places I have mentioned at or near Piercefield.⁵⁰

Though keen to investigate the buried past of her Welsh home, Smith is also intent on ‘making history just as I please’, and this involved a certain amount of geographical – and, needless to say, poetic – licence. Moreover, Smith’s aim is to produce a self-confessed rereading, or reinterpretation, of the past that – through its somewhat paradoxical status as a ‘supposed translation’ – immediately blurs the line between authenticity and the feigned, past and present, real and imaginary. As will become apparent in the discussion of Anne Bannerman’s work below, Smith’s poised belief that the Gothic past is intrinsically unknowable, and therefore malleable, is one that often resurfaces in the writings of female authors interested in Arthur and his history.

2.3 Anne Bannerman’s ‘The Prophecy of Merlin’ (1802): An Exercise in Arthurian Female Gothic

If Betham and Smith’s poems layer a Gothic, and often Ossianic, tint over Arthurian material, the work of the Scottish poet, Anne Bannerman (1765–1829), shows a more pervasive use of the Female Gothic as a narrative through which to redeploy Arthur’s story. She also shares with Smith a strong sense that Gothic writing about Arthur – and importantly, Merlin – entitles the female poet to a certain amount of imaginative freedom. In ‘The Prophecy of Merlin’, the final ballad in her anonymous collection, *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* (1802), Bannerman demonstrates how Female Gothic motifs could be applied to Arthurian subject matter to forge an original and proto-feminist version of Arthur’s death.

The poem begins the day before King Arthur must engage in what will be his final battle against his nephew and challenger for the throne, Modred, at Camlan. Initially pictured ‘alone’ in a Gothic turret, Arthur keeps watch over a strange light and then meets with

⁵⁰ Smith to Miss Hunt, 12 December 1792, in *Fragments in Verse and Prose*, p. 18.

Merlin, who takes the form of a ‘giant’ monk emerging from ‘underground’.⁵¹ On the morning of the battle, Arthur makes another visit to the ‘tow’r’, where no other knight will join him (ll. 19–20). Modred and Arthur fight and both are wounded; subsequently, Arthur is magically transported by boat across a ‘pathless’ and eerily calm sea to a ‘Yellow Isle’ where he is greeted by a mysterious Queen of Beauty (ll. 102, 88, 136). Arthur accepts a drink from her ‘cup of sparkling pearl’ (l. 138) and rouses the ghost of Urien, past King of Scotland and Wales. Urien’s ghost gives voice to Merlin’s prophecy that Arthur must wait for an unstated number of ‘years to pass / Before his kingdom he could see’ (ll. 167–68), and the ballad ends on a haunting ellipsis:

King Arthur’s body was not found,
Nor ever laid in holy grave:…
And nought has reach’d his burial-place,
But the murmurs of the wave.... (ll. 173–76)

Rather than locating Arthur’s bones at Glastonbury – as Warton had in ‘The Grave of King Arthur’ – Bannerman embraces Arthur’s indefinite physicality, and endeavours to connect his legendary existence with the arcane and incessant patterns of the natural world.⁵²

As reviewers noted, Bannerman’s ballads in *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* all make use of familiar Gothic trappings and ‘The Prophecy of Merlin’ is no exception. As well as frequent references to a sensational (and apparently disembodied) ‘hand of blood’ (ll. 143, 160), Merlin is conceived as a giant monk reminiscent of the looming figure cut by Schedoni in Radcliffe’s *The Italian*, and Arthur anxiously watches an eerie light from a Gothic tower in a manner that recalls the performances of multiple Radcliffean heroines.⁵³ Indeed, Arthur acts the role of the typical Female Gothic heroine in Bannerman’s ballad much better than he does that of a legendary king. Distinctly unusual for a portrait of Arthur (but consistent with the

⁵¹ [Anne Bannerman], ‘The Prophecy of Merlin’, in *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* (London: Vernor and Hood, 1802), pp. 125–39 (ll. 1–4, 15, 8). All further references are to this edition and are subsequently given in parentheses throughout the text.

⁵² Warton, ‘The Grave of King Arthur’, in *Poems*, pp. 63–72.

⁵³ See Radcliffe, *The Italian*, ed. Frederick Garber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), esp. p. 221.

behaviour of the Gothic heroine) is the king's hyperbolic expression of fear: haunted by a 'chill of death', he struggles to control his 'knocking knees' when hearing Merlin's prophecy (l. 121). Arthur's experiences continue to echo those of the Gothic heroine as he suffers the assaults of an increasingly threatening landscape; the 'bright and clear' sky transforms into an uncomfortable 'burning noon' (ll. 34, 42) during his fight with the 'dauntless' Modred (l. 48). If, as Anne Williams suggests, the Female Gothic heroine 'is often almost literally reborn, rescued at the climax from the life-threatening danger of being locked up, walled in, or otherwise made to disappear from the world', the legend of Arthur's mythic disappearance and projected return seem curiously (and fittingly) mapped onto the heroine's plight in Bannerman's poetic revision.⁵⁴

Gothic heroine or otherwise, Arthur's isolation in 'The Prophecy of Merlin' represents a departure from earlier poetic accounts of the king's legendary death. In 'King Arthur's Death', published in Percy's *Reliques*, Arthur receives the 'loyal' service of 'twelve good knightes' in his final days, as well as individual assistance from his faithful nephew, Sir Gawain (who returns from the dead to warn Arthur in a dream), and Sir Lukyn (tasked with disposing of Arthur's sword, Excaliber, in the lake).⁵⁵ 'The Prophecy of Merlin' explores some of the same events as 'King Arthur's Death' (Arthur's final battle at Camlan, his wounding by Modred, and his subsequent departure from the world of the living), but Bannerman places very different emphasis on the shortcomings of knightly fealty. In her poem, the Round Table are no more than a nameless and ultimately ineffectual band of

⁵⁴ Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 104.

⁵⁵ 'King Arthur's Death', in *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry; Consisting of Old Heroic Ballads, Songs, and Other Pieces of a Later Date*, ed. Thomas Percy, 3 vols (London: J. Dodsley, 1765), facsimile reprint with a new introduction and notes by Nick Groom (London: Routledge, 1996), vol. 3, pp. 28–36, see esp. ll. 77, 25, 7–16, 117–76. Bannerman makes reference to another Percy ballad, 'The Heir of Lynne', in separate note to *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry*, which suggests that she had a strong familiarity with the *Reliques* and would have been aware of 'King Arthur's Death' (see *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry*, p. 142). It was not until sometime after the publication of the *Tales* that Bannerman received a 'superbly bound' copy of the *Reliques* from Percy (via Anderson) as an indication of Percy's admiration for her poetry. See Percy to Anderson, 21 October 1803, in *The Correspondence of Thomas Percy and Robert Anderson*, ed. W.E.K. Anderson, vol. 9 of *The Percy Papers*, 16 vols, general ed. Cleanth Brooks and A.F. Falconer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 136; also Anderson to Percy, 26 July 1804, p. 153.

knights who offer Arthur little support besides waving his ‘witched sword, / [...] twice in Merlin’s name’ over his wounded body (ll. 73–76). Arthur is separated from his patriarchal family (the Round Table kinship) in a manner that continues to echo the experience of the Gothic heroine, who so frequently finds herself removed from the protection of her benevolent guardians.

Isolated from his knights, Arthur’s only significant exchanges are with the poem’s ambivalent, supernatural figures. After his brief meeting with Merlin, Arthur’s next encounter is with the Queen of Beauty who greets him on her Yellow Isle. Their meeting is immortalised in the engraving that accompanies the poem, showing the Queen offering Arthur a drink from a cup as he kneels in her service (Figure 3; ll. 137–140). Unlike the engraving, however, the poem does not dictate that the Queen is naked, but merely notes that she is ‘blushing’ (l. 135). Further still, once Arthur drinks from her ‘fraughted bowl’ (l. 152), the Queen transforms before him:

His lips have drain’d that sparkling cup,
And he turn’d on her his raptur’d eyes!
When something, like a demon-smile,
Betray’d the smooth disguise!

He started up! ... he call’d aloud!
And, wild, survey’d her as she stood:
When she rais’d aloof the other arm,
And he knew the hand of blood!... (ll. 153–60)

What the engraving highlights (the queen in her first ‘blushing’ state) swiftly turns, in the ballad, into an unspecified ‘something’: a version of woman that is infinitely more complex and beyond physical – or indeed linguistic – representation. Here, too, the action is quintessentially Gothic, inviting Elizabeth Fay to consider Bannerman’s queen as ‘obliquely vampiric’ in a way that anticipates Keats’s ‘La Belle Dame Sans Merci’.⁵⁶ Yet, if the

⁵⁶ Elizabeth Fay, *Romantic Medievalism: History and the Romantic Literary Ideal* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 120. John Keats, ‘La Belle Dame Sans Merci. A Ballad’, in Keats, *The Complete Poems*, ed. John Barnard (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 334–36.

encounter is interpreted through the conventions of the Female Gothic, in which, as Robert Miles notes, the heroine is often ‘caught between a pastoral haven and a threatening castle, sometimes in flight from a sinister patriarchal figure, sometimes in search of an absent mother, and often, both together’, the meeting between Arthur and the Queen becomes less of a sexualised encounter, and more a familial confrontation between mother and daughter.⁵⁷ On her pastoral ‘Yellow Isle’, Arthur receives the resolution of his fate via liquid from the Queen that contains and transmits the knowledge of his future rebirth, a transmission that prompts his realisation that ‘he would return / From Merlin’s prophecy’ (ll. 71–72). By reimagining Arthur’s death through the lens of the Female Gothic, ‘where woman is examined with a woman’s eye, woman as girl, as sister, as mother, as self’, ‘The Prophecy of Merlin’ not only centralises a female figure in the newly imagined role of the Queen of Beauty, but provides an overall intensely female examination of the climax to the Arthurian story.⁵⁸

If, as Paula Backschieider has commented, Bannerman was indeed an ‘isolated poet’,⁵⁹ we can trace her lack of interest in portraying brotherly camaraderie or knightly fealty, as well as her gravitation towards a marginalised island, to her own isolation as a woman writer from the centre of the Scottish patriarchal literary scene. Adriana Craciun has explored Bannerman’s isolated position within ‘the most influential literary circle in Edinburgh’, where ‘[i]t is only in the margins of the correspondence of Scott, Percy, [Richard] Heber, [Henry] Cooper Walker, [William] Erskine, [Thomas] Park, [John] Leyden and others that one finds traces of Bannerman’s life and work’.⁶⁰ However, we can equally relate the conventions Bannerman employs to her astute knowledge of the Female Gothic. Williams

⁵⁷ Robert Miles, ‘Introduction’, *Women’s Writing* (Special Issue: ‘Female Gothic Writing’), 1:2 (1994), 131–42 (131).

⁵⁸ Moers, *Literary Women*, p. 109.

⁵⁹ Paula Backschieider, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and their Poetry: Inventing Agency, Inventing Genre* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2005), pp. 41, 350.

⁶⁰ Adriana Craciun, ‘Romantic Spinstrelsy: Anne Bannerman and the sexual politics of the ballad’, in *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism*, ed. Leith Davis, Ian Duncan and Janet Sorensen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) pp. 204–24 (p. 207).

proposes that ‘from the 1790s onward’, Female Gothic conventions ‘offer[ed] the author a matrix of creative innovation: a chance to write “the unspeakable” in “Gothic”’.⁶¹ The Female Gothic mode provided Bannerman with a way of giving voice to the otherwise ‘unspeakable’ presence of women within the Arthurian story: not through the characterisation of Arthur’s adulterous Queen, Guinevere, or his often malevolent sister, the enchantress Morgan le Fay, but by means of a benign, maternal figure connected to Arthur’s eventual rebirth.

2.3.2 Bannerman’s Arthurian Scholarship

At the same time as it was sensational, however, Bannerman’s Arthurian Gothic was also consciously scholarly. ‘The Prophecy of Merlin’ is accompanied by seven scholarly footnotes that together outline Bannerman’s interest and extensive reading in medieval and Arthurian romance. For some critics, her use of annotation is a defensive practice. Stephen C. Behrendt remarks how:

in employing the familiar ploy of appending to her poems a set of seemingly scholarly endnotes, Bannerman does no more (and no less) than her contemporaries were doing to insulate themselves as authors from the content of the tales their narrators tell.⁶²

Behrendt sees Bannerman’s notes as akin to the glosses of Coleridge’s ‘Rime of the Ancient Mariner’ (1798; rev. 1817): ‘seemingly’ scholarly and only put in place to give credence to the ballad’s supernatural and superstitious material. Sham-scholarship also seems to go hand-in-hand with the wider ‘*faux* medievalism’ of the Gothic, whereby a drive towards an impression of historical authenticity, *pace* Horace Walpole, encourages the use of scholarly appendages.⁶³ Read from within the Gothic’s reputation for the superficial, Bannerman’s

⁶¹ Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 100.

⁶² Stephen C. Behrendt, *British Women Poets and the Romantic Writing Community* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2009), p. 230.

⁶³ Diane Long Hoeveler, ‘Gendering the Scottish Ballad’, 98.

notes signal her capacity for imitation, rather than originality. Indeed, this was the impression shared by contemporary reviewers, who perceived in the *Tales* ‘more smoke than fire, [and] more imitation than original genius’.⁶⁴

Published in the wake of Matthew Lewis’s edited collection of Gothic ballads, *Tales of Wonder* (1801), Bannerman’s ballads reached an already heavily saturated literary market, dominated by reviewers bemoaning their growing ennui for ‘[h]ollow winds, clay-cold hands, clanking chains and clicking clocks’.⁶⁵ Reviewers also objected to the ‘obscurity’ of the *Tales*, complaining that:

[t]he author solicitous, as it would appear, to produce a striking effect, has often left so much to be imagined by the reader that he is turned aside from the general beauty of the poem to discover the connexion or the meaning of particular parts.⁶⁶

The *Tales* were a failure in comparison to Bannerman’s earlier literary success, but did win her one important admirer in Sir Walter Scott. Although, unfortunately, Bannerman did not live to hear it, Scott singled out her work for praise in his ‘Essay on Imitations of the Ancient Ballad’ (1829):

Miss Anne Bannerman should likewise not be forgotten, whose *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* appeared about 1802. They were perhaps too mystical and too abrupt; yet if it be the purpose of this kind of ballad poetry powerfully to excite the imagination, without pretending to satisfy it, few persons have succeeded better than this gifted lady, whose volume is peculiarly fit to be read in a lonely house by a decaying lamp.⁶⁷

This is high praise from Scott, but nevertheless continues to echo the earlier critics in aligning Bannerman’s work with a sensational Gothicism fit for a ‘lonely house’. The *British Critic* similarly recommended the *Tales* to ‘those who love to shudder o’er the midnight fire’.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ [Review], ‘Literature and Polite Arts’, *New Annual Register; or, General Repository of History, Politics, and Literature*, 23 (Jan 1802), 302–22 (p. 318).

⁶⁵ [Review], ‘Tales of Superstition and Chivalry’, *Annual Review; or, Register of Literature*, 1 (Jan 1802), 720–21 (720–21).

⁶⁶ [Review], ‘Tales of Superstition and Chivalry’, *Poetical Register*, 2 (Jan 1803), 431–32 (431–32).

⁶⁷ Sir Walter Scott, ‘Essay on Imitations of the Ancient Ballad’ (1829), in *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, ed. T.F. Henderson, 4 vols (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1902), vol. 4, pp. 1–53 (pp. 25–26).

⁶⁸ [Review], ‘Tales of Superstition and Chivalry’, *British Critic*, 21 (Jan 1803), 78–79 (79).

This strong focus on the Gothic nature of Bannerman's *Tales* across contemporary reviews obscured, and continues to mask, the extent to which her ballads engage with medieval sources and contemporary antiquarian scholarship.

By far the most densely annotated of the ten ballads in *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry*, 'The Prophecy of Merlin' makes use of eighteenth-century works of literary antiquarianism as well as earlier Renaissance treatments of Arthur which serve to situate Bannerman's poem within a tradition of Arthurian writing. Her most frequent source of Arthurian information is Michael Drayton's annotated topographical poem, *Poly-Olbion* (1612–22), the notes for which were compiled by John Selden. This was her source for the decoration of Arthur's shield with an image of the Virgin, the location of Camlan in Cornwall, and also for the belief that 'Arthur is to return to the rule of his country' (Bannerman's note, p. 144). She also notes Spenser's portrait of Merlin in Book III of *The Faerie Queene* and is familiar with the first volume of Gregory Way and George Ellis's *Fabliaux; or, Tales* (1796), a collection of French romances in translation containing several Arthurian texts.⁶⁹ Two further notes refer the reader to Evan Evans's *Some Specimens of the Poetry of the Ancient Welsh Bards, Translated into English* (1764), the first work to make many early Welsh Arthurian poems available to an English-speaking audience.

Bannerman's knowledge of Evans's scholarship signals her interest in the connections between Wales and Arthurian legend – a curiosity which we can trace to her friendship with the 'philologist, linguist, ballad collector and minor poet', John Leyden (1775–1811).⁷⁰ Leyden and Bannerman's close relationship began in the mid-1790s and grew out of their shared interests, which lay not only in Scottish balladry (as Craciun has argued), but also

⁶⁹ See Chapter 4.

⁷⁰ James D. Merriman, *The Flower of Kings: A Study of the Arthurian Legend in England Between 1485 and 1835* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1973), p. 148.

encompassed Arthurian romance.⁷¹ The period between 1800 and 1802 was a busy one for both writers: Bannerman was compiling her material for *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry*, while Leyden collaborated with Scott on the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* and also transcribed several Arthurian texts from Scott's Auchinleck manuscript, including *Arthour and Merlin*. He had been recruited, via Scott, into the small group of scholars interested in reviving and reprinting the Arthurian romances: an all-male circle including Thomas Percy, Richard Heber, George Ellis, and Thomas Park.⁷² Leyden's close manuscript work furnished him with 'an extraordinary antiquarian competence and a fairly detailed mastery of the available medieval versions of Arthur's story'.⁷³ Bannerman's decision to write a ballad on an Arthurian subject was far from arbitrary. It was the natural product of her exposure to, and interest in, Leyden's current antiquarian literary enterprise.⁷⁴

A year before the publication of Bannerman's *Tales*, Leyden had made public his theory that the 'romances of Arthur and the Round Table [...] are probably of Welch origin' in the dissertation to his edition of the Scottish Renaissance political tract, *The Complaynt of Scotland* (1801).⁷⁵ Leyden proposed that the Welsh Arthurian stories represented the oldest forms of the legend: a genealogy rooted in his belief that their language (medieval Welsh)

⁷¹ From her analysis of Leyden's letters and journals, Adriana Craciun concludes that 'he [Leyden] and Bannerman were close friends from at least the mid-1790s' (Craciun, *Fatal Women of Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 188–89, 279, n. 71). Craciun also cites evidence for the dissolution of their friendship when Leyden left for India in 1803 (see pp. 279–80, n. 71). Robert Anderson coupled Bannerman and Leyden's poetry together in 1803 when he sent Percy copies of Bannerman's 'The Dark Ladie' (from *Tales*) and Leyden's *Complaynt of Scotland* (1801). See Percy to Anderson, 21 October 1803, in *The Correspondence of Thomas Percy and Robert Anderson*, p. 136. The *Critical Review* likened Bannerman's poems to 'Dr. Leyden's ballads' in their review of the *Tales* ([Review], 'Tales of Superstition and Chivalry', *Critical Review*, 38 (Jan 1803), 110).

⁷² See Arthur Johnston, *Enchanted Ground: The Study of Medieval Romance in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Althone, 1964), p. 134.

⁷³ Merriman, *The Flower of Kings*, p. 149.

⁷⁴ See the details of Leyden's work in Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, p. 161, and outlined in Scott's letters to George Ellis in *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. Sir Herbert Grierson and others, 13 vols (London: Constable, 1932–79), vol. 1 (1787–1807). See, in particular, Scott to Ellis, 27 March 1801 (vol. 1, p. 110) and Scott to Ellis, 13 July 1801 (vol. 1, pp. 117–18).

⁷⁵ John Leyden, *The Complaynt of Scotland. Written in 1548. With a preliminary dissertation and glossary* (Edinburgh: Constable, 1801), p. 265.

was ‘strong proof of their high antiquity’.⁷⁶ As Arthur Johnston notes, Leyden held a strongly ‘Celtic theory of the origin of Arthurian romance’ which pursued strong links between Scotland and Wales:⁷⁷

As the Welch tribes in Scotland long preserved their peculiar laws and manners, a presumption arises, that their traditions would give a tincture to the early literature of Scotland; a presumption which derives additional strength from the early attachment of the Scottish writers to the stories of Arthur and his knights.⁷⁸

We cannot, of course, be certain that Bannerman read Leyden’s *Complaynt*, but the young Scotsman’s recorded generosity in sharing his scholarship with women – who often remarked on his ‘frank open-hearted manner’ and way of ‘pouring forth his various stores of knowledge’ – appears to set the scene for their academic correspondence.⁷⁹ Moreover, Leyden’s *Complaynt* mentions King Urien and remarks on his ‘encounter with the Black Knight of the Water’.⁸⁰ Bannerman cites Evans’s *Specimens* (and not Leyden’s *Complaynt*) as the source for her knowledge of ‘Urien Regan, King of Cambria and a great part of Scotland, as far as the river Clyde’, but ‘The Black Knight of the Water’ is the title of the ballad that precedes ‘The Prophecy of Merlin’ in her *Tales* (pp. 144, 111–21). Not only does this sharpen the correspondence between Bannerman and Leyden’s work, but it also draws attention to how other poems in Bannerman’s *Tales* were inspired by aspects of medieval history and legend less well known (and less recognisable) than the more popular Arthurian story. When, in ‘The Prophecy of Merlin’, the Queen conjures the ‘mighty form of Urien [...] from the grave’, she turns to ancient Celticism for the revelation of Merlin’s prophecy, a narrative development which parallels Bannerman’s own conscription to Leyden’s Celtic

⁷⁶ Leyden, *Complaynt*, p. 266.

⁷⁷ Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, p. 58.

⁷⁸ Leyden, *Complaynt*, p. 268.

⁷⁹ Letter from Margaret Anderson (1812), NLS MS 3381, f. 5. Cited by W.E.K. Anderson in *The Correspondence of Thomas Percy and Robert Anderson*, p. 40, n. 9.

⁸⁰ Leyden, *Complaynt*, p. 227. Leyden cites the recent publication and translation of Llwyd’s poem in Edward Jones’s *Musical and Poetical Relicks of the Welch Bards: preserved, by tradition and authentic manuscripts, from very remote antiquity; never before published* (London: Printed for the author, 1794), p. 41.

theory and her belief that the oral foundations of the Arthurian myth lay in Scotland and Wales.

While Bannerman's ballads only contain a few words or phrases indicative of a Scottish dialect, 'The Prophecy of Merlin' is more abstractly Celtic in its privileging of the ancient literary traditions of the border nations. Indeed, to those in the know, the title of Bannerman's poem established the expectation of national political commentary. As a 'Prophecy of Merlin', the title of the ballad motions towards the vast corpus of Merlin's political prophecies first incorporated into the Merlin tradition by Geoffrey of Monmouth in his *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c.1135). These consist of a series of coded statements, loosely connected by the fluctuations of power between the Saxons (represented by a white dragon) and the Britons (a red dragon). One prophecy proclaims that 'the oppressed [the Britons] shall prevail and resist the viciousness of the foreigners'.⁸¹ Geoffrey's *History* remained popular, and during the Renaissance period various British monarchs called on Merlin's prophecies to justify specific claims to power. As Knight notes, the prophecies 'tended to validate an England-led Britain' and could therefore provide a rationale for aggressive colonisation.⁸² By the turn of the nineteenth century, several interested scholars had come to view the state application of Merlin's prophecies as a form of national propaganda, including Leyden, who strongly asserted without doubt that 'the English had employed the prophecies of Merlin as a political engine, to intimidate the minds of the Scottish nation'.⁸³ In Leyden's eyes, Merlin's prophecies were intended to 'dispirit the Commons of Scotland, and subject their courage, by familiarizing their minds to the idea of being conquered'.⁸⁴ As a modern rendering of a 'Prophecy of Merlin' by a Scottish woman writer that promotes the Celtic foundations of British medieval history, Bannerman's poem

⁸¹ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History*, p. 133.

⁸² Knight, *Merlin*, p. 98; see also pp. 98–108.

⁸³ Leyden, *Complaynt*, p. 199.

⁸⁴ Leyden, *Complaynt*, p.193.

reverses and poses an indirect challenge to Scotland's subordination to the English centre since the 1707 Act of Union.⁸⁵

In her own voice, however (rather than Merlin's), Bannerman spoke out against a different and more immediate conflict surrounding her poem. Her final note to 'The Prophecy of Merlin' was not a scholarly citation, but a firm statement of her own devising:

It will not perhaps be very consonant to popular feeling, that legendary tradition has been violated in the fate and disposal of this great, national hero. But it is all fairy-ground, and a poetical community of right to its appropriation has never been disputed. ('Notes to "The Prophecy of Merlin"', p. 144)

While gesturing towards her 'disposal' and violation of Arthur's national circulation, Bannerman is keen to stress that her treatment of Arthur is in opposition to those who seek to define Arthur's place in 'legendary tradition'. For Daniel P. Watkins, the note 'exhibits [Bannerman's] willingness to contest past authoritative accounts of King Arthur'.⁸⁶ Like Elizabeth Smith, Bannerman creates a theory of her own practice as antithetical to patriarchal 'legendary tradition', located instead on a new 'fairy-ground' that elicits associations with fantasy intrinsic to the Gothic. Bannerman ends her work by appropriately prophesying that hostility will greet her poem, a foresight that suggests she encountered antagonism from Scottish antiquarians over her 'disposal' of Arthur well before the volume was published. Her poem's self-reflective stress on its difference from traditional (male) legends and heroics, its implied Celticism, and significant demonstration of female scholarship made it a triple threat towards male English antiquarians with their own interests in King Arthur. As the following section will argue, Scottish antiquarians in control of the presentation of Bannerman's *Tales* made particular arrangements to ensure that such a threat was contained.

⁸⁵ For Diane Long Hoeveler, 'Bannerman subscribes to the Whig nationalistic enterprise of uniting Scotland, Wales and England as one country' (Hoeveler, 'Gendering the Scottish Ballad', 97). My argument differs as I suggest that while Bannerman perceived an affinity between Wales and Scotland, she remained antagonistic towards the dominant (patriarchal) English centre.

⁸⁶ Daniel P. Watkins, *Anna Letitia Barbauld and Eighteenth-Century Visionary Poetics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), p. 26.

2.4.3 Arthur and the Venus

Sometimes ignored by Arthurian critics, the striking engraving that accompanies ‘The Prophecy of Merlin’ centres on the exposed body of the Queen of Beauty, which blazes outwards towards the viewer, dramatically illuminated against the dark coastline behind (Figure 3).⁸⁷ The sharp contrast of light and dark in the composition draws on traditional chiaroscuro aesthetics, here exploited to maximise the focalisation of the gaze onto the woman’s flagrant pose and tantalisingly draped veil, both of which suggest that the figure is closely modelled on the famous classical *Venus anadyomene* (‘Venus rising from the sea’). Edinburgh intellectuals were not ready for such a brazen flaunting of a woman’s sexuality. According to Craciun, the engraving threatened Bannerman with an ‘impending scandal’.⁸⁸ Correspondence between the London-based antiquarian Thomas Park, and Bannerman’s early supporter and the current editor of the *Edinburgh Magazine*, Dr Robert Anderson, records their shared fears that the Edinburgh literati were ‘conspiring to give the fair authoress disquiet & to make the work [Bannerman’s *Tales*] misprised’.⁸⁹ Subsequently, Park and Anderson made hasty arrangements to remove the engraving from copies of the *Tales* not yet released by the publisher, although Craciun’s survey of surviving volumes suggests that despite their best efforts, the engraving continued to feature in the majority of sold works.⁹⁰

Park also came forward with a more personal offer to defend Bannerman, couched in metaphors that playfully invoke the themes of the work under siege:

⁸⁷ The image is absent, for example, from the reprinting of ‘The Prophecy of Merlin’ in Lupack and Tapa Lupack’s *Arthurian Literature by Women* (New York and London: Garland, 1999), pp. 43–49. Simpson’s *Camelot Regained* reproduces a copy of the engraving under the new title of ‘King Arthur and the Queen of Beauty’ (see Simpson, *Camelot Regained*, Plate 2a, between pp. 120–21).

⁸⁸ Craciun, *Fatal Women*, p. 184.

⁸⁹ Park to Anderson, 29 Nov 1802, NLS MS 22.4.10. Cited in Craciun, *Fatal Women*, p. 184.

⁹⁰ Craciun summarises that ‘an examination of the sixteen copies of *Tales* reveals that in fact only five copies are missing the final engraving, whereas ten copies include all four’ (Craciun, *Fatal Women*, p. 184). Partial success in removing the engraving from review copies is suggested by the *British Critic*’s mention of ‘three plates’ rather than four ([Review], ‘Tales of Superstition and Chivalry’, *British Critic*, 79).

As Miss B. is guiltless of offence, it is hard that she should need a champion, but in the cause of her *Tales of Chivalry* I am ready to commence knight-errant, & will take up the gauntlet of opprobrium in this affair.⁹¹

Park's extension of the volume's medievalism to contemporary Edinburgh society succeeds in casting Bannerman as a damsel-in-distress opposite his heroic knight-errant, and, in a later application he made to the *Royal Literary Fund* on Bannerman's behalf, he repeated his desire to protect the poet from unnecessary 'exposure'.⁹² Yet, when given the opportunity to influence the engravings for the *Tales*, it seems that female exposure was precisely what Park had in mind. Craciun's research into the publishing arrangements for the *Tales* leaves her in no doubt that 'in the case of the controversial "The Prophecy of Merlin" Thomas Park selected the subject matter'.⁹³

In his most spirited letter to Anderson, Park defended his decision to instruct the engraver to illustrate the ballad with an impression of a classical Venus:

I really think that there is little indelicacy in the design, if no licentious construction be put on it. – Considered as a Venus anadyomene, which seems to have been the character represented by the artist, – there is no impropriety in the unparalleled piece of statuary he has exhibited; – or considered as the siren of a charmed isle, – there still is little to excite human passion in the display of an ideal sorceress; at least, there can be little to excite those, who have been accustomed...to distinguish classical & poetical figures, from those denuded frail ones who traverse the streets, by night.⁹⁴

Park shows good intentions, which lie primarily in disassociating Bannerman from the scandal. Unfortunately, his success in doing so results in her obfuscation: the engraver is the only 'artist' considered and it is 'he' who has created the work in question. Park's vague claim that 'there is little to excite human passion in the display of an ideal sorceress' effectively suggests that Bannerman's poetry contains 'little to excite' either, contrary to Scott's posthumous assessment of Bannerman's ballads cited earlier. Finally, Park's concern with the 'classical' nature of the 'piece of statuary' passes over the engraving's medieval

⁹¹ Park to Anderson, 29 Nov 1802 NLS MS 22.4.10. Cited in Craciun, *Fatal Women*, p. 184.

⁹² Thomas Park to the Royal Literary Fund, 15 May 1805, in *Archives of the Royal Literary Fund*, comp. Nigel Cross (London: World Microfilms Publications, 1982), file 170.

⁹³ Craciun, *Fatal Women*, p. 184.

⁹⁴ Park to Anderson, 29 Nov 1802, NLS MS 22.4.10. Cited in Craciun, *Fatal Women*, p. 186.

Arthurian context, and suggests that her ballad, like the illustration, also reproduces an appropriately ‘statuary’ stock narrative. As Craciun observes, drawing out the effect of the disjunction across the *Tales* as a whole: ‘the Classical Venus Anadyomene figure works against the ballads’ evocations of a medieval age of superstition’.⁹⁵ More specifically, the Venus also encourages the viewer to identify Arthur (not named in the engraving’s caption) with Paris, Cupid, or Mars, as figures better known for their visual encounters with the Classical nude. Like his position in relation to the illuminated Venus, the presence of King Arthur in Bannerman’s ballad is overshadowed by the Classical aesthetic immediately presented in the engraving.

Through overseeing the addition of the realised Venus figure to the ballad, Park (himself a former artist) displays his mastery over the dangerous outputs of a female poet who was not only violating ‘legendary tradition’ by placing Arthur in new dramatic scenarios, but encroaching on traditionally patriarchal areas of antiquarian enquiry. As the engraving precedes the ballad in its placement in the *Tales*, readers approach ‘The Prophecy of Merlin’ with a firm image of the Queen of Beauty as a Classical nude already in mind. J. Hillis Miller has written of the ‘disruptive power’ of illustrations, an effect that he locates in their ability to perform ‘a permanent parabasis, an eternal moment suspending, for the moment at least, any attempt to tell a story through time’.⁹⁶ Bannerman’s creativity was thus superseded by a masculine creative act that perpetuates, as Griselda Pollock puts it, the ‘circulation of woman as the beautiful, mysterious, desired and loved image for the desiring masculine gaze’.⁹⁷

A significant literary antiquarian and editor, Thomas Park (1758/9–1834) would have immediately recognised the challenges Bannerman was making to patriarchal ‘legendary

⁹⁵ Craciun, *Fatal Women*, p. 187.

⁹⁶ J. Hillis Miller, *Illustration* (London: Reaktion, 1992), p. 66.

⁹⁷ Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity and the Histories of Art* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 161.

tradition', in her revisions to Merlin's prophecies and Gothic feminisation of Arthur. He began his career as an engraver, but soon turned to poetry and later, antiquarianism.⁹⁸ Like Leyden, from the 1790s onwards he investigated the field of medieval romance alongside Scott, Ellis, Percy, and Heber.⁹⁹ While he was involved in supporting Bannerman's poetic career, Park was simultaneously pursuing a number of editing projects: 1801 saw him working with George Ellis on an edition of the early fourteenth-century romance, *Kyng Alisaunder*, and in 1804, Bishop Percy invited Park to edit his unpublished collection of romances, which included '[s]ome of the Songs of King Arthur'.¹⁰⁰ Scott also held a high opinion of Park's editorial skills and manuscript expertise.¹⁰¹ Somewhat surprisingly, then, Park never recognised Bannerman's own Arthurian interests, preferring to speak only of her 'ingenious imitations of the Gothic ditty'.¹⁰² His offer to become Bannerman's 'champion [...] knight errant' continues the same effacement of her scholarship. By embroiling the Scottish poetess in her own version of Gothic romance, Park could restore Bannerman to what he saw as her rightful place: on the *faux* Gothic, rather than the scholarly, side of medieval enquiry.

With his own antiquarian project concerning *Alisaunder* failing to progress, Park encountered Bannerman's very different, feminine-centred claim to the 'right' to rewrite the Arthurian story. In response, he substituted her unstable and unsettling version of woman – where beauty is only a 'smooth' disguise for something more threatening – for a visual, concrete, and 'statuary' version of woman as Venus.¹⁰³ As much as a desire for beautiful women is intimately connected to the Arthurian medievalism of the Pre-Raphaelites, Park's

⁹⁸ W.P. Courtney, 'Thomas Park (1758/9–1834)', rev. John D. Haigh, *ODNB* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/21280>> [accessed 9 Nov 2010].

⁹⁹ Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, p. 134.

¹⁰⁰ See Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, pp. 135, 155–56; Percy to Hailes, cited in Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, p. 94.

¹⁰¹ Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, p. 188.

¹⁰² Park to Anderson, 30 January 1801, NLS MS 22.4.10. Cited in Craciun, 'Romantic Spinstrelsy', p. 186.

¹⁰³ Both of Park's editing projects amounted to little: he eventually turned down Percy's offer, and the edition of *Alisaunder* never reached the press. See Percy to Hailes, in Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, p. 94; also *Enchanted Ground*, p. 156.

interruption into Bannerman's medievalism desires to make the same thing central: the exposed body of the woman somehow fulfils the male desire to 'see' into the medieval past. In doing so, it conceals woman as author, scholar, or artist, and replaces her with 'woman as sign'.¹⁰⁴ The sexual controversy surrounding the engraving is a rare manifestation of the repressed sexual desire that might be seen to drive the antiquarian's search for the past in order to possess it. Within this patriarchal pursuit, Bannerman's feminised depiction of a lost, Arthurian past was unsettlingly foreign, and a visual representation was used to reposition the woman as the object to be recovered, or damsel to be saved.

The latter part of Park's earlier meditation on the Venus, however, concerning 'those denuded frail ones who traverse the streets, by night', seems less sure of the figure's concrete and conservative identification with 'unparalleled' high art.¹⁰⁵ Class-snobbery aside, Park nevertheless recognises the potential for the Venus to be read – by those less 'accustomed' to refined aesthetics – as an over-sexualised 'denuded' prostitute. This sharp turn seems to point towards what Caroline Arscott and Katie Scott have termed 'the double nature of Venus': her particular ability to function as both 'low and high' art.¹⁰⁶ The often fragmented body of the Venus enjoys an oddly paradoxical association with perfection, or complete beauty, which, for Arscott and Scott, marks her 'dual capacity' as 'ancient object and modern icon'.¹⁰⁷ Read as a symbol of history fragmented, or disrupted, the Venus nevertheless continues to gesture towards the poetic practices at work in Bannerman's ballad, and, perhaps especially, her attempt to cleave Arthur from 'legendary tradition'. Hillis Miller makes a similar observation when he suggests that 'in all illustrations one doubling always invites further duplications,

¹⁰⁴ I draw this term from Griselda Pollock and Deborah Cherry's influential essay, 'Woman as Sign in Pre-Raphaelite Literature: the Representation of Elizabeth Siddall', in Pollock, *Vision and Difference*, pp. 128–62. Pollock and Cherry are themselves strongly influenced by Elizabeth Cowie's 'Woman as Sign', *M/F*, 1:1 (1978), 49–63.

¹⁰⁵ Park to Anderson, 29 Nov 1802, NLS MS 22.4.10. Cited in Craciun, *Fatal Women*, p. 186.

¹⁰⁶ Caroline Arscott and Katie Scott, 'Introducing Venus', in *Manifestations of Venus: Art and Sexuality*, ed. Arscott and Scott (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 1–23, p. 6.

¹⁰⁷ Arscott and Scott, 'Introducing Venus', p. 7.

[...] potentially *ad infinitum*'.¹⁰⁸ Park's description verbalises that doubling effect, inherent in the engraving, by presenting a multitude of ways of reading the female (body): as Venus, siren, enchantress, or prostitute. While appearing to define 'something' far from Bannerman's meaning, Park's intentions also backfire. Masquerading as both Classical Venus and denuded prostitute, the engraver's representation holds the potential to embody the very 'something' '[b]etray'd' by the poem's elusive Queen (ll. 155–56).

Park's redirection of readers' attention away from Bannerman's ballad proper and towards a deliberately provocative engraving was more than successful. Few nineteenth-century readers and reviewers recognised the strength and extent of Bannerman's medieval scholarship, and contemporary criticism, both Romantic and Arthurian, has continued to focus on her taste for the Gothic. The disruptive engraving is part of this misdirection, and on many counts seems to undermine Bannerman's scholarly investment. However, Park's decision to visualise the Queen of Beauty nevertheless makes immediate – and perhaps even extends – the centrality of the 'Female' in her particular Arthurian Gothic. After all, Bannerman's greatest addition to the events surrounding Arthur's death was her realisation of his encounter with a powerful, maternal figure. In so doing, she created a literary dialogue between Arthur and the Queen that called for the recognition of the feminine within the Arthurian story in much the same way that her final note offered 'fairy-ground' as an alternative to patriarchal 'legendary tradition' (p. 144).

¹⁰⁸ Hillis Miller, *Illustration*, p. 111.

2.4 Mordred as Gothic Villain: Janetta Philipps, ‘Edmund and Bertha’ (1802; rev. 1811) and Charlotte Wardle, *St Aelian’s; or, The Cursing Well* (1814)

Bannerman’s application of Leyden’s Celtic theory of romance origins demonstrates how Arthur’s links with Wales were becoming better known towards the end of the eighteenth century as a result of the broad shift in cultural tastes now referred to as the ‘Celtic Revival’. As Rob Gossedge points out, ‘it was [...] Welsh scholars who established the greatest medieval corpus of Arthurian literature’.¹⁰⁹ In terms of the Gothic, this association between Arthur and Wales quickly began to show itself, in the lightest of forms, in a variety of female-authored Gothic novels: in Mary Pilkington’s *Rosina*, the journey of the characters into Wales raises thoughts of Arthur and the chivalrous, Gothic past.¹¹⁰ Similarly, in a short story from Harriet and Sophia Lee’s collection of *Canterbury Tales* (1797–1802), the ‘Gothic gates’ of a castle in Pembrokeshire anticipate what lies within: a large banqueting table ‘like that of King Arthur for size, solidity and polish’.¹¹¹ These Anglophone writers of popular fiction were certainly not averse to cashing in on the dual currency of the Arthurian legend as both Gothic *and* Welsh.

Perhaps in vague recognition of the fact that the *Annales Cambriae* (c. 960–70), a Cambro-Latin chronicle that focuses heavily on the history of Wales, contains the earliest reference to ‘the battle of Camlann, in which Arthur and Medraut fell’, the name Mordred (or Modred) is associated with murderous villainy in several Gothic poems by Welsh women writers.¹¹² Thomas Gray’s mention of a bard named ‘Mordred’ ‘whose magic song / Made huge Plinlimmon bow his cloud-topped head’ in his influential pro-Welsh ode, ‘The Bard’

¹⁰⁹ Rob Gossedge, ‘Thomas Love Peacock’s *The Misfortunes of Elphin* and the Romantic Arthur’, *Arthurian Studies*, 23 (2006), 157–76 (164).

¹¹⁰ Pilkington, *Rosina*, vol. 1, p. 90.

¹¹¹ Harriet and Sophia Lee, ‘The Clergyman’s Tale: Pembroke’, in *The Canterbury Tales* (1797–1802; London: Pandora, 1989), pp. 1–109 (pp. 26–27).

¹¹² ‘Entry for year 537’, trans. Alan Lupack, in *Annales Cambriae [Annals of Wales]*, [XCIII. Annus. Gueith Camlann, in qua Arthur et Medraut corruere] <<http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/cambrian.htm>> [accessed 9 February 2011].

(1757), may have helped to further popularise the name in Wales; however, Gray's Mordred is certainly not antagonistic, but rather a benevolent, supernatural bard more akin to Merlin in function.¹¹³ In *St Aelian's; or, The Cursing Well* (1814), a poem in five cantos by Charlotte Wardle, the daughter of a radical MP and a North Welsh heiress, Modred's 'evil eye' casts a shadow over the life of his daughter, Elen, as they reside in the family's 'hostile tow'r' situated above the banks of the river Conwy in North Wales.¹¹⁴ As in many Gothic texts, the mother figure is absent (presumed dead), to the effect of heightening and intensifying the contrast between father and daughter:

From Modred sprung the mountain maid
 Yet more unlike was naught display'd,
 From polar ice to tropic fire
 Than Ellen [sic] and her sullen sire.¹¹⁵

From the opening of the poem, then, the beautiful Elen is incarcerated within a North Welsh castle under the keeping of her own 'sire', who is immediately offered up as the poem's villainous patriarch. Wardle's notes to the poem mention a Spenserian 'Prince Arthur' and Merlin, but the poem is otherwise light on Arthurian content besides the use of Modred's name.¹¹⁶

How much of Mordred's history was known to the Welsh poet Janetta Philipps is equally unclear. In fact, little is known about Philipps at all, except that she was the author of a small volume of *Poems* (1811) much admired by Percy Bysshe Shelley.¹¹⁷ The recent attribution of the Minerva Press novel, *Delaval* (1802), to Philipps provides new evidence for her categorisation as a Gothic writer, as well as further support for Jane Aaron's supposition that Philipps was 'probably Welsh by birth' (much of *Delaval* is set in Caernarvonshire,

¹¹³ Thomas Gray, 'The Bard: A Pindaric Ode', ll. 33–34.

¹¹⁴ Charlotte Wardle, *St Aelian's; or, The Cursing Well* (London: Printed for the Author, 1814), Canto II, p. 20; III, p. 36; I, p. 2.

¹¹⁵ Wardle, *St Aelian's*, Canto I, p. 6.

¹¹⁶ Wardle, *St Aelian's*, 'Notes to Canto I', pp. 101–02.

¹¹⁷ See J.R. de J. Jackson, *Romantic Poetry by Women: A Bibliography, 1770–1835* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 256; also Barry John Capella, 'Shelley and Janetta Philipps', *Notes and Queries*, 30:3 (1983), 224.

Bangor, and Swansea).¹¹⁸ The novel contains an interpolated poem that Philipps later revised for publication in her 1811 *Poems*, giving it the title of ‘Edmund and Bertha’.¹¹⁹ The poem tells the gloomy tale of the deaths of its eponymous lovers by the cruel determination of ‘Dark Modred’.¹²⁰

Like Wardle’s *St Aelian’s*, Philipps’s poem also opens with a description of a Welsh valley over which Modred and his castle darkly preside:

Where Snowdon’s bleak summits their shadows throw wide,
Once the castle of Modred arose;
Frowning dark as the mountain that towered at its side,
The rage of the tempest or war it defied,
Sternly mocking its impotent foes. (ll. 1–5)

Among Modred’s tenants are Edmund and Bertha, a young couple who live in an isolated ‘lone cottage’ below (l. 7). Though his ‘pride vainly strove to repel’ his passion for the ‘lowly’ Bertha, Modred is consumed by his desire for the ‘lovely maid’ (ll. 10, 8, 12). When Edmund enrolls to fight for Wales and the ‘genius of Cambria’ (l. 29), this only serves to strengthen Modred’s resolve to bring about Edmund’s death, thereby ensuring that the couples’ ‘bright star of love, which then glittered so fair, / Should be quickly extinguished in blood’ (ll. 74–75). Yet, rather than committing the murder himself, Modred tasks a ‘murderous band’ (l. 76) of his strongest knights to commit the deed, himself overcome by cowardice: ‘For he shrunk from the danger he yet dared command / Bold only in planning that death which his hand / Wanted courage to deal to his foe’ (ll. 78–80).

This plan has the intended fatal consequences, and more; Modred’s dim-witted henchmen kill Bertha as well as Edmund, and their two ‘[p]ale and bleeding’ forms

¹¹⁸ Peter Garside, with Jacqueline Belanger, Sharon Ragaz, and Anthony Mandal, ‘The English Novel, 1800–29: Update 4’ (June 2003–August 2004), *Database of British Fiction*, <<http://www.british-fiction.cf.ac.uk/guide/update4.html>> [accessed 15 February 2011]. Jane Aaron, *Nineteenth-Century Women’s Writing in Wales: Nation, Gender and Belonging* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), p. 52.

¹¹⁹ [Janetta Philipps], *Delaval. A Novel*, 2 vols (London: Printed at the Minerva Press for William Lane, 1802), vol. 1, pp. 85–91. It appears that Philipps made minor revisions to ‘Edmund and Bertha’ for its inclusion in *Poems*. Lines 55, 66, 105, and 116 vary significantly, while other minor amendments to individual words or phrasing are made throughout.

¹²⁰ Janetta Philipps, ‘Edmund and Bertha, A Tale’, in *Poems* (Oxford: Collingwood, 1811), pp. 39–49 (l. 73). All further references are to this edition and are subsequently given in parentheses.

immediately begin to haunt the perpetrator of the scheme (l. 98). Eventually realising that escape from the ghostly lovers is futile, in an Ossianic climax, Modred throws himself into the ‘wild roaring main’ of the ocean (l. 115). The ballad ends by noting that the two ‘unblest [...] spirits’ of Edmund and Bertha continue to howl over Modred’s watery grave (ll. 119–20).

The oscillating presentation of Modred’s blood-thirsty villainy set against his innate cowardliness negotiates a precarious balance between the terrific and the comic. The success of the poem, however, lies in Philipps’s careful delineation of the terror and horror experienced by Modred. In her later essay ‘On the Supernatural in Poetry’ (1826), Radcliffe proposed that: ‘[t]error and horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contrasts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them’.¹²¹ In line with Radcliffe’s theorisation, Philipps describes Modred’s experience of a sublime ‘soul-thrilling [...] terror’ (ll. 93–96) when he hears the signal to denote Edmund’s murder, which quickly transforms into an immobilising horror when he encounters Edmund and Bertha’s ghosts:

For a moment he gazed, fixed with maddening affright,
The life-stream froze fast round his heart;
Then, starting in horror, he flies from the sight,
While behind a dark cloud the moon curtained her light,
And no ray to his path would impart. (ll. 101–05)

The veiled moon propagates Modred’s experience of a negative sublime in which the Welsh landscape refuses to ‘impart’ a path for his escape.

In a rare discussion of ‘Edmund and Bertha’, Aaron argues for the restorative powers of Philipps’s ballad in creating an attractive, if terrifying, image of Wales: ‘[n]onsensical as this material might appear today, at the time its high Romantic flavour at least had the benefit of associating Welshness with exoticism, rather than contemptibility’.¹²² Without the

¹²¹ Ann Radcliffe, ‘On the Supernatural in Poetry’, in *Gothic Documents*, pp. 163–71 (p. 168). Originally published in the *New Monthly Magazine*, 16:1 (1826), 142–52.

¹²² Aaron, *Nineteenth-Century Women’s Writing in Wales*, p. 52.

presence of any notes or biographical information outlining Philipps's knowledge of Arthurian romance, we can only assume that (as Aaron suggests) a combination of the loose medieval exoticism of the name and a vague vogue for Celtic Arthuriana were the driving factors behind her appropriation of Modred.¹²³ On one hand, then, Philipps's limited application of the Arthurian myth confirms our expectations for the Gothic's *faux* medievalism as Hoeveler defines it: a mode that draws shamelessly and eclectically on medieval tropes, characters, and themes without attempting to establish any historical integrity. Yet, on the other hand, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick reminds us, what takes place on the 'surface' in Gothic writing is no less crucial than that which runs deeper. For Sedgwick, critics have been all too eager to 'plunge to the thematic of depth and then to a psychology of depth [that] has left unexplored the most characteristic and daring of Gothic conventions, those that point the reader's attention back to surfaces'.¹²⁴ Arthurian props and characters, then, as much as they might not penetrate to the deeper levels of historical setting and psychological interrogation, are nonetheless a vital part of the Gothic mode.

Moreover, if Philipps's use of the Arthurian legend is superficial, this creation of a *faux* medieval atmosphere only adds to the poem's undercutting of chivalric values, which throughout the poem are shown to be equally ephemeral. Philipps's description of Edmund's lust for glory in battle subtly mocks the chivalric system of honour:

"Let honour," he cried, "but distinguish my name,
 And when life's fleeting moments are o'er,
 May for ever it shine in the annals of fame,
 Let heroes unborn its record inflame
 Bright and lasting, till time is no more." (ll. 51–55)

¹²³ Aaron notes that Philipps's poem includes a footnote explaining that 'Modred was the son of Arthur and his betrayer in his last battle of Camlan' (Aaron, *Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing in Wales*, p. 52). However, an examination of *Poems* suggests that this is not the case. A scanned copy of the text is available at <<http://www.archive.org/details/poemsphilipp00philrich>> [accessed 10 January 2011]. (It would seem that Aaron has confused Philipps's poem with Bannerman's Arthurian ballad, as a footnote very similar to that which Aaron describes is annexed to 'The Prophecy of Merlin' – a poem also discussed in Aaron's monograph.)

¹²⁴ Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'The Character in the Veil', 255.

On the surface, Edmund's speech seems to endorse those very values of honour and 'fame', but Philipps makes it clear to her reader that Edmund is wrong to turn his back on Bertha's love for the seductive promise of a 'bright flash of glory', which 'inflamm[s] his proud mind' (l. 43). In a separate ode included in the same collection as 'Edmund and Bertha', Philipps criticised more openly the desire for fame in battle:

To sing of Knights, who for their Lady's grace
 In Fame's proud record won distinguished place:
 Ah! vainly won – when soon in mingled breath
 Sound glory's hymns and the low dirge of death.¹²⁵

Arthurian Gothic, then, is the site for Philipps's critique of heroic chivalry, which takes additional force from the *faux* or superficial use of the Arthurian legend in her poem itself. For Philipps, Arthurian Gothic provides a mode in which she can explore the motivation of the knight whose lust for glory supersedes all logic. The story of the downfall of the hyper-masculine society of Arthur's court is a fitting surface for a poem that places the human catalyst of that downfall, Mordred, at its centre.

2.5 Christabel at the Round Table: Two Arthurian Analogues to Coleridge

While a recognised Welsh geography informs the Arthurian Gothic of Philipps and Wardle, across the border in England another branch of Arthurian Gothic was laying its foundations in women's writing. Rather than a realistic landscape, the fantastical setting of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 'Christabel' (wr. 1798–1800; pub. 1816) struck more than one female writer as an appropriate site for an encounter with Arthurian personae. This connection might at first seem strange. After all, as Robert Miles has summarised, 'Christabel's status as a Gothic tale is universally accepted', but there is nothing openly Arthurian about its supernatural

¹²⁵ Philipps, 'To Melancholy', in *Poems*, pp. 50–56, ll. 50–54.

medievalism.¹²⁶ Coleridge, like his contemporaries Keats and Shelley, had only a cursory interest in Arthurian romance, preferring instead to foster a vaguer ‘medieval “atmosphere”’ in poems such as ‘Christabel’.¹²⁷ Sir Walter Scott, however, soon saw an opportunity to merge figures from ‘Christabel’ with Arthurian themes by using the name of Christabel’s father, ‘Sir Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine’, in his metrical romance, *The Bridal of Triermain*.¹²⁸ Women poets also arrived at similar connections. On two separate occasions, Coleridge’s ‘lovely Lady, Christabel’, was given new Arthurian surroundings by female poets attempting continuations or reimaginings of Coleridge’s unfinished work.¹²⁹

2.4.1. E.H. McLeod

The true horror of the Arthurian Gothic reaches a blood-thirsty peak in a ballad by the once-popular novelist, E.H. McLeod. Innocuously entitled ‘Song’, the ballad appears within ‘Rosamund; or, The Ghost Story’, a novella itself collected within McLeod’s exploration of ‘fashionable characters’ in a series entitled *Tales of Ton* (1821–22). Like Philipps, the details of McLeod’s biography remain largely lost to literary history, but she appears to have spent

¹²⁶ Robert Miles, *Gothic Writing 1750–1820: A Genealogy*, 2nd edn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 176.

¹²⁷ Beverly Taylor and Elisabeth Brewer, *The Return of King Arthur: British and American Literature since 1800* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1983), p. 36. Coleridge includes a (Spenserian) allusion to Merlin in ‘The Pang More Sharp than All’ [1807 and later; then 1822–25 and later], in Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, general ed. Kathleen Coburn, 16 vols (London: Routledge, 1976–2001), XVI: *Poetical Works I: Poems (Reading Text): Part 2*, ed. J.C.C. Mays (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 825–29 (ll. 37–41). Keats makes a particularly Gothic mention of Merlin in ‘The Eve of St Agnes’ (1819); see Keats, ‘The Eve of St. Agnes’ in *The Complete Poems*, ed. John Barnard, 3rd edn (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 312–24, ll. 170–71 (‘Never on such a night have lovers met / Since Merlin paid his demon all the monstrous debt’), and Percy Bysshe Shelley includes a prophecy, purportedly by Merlin, in his unfinished drama, *Charles the First* (1822), (see *Charles the First*, in *The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (London: Oxford University Press, 1905), pp. 488–507 (l.ii. 366–70)).

¹²⁸ Though based on a historical personage, Sir Walter Scott encountered ‘Sir Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine’ in circulating manuscript versions of ‘Christabel’ before he made the same figure the hero of *The Bridal of Triermain* (Edinburgh: Ballantyne, 1813). The work contains Scott’s only extensive poetic engagement with the Arthurian story and it shares some parallels with the narrative of ‘Christabel’. A sub-plot within Scott’s poem sees Merlin work his magic on Arthur’s illegitimate daughter to put her into an enchanted sleep, which has some similarities with Geraldine’s enchantment of Christabel while she sleeps.

¹²⁹ Coleridge, ‘Christabel’ (written 1797–1800, pub. 1816), in *Poetical Works I (Poems, Reading Text: Part 1)*, ed. Mays, pp. 477–504 (l. 23).

most of her writing life in southern England, in parts of Essex and Norwich.¹³⁰ Within a series of inset narratives, McLeod's Arthurian 'Song' is presented as the composition of a male knight, Sir Halbert, who performs the mock-medieval ballad to an attentive audience of female listeners. The heroine is a recognisable 'Christabelle' and the ballad repeats several Gothic motifs from Coleridge's poem, including the sound of a 'blood-dogs [sic] bay' and a 'darksome wood' (l. 46, 42).¹³¹

Pledged to marry a 'craven, cowardly wight' she does not love (l. 9), Christabelle flees her court with a knight she believes is her lover. In a tribute to the Arthurian story, McLeod names him Sir Gawaine, a name that she had presumably picked up from Percy's 'The Marriage of Sir Gawaine' in the *Reliques*.¹³² However, when Christabelle notices blood on his hands, she asks the knight to affirm his identity and, obediently removing his visor, he replies:

"In blood I embrace my destined bride:
One kiss to thy lips, ere in death we part,
And then my sword shall pierce thy false heart!"

"'Tis not sir Gawaine!"— his haught rival stands,
With uplifted dagger, and blood-reeking hands;
And quick to the breast of the ladye it rushed,
And down her pall garment the life-blood it gushed! (ll. 65–71)

As Christabelle bleeds to death, the villainous doppelganger reveals that it is Gawaine's blood that stains his hands, for, as he tells the dying Christabelle, he made a pledge that: "[i]f thou couldst not love me (and such thou hast said) / The blood of my rival I ween should be

¹³⁰ Otherwise known as 'E.H.P.' (see the title page to McLeod's *Geraldine Murray* (London: A.K. Newman, 1826)). The author's signature is ascribed to Fingringhoe Hall, Essex, in an address 'To the reader' in McLeod, *Belmont's Daughter: A Fashionable Tale* (London: A.K. Newman, 1830). By 1824 her location had moved to Norwich (see 'Preface' to McLeod, *Principle! A Fashionable Tale* (London: A.K. Newman, 1824)). McLeod's works are now little-remembered, but they were evidently popular in their time; all three series of the *Tales of Ton* as well as her other later novels, *Geraldine Murray*, and the aforementioned *Principle!*, are held in the Corvey Library (Cardiff, UK). She is also the author of *Geraldine Hamilton; or Self Guidance, A Tale* (London: Richard Bentley, 1832).

¹³¹ Miss [E.H.] McLeod, *Tales of Ton; The Second Series*, 4 vols (London: A.K. Newman and Co., 1821), vol. 3, pp. 19–22 (ll. 46, 42). All further references are to this edition and are subsequently given in parentheses. Compare Coleridge, 'Christabel', in *Poetical Works I*, ll. 12, 25.

¹³² It seems likely that this was McLeod's main source. She follows Percy's spelling of Gawaine's name, and appears to be familiar with other ballads from the *Reliques* (see below).

shed” (ll. 80–81). Like Philipps’s intertextual use of a superficial Arthurian framework, McLeod’s gruesome ballad apparently owes little to Arthurian medieval romance besides the use of Gawaine’s name, invoked as a heroic exemplar. The pastiche of Coleridge’s poem is a close one, as McLeod unabashedly redeploys selections from Coleridge’s verse. The medieval Catholicism of ‘Christabel’’s world, established by the narrator’s cry of ‘Jesu Maria shield her well!’, is echoed by McLeod’s version of the heroine, who also asks ‘Jesu Maria!’ to ‘shield me from harm!’ (l. 58).¹³³

Coleridge’s own ‘Christabel’ can be linked back to Arthurian romance, if only indirectly. Parallels between the figure of the loathly lady, and the shape-shifting Geraldine lead Caroline Franklin to list Percy’s ‘The Marriage of Sir Gawaine’ (along with ‘Sir Cauline’ and ‘The Child of Elle’) among the ballads from the *Reliques* that provided Coleridge with the inspiration for ‘Christabel’.¹³⁴ In a far less sophisticated way, McLeod also mines the *Reliques* for material: her ballad’s refrain, ‘the squire of low degree!’, is taken from the title of a romance listed in Percy’s ‘Essay on the Ancient Metrical Romances’.¹³⁵ By 1821, Sir Gawain’s name had been widely popularised by the *Reliques*, and women writers were keen to follow Coleridge’s example by scouring Percy’s anthology for names that could give a medieval cast to their Gothic writing.

2.4.2 Anna Jane Vardill’s ‘Christobell. A Gothic Tale’ (1815)

Numerous poets were inspired by ‘Christabel’ to pen their own imitations of Coleridge’s poem; Arthur Nethercot mentions James Hogg’s imitation, ‘Isabelle, by S.T. Coleridge’ (1816), as well as several other hack works that are as melodramatic and burlesque as

¹³³ Coleridge, ‘Christabel’, in *Poetical Works I*, l. 53.

¹³⁴ Caroline Franklin, [Headnote to ‘Christabel’], in *The Longman Anthology of Gothic Verse*, ed. Caroline Franklin (London: Longman, 2011), pp. 279–80 (p. 279).

¹³⁵ Thomas Percy, ‘Essay on Ancient Metrical Romances’, *Reliques* (1765; facsimile repr. 1996), vol. 3, pp. i–xxiv (p. xxiii).

McLeod's own.¹³⁶ Most intriguing, perhaps, is an imitation that appeared in the *European Magazine* more than a year before the original 'Christabel' was published, offering 'a sequel to a beautiful legend of a fair daughter and her father, deceived by a witch in the guise of a noble knight's daughter'.¹³⁷ Published under the initial 'V.', 'Christobell, A Gothic Tale' was for a substantial time thought to be by Coleridge himself, seeking anonymity in an attempt to 'sound out public reaction to this ending' to the eerie tale.¹³⁸ Later, Hogg was put forward for authorship, but at the beginning of the twentieth century its writer was firmly identified as Anna Jane Vardill (1781–1852), a poet, satirist, and a regular contributor to the *European Magazine*.¹³⁹

The diaries of Henry Crabb Robinson, Vardill's friend, reveal how she came to encounter Coleridge's poem – and write her own sequel – before it appeared in press. 'Christabel' was widely circulated in literary circles in manuscript form prior to publication, and, on 19 December 1814, Crabb Robinson recorded that he '[t]ook tea with the Flaxmans, and read to them and Miss Vardill Coleridge's Christabel, with which they were all delighted'.¹⁴⁰ In continuing Coleridge's famously obscure poem, Vardill made one major addition of particular significance to Arthurian Gothicism. At the centre of her narrative is Merlin, whose quest it becomes to quell Geraldine and restore order to Langdale Hall. It is

¹³⁶ Arthur Nethercot, *The Road to Tryermaine: A Study of the History, Background and Purposes of Coleridge's Christabel* (1939; Westport: Greenwood Press, 1978), pp. 36–37.

¹³⁷ 'V.' [Anna Jane Vardill], 'Christobell, A Gothic Tale', *EM*, 67 (1815), 345–46 (p. 345). See also Megan A. Stephan, 'Vardill [married name Niven], Anna Jane', in *ODNB* <<http://www.oxfordnb.com/view/article/45865>> [accessed 27 January 2011].

¹³⁸ Nethercot, *The Road to Tryermaine*, p. 37.

¹³⁹ Vardill's authorship of the poem was first proposed by William A.E. Axon (see Axon, 'Anna Jane Vardill Niven, the Authoress of "Christobell," the sequel to Coleridge's "Christabel". With a Bibliography', *Transactions of the Royal Society of Literature*, 2nd Series, 28 (1909), 57–85). Several decades later, Donald H. Reiman also arrived independently at the identification of Vardill as author (see Reiman, 'Christobell; or, The Case of the Sequel Preemptive', *Wordsworth Circle*, 6:4 (1975), 283–89 (287)). Reiman's lack of knowledge of Axon's previous research was noted by Richard Haven in a rejoinder article, 'Anna Vardill Niven's "Christobell": An Addendum', *Wordsworth Circle*, 7:2 (1976), 117–18.

¹⁴⁰ Henry Crabb Robinson, *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence*, ed. Thomas Sadler, 2 vols (Boston: James R. Osgood and Co., 1872), vol 1, p. 242 (19 December 1814).

Merlin alone, it seems, who has the power to expose Geraldine's true identity as the 'Witch of the Lake' and exorcise her from the domestic setting.¹⁴¹

Vardill's continuation begins with the most Gothic of ceremonies: the raising of the dead. In the vault where Christobell's 'noble mother' is buried (ll. 3, 17), a silver-bearded Merlin performs his magic and the matriarch is 'waken'd by the mighty spell' (l. 18). Her first words are addressed to the magician:

Merlin, Merlin! I know thee well!
 Tho' a minstrel's cloak is around thee flung,
 And a holy hood on thy brow is hung!
 The dead and living obey thy spell (ll. 40–43)

This undead mother then tells Merlin that her daughter's fate will be decided the day that she marries (ll. 44–46). Like Arthur in Bannerman's poem, here Merlin plays the role of the Female Gothic heroine, whose quest it is to find and restore the mother figure.

The action then obediently shifts forward to Christobell's wedding day, enlisting several familiar images from Coleridge's original in the process, including a 'grey dog' (l. 47), Christabel's 'silver lamp' (l. 54), the 'oak tree' under which she discovers Geraldine (l. 27), and the 'matin-bell' (l. 86).¹⁴² Merlin, now disguised as Sir Leoline's trusted minstrel, Bard Bracy, escorts Christobell and her 'own true knight' (l. 61) to the 'ancient hall' (l. 83) where her father and Geraldine are waiting. Merlin is a 'ghostly' (l. 74) guide for Christobell, and, noting his disconcertingly 'soundless stride' (l. 100), she becomes 'cold and pale' at the sight of his 'shadowy face' and strange 'mutter'd words of gramarye' (ll. 93, 89, 97). Though his actions will eventually lead to the poem's positive resolution and the restoration of order,

¹⁴¹ 'V.' [Anna Jane Vardill], 'Christobell, A Gothic Tale', l. 125. All further references are to this edition and are subsequently given in parentheses. The poem is currently listed in Nastali and Boardman's Arthurian bibliography, but Vardill is not identified as author (see *The Arthurian Annals*, vol. 1, p. 82). The bibliographers cite Nethercot's description of the poem as 'well intentioned but appalling' (Nethercot, *The Road to Tryermaine*, p. 37).

¹⁴² These similarities and others are documented extensively by Reiman in 'Christobell; or, The Case of the Sequel Preemptive', 287.

Merlin, like Geraldine, is an unstable, liminal figure who disturbs the boundaries between the living and the dead.

When the party of three reach the hall, they observe Geraldine sitting at Sir Leoline's side (l. 106). Still in his disguise as Bracy, Merlin presents the pair with a 'goblet of crysolite' (l. 126) that he explains is a gift from Geraldine's father, Sir Roland de Vaux. What follows leads to Geraldine's unmasking. When Sir Leoline fills the cup and offers it to his (in more than one sense) 'stranger-guest' (l. 114), 'the crysolite chang'd as she touch'd its brim – / And the gem on its sapphire edge grew dim' (ll. 133–34). As the cup transforms, so too does Geraldine:

There sits a dame of royal mien,
But her lips are pearly, her locks are green;
The eyder-down hides her speckled breast,
The fangs of the sea-wolf clasp her vest:
And those orbs, once bluer than western skies,
Are shrunk to the rings of a serpent's eyes! (ll. 157–62)

Vardill's lines offer a more complete realisation of the horrors of Geraldine's supernatural body than we are party to in Coleridge's finished poem (in which her bosom is, famously, 'a sight to dream of not to tell!').¹⁴³ By painting Geraldine's 'speckled breast' and mutated form in vivid colours of blue and green, Vardill forces the reader to confront the true horror of Geraldine's visual appearance.

Vardill successfully sustains to the end of the poem not only its Gothic horror, but also its Arthurian framework. It concludes with a dramatic speech from Merlin, defining Geraldine as his longstanding enemy for 'three hundred years' and cursing her to hell:

Witch of the lake, I know thee now!
Thrice three hundred years are gone
Since beneath my cave,
In the western wave,
I doom'd thee to rue and weep alone,
And writ thy shame on thy breast and brow.

¹⁴³ Coleridge, 'Christabel', in *Poetical Works I*, l. 253.

But thou and thy envious friends in vain
 Have risen to mock my power again:—
 The spell which in thy bosom worketh,
 No holy virgin's lip can stain;
 The spell that in thy false eye lurketh,
 But for an hour can truth enchain:
 Not ev'n thy serpent eye could keep
 Its ire near guiltless beauty's sleep: —
 The Spirit of Evil could not dare
 To look on heav'n, — for heav'n is there.
 Thy hour is past — thy spells I sever, —
 Witch of the lake descend for ever!

(ll. 163–80)

By naming Geraldine as the 'Witch of the Lake!' and establishing her as Merlin's long-standing foe, Vardill encourages her readers to associate Geraldine with Vivian, who is first aligned with the Lady of the Lake in the Arthurian Vulgate Cycle (c.1215–35).¹⁴⁴ Vardill would have had access to popular accounts of Vivian's imprisonment of Merlin given in Gregory Lewis Way's *Fabliaux* (1796, 1800, 1815), and John Dunlop's recent *History of Fiction* (1814).¹⁴⁵ In particular, the notes to Way's modernised Arthurian poems, compiled by George Ellis, describe 'Viviana and Mourgue' as 'witches' and 'scholars of Merlin': like Geraldine, Vivian is described as 'young and beautiful' but also 'cruel'.¹⁴⁶ Vardill alludes, perhaps, to Vivian's imprisoning of Merlin in his 'cave / beneath the western wave', but ultimately this version of the story will end differently: Merlin will retain his magic, and the Gothic framework requires that the final resting place for the incarnation of 'Evil' can only be hell. Conventional boundaries are restored at the end of the poem: between 'heav'n' and

¹⁴⁴ See Carolyne Larrington, *King Arthur's Enchantresses: Morgan and her Sisters in Arthurian Tradition* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006), p. 5.

¹⁴⁵ See John Dunlop, *The History of Fiction: Being a Critical Account of the Most Celebrated Prose Works of Fiction, from the Earliest Greek Romances to the Novels of the Present Age*, 3 vols (Edinburgh: James Ballantyne and Co., 1814), vol. 1, p. 181. Robert Southey later gave a summary of the Merlin and Vivian episode in the notes to his introduction to *Le Morte Darthur*, but his edition was not yet available at the time Vardill was writing (see Southey, 'Introduction', to [Sir Thomas Malory], *The Byrth, Lyf, and Actes of Kyng Arthur; of his noble knyghtes of the rounde table* [etc.], 2 vols (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1817), vol. 1, pp. i–xxxix (pp. xliii–xlvi)).

¹⁴⁶ George Ellis, [Notes to 'The Mantle Made Amis'], in *Fabliaux or Tales; Abridged from French Manuscripts of the XIIth and XIIIth centuries by M. Le Grand, Selected and Translated into English Verse, with a Preface, Appendix and Notes by the Late G. Ellis, Esq. A New Edition, corrected*, trans. G.L. Way, ed. George Ellis, 3 vols (London: J. Rodwell, 1815), vol. 1, p. 198.

hell; good and ‘Evil’; true and ‘false’; ‘virgin’ and whore. Female sexuality is removed – castrated, even, in the poem’s final ‘sever’-ing of the feminine – and banished to the netherworld.

Vardill’s tetrameter rhyming couplets detract from the terror – and, indeed, often the seriousness – of Merlin’s address, but in the moments when the poem breaks from its regular metre (as in the lines ‘I doom’d thee to rue and weep alone, / And writ thy shame on thy breast and brow’), the full power of Vardill’s Merlin is realised. Antecedents of the moralism, as well as several of the motifs which Tennyson would later bring to the Arthurian story, particularly in ‘Merlin and Vivien’ (1859), can be glimpsed in the impassioned address of Vardill’s Merlin. Vardill’s ‘Witch of the Lake’, with her serpent-like eyes, anticipates Tennyson’s ‘wily’ Vivien, who clings to Merlin ‘like a snake’ with a ‘snake of gold’ in her hair.¹⁴⁷ Called ‘inept and downright risible’ by some critics, Vardill’s poem deserves to be better known as a complex pastiche that succeeds in casting a Gothic light over the Merlin and Vivian story in anticipation of Tennyson’s later management of the narrative.¹⁴⁸ Vardill’s moral compass may be more simplistic (the Witch of the Lake is finally reduced to nothing more than the ‘Spirit of Evil’), but her Merlin is both a triumphant hero and a threatening ghostly wanderer whose ‘grammarye’ is simultaneously powerful and terrifying.

Arthurian Female Gothic, then, can be sensational (as in McLeod’s and Vardill’s poems), but it can also be a guise for more serious antiquarian endeavours, as the poems by Bannerman, Smith, and Betham demonstrate. The association of the Gothic with a *faux* medievalism is both an opportunity for the female writer interested in King Arthur, but also a double-bind, as any considered engagements with contemporary romance scholarship had a tendency to be subsumed under the label of domestic gothic. What draws this small corpus together, however, is its focus on the rewriting of patriarchal narratives, whether that involves

¹⁴⁷ Alfred Lord Tennyson, ‘Merlin and Vivien’, in *Idylls of the King*, ed. J.M. Gray (London: Penguin, 1996), pp. 142–67, ll. 147, 240, 886.

¹⁴⁸ Nethercot, *The Road to Tryermaine*, p. 37.

continuing Coleridge's 'Christabel', creating an onomastic back-story for the site of one's family home in Wales, or crafting a note asserting the 'right to appropriation' of legendary stories. As Diane Long Hoeveler writes:

The originating fantasy that empowers the female gothic [...] is a need to rewrite history from the vantage point of a beleaguered daughter intent on rescuing her mother – and by extension her future self – from the nightmare of the alienating and newly codifying patriarchal family.¹⁴⁹

In Arthurian Female Gothic, however, the role of the 'beleaguered daughter' is just as likely to be played by Arthur or Merlin as it is by a non-Arthurian female figure. Male Arthurian characters are often dominant and mobile in these poems, while, in contrast, the women are curiously static: the Queen of Beauty is immured on the Yellow isle, Albina's task is to wait for Arthur's return, Bertha is killed, and Vardill's Christobell merely follows Merlin. Thus, while the authors of these poems often speak strongly of a need to 'rewrite history', their Gothic plots express contradictory images of stasis, isolation, and separation. Furthermore, the fact that many of the writers of Arthurian Female Gothic hail from Scotland (Bannerman and Vardill) and Wales (Philipps, Wardle, and Smith) makes them, to borrow Hoeveler's phrase, doubly beleaguered daughters, placed outside an English, alienating, patriarchal centre. As we shall see in the next chapter, the Arthurian myth could exert a definite effect on a female writer's experience of place, especially in Wales and Scotland.

¹⁴⁹ Diane Long Hoeveler, *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontës* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 1995), p. xvii.

3. Exploring Ancient Britain: The Arthurian Legend in Women's Travel Writing and Topographical Poetry

In 1848, Lady Charlotte Guest argued that the ancient topography of Wales provided a 'very firm basis' from which to prove the 'high antiquity' of the Welsh *Mabinogion* material:¹

Looking at the connexion [sic] between divers [sic] of the more ancient Mabinogion and the topographical nomenclature of part of the country, we find evidence of the great, though indefinite, antiquity of these tales, and of an origin, which, if not indigenous, is certainly derived from no European nation.²

Ready examples of such 'topographical nomenclature', Guest continued, were sites such as 'Cadair Arthur' (Arthur's Chair), 'Coeten Arthur' ('Arthur's Coit'), and 'Nant Gwytheryn' ('the Rill of Vortigern').³ Prefaced with an authoritative 'we', Guest's summary of the topographical Arthurian tradition in Wales positions her individual narrative as part of a wider field of Welsh medieval scholarship. As the following chapter argues, it was only from the 1830s onwards that women began articulating their contributions to medieval studies in this type of scholarly, empirical discourse. Women's earlier explorations of Arthur's topographical presence not only in Wales, but also in England, Scotland, and France, took a variety of very different, and often mixed forms.

In *Camelot Regained*, Roger Simpson distinguishes the Romantics' topographical interest in Arthur from historical and comic treatments of the king occurring at the same time.⁴ Analysing a wealth of Arthurian material embedded in county histories, travel writing, and topographical poetry, he argues that such texts constitute '[a] corollary of the traditional

¹ Lady Charlotte Guest, 'Introduction', to *The Mabinogion, from the Llyfr Coch o Hergest, and other Welsh Manuscripts: With an English translation and notes*, ed. and trans. Lady Charlotte Guest, 3 vols (London: Longman, Orme, Browne, Green, and Longmans; Llandoverly, W. Rees, 1849), vol. 1, pp. i–xxiii (pp. xviii, xx).

² Guest, 'Introduction', to *The Mabinogion*, vol. 1, pp. xxii–xxiii.

³ Guest, 'Introduction', to *The Mabinogion*, vol. 1, pp. xx–xxi.

⁴ Roger Simpson, *Camelot Regained: The Arthurian Revival and Tennyson 1800–1849* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1990), p. 55.

quest for the historical Arthur'.⁵ Concerns with place, space, and regional identity are equally prominent within Arthurian texts by Romantic women writers, yet the shape of their responses also differs from Simpson's outline. Rather than the outcome of adjacent historical investigations, topography becomes the dominant means for Romantic women writers to stage their quest for a historical Arthur. Women's exclusion from the realms of antiquarian and historical discourse encouraged – or, more accurately, forced – their encounters with Arthur into more 'appropriate' prose discourses such as the domestic tour. Moreover, women's topographical poetry on Arthurian subjects has a similar propensity to embed itself within prose travel narratives as a means of disguising its status as an antiquarian enterprise. Women writers' investigations into the notion of a historical Arthur are united by a persistent need for secrecy, giving rise to some strange meta-textual occurrences: a long historical 'Account of Merlin' is concealed within a Welsh domestic tour, translations of Breton ballads appear in guides to the French Alps, and topographical Arthurian poetry is embedded in the unassuming pages of the prose guidebook. In Romantic women's Arthurian writing, material that one would ordinarily expect to find in a historical text is repeatedly smuggled into more popular topographical genres.

A number of factors lie behind the persistent role of topography and travel as a background for women's Arthurian investigations. The first is to do with wider, contemporary shifts in literary output. The Romantic period saw the rise of the tourist and an overwhelming increase in the number of travel publications by women, especially after the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815.⁶ Women were travelling, and recording their travels, as never before. Crucial, however, to forging a relationship between travel writing and women's

⁵ Simpson, *Camelot Regained*, p. 55.

⁶ On the post-1815 'dawn of mass tourism', see James Buzard, 'The Grand Tour and After (1660–1840)', in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 37–52 (pp. 47–50); also James A. Butler, 'Travel Writing', in *A Companion to Romanticism*, ed. Duncan Wu (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp. 364–70 (p. 367), and Amanda Gilroy, 'Introduction', to *Romantic Geographies: Discourses of Travel 1775–1844*, ed. Amanda Gilroy (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 1–15.

writing about Arthur more particularly, was the relative flexibility that travel literature seemed to offer writers as a still-emerging genre. As James A. Butler notes, ‘like the emerging genre of the novel, travel writing was less fettered by set assumptions about either the nature of the work or the gender of its author’.⁷ Thus, antiquarian scholarship could be housed in the domestic tour and spared the critical attacks that earlier and openly scholarly engagements with Arthur had received in the late-eighteenth century.⁸ This chapter begins with a survey of visits made by women travellers to various Arthurian sites and their responses to apparent physical traces of the legend. This is followed by a more detailed exploration of how Mary Morgan and Elizabeth Spence found space for their research into the life of Merlin in their respective tours through Wales.

Yet as Amanda Gilroy points out, though women may have travelled more widely and freely after 1815, the relative autonomy of travel narrative as a textual space was tapered by its longstanding history as a record of the experience of the ‘normative’ male traveller.⁹ In response, women writers sought out new ways to appreciate their surrounding landscape, and women’s responses to Arthurian landmarks are no different in this respect, though they often use a particular generic shift to do so. In several of the texts examined below, poetry enters the travel narrative at the point where the female viewer is confronted with a view of the Arthurian past embodied in the physical present. The third and fourth parts of the chapter examine the spontaneous Arthurian verses of Mary Morgan and the more considered compositions of Louisa Stuart Costello. Both writers break away from prose description in favour of poetry as a form in which to express their ‘view’ of the Arthurian myth.

The Romantic period is also associated with a new emphasis on topography as a means of exploring the inner condition of the human psyche, giving rise to the aesthetic categories of the sublime, the beautiful, and the picturesque. In a period that saw the writing

⁷ Butler, ‘Travel Writing’, p. 367.

⁸ See Chapter 1, 1.2 and 1.3.

⁹ Gilroy, ‘Introduction’, *Romantic Geographies*, p. 5.

of Wordsworth's 'Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey' (1798), William Lisle Bowles's 'To the River Itchin' (1789) and Charlotte Smith's 'Beachy Head' (1807), it is hardly surprising that popular topographical verse forms become the loci for women's explorations of a geographical Arthurian past. The fifth section of the chapter shifts the focus onto topographical poetry in its own right, and positions Felicia Hemans's *Welsh Melodies* as a collection with strong debts to the travel writing genre. By drawing on Welsh travel narratives by male antiquarians, Hemans is able to mobilise her scholarly interests in Merlin, or Merddin Emrys, and explore the figure of the Welsh bard as a symbol for the songs of the contemporary 'poetess'. The final section of the chapter considers various uses of Arthur in topographical verse set on English soil, to argue that women struggled, and ultimately failed, to articulate a successful conception of Arthur as an 'English' national hero. Both inside and outside the travelogue, women's Arthurian poetry of a topographical cast is always caught up in a complex negotiation between romance and reality, and the local and the national.

Underlying all these responses are the same anxieties and uncertainties that emerge in other strands of Arthurian women's writing in the Romantic period. However, it is important to recognise that an endemic resistance to accurate mapping undoubtedly characterises the shape of the medieval legend itself, as early chroniclers and authors were rarely in agreement over where to locate the story's main events. Like the figure of Arthur himself, the geography of his supposed kingdom is a veritable 'palimpsest' of un-locatable place names, mythic spaces, and multiple sites, all competing for their claim to the place of Arthur's court, birth, or death.¹⁰ As Robert Allen Rouse and Cory James Rushton emphasise, 'Arthurian geography becomes a complex grafting of fictional, sometimes allegorical, places onto the real topography of the British Isles'.¹¹ Yet, rather paradoxically, Romantic women writers appear

¹⁰ Robert Allen Rouse and Cory James Rushton, 'Arthurian Geography', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend*, ed. Elizabeth Archibald and Ad Putter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 218–34 (p. 218).

¹¹ Rouse and Rushton, 'Arthurian Geography', p. 219.

to have had a firmer grasp of Britain's Arthurian geography than they did of other aspects of the legend that we now think of as central to its cultural transmission (namely Malory's *Morte Darthur*).

Critics are in agreement that the 'distinctive basis for most later Arthurian topography' can be found in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* [*Historia Regum Britanniae*] (c. 1135).¹² Geoffrey's 'sharp interest in actual British geography' grafted the following map onto the legend's central events:¹³

Merlin's childhood was spent at Carmarthen but he prophesied to Vortigern in Snowdonia, and removed Stonehenge from Ireland: Arthur was born at Tintagel, fought a giant on St Michael's Mount, held high court at Caerleon, combated Mordred at the river Camel, and was carried from there to the isle of Avalon.¹⁴

As the first section of this chapter demonstrates, a considerable body of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century women writers were well aware of the legendary past associated with such places, and made a point of recounting their mythic significance if they found themselves visiting an Arthurian site. Underlying this apparently widespread acquaintance with Arthurian places was a general knowledge of Geoffrey's *History*, a text which, as Daniel R. Woolf notes, had been a 'striking [...] hit' with women readers since the beginning of the eighteenth century.¹⁵

In 1708, Aaron Thompson published *The British History, Translated into English from the Latin of Jeffrey of Monmouth* (1708), thereby bringing the Latin chronicle to a wider body of English readers than ever before. Woolf notes that Thompson's translation of Geoffrey's *History* 'attracted an enormous female readership of over 17 percent' in

¹² Simpson, *Camelot Regained*, p. 55.

¹³ Rouse and Rushton, 'Arthurian Geography', p. 223.

¹⁴ Simpson, *Camelot Regained*, p. 55.

¹⁵ Daniel R. Woolf, *Reading History in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 307. See also Norris J. Lacy's assessment that Thompson's edition was 'enormously influential' (see Lacy, 'Translation of Medieval Arthurian Literature', in *A History of Arthurian Scholarship*, ed. Norris J. Lacy (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006), pp. 49–61 (p. 50)).

comparison with other antiquarian or historical volumes published between 1680 and 1730.¹⁶ According to Woolf, eighteenth-century women were attracted by the *History*'s mix of 'the mythical and legendary, the chivalrous and the romantic'.¹⁷ We cannot chart the female readership of Geoffrey's *History* in the Romantic period in quite the same way, but references to Geoffrey of Monmouth in the writing of Clara Reeve, Anna Letitia Barbauld, Anna Jane Vardill, Catherine Sinclair, Lady Charlotte Guest, Caroline Norton, and Mary Margaret Egerton would suggest that his chronicle remained a popular text for women readers throughout this later period.¹⁸ Romantic women readers, however, were not always charmed with Geoffrey's text in quite the manner that Woolf imagines their eighteenth-century predecessors were. Barbauld in particular held a rather disparaging view of Geoffrey's 'medley of historical songs, traditions and invention', and declared his *History* 'full of the grossest anachronisms'.¹⁹ Nor did writers exploring Geoffrey's Arthurian places through physical travel always take the legends associated with such sites seriously. Interested readers of Geoffrey's *History* these women might well have been, but they were also shrewd cultural commentators and not afraid to challenge his 'historical' associations, often replacing them with their own imaginative and creative responses to Britain's mythic landscapes. As Inga Bryden points out, it was 'the very lack of historical determinants and

¹⁶ *The British History, translated into English from the Latin of Jeffrey of Monmouth*, ed. and trans. Aaron Thompson (London: J. Bowyer, 1718). Woolf, *Reading History*, p. 307; see also his comparative findings in Woolf, 'A Feminine Past? Gender, Genre and Historical Knowledge in England, 1500–1800', *The American Historical Review*, 102:3 (1997), 645–79 (675). Though the statistical evidence is attractive, it is not without its complexities. That Thompson's text translated a till-then Latin text into English would have immediately raised its appeal, and, indeed, its ability to be read by women who were not generally taught Latin. Many antiquarians continued to publish their works in Latin well into the eighteenth century (see Woolf, 'A Feminine Past', 675).

¹⁷ Woolf, *Reading History*, p. 307.

¹⁸ Clara Reeve, *The Progress of Romance* (1785; New York: The Facsimile Text Society, 1930), pp. 39, 42; Anna Letitia Barbauld, 'On the Origin and Progress of Novel-Writing' (1810), in *Anna Letitia Barbauld: Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft (London: Broadview Press, 2002), pp. 377–416 (p. 382); Anna Jane Vardill (as 'V. '), 'M. Denon in England' [Part 3], *EM*, 80 (Aug 1821), 127–33 (pp. 130–31); Catherine Sinclair, *Hill and Valley: or, Hours Spent in England and Wales* (Edinburgh: W. Whyte, 1839), p. 299; Lady Charlotte Guest, 'Introduction', to *The Mabinogion*, pp. xiv–xvi; Caroline Norton, *Lost and Saved*, 2 vols (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1863), vol. 1, p. 39; [Margaret Mary Egerton] (as the 'Countess of Wilton'), *The Art of Needle-work, from the Earliest Ages; Including Some Notices of the Ancient Historical Tapestries*, 3rd edn (1840; London: Henry Colburn, 1841), p. 132.

¹⁹ Barbauld, 'On the Origin and Progress of Novel-Writing', p. 382.

topographical definition in the Arthurian stories which allowed imaginative range', and women writers were more than willing to experiment.²⁰

3.1 Antiquarianism Disguised: The Woman Traveller and the Arthurian Legend

From the 1790s onwards, Arthurian references appear with substantial regularity in tours made both at home and abroad by Britain's female writers. Indeed, the frequency with which women travellers invoke aspects of the Arthurian myth suggests that literary women were no different from the men of the period in having at least a cursory knowledge of the legend.²¹

Particularly popular for comment were several mountain peaks across the British Isles believed to have Arthurian connections. The most well known then (as today) was 'Arthur's Seat' in Edinburgh, considered in 1799 by the novelist Sarah Scott to promise views well 'worth the fatiguing walk' to its summit.²² In anecdotal fashion, Scott attempted to provide readers with an explanation for the appellation of Arthur's name to the mountain, adding that 'Arthur, King of Britain, sat at the top of this mountain, to behold a sea-fight'.²³ Women travellers also visited 'Cadair Arthur, or Arthur's Chair', a mountain in Brecknockshire in Wales, so named, explained the traveller and novelist Elizabeth Spence in 1809, because its

²⁰ Inga Bryden, *Reinventing King Arthur: The Arthurian Legends in Victorian Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 22.

²¹ For evidence of the fecundity of Arthurian allusions in male-authored guides, travel writing, and topographical poetry, see Simpson's extensive chapter, 'The Topographical Arthur', in *Camelot Regained*, pp. 55–113. The majority of Simpson's examples are taken from works by male writers, but he includes some discussion of contributions by Louisa Stuart Costello, Anne Plumptre, and Anna Eliza Bray.

²² Sarah Scott (as 'Mrs Murray'), *A Companion and Useful Guide to the Beauties of Scotland* (London: Printed for the Author, 1799), p. 123. In addition to the writers discussed above, the formation was also mentioned by Charlotte Lennox in her 'Essay on the Original Inhabitants of Great Britain' [part 3], *The Lady's Museum*, 2 vols (London: J. Newbury, 1760–61), vol. 2, pp. 514–28 (p. 520), Mary Ann Hanway in *Andrew Stuart; or, The Northern Wanderer. A Novel*, 4 vols (London: Minerva Press, 1800), vol. 2, p. 260, and Anna Eliza Bray in *A Description of the Part of Devonshire Bordering on the Tamer and Tavey; its natural history, manners, customs, superstitions, scenery, antiquities, biography of eminent persons, &c, &c, in a series of letter to Robert Southey, Esq.*, 3 vols (London: John Murray, 1836), vol. 1, p. 276.

²³ Scott, *Beauties of Scotland*, p. 123.

‘double-topped summit’ made it resemble an enormous seat.²⁴ In *Summer Excursions, Through parts of Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire, Herefordshire, Derbyshire, and South Wales*, Spence (who was well read in Tudor histories) names William Camden’s *Britannia* (1586, trans. 1610) as her source for the knowledge that ‘this chair being on a high and steep place is by the vulgar ascribed to the greatest and most sovereign British Monarch King Arthur’.²⁵

Spence’s use of Camden demonstrates how the travelogue could provide a stage for the female writer’s scholarly performance of her knowledge of British history. As Zoë Kinsley points out:

[A]esthetics, antiquarianism, geography and science were closed to women at anything other than amateur level, yet the process of travel and travel writing sanctioned independent empirical enquiry, and provided an opportunity for the dissemination of the findings of that investigation.²⁶

Similarly, for Amanda Gilroy, Romantic travel writing is a ‘hybrid discourse’, which, by means of its generic fluidity, dissolves the boundaries and borders between accepted modes of writing at the same time as its authors geographically or spatially enact the same crossings.²⁷ The relative flexibility of the genre was also recognised by women writers themselves. As Spence notes in her introduction to *Summer Excursions*, her aim is to include material ‘not merely useful but interesting’ to readers, incorporating ‘subjects connected with arts, antiquities, and history, [and] natural or historical anecdotes’, themselves the product of ‘much patient investigation and research’.²⁸ As a malleable literary space, the travel narrative encouraged women writers to draw on their accumulated historical knowledge of (often localised) myths and legends, including that of Arthur.

²⁴ Elizabeth Isabella Spence, *Summer Excursions, Through parts of Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire, Herefordshire, Derbyshire, and South Wales*, 2 vols (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1809), vol. 1, p. 22.

²⁵ Spence, *Summer Excursions*, vol. 1, pp. 22–23.

²⁶ Zoë Kinsley, *Women Writing the Home Tour, 1682–1812* (London: Ashgate, 2008), p. 52.

²⁷ Gilroy, ‘Introduction’, *Romantic Geographies*, p. 1.

²⁸ Spence, *Summer Excursions*, vol. 1, p. vi.

Several other writers, however, relied less on past scholarship and more on personal impressions for their judgements about Arthurian monuments. The Scottish novelist Catherine Sinclair also visited ‘Arthur’s Chair’, although – perhaps motivated by her loyalties to Scotland – she humorously dismissed the Welsh peak as ‘not [...] high enough for a footstool to Arthur’s Seat near Edinburgh’.²⁹ Sinclair was writing in 1839 and Arthurian localities appear with increased frequency in women’s travel writing from the 1840s onwards; in 1845, Louisa Stuart Costello recounted the belief that Rhuddlun Castle, near Abergele in North Wales, once housed ‘the crown of King Arthur’, while the American writer, Lydia Sigourney, imagined that the medieval walls of Carlisle were once – and perhaps still – home to ‘King Arthur’s wassail cup’.³⁰ Anna Eliza Bray knew that ‘Arthur’s Stone’ could be found at ‘Cevyn Bryn’ (Cefn Bryn) in the Gower region of South Wales.³¹ Indeed, based on the existence of several ‘blasé’ references to Arthurian sites by male travellers in the early decades of the nineteenth century, Simpson suggests that such landmarks had ‘become regular tourist attractions’ by the end of the Romantic period.³²

On the whole, female travellers tended to treat Arthurian localities as novel and ostensibly historical, though certain more cynical individuals sometimes found cause to doubt the authenticity of such readily apparent relics from the ancient British past. Both Catherine Sinclair and Anne Plumptre observed Arthur’s Round Table at Winchester, ‘cut from one of the largest oaks in England’,³³ and, while neither writer overtly challenged its authenticity,

²⁹ Sinclair, *Hill and Valley*, p. 249.

³⁰ Louisa Stuart Costello, *The Falls, Lakes, and Mountains, of North Wales* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1845), p. 34; Lydia Sigourney (as Mrs. L.H. Sigourney), ‘Carlisle’, in *Pleasant Memories of Pleasant Lands* (Boston: James Monroe and Co., 1842), pp. 56–64 (l. 10).

³¹ Bray, *A Description of the Part of Devonshire Bordering on the Tamer and Tavey*, vol. 1, pp. 126–27, 145. This work was later republished under the alternative title of *Traditions, Legends, Superstitions, and Sketches of Devonshire on the borders of the Tamar and the Tavy, illustrative of its manners, customs, history, antiquities, scenery, and natural history, in a series of letters to Robert Southey, Esq.*, 3 vols (London: John Murray, 1838).

³² Simpson, *Camelot Regained*, p. 69.

³³ Sinclair, *Hill and Valley*, p. 249. Anne Plumptre, *A Narrative of A Three Years’ Residence in France, Principally in the Southern Departments, from the year 1802 to 1805. Including Some Authentic Particulars respecting the Early Life of the French Emperor, and a General Inquiry into his Character*, 3 vols (London: J. Mawman, 1810), vol. 3, p. 187.

Sinclair remarked with some irony that the table, in combination with Arthur's Seat in Edinburgh and his Chair in Wales, formed 'a complete set of marvellous furniture for his majesty of fabulous and chivalrous memory'.³⁴ Sinclair's image performs a kind of domestic deflation of Arthur's historical grandeur, and suggests that not all women travellers took the legend entirely seriously. A more scholarly scepticism was aired by the Devonshire novelist Anna Eliza Bray, who during her *Tour through Normandy, Brittany, and Other Parts of France in 1818* (1820), found cause to disagree with Jean Froissart's claim that the castle at Auray in France was 'originally erected by King Arthur'.³⁵ After examining the site and observing some discrepancies in the position and age of the Auray ruins, Bray concluded that the medieval French chronicler 'might probably be mistaken in his geography (as he often is)'.³⁶ Bray's confidence to disagree with his evidence arises from her ability to explore the Auray ruins in the manner of an antiquarian: something which Froissart, whom she notes 'never visited the scene of action', had to do without.³⁷ Like Elizabeth Spence before her, Bray's travel narratives frequently cross over into the realm of antiquarianism, and offer a record of the Romantic woman writer's physical exploration of materials from the medieval past.³⁸

The timing of Bray's French tour, undertaken in 1818, draws attention to how the shape of Romantic travel is undoubtedly marked by the intervention of the French Revolution

³⁴ Sinclair, *Hill and Valley*, p. 249.

³⁵ Anna Eliza Bray (as Mrs. Charles Stothard), *Letters Written during a Tour through Normandy, Brittany, and Other Parts of France, in 1818: Including Local and Historical Descriptions; With Remarks on the Manners and Character of the People* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1820), p. 240.

³⁶ Bray, *Tour through Normandy, Brittany, and Other Parts of France*, p. 240.

³⁷ Bray, *Tour through Normandy, Brittany, and Other Parts of France*, p. 240.

³⁸ See also Bray's *A Description of the Part of Devonshire Bordering on the Tamer and Tavey*, another hybrid work which advertises itself as travel narrative, containing 'descriptive sketches from observations made on the spot' suitable for the 'tourist', but is also, as Dennis Low notes, a much more ambitious 'antiquarian project' (Bray, 'Preface' to *A Description of the Part of Devonshire Bordering on the Tamer and Tavey*, vol. 1, p iii–iv (p. iii); Low, *The Literary Protégées of the Lake Poets* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p. 178). *A Description of the Part of Devonshire Bordering on the Tamer and Tavey* also references a considerable amount of Arthurian material – a passion shared by Bray and her second husband, Edward Atkyns Bray, who explored the Devonshire countryside together and identified their own localised versions of 'Arthur's Seat' and 'Merlin's Cave' (see *A Description of the Part of Devonshire Bordering on the Tamer and Tavey*, vol. 1, pp. 78–80, 145, 276, 298; vol. 2, pp. 84–85).

and Britain's subsequent conflict with France. Between 1789 and 1815, few British travellers save the most dedicated of revolutionaries travelled throughout Europe.³⁹ Hester Thrale Piozzi was one of a few writers to publish a French travel tour before the Revolution took hold, and in the process she offered her readers a striking commentary on the conditions in French towns:

He who should fix his residence in France, lives like Sir Gawaine in our old romance, whose wife was bound by an enchantment, that obliged her every evening to lay down the various beauties which had charmed admiring multitudes all day, and become an object of odium and disgust.⁴⁰

Piozzi's use of the Arthurian legend differs from many of the examples above on account of its innate literariness. The story of a knight's encounter with a loathly lady who is ugly by day and beautiful by night was well known to readers of Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Tale*, but it is Bishop Percy's ballad version of the same story, 'The Marriage of Sir Gawaine', included in his immensely popular *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), which Piozzi probably has in mind. The influence of Percy's text on literary production was large, but few writers thought to use his material as a means of social commentary on the present in quite the way that Piozzi does here. Her complex simile links the loathly lady's 'various beauties' with the 'lovely' and pleasing views afforded by French towns from a distance, but an examination of their 'closer appearance' reveals 'misery' and 'squallid [sic] scenes of wretchedness and dirt' akin to the lady's loathly form.⁴¹ The off-hand manner in which Piozzi puts her knowledge of 'The Marriage of Sir Gawaine' to contemporary use suggests all the more that educated literary women held knowledge of the Arthurian legend at their fingertips, ready for deployment in acerbic social commentary if the opportunity arose.

³⁹ Buzard, 'The Grand Tour and After', p. 42.

⁴⁰ Hester Lynch Piozzi, *Observations and Reflections Made in the Course of a Journey through France, Italy, and Germany*, 2 vols (London: T. Cadell, 1789), vol. 1, pp. 26–27.

⁴¹ Piozzi, *Observations and Reflections*, vol. 1, p. 26. In fact, Piozzi confuses the arrangement of the lady's opposing states. In both Chaucer's romance and Percy's ballad she is ugly by day and beautiful by night.

In the years post-1815, many more women travellers were keen to stress the Arthurian legend's fecundity in Brittany and convey any parallels they encountered in the circulation of Arthurian material in France and Britain. Anne Plumptre reported with some frankness that the people of Brittany accused the English romance writers of veritably stealing Arthur from 'their own country'.⁴² Always erudite in her conclusions, Elizabeth Spence pointed towards more subtle connections between Wales and Brittany when she noted that although 'Arthur was said to have fought and slain a giant at St. Michael's Mount in Brittany', Skyrryd mountain near Abergavenny in Wales was also known to locals by the same name.⁴³ In her first French tour, *A Summer Amongst the Bocages and the Vines* (1840), Louisa Stuart Costello observed that 'Merlin, the enchanter, is the great hero among the Bretons, as he is of the Welsh; the same legends being common to both people',⁴⁴ and Plumptre recorded a belief that Merlin 'was born in the isle of Sein, a little inlet off the coast of Brétagne' and currently 'enclosed in a tree somewhere'.⁴⁵ Robert Southey later cited 'Miss Plumptre' as an authority on the current circulation of 'the account of Merlin's fate [...] among the Bretons' in the notes to his introduction to *Le Morte Darthur* (1817).⁴⁶ Instead of remaining blind to the cosmopolitanism of the Arthurian story, Plumptre, Spence, Bray, and Costello remark sensitively on the mythological heritage common to both Britain and France, and view Arthurian material as part of Europe's shared mythological foundations.

In fact, rarely, in the realms outside of prose travel writing, do women writers deal with the Arthurian legend in such articulate and assertive ways. Though the comments by Scott, Sinclair, Piozzi, Plumptre, and others are almost always anecdotal asides made within

⁴² Plumptre, *Three Years' Residence in France*, vol. 3, p. 187.

⁴³ Spence, *Summer Excursions*, vol. 1, pp. 12–13. David Williams, *A History of Monmouthshire* (London: H. Baldwin, 1796).

⁴⁴ Louisa Stuart Costello, *A Summer Amongst the Bocages and the Vines*, 2 vols (London: Bentley, 1840), vol. 1, p. 303.

⁴⁵ Plumptre, *Three Years' Residence in France*, p. 187.

⁴⁶ Robert Southey, 'Introduction', to Sir Thomas Malory, *The Byrth, Lyf, and Actes of Kyng Arthur; of his noble knyghtes of the rounde table, theyr mervyllous enquestes and adventures [...] With an Introduction and Notes by Robert Southey, Esq.*, [ed. William Upcott] 2 vols (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1817), vol. 1, pp. i–lxiii (p. xlviii).

larger narratives apparently unconcerned with the ‘Matter of Britain’, Arthurian romance nevertheless provides a range of Romantic women writers with a way of engaging with Britain’s ancient past and reconstructing their contemporary environment. Such a sense of intimacy was fostered by the strong use of the epistolary form among women travellers, including Piozzi, Spence, Bray, and Sinclair. Usually addressed to a female correspondent at home, these texts blur the boundaries between public and private discourse, and in so doing, reveal an undercurrent of conversations between women demonstrating an often more than cursory interest in Arthur throughout the Romantic period and beyond.

3.2 ‘An Account of Merlin’: Mary Morgan’s *Tour to Milford Haven* (1795)

Although there are many allusions to Arthurian romance in Romantic women’s travel writing *per se*, more sustained, and increasingly antiquarian engagements with the legend by women travellers tend to occur in works outlining domestic tours in Wales. In many senses, this too reflects a wider trend. The combination of a revival of interest in things Celtic, steadily gaining ground since the middle of the eighteenth century, and restrictions imposed on travel in France from the 1790s onwards, ushered a ‘wave of tourism’ into Wales.⁴⁷ At the same time, fragments of Wales’s literary past were being recovered and published through antiquarian works such as Evan Evans’s *Some Specimens of the Poetry of the Ancient Welsh Bards, Translated into English* (1764) and Edward Jones’s *Musical and Poetical Relicks of the Ancient Welsh Bards* (1794). A substantial part of the literary and cultural attraction to ‘wild Wales’ lay in the country’s links with Arthur, ‘the scene of whose exploits’, as Anna Letitia Barbauld noted, ‘was in Wales’.⁴⁸ As Lady Charlotte Guest suggested in 1848, Welsh topography seemed to provide strong evidence in favour of a Welsh Arthur, and during the

⁴⁷ Glyn A. Williams, ‘Romanticism in Wales’, in *Romanticism in National Context*, ed. Roy Porter and Mickuláš Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 9–36 (p. 20).

⁴⁸ Barbauld, ‘On the Origin and Progress of Novel-Writing’, p. 382.

Romantic period this ancient past for Wales was investigated (sometimes empirically, and sometimes more imaginatively) by a number of female travellers. Women's knowledge of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History* stood them in good stead for exploring Snowdonia and Carmarthenshire where Geoffrey had set various parts of Merlin's story. In particular, the experiences of Mary Morgan in her *Tour to Milford Haven* (1795) demonstrate that like her male contemporaries, the women traveller well knew 'the traditional Galfridean etymological derivation of Carmarthen from Caer Merddin (= Merlin)'.⁴⁹

Morgan's epistolary travelogue is the earliest female-authored travel narrative to deal extensively with Merlin's legendary history. Morgan (1749?–1808) hailed from Ely where she lived with her Pembrokeshire-born husband, Rev. Caesar Morgan, a clergyman and poet whose published works include several Arthurian pieces.⁵⁰ When she accompanied her husband on a visit to his family at Milford Haven in 1791, Morgan recorded their journey through Wales and published her account four years later.⁵¹ The volume has an impressive subscription list thanks to her fashionable connections: she was a close friend of Elizabeth Montagu, the famed 'Queen of the Bluestockings'.⁵² Morgan's interest in British history and what she refers to as 'charming old romances' is evident from the start of her tour (p. 387). When she enters Wales, she likens it to what 'Caesar did, when he first set foot in Britain', and a couple of pages later she mistakes the Welsh mountains for clouds in a manner

⁴⁹ Simpson, *Camelot Regained*, p. 68.

⁵⁰ Caesar Morgan, *Poems* (Cambridge: J. Archdeacon, printer to the University; J. and J. Merrill, T. Cadell [etc], 1788). The volume includes 'The Shrine of King Arthur' (pp. 13–28), and 'The Cave of Merlin' (pp. 29–34).

⁵¹ There is no formal published record of Mary Morgan's date of birth and death, but I have made the above estimate using details from Morgan's obituary in 'Domestic Occurrences [: Cambridgeshire]', *The Athenaeum*, 22 (Oct 1808), 361–62.

⁵² Montagu requested ten copies; Mary Robinson and Wordsworth's youngest brother Christopher were also notable subscribers. Montagu's keen interest in Morgan's volume doubtless stemmed from the fact that her tour included a visit to Montagu's home at Sandleford near Newbury, of which she gave an extensive and glowing account in two lengthy letters (see Mrs [Mary] Morgan, *A Tour To Milford Haven, in the Year 1791* (London: J. Stockdale, 1795), pp. 32–50). All references are to this edition and are subsequently given in parentheses.

reminiscent of Don Quixote's misidentification of windmills for giants (pp. 120, 122).⁵³ As

Morgan travels deeper into Wales, her observations of numerous ruined castles seem to

carry the mind back to other times, and bring to its view haughty barons and feudal tyranny, the croisades, the age of chivalry, bloody battles, paynim knights, distressed damsels, gallant lovers, haunted towers, ghosts, fairies, and enchantments [sic].
(p. 146)

Through such asides, Morgan's domestic tour is partly refashioned as a chivalric quest, in which the female narrator takes up the position of the questing subject.⁵⁴

Morgan's medievalist imagination becomes increasingly 'wound up' (p. 146) when she arrives in 'Carmarthen or Caerfryddin, which in Welsh is Merlin's city or castle' (p. 145).⁵⁵ At this point, her use of the epistolary form gives a strong sense of Merlin's popularity and familiarity among her female friends back at home in England: 'You have often read and heard of that famous magician', she remarks to her correspondent (p. 145). Morgan's own renewed interest in Merlin arises from her appreciation of the 'romantic' scenery of the town:

This place, it is said, gave [Merlin] birth, and took its name from him. It is no wonder that such a romantic situation as this, surrounded by mountains, should give rise to a thousand legendary tales, in an age when oral traditions were all they had to depend on. (pp. 144–45)

Here Morgan stresses the interconnectedness of landscape and legend: one 'give[s] rise' to the other. Several pages later, she describes a nearby walk by the Towy river and observes 'Merlin's Hill', one of 'the most beautiful hills that nature ever formed' (p. 152–53). For Morgan, the association between Merlin and the Carmarthenshire landscape increases her attraction to both: 'this kind of legendary lore has in it such a mixture of the marvellous and

⁵³ See Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, ed. E.C. Riley, trans. Charles Jarvis (1605–15; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 59.

⁵⁴ In this manner, Morgan's narrative shares its chivalric cast with Mary Shelley's later *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* (1817), which, as Jeanne Moskal demonstrates, makes repeated intertextual allusions to Cervantes's *Don Quixote*. See Moskal, "'To Speak in Sanchean Phrase': Mary Shelley's *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*", in *Mary Shelley in Her Times*, ed. Betty T. Bennett and Stuart Curran (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2000), pp. 18–37.

⁵⁵ For the naming of 'Kaermerdin', see Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain [Historia Regum Britanniae]*, ed. and trans. Lewis Thorpe (London: Penguin, 1966), p. 187.

poetical, that it suits my taste' (p. 160), she explains. The self-confessional nature of Morgan's epistemological narrative invites her to make candid remarks on the attractiveness of the Arthurian story. These are then eagerly recounted to her female correspondent, who also doubles as the anticipated female reader of her *Tour*.

It soon becomes clear, however, that Morgan has a more serious interest in Merlin that goes beyond his attractiveness as a 'romantic' feature of the beautiful Carmarthenshire landscape. Through 'teazing my friends to collect for me, of the old people, legends, ballads, traditions, or his [Merlin's] prophecies, of which there are a great many' (pp. 159–60), Morgan collates a colossal twenty-nine page 'Account of Merlin, the Welsh Prophet; and of Arthur, the Welsh Hero', which is subsequently inserted into her *Tour* between her letters from Carmarthen and Haverfordwest (pp. 161–90). As a spinner might tease out fibres of wool, Morgan envisions her research into Merlin and Arthur as a similar and equally multi-stranded process, reliant on the cooperation of her friends and the local Welsh community. The material she collects includes what Morgan classifies as 'one of the legends of Arthur's posthumous fame', which claims that a magical cave in Merlin's Hill contains 'King Arthur and his knights of the round table, who were laid asleep [...] by the enchantments of Merlin' (p. 189). Like many Welsh uses of the legend, this localised myth imagines Arthur's eventual return in support of the Celtic cause against the 'English' Saxons. Morgan explains how the legend describes that:

at a set time the magician would rouse them from their sleep; when they would rush forth, drive out the Saxons, and institute a Shiboleth [sic], to distinguish the genuine descendants of the ancient Britons, over whom king Arthur would reign with transcendent dignity and splendour. (pp. 189–90)

As Simpson notes, many travel writers of the period were 'conscientiously intent on furnishing evidence of local legendary beliefs', including Arthurian lore, and Morgan is no

different, enthusiastically setting herself the task of converting into written form those ‘oral traditions’ she encounters while travelling through Carmarthen.⁵⁶

However, local beliefs were not Morgan’s only source for her ‘Account’. For the other twenty-seven pages of summary, she follows the pattern of more conventional chronicle histories, telling the story of Vortigern’s search for a child without a father, and his subsequently discovery of Merlin, sired by an incubus, who then comes to Vortigern’s court and reveals his gift for prophecy. This differs little from Geoffrey of Monmouth’s account in his *History* (Geoffrey himself took the material from Nennius’s *Historia Brittonum*), but for several minor details that suggest Morgan’s source was a later version of the English prose *Brut*, a polymorphous chronicle text which survives in more than 170 manuscripts and was one of the first books to be printed by Caxton.⁵⁷ In her self-constructed ‘Account’, long extracts from the seventeenth-century *Brut* are interwoven with Morgan’s own words. Compiled in this way, Morgan’s text reads much like an academic essay; on Merlin’s construction of Stonehenge, we read: ‘As soon as the monument was made, the king [Ambrosius] richely rewarded Merlin and his men, “And lete call that place Ston-henge euer aufter”’ (p. 170). Morgan’s patchwork of old and new also continues her own image of a new history stitched together and ‘teased’ out. After re-telling the history of Merlin, Morgan turns to Arthur, giving her own abbreviated description of his response to Lucius, the Emperor of Rome, who has invited him to war (an event given much more extensive treatment in Geoffrey’s *History*) (pp. 185–86). As Morgan’s self-confessed interests lay in the

⁵⁶ Simpson, *Camelot Regained*, p. 70.

⁵⁷ Morgan herself gives no source for her long extracts, but several features suggest she was working from a copy (or several different copies) of a *Brut* text. In her ‘Account’ Morgan includes a short section in which Merlin’s prophecies are directed towards the upcoming succession of medieval kings. As W.J.R. Barron notes, this is a feature shared by most MS versions of the prose *Brut*, and marks its difference from Geoffrey’s *History* (where the relevance of Merlin’s prophecies to the future is more oblique). See W.J.R. Barron, ‘Prose Chronicles’, in *The Arthur of the English: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval English Life and Literature*, ed. W.J.R. Barron (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), pp. 32–38 (p. 33). In addition, Morgan’s final extract from her source cites 546 as the year of Arthur’s death, whereas Geoffrey’s *History* gives the alternative of 542 (see Morgan, *Tour*, p. 188; Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History*, p. 261). Caxton’s printing of the English prose *Brut* appeared under the title *The Chronicles of England* (1480; 1482).

‘marvellous and poetical’ aspects of the ‘legendary’ Arthurian story, we can assume that she was less concerned with the king’s military exploits (p. 160), and was not afraid to exorcise those parts of the legend that she found less appealing.

In its extensive treatment of Arthurian material, Morgan’s *Tour* has several similarities with other Welsh travelogues of the period. As Simpson notes, Richard Warner’s *A Walk through Wales* (1798), Edward Donovan’s *Descriptive Excursions through South Wales and Monmouthshire* (1805), and John Evans’s similarly epistolary *Letters written during a Tour through South Wales* (1804) all made substantial use of the legend. All three, however, appeared after Morgan’s own *Tour*, and their commitment to telling Arthur’s history somewhat pales in comparison to her twenty-nine pages (Simpson notes with some admiration that Evans’s *Letters* ‘devoted [...] seven pages to Arthur’s biography’ and Donovan’s text a similar ten to the Arthurian associations connected with Caerleon).⁵⁸ *A Tour to Milford Haven* represents one of the earliest and most extensive expressions of interest in the Arthurian legend by a woman writer, made only more remarkable by the strange contrast between Morgan’s historical Arthurian ‘Account’ and her idiosyncratic rendition of her domestic holiday in Wales in the surrounding text. Morgan is a lively narrator and offers complaints about the dryness of her skin from the Welsh weather (p. 143), the over-salted ham partaken in Welsh inns (p. 131), and (in yet another illustration of her often over-active imagination) convinces herself that a chaise encountered on a dark road to Trecastle is ‘the coach of Death, drawn by horses without heads’ (p. 127). Indeed, the potential for humour in Morgan’s *Tour* did not go unnoticed by reviewers, who praised the ‘vivacity and good humour in her manner’, though the *British Critic* had substantially less patience for her anecdotes, and bemoaned: ‘surely it was scarcely worth the while to compose a book, to tell

⁵⁸ Simpson, *Camelot Regained*, p. 67.

how people were deluged by thunder storms, how they are frightened by darkness, or how they are obliged to buy a new horse when the old one is knocked up'.⁵⁹

On the subject of her volume's embedded Arthurian 'Account', however, reviewers were silent. Bearing in mind the charges of ignorance issued to both Susannah Dobson and Clare Reeve following their antiquarian pursuits earlier in the century, the veil of the apparently domestic tour may well have proved a useful shelter from public scorn. Morgan, perhaps, was half-prepared for these kind of accusations ('I [...] am not afraid of being accused of going out of my sphere' (p. ix), she says), but, in reality, her historical investigation into Merlin and Arthur was if anything hidden too well under the auspices of the domestic tour. Yet, one influential reader of Morgan's thoughts on Merlin and Arthur was none other than Robert Southey, who sometime later transcribed Morgan's tale of the Carmarthenshire cave containing Arthur and his sleeping knights into his commonplace book, underneath a section headed 'Ideas and Study for Literary Composition'.⁶⁰ Recorded alongside extensive notes on Malory and other Arthurian romances made in preparation for his fifty-page introduction to Caxton's edition of Malory in 1817, Southey's notebook provides long-overlooked evidence that the transmission of localised Welsh Arthurian lore owed a small but evident debt to Mary Morgan's unassuming *Tour to Milford Haven*.

As further female travellers passed through Carmarthen in the subsequent decades after Morgan's visit, they too seldom failed to remark on the town's connections to Merlin. In her *Summer Excursions*, the ever-scholarly Scots-born Elizabeth Spence drew on her favoured Tudor historians to provide a similar account of Merlin's Carmarthenshire connections, though ultimately she concluded that 'nothing is certainly known of him'.⁶¹

⁵⁹ [Review], 'A Tour to Milford Haven, in the Year 1791', *Monthly Review*, 18 (Nov 1795), 269–74 (269); [Review], 'A Tour to Milford Haven, in the Year 1791', *British Critic*, 6 (Aug 1795), 160–64 (161).

⁶⁰ John Wood Warter, ed., *Southey's Common-Place Book, Fourth Series. Original Memoranda, etc* (London: Longman, Green, Brown and Longmans, 1851), p. 160.

⁶¹ Spence, *Summer Excursions*, vol. 2, p. 81. All further references are to this edition and are subsequently given in parentheses throughout the text.

Spence preferred a more rational and empirical Merlin with ‘extraordinary learning’ and skills in ‘mathematics’ again derived from Camden’s description of the enchanter in *Britannia* (Spence, vol. 2, p. 81). Like Morgan, she drew her readers’ attention to the location of ‘Merlin’s Hill and Cave’, ‘in the vale of Towy, about two miles from the town [...] in the parish of Aberguilly, not far from the palace of the Bishops of St. David’s’ (vol. 2, p. 81–82).

Not one to be carried away by her ‘wrapt imagination [sic]’ in quite the same manner as Morgan (*Tour*, p. 147), Spence’s writings about Merlin contain a distinct air of scepticism. Though she acknowledges that ‘many travellers resort’ to Merlin’s cave in Carmarthen, her doubts about the town’s claims to the enchanter stem from her awareness that Spenser, in his *Faerie Queene* (1590–96), ‘describes his cave to lie in the woody recesses of Dynevor’ (vol. 2, p. 81). She then presents her readers with the following stanza from Spenser’s poem:

And if thou ever happen that same way
To travel, go to see that dreadful place.
It is a hideous hollow cave like bay
Under the rock, that lies a little space
From the swift Barry, tumbling down apace,
Amongst the woody hills of Dinevaour.
But dare thy not, I charge, in any case,
To enter into that same baleful bower,
For fear the cruel fiends should thee unawares devour. (Spence, vol. 2, p. 82)⁶²

As Simpson notes, the act of citing this stanza from Spenser’s work became common practice for travel writers passing through Carmarthen, and Spence’s deployment of his lines represents a bid to align her travelogue with those by her antiquarian contemporaries.⁶³

Moreover, her recourse to Spenser demonstrates her awareness that the British Arthurian legacy was founded as much on literary sources as those thought to be historical. Yet the

⁶² For the original, see Sir Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A.C. Hamilton and others, 2nd edn (Harlow: Longman, 2007), III. 3. 8.

⁶³ For knowledge of the regularity with which Romantic travel writers cited Spenser’s stanzas on Merlin’s Cave, I am indebted to Simpson, who identifies their quotation in John Henry Manners’s *Journal of Three Years Travels through Different Parts of Great Britain in 1795, 1796, 1797* (London: J. Brettell, 1805), p. 115; Donovan’s *Descriptive Excursions*, vol. 2, p. 205; William Howells’s *Cambrian Superstitions* (Tipton: [n. pub.], 1831), pp. 78–83; Thomas Roscoe’s *Wanderings in South Wales* (London: C. Tilt and Simpkin, [1837]), p. 189; and Anne Beale’s *The Vale of the Towey; or, Sketches in South Wales* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1844), pp. 39–40. See Simpson, *Camelot Regained*, p. 68, n. 52.

appearance of poetry within the prose travelogue also draws attention to a potential shifting of literary form which promised to become one of the distinguishing features separating how Arthurian travel was presented by male and female writers. Most poetry found in male Romantic travel writing with interests in Arthur, is, like Spence's use of Spenser, a case of quotation from established literary sources; however, in women's Arthurian travel writing from the same period, any verses encountered along the course of the tour are just as likely to be of the author's own making as they are those of a famed male predecessor. This is yet another example of the detachment of women's Arthurian writing from Arthurian works by male writers that had come before them.

3.3 'Fading vision': Anne Wilson, Mary Morgan, and the Problem of the Arthurian

View

Renaissance texts such as Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and Michael Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* (1612–22) provided the woman writer with ample demonstration that the Arthurian material had a long poetic legacy connecting it with topographical concerns. Several Romantic women poets seemed to find both fitting precursors; Spenser was a source for Eleanor Anne Porden's Arthurian motifs in her juvenile epic, *The Veils; or, The Triumph of Constancy* (1815), and Bannerman relied heavily on Drayton for 'The Prophecy of Merlin' (1802).⁶⁴ Well before Bannerman, however, a Northern labouring-class poet named Anne Wilson modelled her verse on Drayton's in ways more generically similar. Wilson's *Teisa: A Descriptive Poem of the River Teese, its Towns and Antiquities* (1778), is, like Drayton's *Poly-Olbion*, a locodescriptive poem concerned as much with mapping Britain's legendary landscape as its physical one. For Bridget Keegan, it is extremely likely that Wilson knew Drayton's work; as

⁶⁴ See Miss [Eleanor Anne] Porden, *The Veils; or, The Triumph of Constancy* (London: John Murray, 1815), p. 49 (Canto II, l. 11); [Anne Bannerman], [notes to] 'The Prophecy of Merlin', in *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* (London: Vernor and Hood, 1802), pp. 141–44.

she puts it, '[w]hile Wilson's origins may have been humble, her poetry demonstrates that her knowledge of poetry and poetic tradition was formidable'.⁶⁵ In any case, Wilson's use of Arthur is not a straight-forward imitation of Drayton's use of the legend, but her decision to include Arthurian material in *Teisa* may well have come from him. Passages in the *Poly-Olbion* offer regular praise for landmarks and natural geography with connections to the Arthurian legend, but Wilson's contribution takes the form of a 260-line self-contained Arthurian episode within her wider work. At the point when the course of the Tees reaches Rokeby near Hull in North Humberside, Wilson pauses in her progress down river to outline a fantastical romance between Uther Pendragon and a northern enchantress named Geneura. When Uther makes plans to return to his own kingdom, the powerful Geneura holds the king captive through her command of the surrounding landscape:

The fair streams that measure out her bound'ries,
The rolling Greta, and wide rapid Tees,
She, by her magic, wou'd command to rage:
Thus (like a linnet in its cage)
Unwilling Pendragon was still confin'd; ⁶⁶

Likening Uther to the daintiest of birds, Wilson's simile threatens to emasculate the king while the rivers (the Greta and the Tees) illustrate Geneura's more masculine 'wide [...] command'. However, there is an accompanying sense that Geneura (much like the 'confin'd' Uther) must also stay within her 'bound'ries'. The unfolding plot of Wilson's fairy-romance reflects Geneura's ultimate ineffectiveness, as Uther is eventually rescued from her enchanted castle by a Cornish Merlin and regains his place as the leader of the Britons. The once-powerful Geneura is reinscribed within the domestic walls of her castle, with only '[h]er flow'rs to tend, or else the shuttle throw'.⁶⁷ Wilson's enchantress seems frustratingly caught between patriarchal binaries that limit her to either a domestic shuttle-throwing angel or a

⁶⁵ Bridget Keegan, 'Writing Against the Current: Anne Wilson's *Teisa* and the Tradition of British River Poetry', *Women's Studies*, 31 (2002), 267–85 (277).

⁶⁶ Anne Wilson, *Teisa: A Descriptive Poem of the River Teese, its Towns and Antiquities* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Printed for the author, 1778), ll. 829–33.

⁶⁷ Wilson, *Teisa*, l. 991.

‘rage’-ing monster.⁶⁸ As Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar put it in their polemical study of the nineteenth-century woman writer, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), though ‘the woman writer’s male precursors symbolize authority, [...] they fail to define the ways in which she experiences her own identity as a writer’.⁶⁹ In using Drayton’s model, then, Wilson finds herself trapped within the male poet’s patriarchal binaries.

Wilson was unusual in mobilising the locodescriptive form inherited from Drayton to stage her own Arthurian romance. As the eighteenth century progressed and more women writers came to explore their own identity (and their own writing) through physical travel, they began to question Drayton and Spenser as models for Arthurian topographical poetry and search for a different form of poetic expression. More often than not, however, this search for an authentic Arthurian topography is accompanied by visual and linguistic limitations that convey the writer’s sense of what Gilbert and Gubar famously define as a ‘primary “anxiety of authorship” – a radical fear that she cannot create’.⁷⁰ The already open-ended and flexible literary site of the travelogue becomes the place where this ‘battle for self-creation’ – the search for a new feminine topography for Arthur – can be staged.⁷¹

While in Carmarthen during her 1791 tour, Mary Morgan imagined she saw a vision of Merlin ‘at the entrance of a cave’ (p. 147). Experiencing the landscape of ‘Merlin’s Hill’ in the ‘dim light of the declining day’, Morgan is rewarded with a ‘faint’ vision of the Arthurian enchanter:

With silver beard and hoary hair
Streaming to the troubled air
His hands out-stretch’d, and visage fell,
Muttering many a secret spell.
Thus by fancy’s magic hurl’d
Through the vast ideal world,
Entranc’d I saw, how Merlin shed

⁶⁸ Wilson, *Teisa*, l. 831 (cited above).

⁶⁹ Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, 2nd edn (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 48.

⁷⁰ Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, p. 49.

⁷¹ Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, p. 49.

Protecting charms o'er Arthur's head,
 And solemn way'd his potent wand,
 Which fiends of hell could ne'er withstand. (p. 147)

Morgan's unpredictable slide into poetic composition marks the beginning of a search for a more accurate expression of her feelings surrounding the Arthurian past and the Welsh landscape of the present, in verses that place the female 'I' at their centre. Still, Morgan has by no means fully cast off her male predecessors, as she acknowledges that she composes these lines encouraged 'by the aid of the poets' (p. 147), who would appear to be primarily Spenser and Gray. Morgan's first three lines paraphrase images from Gray's 'The Bard' (1757), and her closing reference to 'fiends of hell' recalls the 'cruel fiends' that Spenser first placed in Merlin's cave in *The Faerie Queene*.⁷² Her battle for self-creation, however, is signalled by the rather violent 'hurl' mid-way through the lines, as Morgan's 'I' takes up the position of the privileged viewer and is rewarded with a vision of a benevolent Merlin 'protecting' Arthur from potentially hellish threats. For Morgan, Arthurian romance forms a fantastical and expansively vast 'ideal world' through which her imagination can travel freely, alongside her contemporary movements across Wales.

Although Morgan is struck regularly by the poetic muse throughout her tour, it is not until close to the end of her journey and her return into Carmarthenshire that she composes again on Arthurian themes. While staying at Aberguilly in the county, Morgan compiles verses as enthusiastic as her first offering, but which betray a more acute level of anxiety about the limits of her Arthurian vision:

Oh ! then entranced let me be,
 Lost in poetic reverie;
 Till I imagine all in fight

⁷² Compare: Robed in the sable garb of woe,
 With haggard eyes the poet stood;
 (Loose his beard, and hoary hair
 Streamed, like a meteor, to the troubled air)

(Thomas Gray, 'The Bard: A Pindaric Ode' (1757), in *The Complete Poems of Thomas Gray: English, Latin, and Greek*, ed. H.W. Starr and J.R. Hendrickson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), pp. 19–31 (ll. 17–20)).
 Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. Hamilton and others, III. 3. 8. (l. 9; cited in Chapter 3, 3.2 above).

Prince Arthur and the Red Cross Knight;
 And Merlin, master of the spell,
 Slowly ascending through the dell,
 Musing, murmuring Runic rhyme,
 Searching in the womb of time;
 Or high upon his own fair hill,
 Dark mystic matters mutt'ring still.
 O'er Penalltmawr then cast mine eyes,
 Until the fading vision dies,
 Till mountains black my view suspend,
 And all the beauteous prospects end. (p. 314)

Again Morgan's vision begins with firm support from the compositions of her male poetic predecessor, Spenser, who provides Morgan with the characters of 'Prince Arthur and the Red Cross Knight'.⁷³ Both appear to be observed by Merlin, who is for Morgan an incredibly mobile figure, traversing both 'high' and low, and casting spells echoed by her verse's incantatory use of heavy alliteration and a (mixed) trochaic metre. Most striking, however, is the image of Merlin 'searching', or probing', for something apparently lost or hidden 'in the womb of time'. In imagining past 'time' as an anatomic vessel exclusively women's preserve, Morgan gives authority to her own 'eyes' in surveying the Carmarthenshire landscape from a female point of view. Just as Merlin's sexuality is blurred through his association with a distinctly feminine vessel of reproduction, through Merlin, Morgan gains 'asend[ance]' from ground level upwards to survey the prospect view from his 'fair hill'.

Yet, Morgan's rise to the prospect view which allows her to look 'O'er Penalltmawr' is short lived. In a manner reminiscent of the abrupt ending to Louisa Stuart Costello's juvenile vision of Arthur in 'A Dream' (1815), Morgan quickly finds her 'view suspend[ed]' when 'all the beauteous prospects end'. The Arthurian past, however feminised, is always on the brink of 'fading', and is ultimately rendered inaccessible to the female poet. Observing a similar 'pattern of frustrated prospects' in Ann Yearsley's *Clifton Hill* (1785), a work appearing in print a decade before Morgan's *Tour*, David Fairer suggests that such instances

⁷³ The Redcrosse Knight (or Knight of the Red Crosse) is the hero of Book I of the *Faerie Queene*. Prince Arthur first appears in Book I, canto 7.

‘disturb the notion of landscape as a settled possession or a favourable vantage-point’.⁷⁴ The same holds true for Morgan’s verse, as, though her ‘eyes’ long to retain their vision, the view quickly disintegrates against her will. The Welsh landscape, with its ‘mountains black’, is far from a settled possession; rather, the mountains are paradoxically and problematically both the source for her Arthurian verses and the formations that dictate their end.

Several other remarks in Morgan’s framing narrative also suggest an anxiety in presenting her Arthurian verses to the public. First, her recourse to poetry is primarily presented as something beyond her control. ‘I could not avoid being inspired by this charming combination of picturesque and poetical objects’, she maintains, ‘and I gave vent to my ideas’ (p. 313), in a passage that seems almost proto-Wordsworthian in its argument in favour of a ‘spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings’.⁷⁵ The simulation of unbridled expression in the ‘Oh!’ which introduces Morgan’s second Arthurian fantasy also contrives to give the impression of immediate composition *extempore*. Second, Morgan is keen to stress that other (male) poets have been inspired by the surrounding landscape by way of an excuse for her own composition; she refers to the Carmarthenshire-poet John Dyer’s *Grongar Hill* (1726) – a well-known forerunner to the Romantic topographical ode – immediately before offering her own lines on the surrounding scene, in an attempt to convey how the spot is already imbued with ‘poetical ideas’ (p. 313). In her eagerness to justify her verse and provide a male poetic predecessor, Morgan presents her reader with a two-fold apology for the numerous boundaries that her text will thereafter transgress: between the imaginary and the real, fact and fiction, and overwhelmingly, the travel narrative and the original poem (not to mention the concealment of twenty-nine pages of Arthurian history elsewhere in her *Tour*).

The genre-bending which Morgan’s text undertakes (fusing original poetry, with the domestic prose travelogue, and historical ‘accounts’, all conveyed in epistolary form) is a

⁷⁴ David Fairer, *English Poetry of the Eighteenth-Century, 1700–1789* (Harlow: Pearson, 2003), pp. 207–08.

⁷⁵ William Wordsworth, ‘Preface’, to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1802), in *Poetical Works*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson, rev. Ernest de Selincourt (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 734–41 (p. 734).

larger reflection of the fluidity enjoyed by Morgan's Merlin, a masculine *and* feminine figure of power who is situated neither high nor low. Gilbert and Gubar argue that one way women writers sought to transcend such an 'anxiety of authorship' was 'by *revising* male genres, using them to record their own dreams and their own stories *in disguise*'.⁷⁶ Morgan's moments of Arthurian poetic composition are on the simplest of levels presented to the reader as dreams, or 'reverie[s]' from which the narrator-poet is afterwards 'awakened' (*Tour*, p. 147) – a literary device that recurs in Arthurian poems by later Romantic women writers.⁷⁷ Indeed, while Morgan's poetic drive towards 'self-creation' might appear to be unique, her efforts were followed several decades later by another woman writer who similarly incorporated her Arthurian poems into her travel texts.

3.4 'Merlin concealed': Louisa Stuart Costello's 'The Druid Lover' (1844)

Heralded in 1844 as 'one of the most agreeable of modern travellers', from the 1840s onwards Louisa Stuart Costello's early fame as a poet was superseded by her success as a popular prose writer of 'legendary tours'.⁷⁸ To many this might have signalled a career change, but for Costello it was a move of convenience. By the 1830s, travel guides were an established form of literature that sold, and sold well, and Costello had always written out of necessity.⁷⁹ According to Jane Robinson, Costello was one of 'the first women actually to earn a living by describing their travels'.⁸⁰ In the first half of the 1840s she released no less than four guidebooks, several of which extended over two volumes. Three of these were tours

⁷⁶ Gilbert and Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic*, p. 73. Emphasis in original.

⁷⁷ Most notably, Louisa Stuart Costello's 'A Dream' (1815), but also a device employed in Felicia Hemans's 'Eryri Wen' (1822) (discussed in 3.5 below), and Mary Howitt's short verse tale for children, 'Anien Rhaa: A Fairy Tale', *Howitt's Journal of Literature and Popular Progress*, 2 (1847), 415–16.

⁷⁸ [Review], 'Béarn and the Pyrenees', *Metropolitan Magazine*, 40 (May 1844), 14–16.

⁷⁹ Like Landon, Costello provided financial support for her mother and brother throughout her life. See Rosemary Mitchell, 'Costello, Louisa Stuart (1799–1870)', *ODNB*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6380>> [accessed 9 Sept 2012].

⁸⁰ Jane Robinson, *Wayward Women: A Guide to Women Travellers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 174.

to French regions, but the last was Costello's only home-sourced guidebook, *The Falls, Lakes, and Mountains, of North Wales* (1844).⁸¹ Indeed, by touring Wales, Costello aimed 'to do for the land of the Harp and Bard, what has been done for its brother-land of Brittany' and 'give to every site its legendary and poetical associations'.⁸² Like Morgan and Spence before her, Costello uses the malleability of the Romantic travel tour to house material more pertinent to her own antiquarian interests than those of the parochial domestic traveller.⁸³

Like Morgan, too, Costello was fascinated by the figure of Merlin. In her Welsh tour, she speculates that Merlin's 'eternal dungeon' to which he was confined by 'Viviana' may be located 'near Caermarthen' (p. 123), but her intimate knowledge of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History* led her to associate the earlier events between Vortigern and Merlin with the 'steep rock called Dinas Emrys, the Fort of Merlin' in the valley of Nant Gwynant (p. 120). Still largely following Geoffrey, Costello gives a standard summary of Vortigern's discovery of the Merlin (pp. 120–22). Yet, like Morgan's record of the Carmarthenshire legend of Merlin's cave, Costello also follows her 'historical' account with a more speculative attempt to link past and present:

Whoever has the courage to enter a black cavern nearly on the top of Snowdon, may, by searching far enough, discover the golden chair which Merlin concealed there from the Saxons, and the jewels and money which still lie scattered in heaps around. Some of the enterprising miners who now search in the very heart of Snowdon will, doubtless, come upon these treasures some day. (p. 123)

Unlike Morgan, however, Costello is as interested in the figure of Vivian, or 'Viviana', as she is in Merlin himself. 'Welsh traditions name this neighbourhood as the scene of Merlin's famous grotto, which he constructed for the love of the fairy Viviana, or the White Serpent',

⁸¹ [Review], 'Béarn and the Pyrenees', *Metropolitan Magazine*, 40 (May 1844), 14–16. Costello, *A Summer Amongst the Bocages and the Vines*, 2 vols (London: Bentley, 1840); Costello, *A Pilgrimage to Auvergne, From Picardy to Le Velay*, 2 vols (London: Bentley, 1842), and Costello, *Béarn and the Pyrenees: A Legendary Tour to the Country of Henri Quatre*, 2 vols (London: Bentley, 1844).

⁸² Louisa Stuart Costello, 'Advertisement', to *The Falls, Lakes, and Mountains, of North Wales* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1845), p. viii. All further references are to this edition and are subsequently given in parentheses throughout the text.

⁸³ Gilroy, 'Introduction', *Romantic Geographies*, p. 1.

she notes (p. 123). Costello's inclusion of Viviana's allegorical epithet appears to suggest she had some familiarity with the late thirteenth-century French *Prophesies de Merlin*, in which Merlin prophesies his own death by a 'white serpent'.⁸⁴ For Costello, Merlin is not part of Snowdonia's lost Arthurian past, but a feature of the contemporary present:

The voice of the mighty master [Merlin] may at all events be frequently heard here amongst the hollow rocks, reverberating along the mountains in thunder, and bewailing his weakness in yielding to the force of beauty, as his pupil Vortigern had done, to their mutual destruction. (p. 123)

While this concluding sentence links past legends with present experiences by locating Merlin in the 'mountains' and 'thunder', it also provides a rebuttal to Viviana's previous 'treachery' by suggesting that Merlin's entombment was a product of male 'weakness' rather than female wantonness. The final clauses show Costello drawing on her knowledge of material contained in both Geoffrey's *History* and Malory's *Morte Darthur* to connect Vortigern's seduction by the beautiful Rowena with Vivien's seduction of Merlin. By foregrounding both men's 'mutual destruction', Costello (re)presents the myth's narrative as underpinned by tales of 'mighty' masculinity destroyed by the 'force' of feminine 'beauty'.

Costello's Welsh tour might have provided a home for some of her Arthurian scholarship, but, like Morgan, she was also drawn to poetry as a more intimate form of expression which could convey her love of romance. Within her third French guidebook, *Béarn and the Pyrenees* (1844), Costello interpolated her most experimental Arthurian poem, 'The Druid Lover'. It is a work which places Costello at the forefront of a Victorian move towards 'analysing and dramatising the Arthurian stories from a psychological point of view'.⁸⁵ Crucially for the female Arthurian tradition, the poem emerges from within Costello's prose travel diary, born out of her visit to Le Mans in the Pays de la Loire region,

⁸⁴ *Les Prophesies de Merlin* (Cod. Bodmer 116), ed. Anne Berthelot (Cologny-Geneva: Foundation Martin Bodmer, 1992). For a discussion of Merlin's Lady and the 'white serpent', see Carolyne Larrington, *King Arthur's Enchantresses: Morgan and her Sisters in Arthurian Tradition* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006), p. 111.

⁸⁵ Beverly Taylor and Elisabeth Brewer, *The Return of King Arthur: British and American Arthurian Literature since 1800* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1983), p. 134.

where her ‘imagination’ is piqued by a stone sculpture of a veiled figure.⁸⁶ In the true spirit of an ‘antiquarian’, she stops to make a sketch (Figure 4), and proposes that the ‘mysterious stone’ might represent the natural coffin of ‘the great Merlin, or Myrdhyn’, ‘the Druid lover of the fatal Viviana’ (vol. 1, p. 33). Costello asks: ‘may this not be the very stone bought from Brociliande, within, or under, which he is in durance; or rather is this not himself transformed to stone?’ (vol. 1, pp. 33–34) Costello’s knowledge of Brocéliande (as it is now more commonly spelt) was drawn from her reading of the Vulgate *Merlin*; elsewhere in her travel writing, she described it as ‘[t]hat forest sacred to Merlin and the fairy Viviana, and a host of fairies beside, who filled it with wonders, and provided adventures for the chivalry of ages’.⁸⁷ As Costello also knew, despite much ‘labour’ by ‘poets, antiquaries, and historians of France’, Brocéliande, like Avalon, could not be tied to a physical location but remained elusive.⁸⁸ Her invocation of Brocéliande, then, signifies a point of departure in her tour from the mappable landscape of Le Mans towards a legendary forest emblematic of an unbridled possibilities and ‘wonders’. Kinsley shrewdly points out that Mary Morgan frequently represents ‘place as mythic space’ in her *Tour*, and Costello’s travel writing often does the same, while also doubly marking this transition with an accompanying shift in form from prose to poetry.⁸⁹

In *A Summer Amongst the Bocages and the Vines*, Costello had included her own (unacknowledged) translation of a Breton Merlin ballad collected and published by the

⁸⁶ Costello, *Béarn and the Pyrenees*, vol. 1, p. 33. All further references are to this edition and are subsequently given in parentheses.

⁸⁷ Costello, *A Summer Amongst the Bocages and the Vines*, vol. 1, p. 206. Lady Charlotte Guest also provided extensive and thorough ‘Notes on Breceiliande and the Fountain of Baranton’ in her *Mabinogion* (1849), vol. 1, pp. 216–25. Costello knew of *The Mabinogion* romances which she termed ‘histories’ (see *The Falls, Lakes, and Mountains, of North Wales*, p. 147), and, not being a Welsh speaker, she would have encountered them in Guest’s translation.

⁸⁸ Costello, *A Summer Amongst the Bocages and the Vines*, vol. 1, p. 206. Modern scholars have identified Brocéliande with ‘the forest of Paimpont, about midway between Dinan and Rennes in modern-day Brittany’ (see William W. Kibler, ‘Brocéliande’, in *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia*, ed. Norris J. Lacy, 2nd edn (New York and London: Garland, 1996), p. 55).

⁸⁹ Zoë Kinsley, “‘In moody sadness, on the giddy brink’: Liminality and Home Tour Travel’, in *Mapping Liminalities: Thresholds in Cultural and Literary Texts*, ed. Lucy Kay, Zoë Kinsley, Terry Phillips and Alan Roughley (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), pp. 41–68 (p. 49).

French medievalist Theodore Claude Henri Hersert de la Villemarqué ('Merlin-Devin', translated as 'Merlin the Enchanter'), but the Merlin poem she includes in *Béarn and the Pyrenees* would appear to be one of her own composition, albeit probably loosely based on her reading of the Vulgate *Merlin*. 'The Druid Lover' is a forty-eight line lyric voiced by Merlin on the brink of his imminent entombment.⁹⁰ It is prefaced by a short epigraph which explains that Viviana is the 'cause' of his imprisonment, because she 'asked the sage the fatal word which could enchain him' in an attempt 'to prove his power' (vol. 1, p. 34). Unable to 'resist her entreaties', Merlin transmits his knowledge of the 'spell' to Viviana (vol. 1, p. 34). Finally, Costello explains, seeking 'to gratify her', Merlin 'condemned himself to eternal oblivion' (vol. 1, p. 34). The poem opens with a reference to the 'fatal word', or spell, that Viviana so eagerly covets:

I know to tell the fatal word
Is sorrow evermore –
I know that I that boon accord
Whole ages will deplore.
Though I be more than mortal wise,
And all is clear to gifted eyes;
And endless pain and worlds of woe
May from my heedless passion flow,
Yet thou hast power all else above, –
Sense, reason, wisdom, yield to love. ('The Druid Lover', ll. 1–10)

The poem provides a psychological profile of Merlin as 'more than mortal wise', but despite his ability for rational thought the enchanter must ultimately 'yield' to Viviana's 'love'.

Merlin's carefully considered arguments are given weight by the poem's use of sparser iambic tetrameter (rather than pentameter) lines and a fondness for the monosyllabic.

Costello's poem shares Morgan's predilection for 'I's and 'eyes' that link the poetic gaze to that of the narrator-traveller in the text at large, and again, the Arthurian past is imagined to be geographically vast and expansive: Merlin's 'heedless passion' flows like a river within

⁹⁰ Costello, 'The Druid Lover', in *Béarn and the Pyrenees*, vol. 1, pp. 34–35. All further references are to this printing of the poem and are subsequently given in parentheses.

‘worlds of woe’. A similar subtle negotiation of the prospect also takes place in this poem, as the speaker’s initial enlightened view from which ‘all is clear’ flows downwards throughout the stanza until he must direct his gaze ‘above’. These images link the poem closely to the topographical discourse of the guidebook, which provides an accessible framing discourse for the poet’s verse.

In the second stanza, Merlin nostalgically remembers Viviana’s ‘snowy hand’ and ‘eyes of light’ (ll. 11, 13), which he links to his own recent loss of honour: ‘Oh Viviana! I am lost! / A life of renown thy smile hath cost’ (ll. 15–16). Here the poem perceives a conflict between public fame and private love that is echoed in other examples of women’s Arthurian verse, such as Wilson’s presentation of Uther and Geneura’s relationship in *Teisa*, and Janetta Philipps’s ‘Edmund and Bertha’.⁹¹ After uttering a doom-laden prophecy predicting that the Breton country will be ‘desolate’ (l. 20), the lines of Costello’s poem become increasingly fragmented as Merlin nears entombment and imagines himself ‘Condemn’d – undone – destroy’d – by thee!’ (l. 22). This textual breakdown signals a shift towards resignation in Merlin’s approach to his fate, climaxing in a renunciation of his life-long quest for knowledge:

I have no being but in thee;
My thirst for knowledge is forgot,
And life immortal would but be
A load of care, where thou wert not. (ll. 25–28)

Here the poem appears to replay themes from Costello’s much earlier juvenile poem, ‘A Dream’ (1815), in which knowledge concerning Arthur is abandoned in favour of a disenlightening ‘darkness’.⁹² In ‘The Druid Lover’, too, knowledge is sought but ultimately ‘forgot[ten]’, in favour of love – perhaps figured here as a more acceptably feminine concern for the Druid Lover, especially considering that the following stanza affects the dialogue of

⁹¹ See Chapter 2, 2.4.

⁹² Costello, ‘A Dream’, in *The Maid of the Cyprus Isle and Other Poems* (London: Sherwood, Neely and Jones, 1815), pp. 56–58 (l. 57). See Chapter 1, 1.4.

the love lyric, centring on Viviana's 'eyes', the 'melodious thrill' of her tongue, and her 'radiant brow' (ll. 29, 33, 41). The poem ends with the dramatic declaration of Merlin's everlasting commitment to Viviana, appropriately interwoven into a further prophetic announcement:

Soon shall I all but thee forget,
And perish to be thine alone.
Ages on ages shall decline,
But Myrdyn shall ever be thine! (ll. 45–49)

The poem's modern-sounding psychological interrogation of Merlin's condition and bold presentation of a Viviana who 'hast power all else above' (l. 9) makes it is easy to forget that Costello penned 'The Druid Lover' well before Matthew Arnold's 'Tristram and Iseult' (1852) (described by Beverly Taylor as 'the earliest Victorian work to return Nimüe or Vivien to prominence in Victorian literature'), and Tennyson's influential 'Merlin and Vivien' (1859).⁹³ Costello and Tennyson's poems share a number of similarities; both Costello and Tennyson's Vivien's desire a 'boon',⁹⁴ and Tennyson's monosyllabic refrain emphasising that his Merlin stands to lose his 'use and name and fame' has parallels with Costello's similarly noun-laden phrase describing Merlin's 'wisdom, knowledge, sense, and power' (ll. 10, 34).⁹⁵ Indeed, it is entirely possible that Tennyson knew of Costello's 'The Druid Lover' as he was almost certainly familiar with her poetry more generally and her interest in the Arthurian myth. In 1837, both poets published together in Lord Northampton's *The Tribute*, and Tennyson would have had even further cause to notice Costello's contribution: her poem, 'The Deaths of Tristan and Yseult', appeared immediately before a piece submitted by his brother, Charles.⁹⁶

⁹³ Beverly Taylor, 'Re-Vamping Vivien: Representing Myth as Victorian Icon', in *King Arthur's Modern Return*, ed. Debra N. Mancoff (New York: Garland, 1998), pp. 65–82 (p. 65).

⁹⁴ Costello, 'The Druid Lover', l. 3; Alfred Lord Tennyson, 'Merlin and Vivien', in *Idylls of the King*, ed. J.M. Gray (London: Penguin, 1996), pp. 142–67, cf. ll. 262, 304, 321, 349.

⁹⁵ Tennyson, 'Merlin and Vivien', ll. 212, 302, 372, 968.

⁹⁶ See Costello, 'The Deaths of Tristan and Yseult', in *The Tribute: A Collection of Miscellaneous Unpublished Poems*, by Various Authors, ed. Lord Northampton (London: John Murray, 1837), pp. 289–92, and Rev. C.T.

By 1840, 'The Deaths of Tristan and Yseult' had also found its way into Costello's travel writing. From the very beginning of her literary career, financial pressures had motivated Costello to publish widely and prolifically, and, like her contemporary, Janetta Philipps, she was not averse to re-casting Arthurian material that she had already written to fit new contexts. When 'The Deaths of Tristan and Yseult' appeared in Costello's first tour of France, *A Summer Amongst the Bocages and the Vines* (1840), it had acquired the new title of 'The Legend' and formed part of her visit to the town of Nantes, which, as Costello well knew, was purportedly the location for Tristan's tragic death.⁹⁷ Consistent with the integration of 'The Druid Lover' in *Béarn and the Pyrenees*, 'The Legend' is prefaced by a long epigraph summarising the romance of Tristan and Yseult in Costello's own words.⁹⁸ Again the travel narrative proves congenial to the female traveller's performance of Arthurian scholarship, but Costello also suggests that 'the stories of the Table Ronde' might perform a more consolatory function: she tells Tristan's story at Nantes because she is determined to 'forget [...] all the horrors committed here during the Reign of Terror'.⁹⁹ Arthurian 'romance and poetry' emerges as a literary panacea that can stem the flood of Costello's memories of French 'horrors', themselves 'too hideous to think of!'¹⁰⁰

This was an altogether darker side to the escapism offered by Arthurian romance, but in more positive terms, the rise of the popular guidebook usefully provided Costello with the grounds to recast her interest in Arthurian medievalism in ways which would prove successful, and just as importantly, lucrative. Reviews of *Béarn and the Pyrenees* were generally positive and considered it 'one of the best' of Costello's 'pleasant books of

Tennyson, 'To a Lady', p. 293. Alfred Tennyson's own contribution, 'Stanzas', appears on pp. 244–50. For further discussion of the parallels between Tennyson's and Costello's Arthurian poetry, see Chapter 5, 5.6.

⁹⁷ Costello, 'The Legend', in *A Summer Amongst the Bocages and the Vines*, vol. 1, pp. 299–301.

⁹⁸ Costello, *Summer*, vol. 1, pp. 297–98.

⁹⁹ Costello, *Summer*, vol. 1, p. 296. As it made its first appearance in a literary gift book, the poem is examined in the context of the fashion for popular annuals in Chapter 5, 5.6.

¹⁰⁰ Costello, *Summer*, vol. 1, p. 296.

legendary travel'.¹⁰¹ Yet, for some reviewers, her use of legend and romance as a form of (necessary) escapism threatened to become a bone of contention. While the *Examiner* exulted how the 'far past, and the present, quaintly alternate' in Costello's guidebook, other reviewers treated her mixture of the real and the imaginary with considerable suspicion.¹⁰² In a tone of warning, the *Metropolitan Magazine* declared: 'Imagination is of course not only unavailable but an actual crime in a traveller'.¹⁰³ By blurring poetry with prose, and romance with reality, Costello was pushing at the boundaries of the travel genre's already 'hybrid discourse' in ways which, to some, were unacceptable.¹⁰⁴ Wherever women writers chose to stage their knowledge of Arthurian romance, they always stood some risk of criticism.

3.5 *Welsh Melodies*: Felicia Hemans's Merddin Songs in Context

Of course, not all women writers hid their topographical Arthurian verses within prose travel writing, but the travel guide can be seen to underpin women's engagements with Arthurian material in other, perhaps more subtle ways. One of the best known Arthurian poems by a Romantic woman writer is Felicia Hemans's short two-stanza lyric, 'Taliesin's Prophecy'.¹⁰⁵ Surrounded by the 'hills', 'mountains', and 'rocks' of Wales, the medieval Welsh bard Taliesin announces: 'I see from Uthyr's kingdom the sceptre pass away, /And many a line of

¹⁰¹ [Review], 'Béarn and the Pyrenees', *Metropolitan Magazine*, 40:157 (1844), 14–16 (14); [Review], 'Béarn and the Pyrenees', *The Examiner*, 1888 (Apr 1844), 212–13 (212).

¹⁰² [Review], *Examiner*, 212.

¹⁰³ [Review], *Metropolitan Magazine*, 15.

¹⁰⁴ Gilroy, 'Introduction', *Romantic Geographies*, p. 1.

¹⁰⁵ This is mainly due to its early listing in Clark S. Northrup and John J. Parry's 'The Arthurian Legends: Modern Retellings of the Old Stories: An Annotated Bibliography', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 43 (1944), 173–211 (190). 'Taliesin's Prophecy' was the only Romantic-era Arthurian work by a women author listed. For more recent listings of the poem, see *The Arthurian Annals: The Tradition in English From 1250 to 2000*, ed. Daniel P. Nastali and Phillip C. Boardman, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), vol. 1, p. 85; and *A Bibliography of Modern Arthuriana (1500–2000)*, ed. Ann F. Howey and Stephen R. Reimer (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006), p. 176.

kings and princely men decay'.¹⁰⁶ Wales's Arthurian past, when 'Uther Pendragon' was 'king of Britain', is venerated by Hemans as the high point in Cambrian history from which all of Wales's subsequent conflicts descend (*Poems*, p. 149). Yet, ultimately, the poem offers a more positive consolation, since although Wales will have to share in Britain's 'empire', the 'lofty tongue' of the Welsh language 'shall live' on 'for ever' (ll. 15, 7).

'Taliesin's Prophecy' appeared as part of a series of verse accompaniments Hemans wrote for a selection of Welsh national music arranged by John Parry and published as *A Selection of Welsh Melodies* (1822).¹⁰⁷ The poem's familiarity among Arthurian scholars is more a product of Hemans's popularity and commercial success in her own time than an indication of its extensive engagement with the legend, which is otherwise limited to the brief reference to Uthyr and a footnote by Hemans explaining that he was 'the supposed father of Arthur' (*Poems*, p. 149). For Stephen Knight, 'Taliesin's Prophecy' signifies Hemans's rejection of Merlin for a 'more genuinely Welsh bardic tradition', but her engagement with Merlin also extends beyond this singular poem.¹⁰⁸ 'Owen Glyndwr's War-Song', 'The Green Isles of the Ocean', 'The Lament of Llywarch Hen', and 'Eryri Wen' from *Welsh Melodies* all (to a greater or lesser extent) address Arthurian themes.¹⁰⁹ In fact, the regular appearance of Merlin, or Merddin Emrys, across several of the poems is an important contributor to Hemans's construction of a composite collection, as well as her broader representation of a united, medieval Wales. Diego Saglia has drawn attention to how 'the combination of structural, formal and ideological cohesion and ambivalence' is a 'prominent feature' of

¹⁰⁶ Felicia Hemans, 'Taliesin's Prophecy', in *Poems of Felicia Hemans: A New Edition* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1849), pp. 148–49, ll. 11–12. Material from *Welsh Melodies* spans pp. 145–53, and all further references to poems from *Welsh Melodies* are taken from this edition.

¹⁰⁷ *A Selection of Welsh Melodies, with Symphonies and Accompaniments by John Parry, and Characteristic Words by Mrs. Hemans* (London: J. Power, 1822).

¹⁰⁸ Stephen Knight, *Merlin: Knowledge and Power Through the Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), p. 131.

¹⁰⁹ Critics have rarely examined in detail the Arthurian context for other poems in *Welsh Melodies*. Simpson notes an Arthurian context for 'The Green Isles of the Ocean' (*Camelot Regained*, pp. 101, 263); however, only 'Owen Glyndwr's War Song' and 'Taliesin's Prophecy' are listed alongside 'Taliesin's Prophecy' in Nastali and Boardman's *Arthurian Annals*, though the bibliographers note that 'there are references to Snowdon and Merlin in other poems and notes in this series of "Welsh Melodies"' (see *The Arthurian Annals*, vol. 1, p. 85).

Welsh Melodies, and, though Saglia locates this predominantly in Hemans's repetitive use of acoustic sound and meta-poetic application of song, the figure of Merlin Emrys can be read as the personification of Hemans's attempt to draw similar, mythological links across the collection.¹¹⁰

Unlike Morgan, Spence, and Costello, Hemans does not record her own travel experiences in *Welsh Melodies*, but she is nevertheless concerned with what Saglia terms a 'multi-layered geography'.¹¹¹ On a more practical level, she drew much of her Arthurian material and knowledge of Merlin from her reading of Welsh guidebooks, namely Thomas Pennant's extremely successful *Tours in Wales* (1771–78). The second of Pennant's Welsh tours took him to Snowdonia, where the antiquarian gave an account of the legend of Vortigern's tower and the discovery of 'Merlin, or Merddin Emris, or Ambrosius' as well as Merlin's supposed location on Snowdon itself.¹¹² Hemans's Merlin is a historical Welsh bard rather than a legendary enchanter, but she nevertheless associates him with a dramatic and expressive form of poetic possibility that echoes Morgan's earlier attraction to the figure.

As Jane Aaron, Duncan Wu, and William D. Brewer have all noted, Hemans was deeply attached to Wales and its landscape.¹¹³ She seems almost ideally placed to write about the Arthurian legend and its foundations in Wales: from the age of seven she resided in the area surrounding Abergele in North Wales – the same location which Costello was to later note once housed 'the crown of King Arthur'.¹¹⁴ Hemans's first volume of *Poems* (1808), 'written between the ages of eight and eighteen', included a twenty-two line ode entitled

¹¹⁰ Diego Saglia, "'Harp of the Mountain-Land": Felicia Hemans and Romantic Wales', in *Wales and the Romantic Imagination*, ed. Damian Walford Davies and Lynda Pratt (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), pp. 228–42 (p. 238).

¹¹¹ Saglia, 'Felicia Hemans and Romantic Wales', p. 239.

¹¹² Thomas Pennant, *Tours in Wales*, 2 vols (London: Wilkie and Robinson [etc], 1810), vol. 2, pp. 351–54 (p. 353).

¹¹³ Jane Aaron, *Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing in Wales: Nation, Gender and Identity* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), pp. 50–58; Duncan Wu, 'Felicia Dorothea Hemans', in *Romanticism: An Anthology*, ed. Wu, 3rd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 1241–47 (esp. p. 1245); William D. Brewer, 'Felicia Hemans, Byronic Cosmopolitanism and the Ancient Welsh Bards', in *English Romanticism and the Celtic World*, ed. Gerald Carruthers and Alan Rawes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 167–81.

¹¹⁴ Aaron, *Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing in Wales*, p. 52.

‘Written in North Wales’ that praised ‘lovely prospects’ afforded by the Welsh landscape.¹¹⁵ The task of writing *Welsh Melodies* in the early years of the 1820s bought her mind back to her relationship with her childhood surroundings; as she herself wrote, ‘although not born in Wales, my long residence here has naturalised me [...] I am no stranger to the country’.¹¹⁶ Barring one other, very different use of Arthur in her early work, *England and Spain* (1808), there is no further evidence to suggest that Hemans’s interest in Arthurian romance extended outside of her work for *Welsh Melodies*, and she certainly associated Merlin entirely with the Welsh landscape.¹¹⁷ Literary influences surrounding Hemans in the early 1820s also seem congenial to her writing an Arthurian poem, as she became friends with Reginald Heber and Henry Hart Milman around the time she was composing *Welsh Melodies*. While it is well known that both clergymen encouraged Hemans’s composition of *The Vespers of Palmero* (1823), both also had their own strong interests in Arthur.¹¹⁸

Arthurian material in *Welsh Melodies* is put to use in two ways, the first less extensive than the second. Both ‘The Green Isles of the Ocean’ and ‘The Lament of Llywarch Hen’ (a modernised translation of a medieval Welsh elegy) are given an Arthurian framework by Hemans’s use of scholarly epigraphs and notes. ‘Llywarch Hen, or Llywarch the Aged’ is described as a ‘celebrated bard in the time of Arthur’ (*Poems*, p. 147), and ‘The Green Isles of the Ocean’ rather wistfully makes reference to ‘the voyage of Merddin Emrys’, undertaken with his twelve bards to seek the magical ‘green isles’ of the poem’s title (*Poems*, p. 146).¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Felicia Browne, ‘Written in North Wales’, in *Poems by Felicia Dorothea Browne* (London: T. Cadell, 1808), pp. 5–6, l. 19.

¹¹⁶ Hemans to Miss ———, 19 December 1822, in *Memorials of Mrs. Hemans, with Illustrations of her Literary Character from her Private Correspondence*, ed. Henry Chorley (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea, and Blanchard, 1836), p. 87.

¹¹⁷ Hemans’s application of Arthur in *England and Spain* is discussed in 3.6 below.

¹¹⁸ Henry Hart Milman’s Arthurian ‘heroic poem’, *Samor, Lord of the Bright City* (London: John Murray, 1818) had been published a few years before, and Heber’s unfinished Arthurian fragments, ‘Morte Darthur’ and ‘The Masque of Gwendolen’ occupied his mind till his death. See *The Life of Reginald Heber, D.D., Lord Bishop of Calcutta. By his Widow*, [ed. Amelia Heber] 2 vols (New York: Protestant Episcopal Press, 1830), vol. 1, pp. 353, 404.

¹¹⁹ Southey had mentioned Merlin’s voyage ‘with his band of bards’ in search of ‘the Green Islands of the Ocean’ previously in *Madoc* (1805); see Southey, *Madoc*, ed. Lynda Pratt (London: Pickering and Chatto,

Both poems look back to an Arthurian past, but they do so only obliquely, as Merlin and Arthur are mentioned solely in each poem's accompanying paratextual elements. 'Owen Glyndwr's War-Song', and 'Eryri Wen', on the other hand, show Hemans attempting to deal more explicitly with Arthurian material within her verse itself, supported by the use of material from Welsh antiquarian travel guides in her surrounding notes.

'Owen Glyndwr's War-Song' takes its poetic premise from Pennant's remarks that 'Owen Glyndwr styled himself the dragon; a name he assumed in imitation of Uthyr, whose victories over the Saxons were foretold by the appearance of a star with a dragon beneath' (p. 149). The poem centres on the appearance of that 'blazing star' in Glyndwr's time, which prophetically 'tells that glory's wing shall rest / When warriors meet to die!' (ll. 5–6). Though the poem ostensibly centres on Glyndwr, it is equally concerned – if not more so – with Uthyr's star as a symbol of the glories of the more distant Arthurian past: a time '[o]f conquest and of fame' (l. 10). In the last of the poem's four twelve-line stanzas, Hemans brings the poem to its conclusion by forging an explicit link between a familiar Arthurian 'prophet' and the historical Glyndwr:

– In Snowdon's caves a prophet lay:
 Before his gifted sight,
 The march of ages pass'd away
 With hero-footsteps bright;
 But proudest in that long array,
 Was Glendwr's path of light! [sic] (ll. 43–48)

Another note confirms that Hemans means her readers to identify the 'prophet' as 'Merlin, or Merddin Emrys' who 'is said to have composed his prophecies on the future lot of the Britons, amongst the mountains of Snowdon' (*Poems*, p. 149). The poem's concluding image conflates the 'blazing star' of Pendragon with Glyndwr's equally resplendent military glories, as foreseen by Merlin.

2004), Part 1, Book XI, l. 104. Southey's notes accompanying this passage indicate that his source was a reference to Merlin's voyage in the *Cambrian Biography* (p. 302), which Hemans probably also knew and used.

Hemans returns to Snowdon in another Pennant-inspired number, 'Eryri Wen' (Welsh for 'Snowdon'). Here she investigates further the mountainous territory of North Wales as the location for 'Merddin Emrys' (l. 16), a figure who by now has come to stand for both an ancient bardic and a contemporary poetic voice. Again, Pennant's comments are vital to the construction of this link between the past and present poetic imagination, for Hemans recounts the Welsh antiquarian's record of the local legend that 'whosoever slept upon Snowdon would wake inspired, as much as if he had taken a nap on the hill of Apollo' (Pennant, cited in *Poems*, p. 151). Continuing the Classical cast, Snowdon is named as the British 'Parnassus' and font of poetic inspiration (Pennant, cited in *Poems*, p. 151). More overtly than either Morgan or Costello, Hemans celebrates the Welsh landscape and Merddin the 'seer' not only as a prophetic voice but a poetic one, imbued with 'power' (l. 6), 'majesty and might' (l. 11). For Hemans, the 'spell' of creative poetry remains intimately connected to the hillsides of the Welsh peak to this day, as the poet answers those who might think the Welsh bardic voice lost:

Nor hath it fled! the awful spell
 Yet holds unbroken sway
 As when on that wild rock it fell
 Where Merddin Emrys lay! ('Eryri Wen', ll. 13–16)

Hemans's debt to the topographical tradition for this image is evident from her note to these lines that identifies Merddin's 'wild rock' as 'Dinas Emrys (the fort of Ambrose), a celebrated rock in the mountains of Snowdon' via William Williams's *Observations on the Snowdon Mountains* (1802) (*Poems*, p. 151).¹²⁰ The figure of Merddin Emrys is vital to Hemans's portrayal of an 'unbroken' poetic tradition which still 'holds' to the present day ('Eryri Wen', l. 14). While other songs in the collection, such as the 'Chant of the Bards before their Massacre by Edward I', are resoundingly negative in their presentation of the

¹²⁰ Williams gives a long account of Merlin, or Merddin, from which Hemans's notes are extracted; see Williams, *Observations on the Snowdon Mountains; With Some Account of the Customs and Manners of its Inhabitants* (London: E. Williams, 1802), pp. 53–57.

Welsh land as '[l]onely and voiceless' ('Chant', l. 11), Hemans's Merddin songs are characterised by optimism and celebration.

Hemans's strong faith in Merddin as a positive poetic emblem for Wales (and for poetry more generally) can be traced to the veneration for the Welsh 'bardic character' she expressed in a letter of 1823. 'The idea entertained of the bardic character seems to be particularly elevated and beautiful' she wrote, adding that '[t]he bard was not allowed, in any way, to become a party in political or religious dispute; he was recognised so completely as the herald of peace'.¹²¹ Merlin and Taliesin, then, were for Hemans representative of a different, non-violent but also secular cultural role, one not so different from that carved for the Romantic 'poetess', a figure similarly excluded from the realities of politics and warfare, yet at the same time elevated and celebrated for her 'beautiful' and semi-prophetic verses on the same themes. Knight observes that the Romantics *en masse* 'thought of Merlin as representing a cleverness that lacked moral weight', but there is no irony to be found in either Hemans's Merddin Emrys or Costello's Merlin, whose prophetic or poetic abilities are always absolute.¹²²

Hemans's poetical treatment of Merlin does not hide itself within a prose travelogue in the same manner as Morgan's and Costello's version of the figure, but through its regular recourse to Pennant's *Tours* and Williams's *Observations* in the surrounding notes, *Welsh Melodies* also uses the discourse of the travel guide as a firm context for its Arthurian content. *Welsh Melodies* was published at a time when Hemans's career was rapidly escalating, but (possibly because of the work's collaborative appearance with Parry's music) the volume of verses received comparatively little attention from reviewers.¹²³ The *Literary Gazette* thought that Hemans's 'talents' gave 'a new interest to th[e] fine music', but that the

¹²¹ Hemans to Miss ———, 2 July 1823, in *Memorials of Mrs. Hemans*, ed. Chorley, p. 98.

¹²² Knight, *Merlin*, p. 143.

¹²³ A *Selection of Welsh Melodies* was reviewed twice in the *Literary Gazette*: 259 (5 Jan 1822), 8–9, and 306 (30 Nov 1822), 763–64; see also the *Gentlemen's Magazine* (Dec 1821), 535–36.

songs themselves remained ‘peculiar and curious’.¹²⁴ Reflecting on Hemans’s Welsh lyrics in 1829, the *Gentlemen’s Magazine* concluded that ‘song writing’ was ‘not her forte’.¹²⁵ Only Hemans’s biographer, Henry Chorley, recognised her scholarly investment in *Welsh Melodies* and more positively concluded that ‘the allusions to the legendary history of the ancient Britons, which her songs contain, are happily chosen’.¹²⁶ A ‘feminine’ poet of Hemans’s fame, it would seem, could write on the Arthurian subjects without reproach, but without garnering much attention, either.

3.6 ‘Doubtful Arthur’ in England: Hemans, Eleanor Anne Porden, Anna Sawyer, and Mary Russell Mitford

For Hemans, Merlin belonged firmly on Welsh soil, but King Arthur could be recruited as a symbol of paradoxically ‘English’ grandeur. In this respect, Hemans’s Arthurianism is but a small-scale reflection of what Jane Aaron identifies as her apparently contradictory ability to exist as the ‘national poet of two nations at once’, both England and Wales.¹²⁷ As Britain’s premier ‘poetess’, she was as capable of penning enthusiastic Anglophone verse (such as ‘England’s Dead’ and ‘The Stately Homes of England’, which, as Susan Wolfson notes, ‘became virtual national anthems for the British’) as she was the ‘intensely patriotic’ Celtic songs of *Welsh Melodies*.¹²⁸ In the verses she wrote for Parry, Hemans’s poetic voice

¹²⁴ [Review], ‘A Selection of Welsh Melodies’, *Literary Gazette*, 306 (30 Nov 1822), 763–64.

¹²⁵ [Review], ‘A Selection of Welsh Melodies’ [third series], *Gentlemen’s Magazine* (Sept 1829), 233–35 (234).

¹²⁶ *Memorials of Mrs Hemans*, ed. Chorley, p. 33.

¹²⁷ Aaron, *Nineteenth-Century Women’s Writing in Wales*, p. 54. As both Aaron and Dorothy McMillan note, Hemans also found favour as a national poet for Scotland when she beat fifty-seven competitors to win a Scottish poetry prize for her poem, ‘Wallace’s Invocation to Bruce’. See Aaron, *Nineteenth-Century Women’s Writing in Wales*, p. 55; McMillan, ‘Joanna Baillie’s Embarrassment’, in *Romantic Woman Poets: Genre and Gender*, ed. Lilla Maria Crisafulli and Cecilia Pietropoli (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 113–34 (p. 113).

¹²⁸ Susan J. Wolfson, ‘Introduction: Felicia Dorothea Browne Hemans, 1793–1835’, in *Felicia Hemans: Selected Poems, Letters, Reception Materials*, ed. Susan J. Wolfson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. xiii–xxix (p. xiii). The discrepancy is noted by Aaron, *Nineteenth-Century Women’s Writing in*

positions itself against the very English ‘Saxons’ that she venerates wholeheartedly elsewhere. Yet Aaron warns against trying to reconcile such apparently conflicting loyalties in her verse, arguing that ‘it was not an uncommon response to the unification of Britain then in process’.¹²⁹ What William D. Brewer refers to as Hemans’s ‘cosmopolitanism’ is also reflected in her use of Arthur, as although her poetic imagination links Merlin and Uther almost exclusively with Wales in *Welsh Melodies*, in her teenage years she enrolled Arthur in her Anglophonic address to the Peninsular war, *England and Spain* (1808).¹³⁰ Among praise for several of ‘Britannia’s heroes’, including ‘Alfred’, and ‘Wallace’, Hemans positions King Arthur at the font head of English military glories, past and present:¹³¹

From doubtful Arthur, hero of romance,
King of the circled board, the spear, the lance:
To those whose recent trophies grace her shield,
The gallant victors of Vimiera’s field;
Still have her warriors borne th’unfading crown,
And made the BRITISH FLAG the ensign of renown.¹³²

Here, Arthur and his famed ‘trophies’ – the Round Table and Excalibur – seek to affirm Britain’s past ‘renown’ and anticipate the success of present day ‘warriors’ in Spain (who included her brother, George). Hemans may also have intended Arthur’s name to double for that of Arthur Wellesley, the leader of the British Iberian campaign and currently fighting in ‘Vimiera’s field’.¹³³ Stephanie Barczewski sees this kind of patriotic application of the legend as fairly typical of its time, as ‘nineteenth-century authors often used the legend to promote

Wales, pp. 50–58 (pp. 53–54) and Brewer, ‘Felicia Hemans, Byronic cosmopolitanism and the ancient Welsh bards’, pp. 167–81.

¹²⁹ Aaron, *Nineteenth-Century Women’s Writing in Wales*, p. 55.

¹³⁰ Brewer, ‘Felicia Hemans, Byronic cosmopolitanism and the ancient Welsh bards’, p. 167.

¹³¹ Felicia Hemans (as Felicia Browne), *England and Spain; or Valour and Patriotism* (London: J.M. McReedy and Cadell and Davis, 1808), pp. 3, 6, 7 (n. 1.). All further references are to this edition and are given in parentheses throughout the text. Gary Kelly includes extracts from *England and Spain* in *Felicia Hemans: Selected Poems, Prose, and Letters*, ed. Kelly (Ormskirk: Broadview, 2002), pp. 96–105, but the lines referring to Arthur are omitted. No complete modern edition of the poem has yet been produced.

¹³² Browne [Hemans], *England and Spain*, p. 7 (n. 1.).

¹³³ Hemans named her first son Arthur (b. 1812), perhaps in homage to the legendary king or Wellesley. Stephanie Barczewski draws attention to J.H. Merivale’s *Orlando in Roncesvalles* (1814) and Sir Ambrose Hardinge Gifford’s ‘St. Michael’s Mount’ (1814) which both pursue more emphatic links between Wellesley and the past king. See Barczewski, *Myth and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain: The Legends of King Arthur and Robin Hood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 38–39.

imperial endeavour by drawing comparison between the knights of Camelot [...] and the modern “knights of the empire”.¹³⁴ However, what Barczewski posits as Hemans’s straightforward ‘reverence for Arthur’ may be more complex.¹³⁵ The records of Arthur and other British heroes may be preserved ‘in the annals of th’ impartial page’ (p. 6), but Hemans’s annex of ‘doubtful’ to an Arthur fundamentally of ‘romance’ (p. 7), and not history, seems a point of tension within the poem’s drive towards anticipating success in Spain and raising spirits on the home front. Arthur’s ‘doubtful’ status casts a sense of uncertainty over the records of valour contained in ‘page[s]’ that can be read simultaneously as those of medieval ‘annals’, or of Hemans’s own poem. Ultimately, her recourse to Arthur ‘of romance’ draws attention to the poem’s own artifice and status as literature. The sense of uncertainty that radiates outward from ‘doubtful Arthur’ is echoed in the poet’s later apology for her ‘feeble voice’ (p. 10), which altogether creates a sense that the Arthurian past contributes very little towards ensuring victory in the present day.

Yet, the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the security of an eventual victory over the French forces in the following decade seemed to offer a renewed opportunity for Arthurian loyalism, and, in the same year that Hemans’s *Welsh Melodies* was published, the London-based poet Eleanor Anne Porden sought to forge links between Arthur and George IV in her ‘Ode to the King’s Most Excellent Majesty’, a fervent piece of patriotism prefacing her two-volume medieval epic, *Coeur de Lion; or the Third Crusade* (1822). Porden’s poem features a personified female ‘England’ who directs the course of past and future kings:

England now, from fields of strife
 Guards her Sovereign’s sacred life,
 Yet still aloft her star of glory shines;
 For he that late her Trident bore,
 And he to whom thy hand her sword consigns,
 Shall mate with Arthur’s peers and RICHARD’s knights of yore.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Barczewski, *Myth and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, p. 10.

¹³⁵ Barczewski, *Myth and National Identity in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, p. 36.

¹³⁶ Eleanor Anne Porden, ‘Ode to the King’s Most Excellent Majesty’, in *Coeur de Lion; or, The Third Crusade*, 2 vols (London: G. and W.B. Whittaker, 1822), vol. 1, pp. vii–xii, ll. 46–50.

The uneven lines and complex transferences make this a rather stilted piece of praise, but Porden is determined to sketch out a line of royal inheritance that connects Arthur, via Richard I, to Britain's contemporary monarch. Moreover, such a lineage does not remain focussed on the 'sovereign' but extends to the medieval 'peers' and 'knights' who will provide comforting support for George IV's potential heir (a position left worryingly open after the sudden death of Princess Charlotte in 1817). Porden appears to have regarded King Arthur as part of a nationalist, Anglophone register that could assist the poet in the glorification of the Ancient British past and celebrate the achievements of new kings yet to be born. Yet the awkwardness of the phrase 'he to whom thy hand her sword consigns' instils a sense of confusion that distracts from any sense of a logical inheritance or chronological development. The poem's feminised England retains possession of her symbolic 'sword' and 'Trident', leaving Arthur, Richard, and the contemporary George IV to negotiate a rather blurred medieval inheritance on the ground. Women's verse which first appears to celebrate Arthur as England's national hero and a model for contemporary justice and heroism often undercuts its own nationalist project with confusion about inherited Arthurian values, as well as doubts about the suitability of the legend as a model for contemporary kingship.

Despite such difficulties, women writers were occasionally directly encouraged to celebrate Arthur as the quintessential 'English' hero. As part of an 1821 review of Joanna Baillie's *Metrical Tales* in the *Edinburgh Magazine*, an anonymous Scottish reviewer suggested that English woman poets should base their nationalistic verses on a particular 'English' warrior:

We would beseech those ladies besouth the Tweed to content themselves with celebrating King Arthur and all the numerous train of English warriors who well deserve celebration; and we, in return, can assure them, that our Scottish muses will never sing the praises of the first Edward or the eighth Henry. What horrible pleasure

can these fair and ingenious Saxons find in singing the crimes, the perfidity, and cruelty, of their own countrymen [...]?'¹³⁷

The reviewer's instructions are telling not only because they offer rare evidence in support of Arthurian material as a suitable topic for 'ladies' (albeit only 'Saxon' ones), but they also indicate that Arthur may already be well-established in Englishwomen's poetry of the time (the advice to writers is to continue 'celebrating', rather than begin to celebrate). Indeed, in the decades preceding the review, English poets such as Anna Sawyer (fl. 1794–1801) and Mary Russell Mitford (1787–1855) had drawn on archaeological and historical traditions to explore the Arthurian sites of Glastonbury and Silchester, though neither had represented Arthur as strictly 'English' in a straight-forward way.

Like Hemans, Anna Sawyer's knowledge of the Arthurian legend was gathered from a mixture of historical sources and contemporary travel writing. She had read the Tudor historians John Leland and William Camden, and was also familiar with Nennius's *Historia Brittonum* (830), which she combined with her reading of William Warner's account of Glastonbury's legends to produce 'Glastonbury Abbey' (1801).¹³⁸ This locodescriptive poem of 132 lines describes the 'mighty dead of antient days! [sic]' who have come to rest amongst the Glastonbury remains.¹³⁹ The ghostly rostrum includes Arthur, whose grave, as Sawyer knew from reading Camden and Leland, was apparently discovered by Glastonbury monks in 1191:¹⁴⁰

Here sleeps the dust of Arthur, great and good,
ARTHUR, whose sword was drench'd in SAXON blood;
His country, wasted by the northern swarm,
Found a firm bulwark in his single arm. (ll. 69–72)

¹³⁷ [Review], 'Remarks on Miss Baillie's *Metrical Legends*', *Edinburgh Magazine* (Mar 1821), 260–65 (261).

¹³⁸ Richard Warner, *A Walk Through Some of the Western Counties of England* (London: R. Cruttwell, 1800), esp. pp. 23–41.

¹³⁹ Anna Sawyer, 'Glastonbury Abbey. A Poem', in *Poems on Various Subjects* (Birmingham: Printed for the Author, 1801), pp. 21–33 (l. 2). All further references are to this edition of the poem and are subsequently given in parentheses. I am grateful to Michael Franklin for drawing my attention to Sawyer's work.

¹⁴⁰ See Sawyer's notes to 'Glastonbury Abbey', pp. 26, 31. The year that the legendary excavation supposedly took place has been the subject of some debate by scholars, but most recent discussions settle on 1191 (rather than 1190). See James P. Carley, 'Introduction', to *Glastonbury Abbey and the Arthurian Tradition (Arthurian Studies XLV)*, ed. James P. Carley (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001), pp. 1–11 (p. 1, n. 2).

Sawyer's Arthur is not Celtic but neither is he entirely 'English' either, as the reviewer for the *Edinburgh Magazine* would have it; Sawyer does not shy away from naming Arthur's enemies as the 'Saxons' and he rules over an unnamed southern 'country' (the 'northern swarm' that has debilitated the country appears to be a vague reference to the hostility of the Picts).

Sawyer continues to extol the virtues of 'gallant Arthur' (l. 81), 'his knights' (l. 74), and their chivalrous lifestyle in which '[t]hey fought like heroes, and like heroes din'd' (l. 76). She then laments that, unlike the Roman characters of Caesar and Ammon, no 'poets' have sung appropriately of Arthur's demise:

Yet *those* found poets to record their name,
 And on their murders fix the stamp of fame;
 While none were thine, save perishable lays,
 The bards who prais'd thee could not *write* thy praise:
 Thy great achievements [sic], Britain's brightest boast,
 In loose tradition float, or are in fable lost. (ll. 83–88. Emphasis in original.)

The frustrations voiced at the end of this passage, concerning the intangibility of the 'loose' and 'lost' tales of Britain's Arthurian history, mark Sawyer's encounter with Arthur with the same anxieties that characterise Romantic women's Arthurian poetry as a whole. Like many women writing before 1816, it would appear that Sawyer knew nothing of Malory's *Morte Darthur*, otherwise she would not have been able to conclude so vehemently that all British-authored records of his achievements had been lost in 'perishable lays'. Like Hemans's 'doubtful Arthur' in *England and Spain*, the textual ambiguity of the Arthurian legend infiltrates Sawyer's poem. The idea that Arthurian literature 'float[s]' above the female poet – always out of reach – is a fitting image for the often fleeting and frustrated attempts by women writers to grasp hold of an 'English' national tradition that was equally 'lost'.

Other Arthurian poems centring on English locations continue to display similar patterns. Mary Russell Mitford's topographical ode to 'Silchester' (1811) is an emphatic

celebration of the history attached to the eponymous Berkshire parish situated around eight miles from her home at Three Mile Cross near Reading. According to Geoffrey of Monmouth, it was at Silchester that Arthur was crowned king of the Britons,¹⁴¹ and Mitford's poem contains a 'vision' of the king announced in strains reminiscent of Mary Morgan's impassioned verse:

Hail to the Briton Prince! 'Tis he
 Who lives in Merlin's witchery!
 'Tis Arthur, Sun of Chivalry!
 They come, they come, the glorious train!
 The table round is rear'd again!
 And gallant knights, and ladies fair,
 Enchanters, elfin sprites, are there!
 The rich confusion brighter glows,
 And blends and dazzles as it grows,
 Till hoots yon owl from ivied throne;
 The shades dissolve, the vision's gone!¹⁴²

Mitford exclamatory praise is rich in typical romance motifs, which are repeatedly piled on top of one another 'till' the poet reaches her climax: then, immediately, 'the vision's gone'. Like Morgan before her, Mitford descends into 'shades' of unenlightened darkness which contrast against the sunny brightness of the earlier lines. English female poets did celebrate Arthur in the ways that the *Edinburgh Magazine* reviewer describes, but rather than encompassing or promoting an uncomplicated Anglophone nationalism, such poems moreover seem compelled to expose and explore the complexities involved in such a celebration. More often than not, such forays ended in the 'confusion' Mitford's 'Silchester' so vividly conveys.

In direct contrast to the conception of an 'English' Arthur for women writers by the *Edinburgh Magazine*, the actual terrain of women's Arthurian verse in the period was subtly attuned to the legend's strong links to Wales and Brittany – indeed, so much so, that it prevented Arthur from being put to any valuable use as an 'English' national hero. Rather, it

¹⁴¹ Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History*, p. 212.

¹⁴² Mary Russell Mitford, 'Silchester', in *Poems*, 2nd edn (London: F. C. and J. Rivington, 1811), pp. 248–54, ll. 89–99.

was especially during the course of travel tours through Wales that women found a personal connection to Arthurian material that inspired them to pursue their own scholarly investigations and express their relationship to the Arthurian past in poetic form. Women writers exploited the relative fluidity of the travel narrative in order to find an appropriate voice through which to speak of their contemporary dislocation born of always working within male literary models. The strong prevalence of women's Arthurian material in the popular form of the travelogue is further evidence of the barriers separating them from the scholarly medievalism of contemporary male antiquarians. For Romantic women writers, Arthuriana remained intangible and shadowy, though the sheer number of anecdotal references to aspects of the legend among their works suggests that Arthur had a pervasive role to play in the Romantic literary woman's imagination, and indeed, her experience of space and place, nonetheless.

4. Male Scholarship and the Rise of the Female Arthurianist

While Arthurian works produced in the Gothic mode or as part of literary travelogues are sometimes surprisingly scholarly (Anne Bannerman's 'The Prophecy of Merlin' for example, or Elizabeth Spence's informed commentaries in *Summer Excursions*), often an engagement with contemporary scholarship about Arthur is very far from the female writer's primary concern. This chapter focuses on writers who engaged more closely and openly with the numerous editions of Arthurian romances printed in the early decades of the nineteenth century. By the 1830s, women had become active participants in Arthurian scholarship. Determined to make their mark on Arthurian and medieval studies, they began to seek out relevant manuscripts for transcription and translation, and offer original commentaries on Arthurian texts.

Building on the foundations of Warton and Percy's earlier scholarly interest in the medieval romances, a host of romance texts were republished around the turn of the nineteenth century. In 1792, the Scottish scholar John Pinkerton edited *Gologras and Gawain* and *The Antwyr's off Arthure*, and a decade later, Joseph Ritson's *Ancient English Metrical Romanceës* (1802) brought another twelve romances into print, three of which were Arthurian.¹ Within another two years, Sir Walter Scott produced *Sir Tristrem* (1804), a work that David Matthews, Alan Lupack, and Arthur Johnston all agree 'set the model for

¹ John Pinkerton, ed., *Scotish Poems, Reprinted from Scarce Editions*, 3 vols (London, John Nichols, 1792). These two late medieval romances appear in the second of Pinkerton's three volumes, under the titles *Gawan and Gologras* and *Sir Gawan and Sir Galaron of Galloway* respectively. The Arthurian romances printed by Ritson were *Ywain and Gawain*, *Launfal*, and *Libeaus Desconus*; although, as Beverly Taylor and Elisabeth Brewer note, some Arthurian passages also appear in his edition of the *Chronicle of England* (see Ritson, ed., *Ancient English Metrical Romanceës* (London: W. Bulmer and Company, 1802); also Taylor and Brewer, 'Appendix 1: Arthurian Editions published between 1800 and 1850', in *The Return of King Arthur: British and American Arthurian Literature since 1800* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1983), pp. 322–23 (p. 322).

scholarly editions of medieval works'.² In 1805, George Ellis published *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances*, which included no less than twenty romances, including the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur*.³ In 1810, Henry Weber also added another ten medieval romances to the growing number available in print in his three-volume collection, *Metrical Romances*.⁴ For Stuart Curran, 'these eight years [1802–1810] [...] are without peer in the history of the British literary scholarship; medieval romances may now figure in a relatively minor role, but [...] their initial publication wholly altered the conception of British literature'.⁵ The following decade saw the arrival of three editions of Malory, and new editions of Scott's *Sir Tristrem* (1811, 1819) and Ellis's *Specimens* (1811). William Gunn's translation of Nennius's *Historia Brittonum* and Thomas Ponton's edition of the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur* for the Roxburghe Club both appeared in 1819.⁶ Like Curran, David Matthews emphasises that 'the appearance of such works constituted a scholarly phenomenon'.⁷

Women writers did not respond immediately to the new availability of these texts. Indeed, for women readers the immediacy of this publishing 'phenomenon' was somewhat tempered by the simultaneous secretion of other printed medieval romances – namely Malory's *Morte Darthur* – from 'the fair sex' up to 1816.⁸ Furthermore, women's exclusion

² Alan Lupack, 'The Arthurian Legend in the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries', in *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, ed. Helen Fulton (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), pp. 340–54 (p. 352). Similar sentiments are expressed by David Matthews, 'Scholarship and Popular Culture in the Nineteenth Century', in *A Companion to Arthurian Literature*, ed. Fulton, pp. 355–67 (p. 357), and Arthur Johnston, *Enchanted Ground: The Study of Medieval Romance in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Athlone, 1964), p. 187.

³ The Arthurian content included in Ellis's *Specimens of Early English Romances* is considered in detail below.

⁴ Weber's anthology did not include any Arthurian examples, but he drew on Ellis, Ritson, and Scott's recent editions of Arthurian texts in several of his notes to the volume. See Henry Weber, ed., *Metrical Romances of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries, published from Ancient Manuscripts. With an Introduction, Notes and a Glossary*, 3 vols (Edinburgh: George Ramsay and Company, 1810), vol. 3, pp. 354–56, 359–60, 364.

⁵ Stuart Curran, *Poetic Form and British Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 130.

⁶ *The "Historia Brittonum", commonly ascribed to Nennius; from a Manuscript Lately discovered in the Library of the Vatican Palace at Rome; edited in the tenth century, by Mark the Hermit*, ed. Rev. W. Gunn (London: John and Arthur Arch, 1819). Thomas Ponton, ed., *Le Morte Arthur, The Adventures of Sir Launcelot du Lake* (London: William Bulmer and Company, 1819).

⁷ Matthews, 'Scholarship and Popular Culture in the Nineteenth Century', p. 354.

⁸ [Joseph Haslewood], 'Advertisement', to [Sir Thomas Malory], *La Mort d'Arthur: The Most Ancient History of the Renowned Prince Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table* [ed. Joseph Haslewood], 3 vols (London: R. Wilks, 1816), vol. 1, pp. iv–v. (See Chapter 1, 1.5.)

from antiquarian clubs, such as the Roxburghe (founded 1812) and Bannatyne (founded 1823), meant that they were unlikely to gain access to editions like Ponton's which were generally circulated privately among members.⁹ Continuing limitations surrounding women's access to romances during this period of unprecedented editorial activity created a time lag of approximately a decade between the appearance of Ritson, Scott, and Ellis's editions of romances and women's first published engagements with their scholarship.

In particular, the research of George Ellis (1753–1815) emerges as the strongest and most recurrent influence on the rise of the female Arthurianist. After pursuing various careers as a poet, satirist, and diplomat, Ellis turned to antiquarianism in his forties, and his popularity among women writers and readers was partly self-cultivated. In his preface to *Specimens of the Early English Poets* (1790, 1801), he listed among his predecessors the work of Elizabeth Cooper, the compiler of *The Muses Library* (1787), an anthology of poetry from the eleventh to the sixteenth century, while also delivering the more customary nods to Warton, Percy, Pinkerton, and Ritson.¹⁰ One of Ellis's earliest contributions to Arthurian scholarship took the form of notes and appendices he produced for *Fabliaux or Tales, Abridged from French Manuscripts of the XIIth and XIIIth Centuries* (1796, 1800, 1815).

Based on romances collected by the French medievalist Pierre Jean-Baptiste Le Grand

⁹ The first female member of the Roxburghe Club was elected in 1985 (Mary Crapo, Viscountess Eccles). A full list of members from 1812–present is available through the club's current website ('Members since 1812', *The Roxburghe Club* <<http://www.roxburghclub.org.uk/membership/>> [accessed 19 June 2012]. Early membership records for the Bannatyne Club also confirm that its members were all male. See [Anon.], *The Bannatyne Club: Lists of Members and the Rules, with a Catalogue of the Books* (Edinburgh: T. Constable, 1867), pp. 3–28. However, though the clubs were heavily elitist, when a Roxburghe edition was produced, each member received two copies, 'the spare copy to be presented by him to a friend or to a public institution' (David Matthews, *The Making of Middle English, 1765–1910* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), p. 87). Therefore, by 1835 Louisa Stuart Costello was aware that 'the poems of the Duke of Orleans were printed in quarto by Mr. Watson Taylor, for the Roxburgh [sic] Club, [and] a copy is in the Brit[ish] Mus[eum]' (Louisa Stuart Costello, *Specimens of the Early Poetry of France* (London: W. Pickering, 1835), p. 139). Nevertheless, as Costello did not become a frequent visitor of manuscript libraries until the late 1820s, it is unlikely that women writers would have known much of the club's earlier outputs (Watson Taylor was a Roxburghe member between 1822–1841; his *Poems written in English, by Charles, Duke of Orleans, during his Captivity in England after the Battle of Agincourt. Printed from Harleian MS. No. 682, British Museum; with an Introduction by Mr. Taylor*, appeared in 1827.)

¹⁰ George Ellis, 'Preface', to *Specimens of the Early English Poets, to which is prefixed an Historical Sketch of the Rise and Progress of the English Poetry and Language*, 3 vols (London: W. Bulmer, 1801), pp. v–ix (pp. viii–ix).

D'Aussy, the translations themselves were the work of another antiquary, G.L. Way. The collection includes five Arthurian pieces,¹¹ and Ellis's annotations to each tale offered detailed information about the most prominent Arthurian characters gathered from a wide variety of sources, including Geoffrey of Monmouth, Drayton, Lydgate, Spenser, Percy, Malory, and the Welsh *Triads*.¹² For Roger Simpson, the *Fabliaux* were 'a significant event in the Arthurian revival'.¹³ Ellis was also responsible for writing the preface to the volumes, which he brought to a conclusion by offering the contents as 'the first rude essays in a species of composition [...] in which female writers of the present day have successfully blended the allurements of fiction with much useful instruction and pure morality'.¹⁴ Drawing on the familiar association between women readers and romance, Ellis cannily alters the convention to favour women writers. To borrow Elaine Showalter's polemical phrase, Ellis thus effectively provides women writers with a medieval 'literature of their own'.¹⁵ Whether this was a piece of savvy marketing or a heartfelt belief on Ellis's part, his comments nevertheless firmly situate women writers as the inheritors of a medieval tradition.

This nod to a female literary tradition, combined with the pretty vignettes adorning the tales, helped the *Fabliaux* to achieve a considerable popularity with women readers. Sir Walter Scott's wife, Charlotte Carpenter (1770–1826), thought the volumes 'the most elegant & amusing present she ever received', and their overall 'elegance' was also noted by reviewers.¹⁶ Yet the *Fabliaux* also had a more practical purpose for women writers looking to

¹¹ These were 'The Mantle Made Amiss', 'The Mule Without a Bridle', 'The Knight and the Sword' (all in vol. 1), 'The Vale of False Lovers', and 'The Lay of Sir Lanval' (vol. 2).

¹² See *Fabliaux or Tales; Abridged from French Manuscripts of the XIIth and XIIIth centuries by M. Le Grand*, ed. George Ellis and trans. G.L. Way, 3 vols (1796–1815; London: J. Rodwell, 1815), vol. 1, pp. 191–223.

¹³ Roger Simpson, "'Revisiting Cramalot': An Arthurian Theme in the Correspondence of William Taylor and Robert Southey", in *Studies in Medievalism*, 4 (1992), 143–60 (p. 145).

¹⁴ Ellis, 'Preface', to *Fabliaux*, pp. i–xli (p. xli).

¹⁵ Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Writers from Charlotte Brontë to Doris Lessing*, revised edn (London: Virago, 2009).

¹⁶ Scott to Richard Heber, 28 July 1800, in *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. Sir Herbert Grierson and others, 13 vols (London: Constable, 1932–79), vol. 12, pp. 165–66 (p. 166). Also cited in Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, p. 153. Geoffrey Wilson notes that Scott owned Le Grand's *Fabliaux ou Contes* in 'two separate editions', and assumes that Scott was also the owner of Way's 'English translations', whereas the letter to Heber suggests that

access medieval texts. Following the advice of Robert Southey, Matilda Betham appended Way's translations of Marie de France's 'Lanval' and 'Guigemar' to her loose portrayal of Marie de France in verse, *The Lay of Marie* (1816).¹⁷ Anna Letitia Barbauld also made passing reference to the '*Contes et Fabliaux*' in her 'Essay on the Origin and Progress of Novel-Writing' (1810),¹⁸ and Anne Bannerman referenced Ellis's notes in *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry*.¹⁹

However, it is Ellis's final publication that forms his 'major contribution to Romance scholarship'.²⁰ Much more than the *Fabliaux*, Ellis' *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances* (1805) revolutionised women's access to Arthurian material. Propelled by a firm desire to render medieval texts 'accessible to common readers', Ellis gave summaries of over twenty romances, thereby transforming challenging Middle English into thoroughly modern prose.²¹ Under the category of 'Romances relating to Arthur', he included synopses of the Middle English Stanzaic *Morte Arthur*, *Arthour and Merlin* (from the Auchinleck and Lincoln's Inn manuscripts), and Chrétien de Troyes's 'The Knight and the Cart'. Further summaries of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History* and *Vita Merlini* were included in Ellis's 'Historical Introduction' to the work. The *Lady's Monthly Museum* demonstrated their

the *Fabliaux* were the property of Mrs. Scott. See Wilson, *A Medievalist in the Eighteenth Century: Le Grand D'Aussy and the Fabliaux ou Contes* (The Hague: Martin Nijhoff, 1975), p. xiv. On the 'elegance' of the first volume, see 'Fabliaux or Tales', *Critical Review*, 19 (Apr 1797), 386–90 (p. 386).

¹⁷ Robert Southey to Matilda Betham, 30 May 1814, in *A House of Letters*, ed. Ernest Betham (London: Jarrold and Sons, 1905), pp. 147–48 (p. 147).

¹⁸ Anna Letitia Barbauld, 'On the Origin and Progress of Novel-Writing', in *Anna Letitia Barbauld: Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft (Ormskirk: Broadview Press, 2002), pp. 377–432 (p. 388). McCarthy and Kraft 'believe that Barbauld refers to no specific work here, just stories and fables in general', though they suggest La Fontain's *Contes et Nouvelles* (1664–74) as an alternative possibility (p. 388, n. 1). The title Barbauld mentions is much closer, however, to Le Grand's *Fabliaux ou contes*, and her description of the tales as 'of a lighter texture: they abound with adventure, generally of the humorous, often licentious kind' is an apt description of his anthology (p. 388).

¹⁹ [Anne Bannerman], *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* (London: Vernor and Hood, 1802), p. 142.

²⁰ Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, p. 156.

²¹ George Ellis, 'Advertisement', to *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances, Chiefly Written During the Early Part of the Fourteenth Century; To which is prefixed an historical introduction, intended to illustrate the rise and progress of romantic composition in France and England*, 3 vols (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1805), vol. 1, pp. iii–iv (p. iv).

admiration for *Specimens* by reprinting a favourable review of the volumes by the *British Critic*, full of praise for Ellis's light and enjoyable summaries of otherwise difficult texts:

We are led, through difficult ways indeed, but by a hand which scatters flowers even in the roughest parts of the track. We have here no asperities of controversy, no harsh reflections on preceding writers; none in short of those ornaments which the Furies so liberally bestowed upon the style of their favourite Ritson: but every part is marked by the sagacity of genius, and the suavity of polished education.²²

What both the *British Critic* and the *Lady's Monthly Museum* admired was the way in which Ellis had 'polished' and decorated (with metaphorical 'flowers' and 'ornaments') materials that previously had appeared too 'harsh' for female study. Perhaps influenced by his wife's recent enjoyment of Ellis's 'lively & delightful tales', Scott gave a similar assessment of *Specimens* in the *Edinburgh Review*:²³

Socrates is said to have bought philosophy from heaven to reside among men; and Addison claimed the merit of introducing her to the tea-tables of the ladies. Mr. Ellis, in his turn, has bought the minstrels of old into the boudoirs and drawing rooms which have replaced the sounding halls and tapestried bowers in which they were once familiar; so that the age of chivalry instead of being an at end for ever, may perhaps be on the point of revival.²⁴

In offering a vision of *Specimens* adorning 'tea-tables' in ladies' 'boudoirs and drawing rooms' across the country, Scott seems to have been articulating a genuine, if romanticised reflection of the impact of Ellis's volumes. All the women writers examined in this chapter make extensive and often incredibly detailed use of *Specimens* as a source of Arthurian information.

As Matthews astutely remarks, nineteenth-century 'scholarly and popular Arthurianism are not so easy to disentangle', and it is by examining a popular application of one of the Arthurian texts which Ellis made available in *Specimens* that we begin this chapter.

A poem on the subject of the Maid of Astolat by an anonymous poet, long forgotten by

²² [Review], 'Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances', *Lady's Monthly Museum*, 16 (Jun 1806), 415–16 (p. 416).

²³ Scott to Ellis, 20 July 1805, in *Letters*, ed. Grierson, vol. 12, pp. 274–77 (p. 275). Also cited in Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, p. 172.

²⁴ [Review], 'Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances [and] Ancient English Metrical Romanceës', *Edinburgh Review* 7:14 (Jan 1806), 387–413 (p. 396).

critics, demonstrates the importance of Ellis's *Specimens* in first introducing women to themes which would come to dominate women's writing in the rest of the century.²⁵ Only from 1821 onwards do women writers begin to attempt their own editions of Arthurian texts, sometimes using Ellis's methods as models in ways that were not always fully acknowledged. Anna Jane Vardill's redaction of the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur* purports to be collected directly 'from an MS.', but as I aim to show, this was a well-concealed deception that veiled her heavy plagiarism of content from Ellis's *Specimens*.²⁶ A series of antiquarian satires by Vardill targeting male Arthurianists owe a similarly large debt to Ellis and provide further evidence of her keen absorption, but also frustrations with Ellis's work, and more widely, with antiquarianism's highly gendered exclusivity. However, small successes in women's Arthurian scholarship were already on the horizon. By the end of the 1830s, Louisa Stuart Costello had produced an anthology of translations of French poetry that engaged confidently with recent scholarship surrounding the Tristan legend, and Lady Charlotte Guest was working assuredly on an antiquarian project that had long interested Ellis himself: the compilation of the first edition and translation of the *Mabinogion* (1838–49).²⁷

What had changed by the 1830s to allow Costello and Guest to participate fully in the Arthurian romance revival? As well as mapping how women writers first made the transition from popular to scholarly Arthurianism, this chapter also seeks to define the developments in scholarly activities for women writers with an interest in Arthurian material. As Ruth Hoberman points out, since its creation in 1759, 'women had never been barred from any of the [...] British Museum reading rooms, [but] they had rarely patronised them'.²⁸ Earlier writers who wished to undertake research on medieval topics, including Matilda Betham and

²⁵ Matthews, 'Scholarship and Popular Culture in the Nineteenth Century', p. 356.

²⁶ 'V.', [Anna Jane Vardill], 'La Morte D'arthur; or, the Legend of Sir Launcelot. Collected from the MS. in the Harleian Library', *EM*, 79 (Jun 1821), 553–55 (553).

²⁷ For Ellis's interest in *The Mabinogion*, see Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, pp. 156–59.

²⁸ Ruth Hoberman, 'Women in the British Museum Reading Room in the Late-Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth Centuries: From Quasi- to Counterpublic', *Feminist Studies*, 28:3 (2002), 489–512 (494).

Eleanor Anne Porden, had tended to rely chiefly on their male antiquarian friends for ‘the loan of valuable books’,²⁹ but by the 1830s, Costello and Guest were combining regular epistolary correspondence with leading male Arthurianists with personal visits to manuscript libraries to establish a wider platform for their Arthurian research. It is only in the 1830s that women writers with an interest in the Middle Ages begin to perform the kinds of manuscript studies that Percy, Scott, Ellis, Ritson, and John Leyden had been practising from a much earlier date. This new, closer contact with the primary sources of the legend had its own effect on the rhetoric of women’s literary productions, for the works produced by both Costello and Guest lack many of the anxieties seen across earlier Arthurian works by women writers. By the mid-nineteenth century, the female Arthurianist was born.

4.1 A Lost Lady of Shalott: ‘T.B.G.’s ‘The Maid of Ascolot’ (1821)

As I intimated in Chapter One, a female focalisation in women’s responses to the Arthurian story does not fully emerge until the 1820s, when the scholarship of Ellis and Scott bought women greater access to the plots of Arthurian romances than ever before. In March 1821, the poetry column of the popular women’s periodical, the *Lady’s Monthly Museum or Polite Repository of Amusement and Instruction* (1798–1832), was headed by a short narrative poem entitled ‘The Maid of Ascolot. A Romantic Fragment’.³⁰ Like the majority of contributions to the magazine, the poem appeared anonymously, signed only by the initials ‘T.B.G.’. In 1990, Roger Simpson uncovered what he thought was ‘the first nineteenth-century version of the Elaine legend’ in Louisa Stuart Costello’s ‘The Funeral Boat’ (1829),

²⁹ Eleanor Anne Porden, ‘Preface’, to *Coeur de Lion; or, The Third Crusade*, 2 vols (London: G. and W.B. Whittaker, 1822), vol. 1, p. xxviii.

³⁰ In 1832, the *Lady’s Monthly Museum* merged with the *Lady’s Magazine* and *La Belle Assemblée* to form the *Lady’s Magazine and Museum of Belles Lettres*. See Alison Adburgham, *Women in Print: Writing Women and Women’s Magazines from the Restoration to the Accession of Victoria* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1972), p. 210.

but the presence of ‘T.B.G.’s treatment of the subject eight years earlier demonstrates that it was already a point of interest well before then.³¹ A short note attached to the poem indicates that ‘Ellis’s Specimens’ was ‘T.B.G.’s main source.³²

It seems likely, though not certain, that ‘T.B.G.’ was a female poet. Contributions by both male and female poets were received by the *Lady’s Monthly Museum*, but the majority of its poetical pieces appeared signed by female pseudonyms. Whether these can be relied upon as indicative of an author’s gender, however, is harder to judge. As Edward W.R. Pitcher has documented, despite advertising itself as edited by a ‘Society of Ladies’, in reality, the magazine was tightly controlled by a group of men.³³ One cannot therefore be certain that ‘T.B.G.’ was female, but the regular appearance of contributions under their initials concentrating on aspects of female experience would certainly have encouraged such an assumption among the readers (see, for example, ‘The Deserted Mother’ (1821), or ‘The Lady’s Choice; or, the Female Castle-Builder’ (1821)).³⁴ ‘T.B.G.’ also specialised in sentimental verse translations from languages as diverse as French, Persian, Italian, and Greek.³⁵ Another short poem, ‘Imitation of T.M.’, offers a playful pastiche of Thomas Moore’s light verse.³⁶ As Margaret Beetham points out, like most popular periodicals, the *Lady’s Monthly Museum* published works by well known writers but also ‘relied heavily on readers to provide copy’.³⁷ Thus, throughout 1821–22, ‘T.B.G.’ often shares top billing in the magazine’s poetry column with Anna Maria Porter. Porter was well known by the 1820s as

³¹ Roger Simpson, ‘Costello’s “The Funeral Boat”: An Analogue to Tennyson’s “The Lady of Shalott”’, *Tennyson Research Bulletin*, 4:3 (1984), 129–31 (131). ‘T.B.G.’s ‘The Maid of Ascolot’ has not been listed previously in any Arthurian bibliographies.

³² ‘T.B.G.’, ‘The Maid of Ascolot. A Romantic Fragment’, *LMM*, 13 (Mar 1821), 173–74 (p. 173). All further references are to this edition and are subsequently given in parentheses throughout the text.

³³ Title page to *The Lady’s Monthly Museum*, 1 (1798). See Edward W. R. Pitcher, ‘Introduction’, to *The Lady’s Monthly Museum: 1798–1806, An Annotated Index* (Bern: Edwin Mellon Press, 2000), pp. 1–21 (p. 1).

³⁴ ‘T.B.G.’, ‘The Lady’s Choice; or, the Female Castle Builder’, *LMM*, 13 (Jan 1821), 56–58; ‘The Deserted Mother’, *LMM*, 16 (Sept 1822), 177–78.

³⁵ See, for example, ‘Comfort – from the Greek’, *LMM*, 14 (Oct 1821), 235; ‘Sonnet – from the Italian’, *LMM*, 13 (May 1821), 297; ‘Ode – from the Persian’, *LMM*, 13 (Apr 1821), 235–36; ‘Sonnet – from the Italian’, *LMM*, 13 (Jun 1821), 348, and ‘To a Lady – from the French’, *LMM*, 14 (Nov 1821), 300.

³⁶ ‘T.B.G.’, ‘Imitation of T.M.’, *LMM*, 15 (Jun 1822), 351.

³⁷ Margaret Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Women’s Magazine, 1800–1914* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 17.

the author of several successful historical novels and a volume of poetry, and her items in the *Lady's Monthly Museum* always appear accompanied by her full name. In contrast, 'T.B.G.'s anonymity suggests that she was a reader-contributor whose full name offered the magazine little in the way of celebrity draw.³⁸

Unlike later treatments of the same motif by Alfred Lord Tennyson, Louisa Stuart Costello, and Letitia Elizabeth Landon, 'T.B.G.'s Astolat poem is not based on the Italian analogue of the story included in the thirteenth-century *Cento Novelle Antiche*. Thomas Roscoe's translation of the text in *The Italian Novelists* (1825), which did much to popularise the Italian version of the tale, would not appear for another four years. Rather, 'T.B.G.'s earlier poem is rooted firmly in a Middle English version of the story. Ellis's sixty-one page synopsis of the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur* (c. 1400) concludes the first volume of *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances* (vol. 1, pp. 328–87), and contains an accessible rendition of the Astolat episode which 'T.B.G.' took as the inspiration for her poem. 'The Maid of Ascolot' is effectively based on lines 956–1013 of the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur* (pages 342–43 in Ellis's version); however, it is important to emphasise that she had no access to these particular lines.³⁹ As Matthews points out, Ellis's summaries are 'laced with original quotations, modernized, and with obsolete words glossed', but none of the stanzas from the parts of the poem dealing with the inset Astolat narrative were reproduced in this manner.⁴⁰ Thus, 'T.B.G.'s poem is based solely on the tale as she encountered it in Ellis's modern prose. Indeed, so closely does 'T.B.G.' follow Ellis's paraphrase that her poem strongly inherits aspects of his style, and, particularly, his lacunae.

³⁸ Though I recognise that the gender of T.B.G. is not fully determined, I will henceforth use a female pronoun to discuss the authorship of the poem. The *LMM* deliberately cultivated the impression that the majority of their content was female-authored, and thus it seems likely that contemporary readers would have assumed that T.B.G. was a woman poet.

³⁹ For the original text, see P.F. Hissiger, ed., *Le Morte Arthur [Stanzaic Morte Arthur]: A Critical Edition* (Paris: Mouton, 1975), ll. 960–62.

⁴⁰ Matthews, *The Making of Middle English*, p. 73.

Primitive in style, 'The Maid of Ascolot' provides a sparse, Gothic rendering of the spectacular death of the young maid. The poem opens with Arthur and Gawain in a riverside 'western tower' from where they spy the arrival of a canopied 'gallant bark' (l. 6). The narrative then pauses briefly to emphasise the supernatural progress of the boat through the turbulent waters:

No swelling sail, no moving oar,
 Impells [sic] it through the waves so wan,
 It glides amidst the dashing spray,
 No human arm directs the way. (ll. 9–12)

Once the 'bark is stopped', Gawain is first to discover the corpse of the anonymous maid lying under the boat's golden awning (ll. 19, 23–24). Visibly saddened by 'this sight of woe' (l. 22), Gawain identifies the body as belonging to 'the maid of Ascalot' (l. 24) and recalls the first time he saw her singing '[s]o blithely in her father's bower' (l. 26). Noting that the maid died of 'unrequited love' (l. 30), the poem's final stanza centres unflinchingly on the dead body of the woman:

Now stiff is every beauteous limb,
 Her eyes unclos'd are glaz'd and cold,
 And yet they seem to look on him –
 On him her friend, her Gawain bold;
 And bending stands the silent knight,
 Beside that fair and dreadful sight! (ll. 31–36)

While the earlier fourth stanza concentrates on Gawain's 'view' of the maid, in this final sixth stanza, the relationship is reversed: now it is the maid who 'seem[s] to look' at Gawain from the grave. Unapologetically recording the 'stiff' and 'cold' nature of the maid's material corpse, the poem quickly rejects its own earlier romantic construction of a 'beauteous maid' (l. 13) in preference for a more Gothic body, which, as the poet herself puts it, 'shews the seal of death' in all its macabre manifestations (l. 18).

Moreover, what is immediately striking about 'T.B.G.'s rendering of the tale is that it focuses on the relationship between the maid and Gawain, rather than the maid and Lancelot.

Unable to return the maid's love due to his devotion to Guinevere, Lancelot's position is central to the tragedy of the Astolat tale as it is established in its very first rendering in the Vulgate *La Mort du Roi Artu* (1230).⁴¹ Rather than merely replacing Lancelot with Gawain as the subject of the maid's affections, 'T.B.G.'s poem offers a more ambiguous relationship between the maid and Arthur's nephew: Gawain is her (apparently platonic) 'friend' (l. 34), but also her champion, 'her Gawain bold' (l. 34). The maid's death from 'unrequited love' may or may not be linked to the behaviour of the knight who stands beside her corpse.

Alan Lupack and Barbara Tapa Lupack have argued that women's Arthurian literature is characterised by these kind of revisions, whereby the female writer displays:

a willingness to depart from the familiar stories and the expected interpretations of the characters – a willingness, even a desire, to turn aside from the usual manner of telling and the conventional concerns of the Arthurian world.⁴²

By focusing on the maid's ambiguous relationship with Gawain rather than her submissive position as a lover to Lancelot, 'T.B.G.' demonstrates a willingness to 'turn aside' from the traditional narrative that focuses on the maid's isolated position as a love object. It is important to add, however, that it is 'T.B.G.'s reliance on Ellis's prose summary of the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur* (a reliance exacerbated by women's lack of access to the original romance texts in libraries and museums) that triggers the kind of 'departure' that Lupack and Tapa Lupack describe. Without access to the 'usual manner of telling' (in this case, the Stanzaic poem), the lacunae in Ellis's summary actively encourage the female poet to fill in the gaps and thereby provide an alternative story.

In his 'Advertisement' to the text, Ellis assured readers that he had 'faithfully given, in plain prose, not only the general outline, but even the smallest incidents of each story' (vol. 1, pp. iii–iv). All three authors (the Stanzaic poet, Ellis, and 'T.B.G.') identify the damsel

⁴¹ See *The Death of King Arthur [La Mort le Roi Artu]*, ed. and trans. James Cable (London: Penguin, 1971), pp. 92–94.

⁴² Alan Lupack and Barbara Tapa Lupack, 'Arthurian Literature by Women: The Forgotten Tradition', in *Arthurian Literature by Women*, ed. Lupack and Tapa Lupack (New York and London: Garland, 1999), pp. 3–30 (p. 4).

only as the ‘maid of Ascalot’ (l. 24) (Malory is the first to name her ‘Elaine’). In the Middle English poem, Arthur and Gawain are ‘talkynge’ in a ‘toure’ beside a ‘feyre ryver’.⁴³ These details are retained in Ellis’s description and subsequently find their way into ‘T.B.G.’’s poem (ll. 3–4). The cloth covering the boat which ‘[a]lle shynand as gold as yt ganne sayle’ (Stanzaic, l. 973), becomes in Ellis, simply ‘an awning of a cloth of gold’ (*Specimens*, vol. 1, p. 342). The same canopy subsequently reappears in ‘T.B.G.’’s poem as ‘an awning bright with gold’ (l. 14). Occasionally, Ellis’s language is repeated almost verbatim by ‘T.B.G.’. His observation that the funeral barge travels ‘without any human guidance’ (*Specimens*, vol. 1, p. 342) – a phrase without an equivalent in the Middle English poem – is a clear influence on ‘T.B.G.’’s almost identical line that states that ‘no human arm directs the way’ of the boat (l. 12).

Yet, as with any text offering a summary (or, in Ellis’s words, a ‘general outline’), the level of detail is always compromised to some extent. As Matthews points out, ‘Ellis never promised completeness of coverage, and he presents only what he thinks the indolent reader needs to know’.⁴⁴ Ellis’s description of the encounter between Gawain and the maid leading up to her death provides a good illustration of his unique style of synopsis, including what Matthews shrewdly terms his ‘ironical rhetorical mode’:⁴⁵

Gawain [...] was distinctly informed by the earl’s daughter [the maid of Astolat], that she had bestowed her heart upon his friend, and that she had good reason to flatter herself with being the lady of his affections; as a pledge of which, he had left with her his well known suit of armour. Gawain, though at first incredulous, could not resist this apparently decisive testimony; and after requesting the maiden that he also might, for Lancelot’s sake, have the honour of being admitted amongst her knights, took his leave, and returned home. (*Specimens*, vol. 1, pp. 335–36)

Ellis’s subtle ironies gently encourage the nineteenth-century reader to see the maid as naive and fanciful for ‘flattering’ herself with the belief that Lancelot may love her, while also

⁴³ Hissiger, ed., *Le Morte Arthur [Stanzaic Morte Arthur]*, ll. 960–62. All further references are to this edition and are subsequently given in parentheses throughout the text.

⁴⁴ Matthews, *The Making of Middle English*, p. 73.

⁴⁵ Matthews, *The Making of Middle English*, p. 74.

undermining (by the insertion of a cynical ‘apparently’) the text’s chivalric ideology which equates the possession of a knight’s armour with a reliable pledge of love. As Matthews points out, as irony relies on a distance, or knowingness between the object and the audience or reader, Ellis’s already ‘decontextualised and dehistoricised’ texts simultaneously remind the reader of their own modernity.⁴⁶ Ellis’s versions of medieval texts are thus ‘doubly distanced’ from their originals.⁴⁷

The paragraph of Ellis’s summary cited above at times remains very close to the language of the Middle English poem; however, it does not retain all of the details fundamental to the Astolat plot. In the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur*, Gawain offers his own services to the maid in a manner much in keeping with Ellis’s description: ‘I with alle my myght and mayne’, says Gawain, ‘Wille be thy knight for his [Lancelot’s] sake’ (Stanzaic, ll. 605–06). Yet when the maid’s boat arrives at court 400 lines later and Gawain identifies the body inside, he recalls how he desired her for ‘[h]is owne leman’, but ‘she aunsweryd hym ay in haste, / To none bot Launcelot wold she te’ (Stanzaic, ll. 1013–15). This addendum provides important clarification for Gawain and the maid’s earlier exchange but is conspicuously absent from Ellis’s summary. Instead, when Gawain leaves the maid of Astolat and returns to court in *Specimens*, he does so without receiving a similar refusal. This gap or lacuna in Ellis’s reconstruction of the medieval poem is reinterpreted by ‘T.B.G.’ as Gawain’s acceptance, rather than his rejection by the maid, and produces a poem in which Arthur’s nephew appears unproblematically as the Maid of Ascolot’s ‘Gawain bold’ (l. 34).

‘The Maid of Ascolot’ is curiously emblematic of the Romantic female-authored Arthurian poem in several ways. Like many Arthurian poems by women writers, it was published anonymously, and it articulates some (limited) connections to contemporary male scholarship. It also combines aspects of the Gothic register with an emphasis on the pictorial

⁴⁶ Matthews, *The Making of Middle English*, pp. 75, 77.

⁴⁷ Matthews, *The Making of Middle English*, p. 75.

qualities of the myth that later come to dominate Arthurian poems produced for the literary annuals. Its sestet stanza and rhyme scheme also prove the form of choice for later poems on the same theme (Louisa Stuart Costello's 'The Funeral Boat', for example, incorporates some similar *ababcc* stanzas).⁴⁸ Yet perhaps most of all, the poem's subtitle, 'A Romantic Fragment', neatly encapsulates the incompleteness of the woman writer's perspective on the newly recovered Arthurian romances. 'Romantic', in the sense that it is based upon a romance text, as a 'fragment', 'T.B.G.'s poem responds to what Anne Janowitz describes as a poetical 'fashion for fragments' that had been gathering pace since the publication of Percy's *Reliques*.⁴⁹ The self-advertised fragmentary nature of 'The Maid of Ascolot' fashions the poem as a distressed yet material textual remnant from the past; but, crucially, any such claim to fragmentation must always involve a compromise. As Janowitz suggests:

Unmoored from an antiquarian grounding, the fragment opens itself up to a new poetic matter: the relation between its own incompleteness and the greater whole to which it alludes, and which it both aspires to and struggles against. In this de-historicizing and aestheticizing process, the fragment form becomes the place where the theme of incompleteness is enacted.⁵⁰

In the case of 'The Maid of Ascolot', the poem's status as incomplete fragment – part of a greater 'whole' – is not so much an aesthetic choice but an unavoidable outcome, as the text is founded on Ellis's selective 'specimens' which are themselves already fragments, and similarly incomplete. The poem's complex handling of Gawain's involvement in the maid's death shows 'T.B.G.' both aspiring to Ellis's *Specimens* (by maintaining a certain fidelity to her source) as well as struggling against it (by reinterpreting his summary's lacunae).

Theorized in the way that Janowitz suggests, fragmentation becomes a recurrent theme in women's early Arthurian writing. Like the poetical fragment, women were

⁴⁸ See Chapter 5, 5.1.

⁴⁹ Anne Janowitz, 'The Romantic Fragment', in *A Companion to Romanticism*, ed. Duncan Wu (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp. 442–51 (p. 444). Compare, for example, the titles of Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan, or the Vision of a Dream. A Fragment' (1816), Keats's *Hyperion. A Fragment* (1820), and Byron's *The Giaour, A Fragment of a Turkish Tale* (1813).

⁵⁰ Janowitz, 'The Romantic Fragment', p. 444.

themselves '[u]nmoored from an antiquarian grounding' by their inability to participate freely in manuscript research and antiquarian societies. The mysterious 'T.B.G.' appears only as a fragment presented by initials, themselves tantalizing 'specimens' of the author's full name which, like the maid of Ascolot/Astolat's, remains unknown. Thus it may seem entirely fitting that the first female figure to be extracted from the legend as a character of particular interest to women readers and writers is one who represents, in the words of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, '[a] *momento mori* of female helplessness, aesthetic isolation, and virginal vulnerability carried to deadly extremes'.⁵¹ Textually isolated from the manuscript materials of the legend she longs to (re)write, the female writer turns to (re)writing the maid's material female body, replacing a textual lack with a lack of a different kind: a suicidal death. In her analysis of Tennyson's 'Lancelot and Elaine', Elisabeth Bronfen assigns a Lacanian fluctuation between absence and presence to the maid's suicidal drive:

Like that of the fetish, the rhetoric of suicide is an ambivalent simultaneity of acknowledgement and denial of lack, a corrective remaking of the self, a narcissistically informed design of self-construction, which gives a particular life [to] the shape of a whole at the same time that it is a radical unmaking and disintegration of the self.⁵²

Seen in these terms, the Astolat tale emerges as a story of paradoxical 'self-construction' and 'disintegration'. Out of fragmented, disintegrated texts – such as Ellis's *Specimens* – the Arthurian woman writer constructs new designs, which aspire to be 'corrective' by placing a new emphasis on the female body. Like Ellis's 'doubly distanced' texts, women writers were doubly distanced from Arthurian romance, but, crucially, it is from this vantage point that a new perspective is brought into view.⁵³ The subject of the Maid of Astolat is one of the earliest trends to emerge in women's Arthurian writing; Louisa Stuart Costello's poem on the subject, 'The Funeral Boat' (1829), appears eight years later, closely followed by Letitia

⁵¹ Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, 2nd edn (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 618.

⁵² Elisabeth Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), p. 153.

⁵³ Matthews, *The Making of Middle English*, p. 75.

Elizabeth Landon's 'The Legend of Tintagel Castle' (1832).⁵⁴ Long before Tennyson's *Lady of Shalott*, the figure of the Maid of Astolat attracted the attention of women writers whose position in the literary market encouraged them to self-construct and deconstruct themselves in a way that chimed with the experiences of the tragic maid.

4.2 Anna Jane Vardill's 'La Morte D'arthur; or the Legend of Sir Lancelot' (1821) and the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur*

Although written in response to Ellis's summary of the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur*, 'The Maid of Ascolot' is not a scholarly poem; that is, it does not attempt to situate itself in the field of knowledge through the use of extensive notes or commentary. At the same time as 'T.B.G.', however, another female writer was working closely with Ellis's version of the same text to produce a more openly antiquarian work with considerable scholarly ambitions. In the same year that 'T.B.G.'s poem appeared in the *Lady's Monthly Museum*, the Scottish poet Anna Jane Vardill (1781–1852) published 'La Morte D'arthur; or, the Legend of Sir Launcelot' in the *European Magazine* (1821). Rather than an original imaginative Arthurian work, this was apparently a severely abridged version of the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur*, done into modern orthography and with accompanying notes and glosses very much in keeping with Ellis's own style.

Information contained in Ellis's *Specimens* and Ritson's *Ancient Engleish Romanceës* pertaining to the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur* meant that by 1821, the location of the poem – found in Harley 2252 in the British Museum – was relatively well known.⁵⁵ The full text was also available in a black letter edition edited by Thomas Ponton for the Roxburghe club. As

⁵⁴ See Chapter 5, 5.1 and 5.2.

⁵⁵ See Ellis, *Specimens*, vol. 1, p. 308. Joseph Ritson, 'Dissertation on Romance and Minstrelsy', in *Ancient Engleish Metrical Romanceës*, ed. Joseph Ritson, 3 vols (London: Nicol, 1802), vol. 1, pp. v–ccxxiv (pp. cv–cvi). The manuscript, along with the rest of the Harleian Collection, is now held in the British Library under the same shelf mark (London, British Library, Harley 2252).

mentioned earlier, club editions of medieval texts tended to be circulated among members only, although they might occasionally be lent or borrowed.⁵⁶ Rather than acknowledging the use of Ellis's or Ponton's texts, however, Vardill is keen to stress that the contents of her poem have been 'collected from the MS. in the Harleian Library'.⁵⁷ Further footnotes to the poem give the manuscript's exact bibliographical record ('Bibl. Reg. 14eii.19.c.xiii and 20 c.vi'), and inform us that the poet sourced the last four stanzas of the poem from 'prose fragments in the Museum' (Vardill's note, p. 555). The presentation and paratextual elements of the poem, then, cultivate a strong impression that its author was a regular visitor to the British Museum and engaged in detailed antiquarian research there.

From the 1810s onwards, Vardill published a number of Arthurian poems and prose works in the *European Magazine*, a periodical with a reputation for articles on 'historical and antiquarian subjects'.⁵⁸ Under her initial, 'V.', or an alternative pseudonym, Vardill contributed over two hundred articles to the *European* between 1809 and 1822, a significant portion of which convey her interest in old ballads and antiquarian fragments.⁵⁹ Her Arthurian imitation of Coleridge's 'Christabel' appeared in the magazine in 1815,⁶⁰ and a later poem, 'Sir Locrine. A Northern ballad' (1818), also drew on aspects of the Arthurian story.⁶¹ In 1820 she published 'The Eldest King of Britain' (1820), again with the *European*, a poem inspired by her reading of her friend William Gunn's recent edition of Nennius's

⁵⁶ The bibliophile Richard Heber (1773–1833) was a founding member of the Roxburghe Club and loosely connected to Vardill via her friendship with the Porden family. It is entirely possible that Heber – who was known for his generous lending of rare books – may have granted Vardill access to Ponton's edition. However, for reasons outlined below, Ellis's *Specimens* is a more evident influence on Vardill's poem.

⁵⁷ This forms the poem's subtitle. See 'V.', [Anna Jane Vardill], 'La Morte D'arthur; or, the Legend of Sir Launcelot. Collected from the MS. in the Harleian Library', *EM*, 79 (Jun 1821), 553–55 (553). All further references are to this edition and are subsequently given in parentheses throughout the text.

⁵⁸ Helene E. Roberts, 'The European Magazine', in *British Literary Magazines: The Augustan Age and the Age of Johnson, 1698–1788*, ed. Alvin Sullivan (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1983), pp. 106–12 (p. 107).

⁵⁹ She also published in the *European* under 'A.J.V.', and 'Vivant Denon' (see 4.4 below).

⁶⁰ See Chapter 2, 2.5.

⁶¹ 'V.', 'Sir Locrine: A Northern Ballad', *EM*, 74 (1818), 439–40.

Historia Brittonum (1819).⁶² Many of her poems for the *European* are also Northern or Scottish in theme: ‘The Warden of Carlisle: A Border Tale’, (1815), ‘Lomond’s Isle: A Scotch Tale’ (1815), and ‘A Highland Husband’s Gift. From an MS. in the McGregor Family’ (1818) all showcase her strong interest in manuscripts, Scots heritage, ballad culture, and folklore.⁶³ Though Vardill spent a substantial portion of her life in London and Lincoln, it still seems appropriate to classify her, as Helen Groth does, as a ‘Scottish poet’; she grew up in Galloway, and after her marriage to a Scotsman lived for eight years at his estate in Kirkcudbright.⁶⁴ Her Scots-inflected antiquarianism prompted several readers to write to the editor of the *European* believing they had correctly identified ‘V.’ as Sir Walter Scott.⁶⁵

Vardill was rather skilled in the arts of deception and imitation; indeed, so much so that she could not only pass herself off as Scott, but also successfully present another antiquarian’s edition of an Arthurian romance as her own. While it would appear from the presentation of her poem that Vardill had visited an academic library, seen an Arthurian manuscript, transcribed its contents, and produced her own text as a result, in reality her ‘La Morte D’arthur’ is constructed by weaving together selected stanzas quoted in Ellis’s summary of the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur* in *Specimens*. Regarding her professed visits to the British Museum, the loss of signature lists for visitors to the museum’s Reading Room between 1810–1820 (when it is most likely that Vardill would have been an active reader) means that it is impossible to determine whether she ever studied there. We also know that

⁶² ‘V.’, ‘The Eldest King of Britain. Llewellyn’s Dream’, *EM*, 77 (1820), 166–67. Vardill is regularly mentioned in the correspondence between John and Mary Ann Flaxman and Gunn. See John Flaxman to William Gunn, 15 October 1822, WGN 1/8/5; M.A. [Mary Ann] Flaxman to Gunn, January 1823, WGN 1/8/19; M.A. Flaxman, to Gunn, 24 October 1823, WGN 1/8/46; Mary Ann Flaxman to Gunn, 13 February 1826, WGN 1/8/101, Norfolk Record Office, Norwich, UK.

⁶³ ‘V.’, ‘The Warden of Carlisle: A Border Tale’, *EM*, 67 (May 1815) 442–43; ‘V.’, ‘Lomond’s Isle: A Scotch Tale’, *EM*, 67 (Jan 1815), 55–56; ‘V.’, ‘Sir Lochrine: A Northern Ballad’, *EM*, 74 (1818), 439–40; ‘V.’, ‘A Highland Husband’s Gift’, *EM*, 73 (May 1818), 435.

⁶⁴ Helen Groth, ‘Kaleidoscopic Vision and Literary Invention in an “Age of Things”’: David Brewster, *Don Juan* and “A Lady’s Kaleidoscope”, *ELH*, 74: 1 (2007), 217–37 (221).

⁶⁵ See ‘Acknowledgements to Correspondents’, *EM*, 67 (May 1815), 267.

she did not visit between 1821 and 1826.⁶⁶ While it is not impossible that Vardill did frequent the museum and study Harley 2252 as she claims, a comparison between her poem and Ellis's *Specimens* reveals that she was highly indebted to his edition of the Stanzaic poem.

Throughout his summary of the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur* in *Specimens*, Ellis gives occasional selected quotations from the poem, transposed into modernised orthography and with appropriate glosses. His summary reproduces 376 lines from the original romance in this manner; the longest single extract, describing Arthur's dream, runs to fifty-six consecutive lines (*Specimens*, vol. 1, pp. 373–75). Vardill's 187-line poem is compiled from eight extracts of varying length (of four to up to twenty-four lines) from the romance strung together in a revised sequence, all of which can be found in Ellis's *Specimens*.⁶⁷ In addition, the majority of her glosses and notes match those found in Ellis's edition. This holds true for her dating of the text; Vardill notes that the 'original romance' runs to 'about 3850 lines' and was 'apparently written in the 15th century' (Vardill's note, p. 555), and both these estimates match those made by Ellis in his introduction to the text (Ellis, *Specimens*, vol. 1, p. 308).

Vardill's limited choice from only those stanzas selected by Ellis has an obvious effect on the shape of her poem, which maps broadly onto the parts of Stanzaic *Morte Arthur* that Ellis quotes from most generously. Thus, rather than forming a coherent whole, the poem presents a series of Arthurian tableaux. A substantial section of 'La Morte D'arthur' concentrates on Arthur's two dreams (containing visions of the Wheel of Fortune and of Gawain, recently deceased) and his death, all of which merited long extracts from the poem

⁶⁶ I am grateful to Ms Liane MacIver, Archival Assistant at the British Museum, for her assistance in checking the signature records currently held there. Ms MacIver was able to confirm the records between 1810–20 have been destroyed, and also that Vardill's name does not appear in the records held for the period 1820–1826. All reader applications before 1890 were destroyed under the Director, E. Maunde Thompson, so Vardill's application, if she did become a reader, is also lost.

⁶⁷ The extracts which Vardill takes from Ellis appear in *Specimens*, vol. 1, pp. 356 (beginning 'The maiden is ready for to ride': 8 lines), 357 ('The king was ever near beside': 4 lines), 358 ('Alas quod Lancelot [...]': 4 lines), 360 ('Lancelot and the queen were cledde': 16 lines), 361 ('Then bespake Sir Gawain': 8 lines), 363–64 ('The maiden was full sheen to show', 16 lines), 366 ('The lord that was of great honour': 8 lines), 366 ('Through the helm, into the heved': 4 lines), 367 ('Gawain, while thou might stiffly stand': 4 lines), 373–74 ('At night when Arthur was in bed': 20 lines), 374–75 ('And against day he fell on sleep': 22 lines), 379 ('Sir Bedwer saw that bote was best': 24 lines).

in Ellis's summary. However, rather than simply listing Ellis's stanzas in the order they occur, Vardill rearranges them to recreate an alternative narrative. Her poem's description of a maiden clothed in 'samyte green' (l. 59) who is sent as a messenger from Lancelot to the king cleverly fuses together two separate descriptions of female messengers to form one longer portrait (ll. 57–80; Stanzaic, ll. 2054–61, 2612–27). Similarly, the two stanzas describing the conflict between Lancelot and Gawain stitch together four separate extracts, refashioned to look like two 'original' stanzas:

Through the helm unto the head,
 Was hardy Gawain wounded so,
 That Launcelot him lying leaved;
 On foot might he no farther go.
 "Gawain, while thou might stiffly stand,
 Many a stroke of thee I stood,
 And I forbare thee in every land
 For love, and for the king's blood."

The king was ever near beside,
 And hew on him with all his mayne;
 But he so courteous was that tide,
 One stroke he wolde no smite again.
 "Alas!" quoth Launcelot, "woe is me,
 That ever I should see with sight
 Before me him unhorsed be
 The noble king that made me knight!" (ll. 41–56)

While a medievalist would spot the disturbance of the Stanzaic poem's typical *abababab* stanza (replaced with *ababcdcd* in Vardill's amalgamated stanzas above), it is unlikely that most readers of the *European* would have noticed the difference. The complex reordering and selection that Vardill applies to the original romance allow her to create a wholly different text.

After acknowledging that she has 'omitted' verses 'descriptive of Arthur's battle with his perfidious foster-son Modred, by whom his dream appears to have been verified' (Vardill's note, p. 554), the next part of the poem moves to the scene of Arthur's death and Bedivere's task of returning Excalibur to the lake shortly before 'a rich ship [...] full of

ladies' arrives to take Arthur to Avalon (ll. 145–46). While this passage, like the rest of the poem, was extracted from Ellis, the final thirty-two lines, describing Lancelot's arrival in England and his own death, are of Vardill's own invention (ll. 155–87). She had already published an 'imitation' of a 'prophetic fragment' from Nennius's *Historia Brittonum* in the *European* the previous year which showcased her interest in emulating ancient texts.⁶⁸ By 1821 she was ready to try her hand at an Arthurian imitation. The affected Middle English orthography she deploys in 'La Morte D'arthur' suggests that Vardill intended her original lines to be disguised among those from the romance, but – unfortunately for Vardill, perhaps – they are otherwise quite clearly demarcated by their difference from the Stanzaic poet's unwavering predilection for an *abababab* stanza. Vardill's modern lines are marked by a more varied rhyme scheme and line length, as we see in the following stanza which precedes Lancelot's Christian vision:

He hath foughten with belt and brand,
 But the king's good sword is lost,
 There is a light in the forest yon,
 And it is holy Pentecost
 And there is a bier without help of man,
 Built as it were of eventide frost. (ll. 158–63)

Not only is line 162 ('And there is a bier [...]') unusually extended, but the following line especially stands out for its application of a peculiarly Coleridgean simile and concentrated syntax; Ritson would have been appalled at Vardill's blending of old and new without any indication to the reader. Adding lines, or even a complete ending to a poem, however, was common practice for a poet and antiquarian like Scott, who had provided original continuations to both 'Thomas the Rhymer' and *Sir Tristrem*.⁶⁹ Vardill, who it seems

⁶⁸ 'V.', 'The Eldest King of Britain. Llewellyn's Dream', *EM*, 77 (Feb 1820), 166–67.

⁶⁹ See Scott, 'Sir Thomas the Rhymer. Part the Third', in *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border: Consisting of Historical and Romantic Ballads*, ed. Sir Walter Scott, 5th edn, 3 vols (Edinburgh: Longman, Hurst, Orme, Rees, and Brown, 1812), vol. 3, pp. 220–28; and Scott, 'Conclusion. Abridged from the French Metrical Romance, in the stile of Tomas of Erceldoune', in *Sir Tristrem: A Metrical Romance of the Thirteenth Century, by Thomas of Ercildoune, called the Rhymer* (Edinburgh: Constable, 1804), pp. 191–200.

deliberately emulated Scott's style in a number of poems for the *European*, also adopts this feature of his antiquarianism when compiling her edition of an Arthurian metrical romance.

Like Scott, who used a copy of the French *Tristan* to compile his ending for the Middle English *Sir Tristrem*, Vardill did not freely invent an ending to the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur* without a source. The last eight lines of Vardill's poem offer a paean to Lancelot which will be immediately familiar to readers of Malory's *Morte Darthur*:

And there he lieth the truest knight
That ever foughten under shield:
The fullest friend to luckless wight,
That ever bestrode horse in field.

The goodliest shape among the best,
The gentildest in bower and hall;
The sternest foes with spear in rest,
The kindest at his foe's downfall! (ll. 180–87)

These lines, Vardill tells us, are a versification of 'prose fragments in the museum' (Vardill's note, p. 555), but they are more accurately a loose versification of the threnody that Malory assigns to Sir Ector at the end of *Le Morte Darthur*:

[t]hou Sir Lancelot, there thou lvest, that thou were never matched of erthely knyghtes hande; and thou were the curtest knyght that ever bare shelde; and thou were the truest frende to thy lovar that ever bestrade hors; and thou were the trewest lover, of a synful man, that ever loved woman; and thou were the kyndest man that ever strake wyth swerde; and thou were the godelyest persone that ever cam emonge prees of knyghtes; and thou was the mekest man and the jentylldest that ever ete in halle emonge ladyes, and thou were the sternest knyght to thy mortal foo that ever put spere in the reeste.⁷⁰

While, as Larry Benson observes, Malory 'occasionally carried over into his own work the exact wording' of the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur*, Vardill undertakes the same method in reverse by carrying Malory's words back into verse.⁷¹ In doing so, she becomes the first woman writer to work creatively with his romance. The use of the feminine definite article ('*La*

⁷⁰ Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur, or, the Hoole Book of Kyng Arthur and of his Noble Knyghtes of The Rounde Table*, ed. Stephen H.A. Shepherd (New York: Norton, 2004), pp. 696–97.

⁷¹ Larry D. Benson, 'Introduction', to *King Arthur's Death: The Middle English Stanzaic Morte Arthur and the Alliterative Morte Arthure*, ed. Larry D. Benson, rev. Edward E. Foster (Kalamazoo: TEAMS; Medieval Institute Publications, 1994), pp. 1–7 (p. 4).

Morte D'arthur') for the title of her poem suggests that she might have known, or owned, Wilks's 1816 edition of Malory (the only one of the 1816 and 1817 editions to use the *la* form rather than *le*).⁷²

In affixing Malory's prose to the end of the Stanzaic poem, Vardill was still closely copying Ellis, who had placed the same prose extract from Malory at the end of his summary of the Stanzaic poem in *Specimens* to replace what was, in his opinion, the 'rather insipid' ending to the metrical romance (Ellis, *Specimens*, pp. 386–87). However, nowhere had Ellis suggested versifying Malory's text, and we should not underestimate the creativity, as well as the commitment to Arthurian studies, which inform Vardill's poem. Besides the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur* and Malory's *Morte Darthur*, she also placed the opening stanza from Canto II of *Arthour and Merlin* (also included in Ellis's *Specimens*) at the very beginning of her poem (ll. 1–6).⁷³ Her miscellaneous poem, then, fuses no less than three romances with lines of her own composition in a manner not unlike Malory's own assembling of the *Morte Darthur* from a combination of individual romances and original material. Although Vardill's poem is not quite what it seems (that is, a transcription of an Arthurian poem from a manuscript in the British Museum), it is an important text in the development of women's Arthurian scholarship. It demonstrates a female writer's desire to participate in the emerging manuscript culture at a time when the constraints on women's scholarship most likely prevented her from doing so. In the face of such restraints, Vardill turned to Ellis's scholarship and to her own imagination, as well as to writing about Arthurian manuscripts in quite another form altogether.

⁷² Malory himself used the incorrect French combination of a masculine prefix with the feminine form (*morte*) which has been retained in almost all editions beside Wilks's. See *La Mort D'Arthur: The Most Ancient and Famous History of the Renowned Prince Arthur, and the Knights of the Round Table* [ed. Joseph Haslewood], 3 vols (London: R. Wilks, 1816). Thomas Wright also used the feminine form in his later edition, *La Mort D'Arthur: The History of King Arthur and the Knights of the Rounde Table. Compiled by Sir Thomas Malory, Knt. Edited from the text edition of 1634, with introduction and notes by Thomas Wright, Esq.*, 3 vols (London: John Russell Smith, 1858).

⁷³ See Ellis, *Specimens*, vol. 1, p. 246. *Arthour and Merlin*, contained in the Auckinleck manuscript (NLS Adv MS 19.2.1), is referred to by Ellis as 'Merlin: Part 2'.

4.3 ‘M. Denon in England’ and ‘The Last Leaf of the Parish Register’ (1821): Vardill’s Mockery of Male Arthurianists

Quite another kind of Arthurian story is presented in a series of satirical prose works which Vardill produced for the *European Magazine* in the months surrounding her compilation of ‘La Morte D’arthur’. While that poem strongly cultivated the image of an Arthurian edition taken directly from a manuscript, Vardill’s collection of antiquarian satires, begun in a series entitled ‘M. Denon in England’ (July–Sept 1821) and concluded in a subsequent set of instalments billed as ‘The Last Leaf of the Parish Register’ (Oct–Dec 1821), thoroughly mock the value that the (male) antiquarian attaches to romance manuscripts.⁷⁴ In these works, Vardill demonstrates how a firm grasp of recent Arthurian scholarship could be redeployed to form a popular comedic send-up of those men responsible for bringing Arthurian texts into print. While the Arthurian legend had been used frequently for comic and satirical effect in eighteenth-century stage productions, and more recently for Vardill, in works like John Hookham Frere’s *The Monks and the Giants* (1816) and Thomas Love Peacock’s *Calidore* (1816), what separates Vardill’s work from other Arthurian attempts in this vein is that the target of her satire is the antiquarian who studies Arthurian romances, rather than the legend itself.

Eclectic and strongly Menippean in mode, her series of satires describe the various adventures of two unlikely travel companions as they conduct a tour through England.

Founded on this particular premise, the various instalments blend travel writing with

⁷⁴ Vardill’s three-part series, ‘M. Denon in England’ appeared under a range of differing titles and pseudonyms: (1) ‘V.’, ‘M. Denon’s Hundred Days in England: Extracted from his Journal’, *EM*, 80 (July 1821), 6–12; (2) ‘V.’, ‘M. Denon in England’, *EM*, 80 (Aug 1821), 127–33; (3) ‘V. Denon, Junior’, ‘M. Denon in England’, *EM* 80 (Sept 1821), 216–21. ‘M. Denon in England’ is used hereafter to refer to the whole work. Its connected epilogue, ‘The Last Leaf of the Parish Register’, was completed in a further three parts (*EM*, 80 (Oct–Dec 1821), 310–13, 412–16, 511–16).

antiquarianism in a manner similar to the texts discussed in Chapter Three, but with the crucial addition of bathos. Vardill's protagonist is Monsieur Vivian Denon, an enthusiastic antiquarian, member of the French National institute, and the fictional son of the real-life French diplomat, archaeologist, and writer, Dominique Viviant, Baron Denon (1747–1825), the author of *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt* (1802; translated into English in 1803). Denon was first introduced to the magazine in a fantastical prequel describing his journey to the centre of the earth where he meets the humorously named Teapottus, the 'president' of the blue-coloured inhabitants of the region.⁷⁵ In the first instalment of 'M. Denon in England', Denon and Teapottus are reunited in London and the two companions subsequently embark on a journey to Shropshire.

Once the Denon and Teapottus have installed themselves in a Shropshire village, they soon encounter an old gentlewoman affectionately referred to as Dame Wimble. In a manner reminiscent of the enthusiasms of Scott's own fictional idiosyncratic antiquarian, Jonathan Oldbuck, Denon's attention is immediately fired by the possibility that the 'ancient dame' might remember 'all the ballads and traditions of her country, and might furnish me with some'.⁷⁶ Addressing the dame, Denon launches into a speech which is part enquiry, part self-aggrandisement:

Your good and great King Arthur, pupil of the prophet Merlin, appears to have had a wife with more than one husband, as I have read in the Auchinleck manuscript. Merlin himself only laughed when he saw such incidents; and he is said to have laughed all the way from Wales to London.⁷⁷

Vardill puts her knowledge that the Auchinleck manuscript contains *Arthour and Merlin* to good use in crafting Denon's dialogue – information which she knew from reading Ellis's

⁷⁵ 'V. Denon, Junior' [Vardill], 'An Account of the Mezzoterranea, or the Central Regions of the Earth', *EM*, 79 (1821), 294–97.

⁷⁶ [Vardill], 'M. Denon in England' [Part 2], 129. Compare, in particular, the scene between Oldbuck and Elspeth Meiklebackit towards the end of *The Antiquary*. When he encounters Elspeth singing, Oldbuck can scarcely believe his good fortune at discovering 'a genuine and undoubted fragment of minstrelsy! – Percy would admire its simplicity – Ritson could not impugn its authenticity.' See Sir Walter Scott, *The Antiquary*, ed. Nicola J. Watson (1816; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 375–76.

⁷⁷ [Vardill], 'M. Denon in England' [Part 2], 129.

Specimens and his summary of that particular romance. The circumstances surrounding Merlin's prolonged laughing fit are drawn from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Vita Merlini* (c.1148–55), in which Merlin repeatedly laughs wildly at court when he is challenged to prophesise to the Queen. Merlin also willingly gives permission for his wife to remarry so long as he never views her new choice of husband.⁷⁸ Again, Vardill would have found these details in Ellis.⁷⁹ Much like her technique in 'La Morte D'arthur', Vardill combines and adapts instances from different Arthurian romances to compose Denon's enquiry. Arthur, rather than Merlin, plays the role of the polygamous husband, an adaptation which, whether deliberately or otherwise, has overtones of the description of Arthur's three queens in the *Welsh Triads*.⁸⁰ While Denon's dialogue would no doubt seem confusing, even incomprehensible, to most ordinary readers of the *European*, it is a clear testimony of Vardill's deep study of Arthurian texts (albeit via Ellis's *Specimens*). Moreover, as Denon's inability to relate the romance material he studies to modern life is the wheel upon which the satire turns, the incomprehensibility of his speech forms a major part of the mockery.

Dame Wimble's response to Denon's densely academic enquiry is a strident one.

Dismissing his reading of manuscript sources, she offers a very different version of the story:

There is not one word of truth in the Laird of Auchinleck [...] I knew him when he was a ragged boy, riding in the cart to buy lean calves; and as to that Mr. Merlin he is so fond of, he kept a workshop in London, and made a show of his whispering statues, and moving stools. That chair my lady sits on is of his making.⁸¹

The voice of the provincial dame swiftly deflates the heroic characters of the Arthurian legend to the rank of local tradesmen. Merlin is now no more than a provincial carpenter (though a subtle allusion to the popular 'miracles' of the Belgian inventor and maker of

⁷⁸ See Ellis, *Specimens*, vol.1, p. 75.

⁷⁹ See Ellis, *Specimens*, vol.1, p. 75.

⁸⁰ Rachel Bromwich, ed. and trans., *Trioedd Ynys Prydein / The Triads of the Island of Britain*, 3rd edn (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006), Triad 56 (p. 161). See also Chapter 1, 1.1.

⁸¹ [Vardill], 'M. Denon in England' [Part 2], 129.

mechanical toys, Jean Joseph Merlin (1753–1803), is in all likelihood also intended).⁸² The same technique is extended when Denon persists in rattling off a huge list of Arthurian knights taken from the Auchinleck *Arthur and Merlin*:

He was called Gawain the Brave, but there were thirty-nine who followed Arthur in pairs – and these were Sir Antour, Sir Ulfin, Sir Bretel, Sir Kay, Sir Lucan, Sir Ditto, son of the Mayor of London, Sir Grifles, Sir Mairoe, Sir Drians of the Forest, Sir Belias, Sir Flandran, Sir Leomas, Sir Amours the Brown, Sir Aneales the Red, Sir Bleobel, Sir Bleoberis, Sir Canode, Sir Aladan the Crisp, Sir Colatides, Sir Lampades, Sir ———⁸³

However, before Denon can proceed any further, he is interrupted:

The dame ran to the casement near the street, down which a troop of fine Galloway cattle were pacing; and her cry, “There they all go!” put the rest of the knights’ names out of my memory.⁸⁴

Though Denon fails to make any association between the knights he lists and the cattle that thunder past, it is clear that Vardill intends a comic parallel. The mockery continues at Denon’s expense when he accepts the dame’s various responses with entire seriousness, recording the details in his ‘notebook’ as an addition to his ‘extract of the memoir of Merlin, consisting of 40,000 lines, written in the reign of Henry VI. by Thomas de Lonelich; and from others preserved in the library of Lincoln’s Inn and Lincoln Cathedral’.⁸⁵ Vardill is again quoting Ellis, who, in his general introduction to the ‘Romances relating to Arthur’, had noted that ‘Mr. Warton has given us an extract from the *St. Graal*, a metrical fragment, said to consist of about 40,000 lines, composed in the reign of Henry VI by Thomas de Lonelich’.⁸⁶ The close parallel again reinforces the depth to which Vardill studied and absorbed Ellis’s *Specimens*.

⁸² Vardill was not the only female writer to document this form of popular entertainment. A group of young women visit the ‘miracles of Merlin’ in Charlotte Smith’s *Rambles Farther: A Continuation of Rural Walks: in dialogues. Intended for the use of young persons*, 2 vols (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1796), vol. 2, pp. 69–72 (p. 71).

⁸³ [Vardill], ‘M. Denon in England’ [Part 2], 130. The list (with several minor differences) appears in Ellis, *Specimens*, ‘Merlin, Part II’, vol. 1, p. 268.

⁸⁴ [Vardill], ‘M. Denon in England’ [Part 2], 130.

⁸⁵ [Vardill], ‘M. Denon in England’ [Part 2], 129.

⁸⁶ Ellis, *Specimens*, vol. 1, p. 193.

References to romances and chronicles including those by ‘Chrestien de Troyes’, Marie de France, Thomas de Lonelich, William of Malmesbury, Giraldus Cambrensis, and Geoffrey of Monmouth are peppered throughout the second instalment, but most striking is Vardill’s recurring interest in the Auchinleck manuscript, an artefact much prized by the Romantics.⁸⁷ In 1792, Joseph Ritson was the first to discover that it contained the romance of *Sir Tristrem* as well as several others that had never been found elsewhere: *Sir Orfeo*, *Lai le Freine*, and *Floris and Blanchflour*.⁸⁸ As Matthews states: ‘[n]o other single manuscript of medieval English commanded so much attention [...] in the first decade of the nineteenth century’.⁸⁹ The manuscript’s strong role in Vardill’s satire, then, demonstrates how well she understood the values of the male antiquarian community, as well as the closeness between her interests and Scott’s own. A Scottish poet herself, Vardill, like Scott, was drawn to the Auchinleck as a nationalistic relic of Scotland’s literary past. Vardill’s belief in a Scottish Arthurian tradition is revealed when Denon, again addressing Dame Wimble, maps the events and characters of Arthurian legend firmly onto Scottish soil:

Carlisle was the favourite seat of Arthur, as Froissart thinks; and his oven and table are between that and Penrith. Etrick forest was the Sylva Caledonia beloved by Merlin and Drummelziar his burial-place. Galloway was given to one of Arthur’s knights, and the tomb of Dame Ganore, or Guenever, his beautiful left-handed wife, may be seen at Angus, between Coapar and Forfar.⁹⁰

Much like Scott, whose ‘own Arthurian material is strongly Scottish in interest’, Vardill’s interest in Arthur lies – literally – in his ability to inhabit Scottish ground.⁹¹ As Matthews points out, by supplying an ending to *Sir Tristrem*, ‘Scott [...] literally wrote himself into the world of Thomas of Erceldoune’,⁹² and in ‘M. Denon in England’, Vardill does the same:

⁸⁷ [Vardill], ‘M. Denon in England’ [Part 2], 130–31.

⁸⁸ See Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, p. 132; Matthews, *The Making of Middle English*, p. 60.

⁸⁹ Matthews, *The Making of Middle English*, p. 81.

⁹⁰ [Vardill], ‘M. Denon in England’ [Part 2], 130.

⁹¹ Rob Gossedge and Stephen Knight, ‘The Arthur of the Sixteenth to Nineteenth Centuries’, in *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend*, ed. Elizabeth Archibald and Ad Putter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 103–119 (pp. 109–10).

⁹² David Matthews, ‘“Quaint Inglis”: Walter Scott and the Rise of Middle English Studies’, *Studies in Medievalism*, 7 (1996), 33–48 (p. 46).

‘Galloway’ is her own birthplace, and she also later incorporates her mother’s family name, Birtwhistle, into the adjoining satire, ‘The Last Leaf of the Parish Register’.⁹³ Although Vardill’s tone is far from serious, her construction of a Scottish Arthurian terrain stakes a nationalist claim on the legend in much the same way as Scott’s *Sir Tristrem*.

Vardill’s series offers itself up as a general satire of British antiquarianism and the fetishisation of manuscript culture. Like Ellis, Ritson, and Weber before him, Denon’s current antiquarian project is to write a ‘memoir of Anglo-Saxon romances’, the research for which he impractically carries with him at all times and produces at the slightest opportunity:

I deposited on the table the huge chronicles of Gildas and Nennius, the lays of our King Thibaut of Navarre and my own extracts from the Auchinleck MS, with the annotations of Sir. W.S. – All these, carefully transcribed on broad vellum paper, with the signatures and comments of sundry learned men now living, especially of celebrated Scotch civilians, had a most imposing appearance [...].⁹⁴

As a close friend of ‘Sir W.S.’ (clearly a thinly veiled Scott), however, Denon may be modelled on a more traceable individual. Consistently spouting dialogue adapted from *Specimens*, Denon emerges as a more specialised parody of Ellis, one such friend of Scott who, like Denon, took many ‘extracts from the Auchinleck MS.’ and who also, like the real Baron Denon, was a diplomat turned antiquary. Like the fictionalised portraits of Coleridge and Shelley in Thomas Love Peacock’s *Nightmare Abbey* (1818), Vardill’s Denon is a thinly veiled sketch of the scholar whose publications revolutionised women’s access to the romances.

‘M. Denon in England’ is full of similar exchanges during which Denon eagerly contributes details he has collected from Arthurian manuscripts, only to have them deflated immediately by Dame Wimble and reassigned to members of her local parish. As Denon thunders his way through allusions to various Arthurian romances, he mentions ‘a fair lady called Vivian’, and it transpires that the lady of the ‘Vivian family’ is Dame Wimble’s

⁹³ [Vardill], ‘The Last Leaf of the Parish Register’ [Part 2], 413.

⁹⁴ [Vardill], ‘M. Denon in England’ [Part 2], 132.

employer.⁹⁵ This provides the opening to Vardill's connected serial, 'The Last Leaf of the Parish Register' (Oct–Dec 1821). Philippa Levine has summarised how, during the mass appeal of antiquarian pursuits in the adjoining 1830s, '[c]ountless were tempted to exhume the treasures hidden between the covers of their local parish register, buried deep in the nearby tumulus or turned up by the spade of the rail builders'.⁹⁶ Vardill's concentration on the parish register, then, which will provide not only the material centre for her tale, but the content of her narrative itself, plays palimpsestically towards this fascination and interest in localised, familial histories. In 'The Last Leaf of the Parish Register', Teapottus (whose real name is revealed to be Thibaut, after the notable troubadour, Theobald of Navarre) takes over the narrative and visits 'Sir Lancelot Vivian', an elderly antiquarian who styles himself a descendant of 'Sir Lancelot du Lac'.⁹⁷

While antiquarianism is still resolutely mocked in 'The Last Leaf of the Parish Register', the text places an important emphasis on the role of Sir Lancelot Vivian's niece, Isabel, a young and beautiful female medievalist who assists her 'discontented and spleenful' uncle by reading from 'all the ancient romances of Charlemagne, Merlin, and Coeur de Lion's days' in the following manner:⁹⁸

She was seated near his arm-chair, with a large folio resting on her knee; and the old man turned the leaves as she requested, while his other hand rested among the curls upon her fair forehead. Then I perceived that he was blind, and by touching both his treasures, the folio and the beautiful reader, assured himself of possessing them.⁹⁹

In this second series, Vardill's criticisms of the excessive materialism of the male antiquary now extend to his fetishised possession of a female amanuensis as well as the ancient texts she reads. Rosemary Sweet has drawn attention to several eighteenth-century wives and daughters who were 'enlisted as scribes and amanuenses, taking notes at dictation,

⁹⁵ [Vardill], 'M. Denon in England' [Part 2], 131.

⁹⁶ Philippa Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional: Antiquarians, Historians and Archaeologists in Victorian England 1838–1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 8.

⁹⁷ [Vardill], 'The Last Leaf of the Parish Register' [Part 1], 312.

⁹⁸ [Vardill], 'The Last Leaf of the Parish Register' [Part 1], 312.

⁹⁹ [Vardill], 'The Last Leaf of the Parish Register' [Part 1], 312.

transcribing documents and making drawings' (as did Ellis's own wife, Anne Parker).¹⁰⁰

Vardill's sentimentalised portrait of Isabel, Sir Lancelot's 'young student', is based on this historical reality; Isabel shows significant 'skill in Latin', and, through the course of reading aloud to her uncle, has committed all his Arthurian romances to memory.¹⁰¹

Teapottus/Thibaut is fascinated when he realises that Isabel is also an improvisatrice, who uses her memorised store of romances to invent new adventures 'extempore'.¹⁰² This she does unbeknownst to the old antiquarian, who believes he 'still hears the legends which delighted the most learned'.¹⁰³ Like the character of Dame Wimble, Isabel provides an alternative interpretation of Arthurian romance to rival the pedantic scholarship of the text's male antiquarians (Denon, Thibaut, and Sir Lancelot). Throughout both satires, Vardill attacks the masculine institution of medieval scholarship by mocking editors who attach 'two or three hundred pages of notes' to their editions of medieval verse, and sardonically implying that Ritson's scholarship is little more than guesswork.¹⁰⁴ Vardill's aim, in mocking masculine romance scholarship and offering a feminine version of oral romance transmission and composition in its place, is to expose the gendered injustice in women's education that means that the tales of 'Merlin, and King Arthur' are 'recorded in French poems which only a few learned men can read'.¹⁰⁵

If Vardill's Denon is a veiled portrait of Ellis, then his centrality to her parody of romance antiquarians is a product of the same frustrations which have dogged women's encounters with Arthurian romance thus far. Though Ellis brought scholarly women writers like Vardill closer to Arthurian romances than ever before, his ironic summaries and limited

¹⁰⁰ Rosemary Sweet, *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 73–74. See Scott to Ellis, 9 October 1801, in *Letters*, ed. Grierson, vol. 12, pp. 196–99. Scott acknowledges the receipt of Parker's transcription of *Sir Eger*, thanking Parker via Ellis for the 'trouble she has undertaken on my account' (p. 196).

¹⁰¹ [Vardill], 'The Last Leaf of the Parish Register' [Part 2], 412.

¹⁰² [Vardill], 'The Last Leaf of the Parish Register' [Part 1], 312.

¹⁰³ [Vardill], 'The Last Leaf of the Parish Register' [Part 1], 312.

¹⁰⁴ [Vardill], 'The Last Leaf of the Parish Register' [Part 2], 412.

¹⁰⁵ [Vardill], 'M. Denon in England' [Part 1], 11.

extracts kept them, to repeat Matthews's words, still 'doubly distanced' from the romances themselves.¹⁰⁶ Vardill's response to being kept at arm's length was to feign her familiarity with select Arthurian texts in manuscript, and then to retreat from scholarship into satire. Unbeknown to Vardill, however, the next decade would see major progress in women's access to manuscripts and libraries that would allow them to produce the kind of annotated translations of medieval romances that she herself could only feign.

4.4 Seeking Tristan: Louisa Stuart Costello's *Specimens of the Early Poetry of France* (1835)

Vardill had tried to emulate Ellis through heavy plagiarism of his romance texts, but her contemporary, Louisa Stuart Costello, was more successful in applying Ellis's style of antiquarianism to her own original research. By the 1830s Costello was no longer a teenager dreaming of Arthur, but a serious scholar of medieval French poetry with ambitions to rival Scott and Ellis. For Clare Broome Saunders, Costello's 'life and work, spanning as it does seventy years of the century, demonstrates the permeable nature of the divisions between [...] Romantic medievalism and Victorian medievalism'.¹⁰⁷ It is certainly true that since the publication of 'A Dream' (1815), Costello's literary career had progressed substantially. Like *The Maid of the Cyprus Isle*, Costello's second collection of poetry, *Redwald: A Tale of Mona and Other Poems* (1818), also failed to garner much attention, but her third volume, *Songs of a Stranger* (1825), achieved considerable popularity: Joanna Baillie thought it a collection 'of great merit'.¹⁰⁸ Meanwhile, attitudes towards learned women writers had also undergone an important shift. Around 1820, when Vardill was writing, a commentator

¹⁰⁶ Matthews, *The Making of Middle English*, p. 75.

¹⁰⁷ Clare Broome Saunders, *Women Writers and Nineteenth-Century Medievalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 9.

¹⁰⁸ Joanna Baillie to [(?) Miss Corbett], 27 June [1825], in *Further Letters of Joanna Baillie*, ed. Thomas McLean (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2010), p. 101.

observed that ‘it was not considered good etiquette for ladies to study in the British Museum’.¹⁰⁹ Yet ‘[b]y the 1830s, the category of bluestocking had made way for that of the literary woman’, and female patronage of the British Museum Reading Room was correspondingly on the rise.¹¹⁰

Male antiquarians were also happy to offer advice to aspiring women medievalists. In 1828, Costello visited Sir Walter Scott in London and they discussed her latest project – an edition of medieval French poems:

with great earnestness he listened to what I said on the subject recommending me various authors to consult. He appeared pleased with the design, and when I told him that my intention was to give translated specimens of all the French poets from the Troubadours to the age of Louis XIV he paid me some compliments, which were all the more agreeable as they were so simply uttered, and seemed sincere.¹¹¹

By the 1830s, then, women writers with interests in medieval texts were receiving valuable support from male antiquarians. Costello had been writing intermittently to Scott since 1823 with various appeals for help with publishing her poetry. ‘I find how impossible it is to succeed in any undertaking’, she wrote, ‘– especially for a woman to do so – unless some powerful friend would lend a helping hand to help her!’¹¹² Scott’s endorsement of her ‘design’ for an edition of translated French medieval poetry was extremely valuable to Costello, who, like her contemporary Letitia Elizabeth Landon, depended on her literary output to make a living. Though Scott did not live to see it, the anthology Costello outlined to him in London was published seven years later as *Specimens of the Early Poetry of France* (1835).

¹⁰⁹ Cited in George Barwick, *The Reading Room of the British Museum* (London: Ernest Benn, 1929), p. 65. See also Hoberman, ‘Women in the British Museum Reading Room’, 494.

¹¹⁰ Glennis Stephenson, *Letitia Landon: The Woman Behind L.E.L.* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 14. Hoberman, ‘Women in the British Museum Reading Room’, 494.

¹¹¹ ‘Miss Costello’, ‘A Morning Visit to Sir Walter Scott’, *Court and Lady’s Magazine, Monthly Critic and Museum*, 4:1 (Jan 1834), 13–14 (14).

¹¹² Louisa Stuart Costello to Sir Walter Scott, 4 July 1823, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh. MS 868. fols. 20–21 (20).

As Broome Saunders has noted, the title of Costello's work echoes closely those of Ellis's earlier anthologies.¹¹³ Containing verses by over seventy French poets – many of which had 'never yet been printed' – and supported by extensive notes, it constitutes Costello's most significant contribution to medieval studies.¹¹⁴ As the titular nod implies, her editorial style was also very much in line with Ellis's own drive towards popularisation and accessibility; her aim is 'to convey, as much as possible, the spirit of the original poems, divesting them of the trammels which their antique phraseology has thrown around them' ('Preface', p. vii). Anticipating commentators who might criticise the accuracy of her translations, Costello defends her more liberal method of interpretation, arguing that it is:

not by mere verbal translation that that which pleases one language can be rendered into another so as to give equal pleasure: the difference of idiom must be considered, and an *equivalent* expression may convey the poet's meaning with more force than a mere literal version of the passage could do. ('Preface', pp. vii–viii, emphasis in original)

Costello thus offers a theory of translation whereby the poetical skill of the translator is as important as their knowledge of languages; the 'pleasure' of reading medieval poetry, she argues, can only be replicated in translation if differences in 'idiom' are interpreted creatively, rather than literally. According to her model, the categories of poet and translator are mutable.

As well as translation, *Specimens* also showcased Costello's considerable skills in drawing. The decorative volume was illustrated with plates copied from several illuminated manuscripts, including the Harley manuscripts in the British Museum and several in the King's Library in Paris (pp. 19–20). Indeed, Costello is remembered chiefly as 'one of the

¹¹³ Broome Saunders, *Women Writers and Nineteenth-Century Medievalism*, p. 19. For an example of Costello's more direct application of Ellis's scholarship, see her *Specimens of the Early Poetry of France: From the Time of the Troubadours to the Reign of Henri Quatre* (London: William Pickering, 1835), pp. 43–44.

¹¹⁴ Costello, *Specimens of the Early Poetry of France*, p. 104. All further references are to this edition and are subsequently given in parentheses throughout the text. Costello's *Specimens* were later joined with John Oxenford's translations to form *The Book of French Songs; to which is added Miss Costello's Early French Poetry* (London: Frederick Warne and Co., 1886). The volume was generously illustrated throughout; Costello's 'The Lay of the Eglantine', for example, appears with an illuminated capital and a honeysuckle border alongside the text (pp. 324–29).

earliest copyists of illuminated manuscripts'.¹¹⁵ *Specimens* exhibits a new familiarity with medieval works brought about by this close manuscript work, which before long had extended to her Arthurian research. Reflecting on her work as a medievalist in the 1840s, Costello assured her readers of her familiarity with the romances of 'Little Arthur of Brittany, Lancelot du Lac, Tristan the Adventurer [...] and others in ancient verse which I have seen in multiple libraries'.¹¹⁶ Her work in the British Museum's Department of Manuscripts led her into correspondence with Stacey Grimbaldi and Sir Frederic Madden who, as Simpson notes, were both 'leading Arthurian experts'.¹¹⁷

Brief allusions to Arthur and Lancelot appear in several of the French poems Costello includes in *Specimens*, but a more significant engagement with Arthurian material can be found in two short Tristan texts included in the volume.¹¹⁸ In the course of preparing *Specimens* she had struck up a scholarly friendship with the French medievalist Francisque Michel, the 'most active editor of [French] Arthurian material' in the nineteenth century.¹¹⁹ In his 'Lettre a Mademoiselle Louisa Stuart Costello, sur le trouverres François des XII^e et XIII^e siècles', reproduced in the introduction to *Specimens*, Michel encouraged Costello to look favourably on the Tristan texts:

Ces romans [...] de Tristan l'amoureux [...], quoiqu'en dise M. le Docteur Robert Southey qui n'a lu que la dernière rédaction, sont dignes de la renommée de leur héros; ceux du Saint-Graal, de Perceval le Gallois, de Lancelot du Lac, de Gauvain, etc [...] Mais admirez, mademoiselle, la merveilleuse fécondité de la littérature romane!¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ 'Louisa Stuart Costello', in *The Feminist Companion to Literature in English*, ed. Virginia Blain, Isobel Grundy and Patricia Clements (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 240.

¹¹⁶ Costello, *Béarn and the Pyrenees: A Legendary Tour to the Country of Henri Quatre*, 2 vols (London: Bentley, 1844), vol. 1, p. 147.

¹¹⁷ Louisa Stuart Costello to Stacey Grimbaldi, 22 July 1848. London. British Library. Add.MS 34189, fol. 357. Simpson, *Camelot Regained*, p. 86.

¹¹⁸ See the reference to 'Arthur' in Gaucelm Faidit's 'Elegy on the Death of King Richard Coeur de Lion, in 1199' (*Specimens*, pp. 21–24 (p. 22)), and 'Lancelot' in Pierre de Ronsard's 'To Mary Stuart, Queen of Scotland' (*Specimens*, p. 268).

¹¹⁹ Joan Tasker Grimbaldi and Norris J. Lacy, 'Arthur in Modern French Fiction and Film', in *The Arthur of the French: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval French and Occitan Literature*, ed. Glyn S. Burgess and Karen Pratt (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006), pp. 546–70 (p. 547). As well as editing the Tristan texts, Michel also published an edition of Robert de Boron's *Estoire dou Graal* (as *Roman du Saint-Graal* (1841)).

¹²⁰ Francisque Michel to Louisa Stuart Costello, 'Lettre a Mademoiselle Stuart Costello, sur le trouverres François des XIIe et XIIIe siècles', 23 August 1834, in Costello, *Specimens*, pp. xxxix–xlix (p. xliii).

[Those romances [...] of Tristan the lover [...], despite what Monsieur Dr Robert Southey says, who has only read the last redaction, are worthy of the fame of their heroes as much as those of the Holy Grail, Percival of Wales, of Lancelot, Gawain, etc. [...] But admire, miss, the wonderful fecundity of Romance literature!]¹²¹

Michel's reference to Robert Southey's dislike of the Tristan story alluded to comments made by the poet laureate in his 'Preface' to the 1817 edition of *Le Morte Darthur*, in which he expressed his views on Malory's treatments of the story in no uncertain terms:

[T]he story in its progress not only disappointed, but frequently disgusted me. Vile as the thought is of producing by a philtre that love upon which the whole history turns, and making the hero, or rather both the heroes, live in adultery (and that too in both instances of an aggravated kind), these are the conditions of the Romance, which must be taken with it for better for worse: they are the original elements, of which the author was to make the best he could.¹²²

Influenced by Michel, Costello's view of the Tristan story was likewise antithetical to Southey's, and in *Specimens* she notes that 'Tristan de Léonois, knight of the Round Table, is the hero of one of the most pleasing of the romances of antiquity' (p. 63). Michel's enthusiasm also convinced Costello of the prominence of the 'adventures of the knights of [...] Arthur' in the works of the troubadours and trouveres ('Introduction', p. xxviii), and she used one of the French scholar's own poems, 'The Trouvères', as an epigraph. Michel's poem praised and drew attention to the heroes of various Arthurian romances:

[...] Perceval le Gallois,
Le roman du Graal, Parthenopex de Blois,
Les amours de Tristan avec Yseult la Blonde
Et cent autres beaux dits les plus plaisants du monde.

[[...] Percival the Welshman,
The romance of the Grail, Partonopeus de Blois,
The loves of Tristan and Yseult la Blonde
And a hundred beautiful others known as the most pleasant in the world].¹²³

¹²¹ English translation is my own.

¹²² Robert Southey, 'Introduction', to [Sir Thomas Malory], *The Byrth, Lyf, and Actes of Kyng Arthur; of his noble knyghtes of the rounde table, theyr mervyllous enquestes and adventures [...]* With an Introduction and Notes by Robert Southey, Esq., [ed. William Upcott] 2 vols (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1817), vol. 1, pp. i–lxiii (p. xv).

¹²³ Francisque Michel, 'The Trouvères', in Costello, *Specimens*, p. 41. English translation is my own.

Michel's appreciation of the Tristan romances was unsurprising considering that he was in the process of compiling a collection of all the then known Tristan texts. The first volume of Michel's edition of the courtly Tristan poems was published with the same publishers and in the same year as *Specimens of the Early Poetry of France*, and is warmly anticipated by Costello as a work which 'will doubtless be most valuable' (p. 295).¹²⁴

Fired by her knowledge of Michel's Tristan project, Costello included Marie de France's 'Chevrefoil' in *Specimens*, renaming it in translation as 'The Lay of the Eglantine' (pp. 61–67). The shortest of Marie's twelve *lais*, 'Chevrefoil' describes a romanticised meeting in a Cornish forest between the exiled Tristan and a journeying Yseult. In order to signal to the queen that he is hiding in the forest, Tristan carves his name into a branch of honeysuckle, leaving it for her to find on her route through the wood.¹²⁵ Prior to Costello, Matilda Betham, Eleanor Anne Porden, and Anna Jane Vardill had all praised Marie's *lais*, and there is a sense that by translating one of Marie's Arthurian *lais*, Costello is continuing a female tradition;¹²⁶ as Lupack and Tapa Lupack point out, Marie was 'the first [woman] to retell the [Tristan] story'.¹²⁷ Some years earlier, Ellis had furnished Scott with a prose translation of 'Chevrefoil', which he subsequently printed in the appendix to his introduction

¹²⁴ Francisque Michel, ed., *Tristan, recueil de ce qui reste des poèmes relatifs à ses aventures, composés en françois, en anglo-normand et en grec dans les XIIe et XIIIe siècle [The Poetical romances of Tristan, in French, in Anglo-Norman and in Greek, composed in the XII. and XIII. Centuries]*, 3 vols (London: William Pickering, 1835–39).

¹²⁵ Broome Saunders, *Women Writers and Nineteenth-Century Medievalism*, p. 24.

¹²⁶ Matilda Betham thought Marie's lays 'curious in themselves, illustrative of the manners and morals of an age when they formed the amusement of the better orders' (Betham, 'Preface', to *The Lay of Marie* (London: Rowland Hunter, 1816), pp. v–viii (p. viii)). Eleanor Anne Porden includes a reference to 'soft Marie's tales' in *Coeur de Lion*, vol. 2, p. 175, l. 95), and, in an accompanying note, asserts: 'Those who have perceived Mr. Ellis' agreeable abstract of our old English Romances of Chivalry, can scarcely fail to remember with pleasure the twelve lays of Marie de France [...] which appear to contain more novelty and elegance of invention than is usual in the Fabliaux of that age (*Coeur de Lion*, vol. 2, p. 401). In 'M. Denon in England' [Part 2], Vardill's Denon mentions 'the lays of the Breton's [sic], new called Marie's lays, because collected by her, and still in one manuscript – let me see – Harl. MSS No. 798'. Two of Marie's *lais*, 'Bisclaveret' and 'Eliduc', are then cited (Vardill, 'M. Denon in England [Part 2]', p. 130). The historian Hannah Lawrance (1775–1875) also praised Marie's *lais* as 'certainly superior, in both grace and feeling, to those of perhaps any other trovère' (Lawrance, *Historical Memoirs of the Queens of England, from the Commencement of the Twelfth Century* (London: Edward Moxon, 1838), p. 365 (note)).

¹²⁷ Lupack and Tapa Lupack, 'Arthurian Literature by Women: The Forgotten Tradition', p. 9. Broome Saunders offers a similar suggestion when she observes that both Costello and Marie 'express a desire to keep these tales in "circulation"' (Broome Saunders, *Women Writers and Nineteenth-Century Medievalism*, p. 24).

to *Sir Tristrem*, but Costello is the first writer to compile an English metrical version. Her keenness to present Marie's *lais* in verse (rather than prose) follows an earlier model set by G.L. Way, who had rendered two of the *lais* – 'Lanval' and 'Guigemar' – into verse as part of the *Fabliaux or Tales*.¹²⁸

Costello's 'The Lay of the Eglantine' demonstrates the effects of her liberal translation strategy, as it introduces a number of poetic motifs not found in Marie's original *lai*. The first stanza of Costello's version, for example, has the speaker accompanied by a harp: 'Awake, my harp, and breathe a lay / Which poets oft have loved to tell, / Of Tristan and his lady gay' ('The Lay of the Eglantine', ll. 1–3).¹²⁹ While this addition quite cleverly anticipates Marie's ending to the tale, which refers to Tristan as a 'gifted harper' [*ki bien saviet harper*'],¹³⁰ it also establishes Tristan's musical skills early on to allow Costello to interpret the later line in more sentimental terms, remarking that 'well to him, Love's Slave, was known / All the deep springs of minstrel lore' (ll. 131–32).¹³¹ Similarities with her earlier Arthurian poem, 'A Dream', also emerge: Tristan, we are told, roams 'flowery plains' (l. 37) much akin to the 'flowry plain' upon which the speaker of 'A Dream' observes King Arthur.¹³²

¹²⁸ See *Fabliaux*, vol. 2, 'The Lay of Sir Lanval', pp. 51–72; 'The Lay of Sir Gugemer', pp. 102–16.

¹²⁹ Compare:

Asez me plect e bien le voil
del lai que humme nume *Chevrefoil*
que le verité vus en cunt,
pur quei il fu fet e dunt.
Plusurs le me unt cunté e dit
e jeo l'ai trové en escrit
de Tristram e de la reïne

It pleases me well and I truly wish
to tell you the truth of the lai
that men call *Chevrefoil*,
why it was made and how it originated.
Many have told and recounted it to me
and I have found it written
about Tristan and the queen

Marie de France, 'Chevrefoil (The Honeysuckle)', in *The Broadview Anthology of British Literature: The Medieval Period*, ed. Joseph Black and others, 2nd edn (London: Broadview, 2009), pp. 207–09, ll. 1–7.

¹³⁰ Marie de France, 'Chevrefoil', l. 112.

¹³¹ Broome Saunders is the only scholar to have paid significant attention to Costello's *Specimens* (see Broome Saunders, *Women Writers and Nineteenth-Century Medievalism*, pp. 23–27). For Broome Saunders, 'Costello's use of archaic phrases has a basic purpose [...] to emphasize the poetic beauty of the language and give a taste of the medieval as it would have been perceived by many of her audience, in all its antique charm' (pp. 25–26).

¹³² Louisa Stuart Costello, 'A Dream', in *The Maid of the Cyprus Isle and Other Poems* (London: Sherwood, Neely and Jones, 1815), pp. 56–58 (l. 12).

Though Costello was influenced heavily by Ellis's style of editing, her translation of Marie's 'Chevrefoil' differs significantly from his prose rendering of the same text in Scott's *Sir Tristrem*. In Ellis's translation, Tristan's exile causes him to become 'careless of life', but in Costello's poem, the knight is 'Abandon'd, hopeless and forlorn!' (l. 16).¹³³ Ellis's more formal rendering of the story comments from a distance on the actions of the characters involved (Mark is 'much offended' by the lovers, who, when they meet are 'delighted beyond measure' and part again 'with mutual grief').¹³⁴ Throughout her version, Costello inserts new details that graft a layer of nineteenth-century sentiment onto the medieval poem. When Tristan carves the honeysuckle branch that will signal his presence to Yseult, his hand trembles with emotion (l. 59), and his lover blushes when she spots the sign:

She came – she saw the dear loved name,
So long to deep regret consign'd,
And rosy bright her cheek became,
As thoughts flash'd quick across her mind.¹³⁵ (ll. 85–88)

Both these details, as well as the comment on Yseult's disturbed state of mind, are not found in Marie's French, and demonstrate Costello's efforts to construct a more sympathetic account of the lovers' plight.

Through such sympathetic details, the translation illuminates Costello's interest in the body as an emotional signifier, an element of her style that also characterises her original Arthurian poems, such as 'The Druid Lover' and 'The Funeral Boat', and has similarities with 'T.B.G.'s approach to the Maid of Astolat story.¹³⁶ Like Anne Bannerman's claim to 'a

¹³³ See [George Ellis], 'Translation of the Lai dee Chevrefoil, by Mademoiselle Marie', in the Appendix to the 'Introduction', to *Sir Tristrem: A Metrical Romance of the Thirteenth Century*, ed. Sir Walter Scott (Edinburgh: Constable, 1804), pp. civ–cvi (p. cv). Towards the end of his introduction, Scott acknowledges that he received 'the subjoined translation of the *lais* of Mademoiselle Marie' from Ellis 'while these sheets were going to press', and made a last-minute decision to annex it to his edition (p. xciii).

¹³⁴ [Ellis], 'Translation of the Lai dee Chevrefoil', pp. civ–cvi.

¹³⁵ Compare 'Chevrefoil', ll. 79–82:

La reine vait chevachant;	The queen came riding along:
ele esgardat tut un pendant.	she looked all along the slope of the road.
La bastun vit, bien l'aparceut	She spotted the staff, she saw it well,
tutes les lettres i conut.	she recognized all the letters.

¹³⁶ For detailed discussion of these poems, see Chapters 3, 3.4 and 5, 5.1.

poetical community of right' that sanctions her appropriation of the Arthurian story, Costello's considerable use of poetic licence – in her words, her use of an 'equivalent expression', rather than a 'mere literal' substitution – asserts her right to (re)write medieval material in a manner which reflects contemporary taste at the same time that it makes obscure, or challenging texts accessible to a wider reading public. In her appendix to *Specimens*, Costello included a second Tristan poem: a 'free translation' of 'Laie de Mort de Tristan Leonnois' (pp. 294–95). This, too, aspires to the kind of antiquarian practice popularised by Ellis and Scott. In the same way that Scott had offered 'Chevrefoil' to readers as an analogue to *Sir Tristrem*, Costello provided an additional poem 'from the romance of Tristan and Yseult' to illuminate Marie's *lai* (p. 294).¹³⁷

Costello's direct correspondence with a network of French and English romance scholars – including the likes of Scott, Michel, and Sir Frederic Madden, 'the most learned Middle English scholar up to his time' – lends a confidence to her work that is not found in women writers' Arthurian pursuits before this point.¹³⁸ In private, however, Costello still harboured anxieties about her treatment of medieval literature. In 1834, Madden lent several books to Costello that she returned with a letter (humbly referring to herself in the third-person) informing him that she had 'altogether re-written the introduction [to *Specimens*] which she hopes now contains fewer errors, though she feels very nervous about it'.¹³⁹ Yet in her preface to *Specimens* she admitted to feeling 'less diffidence in submitting this collection to the public, since it has received the sanction of a person [Madden] whose opinion carries so much weight, and who has most indulgently directed my inexperience with his judgement'

¹³⁷ Ellis had already printed this French poem and provided an English translation in the third volume of the *Fabliaux*, vol. 3, pp. 203–06. As Ellis explains, it was one of several 'shorter lays and songs' included in the four-volume *Corps d'extraits de romans de chevalerie* (1780) edited by the Louis-Élisabeth de La Vergne de Tressan, a French medievalist who shared Ellis and Way's desire to popularise medieval literature. Way had translated this poem and others shortly before his death in 1799.

¹³⁸ Matthews, *The Making of Middle English*, p. 116.

¹³⁹ Louisa Stuart Costello to Sir Frederic Madden, 24 August 1834. British Library, London. MS Eg.2840, fol.275.

(p. ix). Positioning herself as a sort of pupil of Madden's, Costello's comments retain an air of hesitancy and humility, but his important 'sanction' of her work alleviates many of these anxieties.

In addition, Costello's increase in confidence was also brought about by the fact that she had viewed many of her texts – including Marie's *lais* – in manuscript, and therefore could talk authoritatively about their contents.¹⁴⁰ She concluded her preface to *Specimens* by thanking 'those persons both in England and France, who have, with so much kindness, permitted me to avail myself of the treasures contained in their libraries' (p. x). She drew on all aspects of her wide reading when annotating her medieval poems; the notes to 'Chevrefoil' cite Thomas Warton, Robert de Brunne, John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, and (perhaps more surprisingly) Byron's *The Bride of Abydos* (1823) (pp. 295–96).¹⁴¹ She is aware of the French prose *Tristan* (1230–35), and conveys her knowledge that 'the celebrated poet, Chrestien de Troyes, versified it, but his work is unfortunately lost' (p. 63). Her familiarity with Scott's *Sir Tristrem* – a text Beverly Taylor and Elisabeth Brewer describe as characterised by 'difficult Northern Middle English, [...] abrupt transitions, and obscure diction' – is also a testimony to her high level of scholarly endeavour, as is her frequent citation of Ritson's scholarship throughout *Specimens*.¹⁴² Ritson shared none of Ellis and Scott's drive towards popularisation and 'held interests [...] purely scholarly', yet his uncompromising edition of *Ancient English Metrical Romanceës* – remarkable, says

¹⁴⁰ The introductory headnote to Marie's *lais* in *Specimens* contains references to detailed variations in the copies of the works contained in the Harley MS 978 in the British Museum, which would appear to suggest that Costello and her brother Dudley (who compiled the headnote to the *Lais*) saw the manuscript in person. Costello certainly viewed other manuscripts in the Harley collection in the course of her research, including Christine de Pizan's poems (Harley 4431; see *Specimens*, p. 104) and the *Roman de la Rose* (Harley 4425), from which she made a copy of an illumination (see *Specimens*, facing p. 89).

¹⁴¹ Costello believed that 'the account of the miracle attending the tombs of Tristan and Yseult, who were buried near together, is very poetical, and may have suggested to Lord Byron his beautiful lines on the undying rose on the tomb of Zuleika' (*Specimens*, p. 295).

¹⁴² Taylor and Brewer, *The Return of King Arthur*, p. 29. Matthews similarly observes that Scott's *Sir Tristrem* was 'not widely read' (see Matthews, 'Scholarship and Popular Culture in the Nineteenth Century', p. 357). For Costello's engagement with Scott's *Sir Tristrem* outside of *Specimens*, see Miss Costello [Louisa Stuart Costello], 'The Deaths of Tristan and Yseult', in *The Tribute*, pp. 289–92, discussed in Chapter 5, 5.6.

Johnston, for its ‘arid unreadableness’ and ‘dullness’ – was put to use by Costello, Vardill, and Lady Charlotte Guest.¹⁴³

Despite her strong allegiances to France, like Scott, Costello was keen to promote a British Arthurian tradition, not only by reference to Scott’s *Sir Tristrem*, but by arguing that the author of the French *Tristan* ‘took this, and Lancelot du Lac [meaning the Vulgate Prose *Lancelot*] from two older British writers’ (p. 63). A further significant inclusion is her awareness that ‘[i]n Caxton’s ‘Morte Arthur’ the 8th, 9th, and 10th books treat of “Sir Trystram”’ (p. 67). Although ‘Chevrefoil’ does not make Tristan a knight of the Round Table, Costello clearly considered it an Arthurian work. She is the first women writer that we can be certain had read Malory’s *Morte Darthur* since Clara Reeve half a century earlier. Her strong desire to engage with continental romances, as well as French and English scholarship, anticipates Lady Charlotte Guest’s similar attention to continental analogues for the Welsh Arthurian romances collected in *The Mabinogion*.

4.5 Lady Charlotte Guest’s Arthurian Romances in *The Mabinogion* (1838–49)

Lady Charlotte Guest’s *Mabinogion* was, undoubtedly, a seminal achievement for women’s Arthurian scholarship. As Norris J. Lacy puts it, ‘Charlotte Guest’s importance in the history of Welsh, and therefore more generally of Arthurian, scholarship is almost inestimable’.¹⁴⁴

Similarly, for Rachel Bromwich, ‘[h]er name will always remain indissolubly linked with *The Mabinogion*, whose publication was an epoch-making event in Welsh studies’.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Matthews, ‘Scholarship and Popular Culture in the Nineteenth Century’, p. 357. Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, p. 146.

¹⁴⁴ Norris J. Lacy, ‘Translation of Medieval Arthurian Literature’, in *A History of Arthurian Scholarship*, ed. Norris J. Lacy (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006), pp. 49–60 (p. 51).

¹⁴⁵ Rachel Bromwich, ‘The “Mabinogion” and Lady Charlotte Guest (1812–1895)’, in *On Arthurian Women: Essays in Honour of Maureen Fries*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler and Fiona Tolhurst (Dallas: Scriptorium Press, 2001), pp. 321–34 (p. 331).

While Costello's translation of various Tristan poems and Vardill's semi-plagiarised attempt to create a popular redaction of the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur* show women writers offering small, embryonic editions of Arthurian texts, Guest's project remains largely unprecedented in its scope, ambition, and subsequent influence. That said, the new material uncovered in this thesis, and particularly in this chapter, challenges some previous accounts which name Guest as the inaugurator of women's Arthurian writing. For Marion Wynne-Davies, 'Lady Charlotte Guest's voice is the first female rewording of the Arthurian narrative in English'.¹⁴⁶ Given Wynne-Davies's choice to define Guest's strategy as one of 'rewording', it would be more accurate to locate the beginnings of such a practice with Costello's translation of various Tristan texts, Vardill's pseudo-plagiarised reordering of the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur*, or even – and perhaps most appropriately – the anonymous lady's re-editing and rewording of Percy's Arthurian ballads in 1807.¹⁴⁷ Though conducted on a much smaller scale, and often (in the case of Vardill and the 'lady') heavily reliant on existing editions of Arthurian material by male scholars, these earlier attempts at translating and editing Arthurian texts for a public audience are important antecedents for Guest's later achievements.

The intellectual profiles of Lady Charlotte Guest (1812–1895) and Louisa Stuart Costello are very similar. Like Costello, Guest was a gifted linguist, an admirer of Scott and of Malory's *Morte Darthur*, and had a particular interest in continental romance traditions. As her biographers Revel Guest and Angela V. John note, Guest 'had long admired the Arthurian legend'¹⁴⁸ and she considered Arthur 'the noblest creature that ever lived in fiction'.¹⁴⁹ Unlike Costello, however, Lady Charlotte had wealth, which, among many other things, allowed her to request that transcripts of romances be made on her behalf; on 9 April

¹⁴⁶ Marion Wynne-Davies, *Women and Arthurian Literature: Seizing the Sword* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), p. 111.

¹⁴⁷ See Chapter 1, 1.3.

¹⁴⁸ Revel Guest and Angela V. John, *Lady Charlotte Guest: An Extraordinary Life*, 2nd edn (Stroud: Tempus, 2007), p. 104.

¹⁴⁹ Cited in Guest and John, *Lady Charlotte Guest*, p. 104.

1839 she recorded in her journal that '[r]esearches are being made for me at the British Museum as to *Percival de Galles* and the *Sangreal*, so that I have much going on in my book in different directions'.¹⁵⁰ Guest's Arthurian project is far more ambitious and more substantial than Costello's or Vardill's, then, because she had the financial freedom to invest her own time in the project and recruit others to help her. Furthermore, as the wife of a baronet and member of parliament, she was able to study in manuscript libraries with greater freedom; according to Hoberman, 'prominent women' (like Guest) 'could use the [British museum] library with impunity', whereas 'prolonged visibility there was considered hazardous for middle-class women' (like Costello and Vardill).¹⁵¹ Guest visited the British Museum on 22 February 1839 'to make some references', and again on 5 August that year.¹⁵² For Judith Johnston, who reads Guest's project in colonial terms,

Guest's class and wealth permitted her an opportunity to dominate [...] and her elaborate production of a translated *Mabinogion* represents her own attempt to locate a place for herself that was different from her husband's world yet within the acceptable parameters of the day.¹⁵³

According to Johnston, for the upper-class woman Arthurian studies is no longer a problematic interest, but an 'acceptable' one.

Affluent she may have been, but Guest was far from free of her share of responsibilities. During her time working on the *Mabinogion*, she remained heavily involved in her husband's ironworks at Dowlais and his political campaigns, often while pregnant (she bore ten children in thirteen years). Guest started work on the *Mabinogion* on 1 January 1838, beginning with 'The Lady of the Fountain', an analogue to Chrétien de Troyes's *Yvain*. For Guest and John, this was a suitable starting point, as the 'tale of Owain was one with which

¹⁵⁰ Journal of Lady Charlotte Guest, entry for 9 April 1839. Cited in D. Rhys Phillips, *Lady Charlotte Guest and the Mabinogion* (Carmarthen: W. Spurrell and Son, 1921), p. 25.

¹⁵¹ Hoberman, 'Women in the British Museum Reading Room', 494.

¹⁵² Journal of Lady Charlotte Guest, entries for 22 February 1839 and 5 August 1839. Cited in Rhys Phillips, *Lady Charlotte Guest*, pp. 23, 26.

¹⁵³ Judith Johnston, 'Victorian Appropriations: Lady Charlotte Guest translates *The Mabinogion*', *Studies in Medievalism*, 11 (2001), 145–66 (p. 151).

Lady Charlotte would have been familiar through versions in other languages' and therefore she would have found it 'easier to translate than the Four Branches which open most modern versions [of *The Mabinogion*]'.¹⁵⁴ She followed this with 'Peredur' and 'Geraint, son of Erbin', which, together with 'The Lady of the Fountain', form an Arthurian group now typically known as 'The Three Romances'. Two further Arthurian independent tales, 'Kilhwch and Olwen' and 'The Dream of Rhonabwy', were the next to appear in print.¹⁵⁵ For Bromwich, '[i]t is clear that the three Arthurian romances were Lady Charlotte's primary interest'.¹⁵⁶

Guest's busy schedule meant that she often worked on her translations at a furious pace and well into the night.¹⁵⁷ 'Peredur' (an analogue of Chrétien's *Perceval*) was completed in seven weeks (admittedly with added haste due to pressure from the French scholar, Theodore Hersart de la Villemarqué, who was threatening to publish his version first), and the whole of the *Mabinogion* had been translated by the end of June 1843, in almost exactly five and a half years. Her skills in copying and transcribing were similarly impressive. In 1964, Roger Sherman Loomis noted with awe the speed at which Guest transcribed 2288 lines of the Middle English *Sir Perceval of Galles* from the Thornton Manuscript (Lincoln Cathedral MS 91). As Loomis anecdotally recalls: 'she began it on a Monday morning and

¹⁵⁴ Guest and John, *Lady Charlotte Guest*, p. 104.

¹⁵⁵ Guest's *Mabinogion* appeared in seven parts between 1838–49. The complete collected three-volume edition also appeared in 1849. The texts were published in the following order: (1) 'The Lady of the Fountain' (1838); (2) 'Peredur' (1839); (3) 'Geraint' (1840); (4) 'Kilhwch and Olwen' (1842); (5) 'The Dream of Rhonabwy, and the Tale of Pwyll, Prince of Dyved' (1843); (6) 'Branwen, the daughter of Llyr; Manawyddan, the Son of Llyr; Math, the Son of Mathonwy' (1846); (7) 'The Dream of Maxem Weldig, Llud and Llevelys, and the History of Taliessin' (1849). I have retained the spellings and titles for the tales used by Guest throughout this chapter, though they vary in more modern editions (see, for example, Sioned Davies's recent title variants for 'How Culhwch won Olwen', 'The Lady of the Well', and 'Rhonabwy's Dream', in *The Mabinogion*, trans. Sioned Davies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)).

¹⁵⁶ Bromwich, 'The "Mabinogion" and Lady Charlotte Guest', p. 327.

¹⁵⁷ See Guest's journal entries in Rhys Phillips, *Lady Charlotte Guest and the Mabinogion*, 1 August 1840: 'I was fully employed, till midnight indeed, in making a kind of abstract of the English Metrical *Percival*, for the notes on 'Peredur'' (p. 27); and 14 August 1841: 'I sat up late this evening [...] finishing my 'Kilhwch' notes' (p. 30).

seems to have finished it on Saturday – six days. It took me almost a month'.¹⁵⁸ Like Costello, Guest was gracious in acknowledging the assistance she had received from continental scholars. In her preface she thanked Villemarqué 'for the kindness and alacrity with which he furnished me with a Transcript of the "Chevalier au Lion" from an original MS. in the Bibliotheque du Roi'.¹⁵⁹

Guest's reading and research for her notes to the Three Romances display her familiarity with the same editions which had already proved so useful to Costello, Vardill and others. Ellis's notes to Way's *Fabliaux* (vol. 1, pp. 103, 115, 381; vol. 2, p. 162), St. Palaye's work on chivalry (read in the original French rather than in Dobson's translation) (vol. 1, p. 93, 110, 117, 123; vol. 2, p. 179), and Ritson's *Ancient English Metrical Romanceës* (vol. 1, pp. viii, 105–06, vol. 2, pp. 142, 169) were Guest's most frequent sources of Arthurian information, alongside the medieval Welsh texts included in the *Myvyrian Archaiology of Wales* (1801–7). She also made use of Aaron Thompson's translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth (vol. 1, p. 102), Ellis's *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances* (vol. 1, p. 130), Southey's preface to *Le Morte Darthur* (vol. 1, p. 216), Scott's notes to *Sir Tristrem* (vol. 1, pp. xvi, 383), and Sir Frederick Madden's edition of Layamon's *Brut* and his 1838 anthology of Gawain romances (vol. 1, pp. xv, 398).¹⁶⁰ Her close familiarity with Malory is evident from her detailed summary of the 'Tale of Sir Gareth' (vol. 1, pp. 97–98, 114). In Southey's introduction to Malory she also found his summary of the Merlin and Vivian story which she reproduced in her 'Note on the Forest of Breciliande, &c' (vol. 1, pp. 216–18).

¹⁵⁸ Roger Sherman Loomis, 'Pioneers in Arthurian Scholarship', *Bulletin Bibliographique de la Société Internationale Arthurienne*, 16 (1964), 95–106. Repr. in Loomis, *Studies in Medieval Literature: A Memorial Collection of Essays*, ed. Albert C. Baugh (New York and London: Burt Franklin, 1970), pp. 313–24 (p. 322). See also Guest's recording of her progress with *Percival* in Rhys Phillips, *Lady Charlotte Guest*, p. 27.

¹⁵⁹ Lady Charlotte Guest, 'Preface', to *The Mabinogion, from the Llyfr Coch o Hergest, and other Welsh manuscripts: with an English translation and notes*, ed. and trans. Lady Charlotte Guest, 3 vols (London: Longman, Orme, Browne, Green, and Longmans; Llandoverly, W. Rees, 1849), vol. 1, p. vii. All further references are to this edition and are subsequently given in parentheses.

¹⁶⁰ A list of the books owned by Lady Charlotte Guest and used for her *Mabinogion* research has been helpfully compiled by Guest and John; see 'Appendix 4B: A List of books which Lady Charlotte possessed in 1852 relevant to *The Mabinogion*', in *Lady Charlotte Guest*, pp. 251–52.

Yet although lauded by Lacy and Bromwich as a formidable contributor to Arthurian studies, and clearly skilled in transcribing, translating, and all aspects of antiquarian research, Guest's success in providing the first published version of *The Mabinogion* in Welsh and English has been persistently dogged by two claims: first, that that she received far heavier assistance from two Welsh scholars, the Reverend John Jones ('Tegid') and the Reverend Thomas Price ('Carnhuanawc'), than she ever acknowledged, and second, that her translation was less accurate due to her prudish omission of references to sexual activity in the tales. The idiosyncrasies in her translation continue to be explored to the present day.¹⁶¹ Thus, Wynne-Davies rather uneasily places Guest at the font head of women's Arthurian literature. 'It must be accepted', writes Wynne-Davies, 'that even though she was the first woman to rework the Arthurian material, Guest hardly radicalised the mythology'.¹⁶² The job of the translator, however, Guest firmly believed, was not to 'radicalise' or alter the text, but to present a faithful rendering. After a meeting with Price to discuss her translation of 'The Lady of the Fountain', she recorded in her journal that 'being willing to keep very rigidly to the original, very little alteration could be made in my version, which will, I fear, appear very clumsy English'.¹⁶³ In theory, then, her method was thus entirely opposed to Costello's more poetical approach to translation from medieval languages into modern English.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶¹ See Donna R. White, 'The Crimes of Lady Charlotte Guest', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 15 (1995), 242–49. Both Wynne-Davies and Johnston have focussed on examining the differences between Guest's translation of the tales and the successive edition by Jones and Jones (*The Mabinogion*, trans. Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones (London: Everyman, 1948)). See Wynne-Davies, "'I will, Lord, while I can": Lady Charlotte Guest's *Mabinogion*' [Chapter 5], in *Women and Arthurian Literature*, pp. 107–26; Johnston, 'Victorian Appropriations: Lady Charlotte Guest translates *The Mabinogion*', *Studies in Medievalism*, 11 (2001), 145–66. Though she does not attempt comparisons in any detail, Clare Broome Saunders's discussion of 'Geraint' begins by describing how 'Guest's translation displays all the expected niceties – her language is full of euphemism, sections from the original Welsh tales of explicit sex or violence avoided' (Broome Saunders, *Women Writers and Nineteenth-Century Medievalism*, p. 129).

¹⁶² Wynne-Davies, *Women and Arthurian Literature*, p. 120.

¹⁶³ Guest's Journal, 5 February 1838, cited in Rhys Phillips, *Lady Charlotte Guest and the Mabinogion*, p. 20.

¹⁶⁴ On Guest's 'theory of translation', see Sioned Davies, 'A Charming Guest: Translating the *Mabinogion*', *Studia Celtica*, 38 (2004), 157–78 (pp. 164–66, 177).

However, Sioned Davies's detailed comparison of the opening of 'Kilhwch and Olwen' as translated by Guest, William Owen Pughe, Gwyn Jones and Thomas Jones, and Jeffrey Gantz, reveals what can be considered radical in her treatment of the text:

Above all, [...] the comparison reveals how [Guest] draws on her everyday experiences as a woman, and as a mother. No 'she grew with child' or 'when her time came' for her – 'pregnancy' and 'delivery' are the realities of a woman's life. She tends to use inclusive language and is more neutral in her recoding of the source language text. Indeed, through her work as a translator, or rather a translatrix, she succeeds in bringing the female voice into the *Mabinogion*.¹⁶⁵

Equally groundbreaking, if not radical, was her contribution to the understanding of the relationship between Welsh literature and continental romances. As Bromwich points out, 'it seems most probable that Lady Charlotte was the first person to discover and point out that closely parallel versions existed in French and other languages to the Three Romances'.¹⁶⁶ She was, as it were, well ahead of her time. Her printing of Chrétien's *La Chevalier au Lion* remained the most easily accessible version of the text until a German scholar, Wilhelm Ludwig, published his edition in 1869.¹⁶⁷

Guest's notes illuminate these continental parallels between the various texts with confidence and authority, but an element of the Arthurian anxieties so common in women's writing in the previous decades nevertheless still crept in. In her introduction to the 1849 collected edition, Guest expressed her unease at 'trespass[ing]', as she called it, into the realm of the researcher and commentator:

it is one thing to collect facts, and quite another to classify and draw from them their legitimate conclusions; and though I am loth that what has been collected with some pains, should be entirely thrown away, it is unwillingly, and with diffidence, that I trespass beyond the acknowledged province of a translator. (vol. 1, p. xi–xii)

Guest leads her reader to believe that she enters the realm of scholarship 'unwillingly and with diffidence', and that it is only out of a sense of duty – or dislike of waste – that she must

¹⁶⁵ Davies, 'A Charming Guest', 177.

¹⁶⁶ Bromwich, 'The "Mabinogion" and Lady Charlotte Guest', p. 328.

¹⁶⁷ See Tony Hunt, 'Editing Arthuriana', in *A History of Arthurian Scholarship*, ed. Norris J. Lacy (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006), pp. 37–48 (p. 39).

publish what ‘she has collected with some pains’. Besides presenting the act of constructing her edition as a painful process, Guest’s apology seems to contradict her views on the text expressed in her private journal, where her plans to present an annotated edition appear early on. Upon reading an extant translation of ‘Kilhwch and Olwen’ provided by Tegid on 4 December 1837, Guest recorded: ‘It pleases me much. There is a great field for annotation’.¹⁶⁸ Indeed, there is as much material in Guest’s journal pertaining to her compilation of ‘notes’ for the various tales as there are details about the progress of the translation itself. Therefore, we should perhaps be wary of taking her apology for ‘trespassing’ too seriously, and indeed, the spatial imagery which characterises her comments suggests that she well knew that her work was helping to gain a new ‘province’ for women intellectuals. ‘The notes are extremely clever’, remarked a reviewer of *The Mabinogion* in the *Court and Lady’s Magazine*.¹⁶⁹ If, as Davies puts it, Charlotte Guest brought a female voice into the *Mabinogion*, her work also firmly announced the arrival of the female Arthurian scholar.

¹⁶⁸ Guest’s Journal, 4 December 1837, cited in Rhys Phillips, *Lady Charlotte Guest and the Mabinogion*, p. 19.

¹⁶⁹ [Review], ‘The Mabinogion [Part 2: Peredur]’, *Court and Lady’s Magazine*, 17 (Oct 1839), 451–53 (452, 453).

5. A Fashionable Fantasy: Arthur in the Annuals, 1829–1845

While Chapter Five focussed largely on the scholarly strain in women's Arthurian writing in the 1830s and 40s, this final chapter explores the parallel rehabilitation of the legend in the popular poetic consciousness. 'By 1830', write Beverly Taylor and Elisabeth Brewer, 'Arthur's promised return had become assured'.¹ 1832 would mark the appearance of Tennyson's 'The Lady of Shalott' and 'The Palace of Art', and as Roger Simpson has shown, in the 1830s Tennyson was already making notes for a serious and much longer Arthurian work.² It is difficult to challenge Tennyson's eventual centrality to the explosion of Victorian interest in the legend; as Rob Gossedge and Stephen Knight cogently summarise, the *Idylls of the King* (1859–85) was 'the overwhelming force in rescue[ing] Arthur from the comic underworld and re-establish[ing] him as a central figure of literary value'.³ Well before this later magnitude, however, Tennyson and a number of Romantic women poets published side-by-side in the literary productions of the 1830s and 1840s, and it was not Tennyson, but his female contemporaries who exhibited interests in Arthurian romance in the period's most popular and fashionable publications. James D. Merriman observes that the Romantic period saw 'the development of a climate of opinion, a new sensibility, in which Arthurian story in

¹ Beverly Taylor and Elisabeth Brewer, *The Return of King Arthur: British and American Literature since 1800* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1983), p. 34.

² 'The Lady of Shalott' and 'The Palace of Art' appeared in Tennyson's *Poems* (London: Edward Moxon, 1833). Despite being dated 1833 on the title page, the volume appeared in December 1832. 'The Lady of Shalott' is discussed in 5.6 below. 'The Palace of Art' contains a single Arthurian stanza mentioning Uther, Avalon, and the 'weeping queens', retained but revised for the 1842 version of the poem (See *The Poems of Tennyson*, 2nd edn, ed. Christopher Ricks, 3 vols (Harlow: Longman, 1987), vol. 1, pp. 436–56 (ll. 105–08)). For Tennyson's work towards an Arthurian epic in the 1830s, see Roger Simpson, *Camelot Regained: The Arthurian Revival and Tennyson 1800–1849* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1990), pp. 190–94.

³ Rob Gossedge and Stephen Knight, 'The Arthur of the Sixteenth to Nineteenth Centuries', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend*, ed. Elizabeth Archibald and Ad Putter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 103–19 (p. 115).

the coming age could flourish again as it had not done since the end of the Middle Ages'.⁴

Though often overlooked in Arthurian studies, key to crafting this 'new sensibility' – as well as a major but seldom acknowledged influence on the style of Tennyson's early Arthurian verse – was the overwhelming taste for decorative annuals and gift books which dominated British literary output in the 1820s and 30s.

Often said to mark the transition from Romantic to Victorian poetry, the enormous fashion for ornamental literary annuals began with the publication of Rudolph Ackermann's *Forget Me Not* in 1822.⁵ Inspired by the recent success of gift books in Germany, the English annuals proved hugely popular with middle-class readers, and, priced at up to a guinea, they represented a financially lucrative business for publishers, editors, and contributors alike.⁶ By 1832, sixty-three annual titles were in circulation.⁷ As Tim Killick notes, the annuals 'were crucial in allowing authors to try out subject matter and themes', including, it would seem, the long-sidelined subject of the 'Matter of Britain'.⁸ Within this new publishing format, the Arthurian legend returned to popular consciousness. Arthurian poems appeared in almost all of the major and most enduring annual titles, including *Friendship's Offering*, the *Literary Souvenir*, the *Forget Me Not*, the *Juvenile Forget Me Not*, the *Bijou*, *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap-book*, and *The Tribute*.⁹

⁴ James D. Merriman, *The Flower of Kings: A Study of the Arthurian Legend in England Between 1485 and 1835* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1973), p.174.

⁵ See Lee Erickson, 'The Market', in *A Companion to Victorian Poetry*, ed. Richard Cronin, Alison Chapman, and Antony H. Harrison (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 345–60 (p. 346). The *Forget Me Not* ran from 1822–47.

⁶ Frederick W. Faxon, *Literary Annuals and Gift-Books: A Bibliography with a Descriptive Introduction* (Boston: The Boston Book Company, 1912), p. xv. See also Kathryn Ledbetter, *Tennyson and Victorian Periodicals: Commodities in Context* (London: Ashgate, 2007), who notes that twelve shillings was the selling price for most annuals (only the *Keepsake* was a guinea) (p. 8).

⁷ Faxon, *Literary Annuals and Gift-Books*, p. xi. Later cited in Susan Brown, 'The Victorian Poetess', in *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Poetry*, ed. Joseph Bristow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 180–202 (p. 190); also Tim Killick, *British Short Fiction in the Early Nineteenth Century: The Rise of the Tale* (London: Ashgate, 2008), p. 29.

⁸ Killick, *British Short Fiction*, p. 30.

⁹ These were: William Lisle Bowles, 'Glastonbury Abbey and Wells Cathedral', *Friendship's Offering*, ed. Thomas K. Hervey (London: Lupton Relfe, 1826), pp. 64–66; Thomas Hood, 'A Lament for the Decline of Chivalry', *Bijou* (London: William Pickering, 1828), pp. 75–79; 'R.', 'English Chronicles', *Juvenile Forget Me Not. A Christmas and New Year's Present, or Birthday Present, for the Year 1830*, ed. Mrs S.C. Hall (London: N. Hailes, 1830), pp. 156–58; [Winthrop Macworth Praed] 'The Author of 'Lillian'', 'The Legend of the

Despite this prevalence, there has been little detailed discussion of the relationship between early nineteenth-century Arthurian literature and the annual phenomenon. Roger Simpson's meticulous study, *Camelot Regained* (1990), uncovers a wealth of previously unnoticed Arthuriana in 'the early nineteenth century's annuals, periodicals and literary magazines', but is more concerned with outlining a 'general survey' of Arthurian texts produced between 1800 and 1849 than it is with establishing distinctions between texts based on their mode of publication.¹⁰ Outside the realm of Arthurian studies, however, Peter Manning has recently proposed that William Wordsworth's unusual 'Arthurian fable', 'The Egyptian Maid; or, the Romance of the Water Lily' (1835), can be better understood in the context of Wordsworth's numerous contributions to the annuals; for Manning, 'The Egyptian Maid' 'would have been quite at home in the *Keepsake*'.¹¹ Manning's acute observation hints at how shifting the focus onto this popular literary form has the potential to offer new insights into Romantic uses of the myth. This chapter argues that women's Arthurian poems in the annuals share a number of formal and stylistic commonalities, and are always negotiating their material context as an annual contribution at the same time as they pursue an engagement with Arthurian romance.

Decorated both inside and out, the literary annuals were the epitome of the ornamental commercial object, and as their popularity grew, so did their size and ostentation:

At first they were the small duo-decimos, then octavos, and finally some of them appeared as quartos. Their bindings were ornate, often to the point of gaudiness. If of

Haunted Tree', *Literary Souvenir*, ed. Alaric A. Watts (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1831), pp. 1–16; John Michell, 'Tintagel Castle', *Forget Me Not: A Christmas and New Year's Present for MDCCCXXIX*, ed. Fredrick Shoberl (London: R. Ackermann, 1829), pp. 85–88; J.F. Hollings, 'To Morgan Le Fay', *Literary Souvenir* (1831), p. 133, 'C.' [Thomas Crofton Croker], 'St. Michael's Mount', *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap-book* (London: Fisher and Son, 1832), pp. 8–9. Arthurian poems by Letitia Elizabeth Landon, Mary Howitt and Caroline Norton appeared in *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap-book*, and by Louisa Stuart Costello in the *Forget Me Not* and *The Tribute* (all discussed below).

¹⁰ Simpson, *Camelot Regained*, p. 2.

¹¹ Peter J. Manning, 'Wordsworth in the *Keepsake*, 1829', in *Literature in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century British Publishing & Reading Practices*, ed. John O. Jordan and Brian L. Patten (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 44–73 (p. 61).

leather the covers were heavily embossed, or profusely gilt, or if a cloth was desired, a watered silk dress gave distinction to the volumes.¹²

The content of the annuals was as intensely decorative as their exteriors. Their major selling point was the large number of high quality steel-plate engravings they contained, numbering anything from fourteen (the *Forget Me Not*) to thirty-six (*Fisher's*). Such personal picture galleries offered aspiring middle-class readers the chance to 'view copies of fine paintings for the first time in history'.¹³ Often, as was the case with Letitia Elizabeth Landon's work for *Fisher's*, editors were required to provide 'poetical illustrations' of pre-selected prints, giving rise to a public perception that the picture was more valuable than the poem. In terms of poetic style, the annuals' emphasis on the visual cultivated what Lee Erickson describes as a fondness for 'pictorial description', and indeed, a strong preoccupation with visual beauty colours all of the Arthurian poems women wrote for the annuals.¹⁴ In particular, Louisa Stuart Costello's 'The Funeral Boat' speaks loudly of its status as an annual poem, wrapping, as it does, its Arthurian female subject in ornate 'bindings' that mimic those which will eventually hold her poem in place among the decorated leaves of the *Forget Me Not*.

From the late 1820s to the 1840s, the literary annuals became the new hosts for women writers' imaginative experiments with aspects of the Arthurian myth. Several early Arthurian contributions to the annuals are admittedly the work of male authors, but (perhaps unsurprisingly) Arthurian poems by women are common within a form closely associated with 'female poetry, female editorship, and female readership'.¹⁵ As Susan Brown notes, the annuals offered women writers a newly lucrative professionalising space:

¹² Faxon, *Literary Annuals and Gift-Books*, p. xiv.

¹³ Kathryn Ledbetter, "'BeGemmed and beAmuletted": Tennyson and those "vapid" Gift Books', *Victorian Poetry*, 34:2 (1996), 235–45 (236). Paula R. Feldman similarly observes that the annuals, 'on an unprecedented scale, allowed ordinary people to own high quality reproductions of significant works of art' (see Feldman, 'Introduction', to *The Keepsake for 1829*, ed. Frederic Mansel Reynolds, with an introduction by Paula Feldman (Toronto: Broadview, 2006), pp. 7–26 (p. 7)).

¹⁴ See Lee Erickson, *The Economy of Literary Form: English Literature and the Industrialization of Publishing, 1800–1850* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins Press, 1996), p. 41.

¹⁵ Patricia Pulham, "'Jewels – delights – perfect loves": Victorian Women Poets and the Annuals', in *Victorian Women Poets*, ed. Alison Chapman (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003), pp. 9–32 (p. 13). William Lisle Bowles,

The fact that women writers edited [the annuals] as well as published in them fostered a network of women's writing that rippled down through the entire Victorian period. The sense of association with sister writers whose work appeared alongside their own, the opportunity to publish in a large circulation market, [...] and the correspondence between authors and editors all laid the foundation for a community of women writers.¹⁶

Women's Arthurian contributions to the annuals reflect this increased sense of 'correspondence' and 'community' on a smaller scale. What is new about Arthurian poems by women published in the annuals (and distinguishes them from more isolated engagements before this time) is that they frequently allude to contemporary Arthurian works by their 'sister writers'. Landon alighted on the same aspect of the story as Costello for treatment in her poem, 'A Legend of Tintagel Castle', published in *Fisher's* in 1832. Again, this was encouraged by the annuals' preference for 'tales about love or lost love, death, nature, and children', as well as 'medieval romance'.¹⁷ The tale of the love affair between Lancelot and the Maid of Astolat – a narrative which usefully encompasses love, lost love, death *and* medieval romance – offers an attractive combination of several of the form's 'acceptable and typical' subjects.¹⁸ Not only did Costello and Landon both alight on the same aspect of the story for their individual contributions to different annuals, but the appearance of two Arthurian poems in *Fisher's* while the title was under Landon's longstanding editorship encouraged those writers who inherited her position to continue the tradition of publishing Arthurian poems in the title 'so associated with her name'.¹⁹ Keen to maintain Landon's influential legacy after her early death, two of the title's future editors, Mary Howitt and Caroline Norton, wrote their own Arthurian poem for *Fisher's*.²⁰

Thomas Hood, J.F. Hollings, William Macworth Praed, Thomas Crofton Croker, and John Michell all contributed Arthurian poems to the annuals (see note 9 above).

¹⁶ Susan Brown, 'The Victorian Poetess', in *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian Poetry*, ed. Joseph Bristow (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 180–202 (p. 191).

¹⁷ Ledbetter, "'Beggemmed and beAmuletted'", 236.

¹⁸ Ledbetter, "'Beggemmed and beAmuletted'", 236.

¹⁹ Mary Howitt, 'Preface', to *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap-book. MDCCCXL. With Poetical Illustrations by L.E.L. and Mary Howitt* (London: Fisher and Son, [1840]), n. p.

²⁰ Pulham, "'Jewels – delights – perfect loves'", p. 12.

Though she had both ‘a keen sense of the literary market’ and an influential legacy, Landon did not inaugurate the introduction of Arthurian poetry into the annuals; rather, she was shrewdly responding to what was an already emerging fashion.²¹ The first Arthurian poem to appear in an annual was William Lisle Bowles’s ode to ‘Glastonbury Abbey and Wells Cathedral’ in the 1826 volume of *Friendship’s Offering*.²² A few years later, both the *Forget Me Not* for 1829 and the *Literary Souvenir* for 1831 included two Arthurian works.²³ One of the *Souvenir*’s offerings was a sonnet addressed ‘To Morgan Le Fay’ by J.F. Hollings, a little-remembered poet who in his day contributed widely to annuals such as the *Amulet*, the *Forget Me Not*, and the *Gem*.²⁴ Hollings’s sonnet, like Costello and Landon’s poems contemporaneous with it, marks the beginning of a new interest in the female characters of the legend and shows how the annuals’ preoccupation with the beautiful encouraged, and was partly responsible for this shift. Despite Morgan’s antagonistic role in the medieval legend, Hollings’s poem celebrates Arthur’s sister as powerful, but ‘stainless’:

Nymph of undying Song! Thy stainless brow,
 With lilies and the mystic vervain crowned,
 And tresses floating in the blast unbound,
 Where in these days inglorious lingerest thou?²⁵

Hollings’s recasting of Morgan into a benign role is a reminder of the risks of defining a female Arthurian tradition along essentialist lines; for Alan Lupack and Barbara Tapa Lupack, ‘the tendency to shift the focus from traditional concerns and to give women

²¹ Glennis Stephenson, *Letitia Landon: The Woman Behind L.E.L.* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 4.

²² William Lisle Bowles, ‘Glastonbury Abbey and Wells Cathedral’, in *Friendship’s Offering*, ed. Thomas K. Hervey (London: Lupton Relfe, 1826), pp. 64–66. The poem was not new, but had appeared in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* earlier that year; see Lisle Bowles, ‘Glastonbury Abbey and Wells Cathedral’, *Gentleman’s Magazine*, 95 (Jul 1826), 70.

²³ In the *Forget Me Not: A Christmas and New Year’s Present for MDCCCXXIX*, ed. Fredric Shoberl (London: R. Ackermann, 1829), these were by John Michell (‘Tintagel Castle’, pp. 85–88) and Costello (‘The Funeral Boat’, pp. 185–92). In the *Literary Souvenir*, ed. Alaric A. Watts (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1831) appeared ‘The Legend of the Haunted Tree’ by Winthrop Macworth Praed, ‘The Author of ‘Lillian’ (pp. 1–16), and J.F. Hollings’s ‘To Morgan Le Fay’ (p. 133), discussed below.

²⁴ See Hollings’s entry in Katherine D. Harris’s ‘Index of Author’s Contributions to British Literary Annuals’ <http://www.orgs.muohio.edu/anthologies/FMN/Authors_GenB.htm> [accessed 9 February 2012].

²⁵ J.F. Hollings, ‘To Morgan Le Fay’, *Literary Souvenir* (1831), p. 133 (ll. 1–4).

prominent roles' is one of several particularities common to women's writing about the legend.²⁶ Rather, 'feminisation' was the annuals' stock-in-trade, and Hollings's lily-crowned Arthurian 'nymph' is, in fact, little different to the more familiar Arthurian 'Lily Maid', the maid of Astolat, given treatment by Costello and Landon, and later Tennyson.²⁷ Fidelity to the characterisation of the medieval figure, is, for Hollings (and likewise for Landon), not an important concern. The annuals promoted a malleable poetic discourse that could accommodate a range of Arthurian women – otherwise opposed in their typecast roles of angel and monster – within the same ornamental mode. While the Arthurian annual poems engage with medieval material, they do so in a way that is mediated through a self-conscious knowledge of their location within a commodity that is very much a product of the present day.

In writing about the Maid of Astolat, Costello and Landon had alighted on what was at once a 'typical' subject for an annual poem, but both poets knew more about the Arthurian myth than they were prepared to admit in an annual context, where contributions were more generally '[s]entimental, feminine, and unashamed about their lack of scholarship'.²⁸ Medieval romance was an 'acceptable' subject for an annual poem, so long as the sentiments it offered were not too deeply entrenched in antiquarian research, or did not draw undue attention to the more morally suspect aspects of the myth. The annuals were often mocked for their lightness; Wordsworth called the 'ornamental annuals [...] greedy receptacles of trash', and Tennyson likewise dubbed them 'vapid' books – although as Alison Adburgham, Kathryn Ledbetter, and Peter Manning all note, this did not preclude both poets from

²⁶ Alan Lupack and Barbara Tapa Lupack, 'Arthurian Literature by Women: The Forgotten Tradition', in *Arthurian Literature by Women*, ed. Lupack and Tapa Lupack (New York and London: Garland, 1999), pp. 3–30 (p. 14).

²⁷ Pulham, "Jewels – delights – perfect loves", p. 13.

²⁸ Jennifer Wallace, 'Classics as Souvenir: L.E.L. and the Annuals', *Classical Receptions Journal*, 3:1 (2011), 109–28 (p. 117).

publishing in them.²⁹ Ledbetter in particular suggests that this public ridiculing of the annuals (mainly voiced by male poets), may have been provoked by ‘a class-based and misogynistic fear of the impending democratization and feminization of literature’.³⁰ Yet, the rubbishing of the annuals’ integrity paradoxically had some benefits, as, under a banner of general insipidity, more careful explorations of Arthurian texts were allowed space to flourish. By the early 1840s, Costello and Caroline Norton were writing contributions for the annuals which, though still decorous in style, were keen to advertise an engagement with Arthurian texts and current scholarship. The anxieties which plague women writing about Arthur in the preceding decades of the nineteenth century continue to be played out in the spacious and gilded pages of the literary annuals in the 1830s and 40s.

5.1 Louisa Stuart Costello’s ‘The Funeral Boat’ (1829) and the *Forget Me Not*

A pioneer figure for women’s Arthurian studies in the Romantic Age in so many ways, Louisa Stuart Costello was also the first woman writer to contribute an Arthurian poem to a literary annual. Well known in literary circles as William Lisle Bowles’s ‘young protégée’, she may have alighted on the idea to submit her Arthurian poem, ‘The Funeral Boat’ (1829), to the *Forget Me Not* based on her literary advisor’s recent success in finding a home for his own Arthurian poem in the *Literary Souvenir*.³¹ By 1829, the *Forget Me Not* was attracting contributions from a host of familiar names; Felicia Hemans, Emma Roberts, Mary Russell Mitford, James Hogg, and John Clare were among Costello’s fellow contributors that year. Publishing alongside such eminent names ensured a high readership, and, in contrast to many

²⁹ Alison Adburgham, *Women in Print: Writing Women and Women’s Magazines from the Restoration to the Accession of Victoria* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1972), p. 236; Manning, ‘Wordsworth and *The Keepsake*’, p. 68; Ledbetter, “‘BeGemmed and beAmuletted’”, 235.

³⁰ Ledbetter, *Tennyson and Victorian Periodicals*, p. 10 (American spelling retained).

³¹ For a description of Costello as Lisle Bowles’s protégée, see Thomas Moore’s entry for 25 December 1818, in *The Journal of Thomas Moore*, ed. Wilfred S. Dowden, 6 vols (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1985), vol. 1, pp. 104; and 29 May 1819 (vol. 1, p. 177).

of the poems discussed in earlier chapters, Costello's 'The Funeral Boat' would have reached a large body of readers: sales of the 1826 volume of the *Forget Me Not* exceeded 6,000.³²

Running to 192 lines, 'The Funeral Boat' is by far the most extensive and intricately constructed of the three extant Astolat poems by Romantic women writers. Costello based her poem on a version of the Astolat (or Scalot) story in Novella LXXXI from the thirteenth-century *Cento Novelle Antiche*, as Tennyson would himself do several years later.³³ As both Clare Broome Saunders and Simpson note, Costello's inclusion of an Italian epigraph ('la damigella tanto ama Lancialotto ch'ella venne alla morte') indicates that she encountered the text in the original language rather than through the newly translated version of the tale contained in Thomas Roscoe's anthology, *The Italian Novelists* (1825).³⁴ One other brief note of Costello's own devising accompanies the poem, explaining that 'the idea for this poem was taken from a very ancient Italian story, written more than a century before the time of Boccaccio' (p. 185). Through its vague temporal placement of its medieval source text as 'very ancient' and the absence of a concrete name for the 'story', Costello's poem refuses to articulate a tangible connection to any graspable medieval past.

Unlike 'T.B.G.'s earlier analogue, Costello's poem begins before the death of its protagonist. In the first six stanzas, the damsel dictates instructions to her attending maidens, outlining how she wishes her 'corse' to be decorated and displayed after death and placed in a 'gilded bark' (ll. 21, 8). She is to be accompanied by a 'scroll', written in her own hand and contained in a purse (ll. 26–29). The second part of the poem begins with the journey of the damsel's boat to its 'destined port' at Camelot where 'many a lord and lady', including Arthur, Guenever, and Launcelot, are gathered on the 'sandy shore' (ll. 60–61). Launcelot

³² Erickson, *The Economy of Literary Form*, p. 29.

³³ Louisa Stuart Costello, note to 'The Funeral Boat. A Legend', in *Forget Me Not; A Christmas and New Year's Present for MDCCCXXIX*, ed. Frederic Shoberl (London: R. Ackermann, 1829), pp. 185–92 (p. 185). All further references are to this edition and are subsequently given in parentheses throughout the text.

³⁴ See Clare Broome Saunders, *Women Writers and Nineteenth-Century Medievalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 123; also Roger Simpson, 'Costello's "The Funeral Boat": An Analogue of Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott"', *Tennyson Research Bulletin*, 4:3 (1984), 129–31 (131).

entertains the courtiers with a minstrel song of love and military honour, but is interrupted by the disembodied sound of ‘accents softly murmuring’, accusing him of singing ‘lays of falsehood’ (ll. 129, 135). When the waves draw the barge onto the shore, Launcelot recognises the damsel’s ‘face of pallid hue’ (l. 147). It is Guenever who retrieves the damsel’s scroll (l. 150), pausing before she reads it to voice her own judgement of Launcelot’s behaviour:

“Hear” she said, “Sir Launcelot,
 How fond a heart thy vows betray’d –
 Vows, lightly made, and soon forgot!
 Ah! thus is woman’s truth repaid!” (ll. 154–57)

Any romantic association between Launcelot and Guenever is absent from Costello’s poem; rather, Guenever addresses Launcelot coldly, and condemns his flippant ‘vows’ in a judicial, detached tone complexly structured by an additional internal rhyme and measured caesuras. In contrast, her more emotive contemplation of the maid’s ‘truth’ which follows is punctuated by an outburst of sympathetic feeling (‘Ah!’), which positions both women against the false knight. The queen then reads the letter aloud to the assembled court, which conveys the damsel’s desire for ‘a grave’ from the disloyal Launcelot, who promises to bury her underneath a willow tree and ‘beside a stream’ (l. 185). The poem ends with Launcelot’s declaration to the court that he shall perform a year of solitary penance in honour of the damsel (ll. 189–92).

‘The Funeral Boat’ has been read by both Broome Saunders and Simpson as a proto-feminist version of the Astolat tale that places a new emphasis on the role of women;³⁵ however, it is also just as strongly concerned with the relationship between women, writing, and reading. The repetitive structure created by the damsel’s oral list of imperative demands which ‘must’ be fulfilled (ll. 11, 14, 19, 20, 26), as well as the strict alternating tetrameter and

³⁵ Broome Saunders observes that the poem ‘focuses on the roles of female characters in a way that other versions of the story do not’ (Broome Saunders, *Women Writers and Nineteenth-Century Medievalism*, p. 125). Simpson similarly notes Costello’s ‘foregrounding of female roles’ (Simpson, ‘Costello’s “The Funeral Boat”’, 131).

trimeter lines which organise her spoken dialogue, establish her as the considered orchestrator of her own death, reinforced by the letter penned ‘in her own hand’. In the Italian Novella, as well as the earliest version of the Astolat episode in the Vulgate *La Mort du Roi Artu* (1230), it is not specified if the maid is the writer of the letter, but the reader is given little cause to question its authorship (it is addressed ‘from the poor lady of Scalot’ and written in the first person).³⁶ In both medieval texts it is Arthur, not Guinevere, who reads the maid’s letter aloud.³⁷ The new prominence which Costello places on the scroll that contains the ‘last sad lines [the damsel’s] hand will trace’ (l. 29) establishes a firm connection between the author of the letter and Guenever, who replaces Arthur as the public reader of her ‘lines’:

A purse and scroll Queen Guenever
Took from the hand as pale as snow;
And, as she traced each character,
Sad grew her eye, and flush’d her brow. (II. 150–53)

Guenever’s dignified but febrile response to the tragedy is placed in contrast to that of the newly emasculated Launcelot, who, though he approaches the barge with an ‘eager eye’ (l. 142), quickly recoils in fear: ‘He [...] shrank, all heart-struck, at the sight’ (ll. 147–48).

Guenever’s ‘trac[ing]’ of ‘each character’ of the letter mimics the damsel’s earlier movements and suggests that writing and reading are crucial to the transmission of female experience and suffering.³⁸ This new attention to female authorship is tied up with poem’s larger context, as the annuals (which often concerned themselves with tales of female suffering) promoted ‘a framework of supportive literary friendships’ that Costello’s proto-modern (re)presentation of the damsel and Guenever as figures who actively read and write

³⁶ Thomas Roscoe, ‘Novella LXXXI’, in *The Italian Novelists; Selected From the Most Approved Authors in that Language [...] Translated from the Original Italian*, 4 vols (London: Septimus Prowett, 1825), vol. 1, pp. 46–47 (p. 46). For the same episode in the French Vulgate, see *The Death of King Arthur [La Mort le Roi Artu]*, ed. and trans. James Cable (London: Penguin, 1971), pp. 92–94.

³⁷ Roscoe, ‘Novella LXXXI’ in *The Italian Novelists*, vol. 1, p. 46; *The Death of King Arthur*, p. 94.

³⁸ In *Revolutions in Taste: Women’s Writing and the Aesthetics of Romanticism, 1773–1818* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), Fiona Price suggests that an awareness of female suffering in general became one of the markers of taste in the Romantic period (see Price, *Revolutions in Taste*, pp. 91–97).

reflects back on itself.³⁹ Indeed, the new centrality Costello's text accords to the damsel's textual document forms part of the poem's broader pre-occupation with its own materiality.

Like many annual poems, 'The Funeral Boat' is dominated by pictorial description. This, too, indicates its cultural context; in Erickson's view, the annual market placed 'a popular pressure [...] on poetry to conform to a purely pictorial aesthetic'.⁴⁰ Both the sea and ground in Costello's Arthurian world are 'green' (ll. 47, 192); the damsel's barge crosses a 'silver lake' (l. 52) surrounded by 'white' cliffs (l. 58); and Arthur has 'flowing golden hair' (l. 73) and eyes of 'bright blue' (l. 72). Most excessively painted, however, is the love-sick damsel, who is surrounded by 'roses white and red' (l. 17), and encircled with a 'precious wreath / Of turquoise, purely blue' around her waist (ll. 22–23). Her funeral wrappings are equally ornate:

Of richest silk, and velvet sheen,
Must be my winding-sheet;
Daises and myrtle, fresh and green,
Strew'd gaily at my feet;
And ye must bind my flowing hair
With pearls and crystals rich and rare. (ll. 10–15)

Just as the annuals appeared bound in 'watered silk, in velvet or tooled morocco leather', so the damsel requests her own 'bind[ings]' of 'richest silk' and 'velvet'.⁴¹ In an expansion of the '*peitre preziose* [precious stones]' mentioned in the Italian source, Costello crowns the damsel with 'pearls and crystals' and surrounds her with 'daises and myrtle' that recall both the title of the *Forget Me Not* and other early annuals with floral namesakes such as *First Flowers* and *Blossoms at Christmas* (both begun in 1825).⁴² The repeated framing of texts in ostentatious wrappings in 'The Funeral Boat' creates a sense of *mise en abyme*; the poem

³⁹ Margaret Reynolds, 'Introduction I', to *Victorian Women Poets: An Anthology*, ed. Angela Leighton and Margaret Reynolds (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), pp. xxv–xxxiv (p. xxvi).

⁴⁰ Erickson, *The Economy of Literary Form*, p. 41.

⁴¹ Adburgham, *Women in Print*, p. 236.

⁴² See 'Novella LXXXII' in *Le Cento Novelle Antiche: second l'edizione del MDXXV*, ed. Carlo Gualteruzzi (Milan: Paulo Antonio Tosi, 1825), pp. 116–117 (p. 117). Faxon, 'Chronological Index', *Literary Annuals and Gift-Books*, pp. 90 (*First Flowers*), 84 (*Blossoms at Christmas*).

which holds the damsel (wrapped in silk and herself representative of the annual's sentimental ornamentation) holds yet another text, in the form of the damsel's written 'testament' to the court. This is further contained within another decorated layer: '[a] silken purse [...] / Spangled with glittering stars of gold' (ll. 26–27). Such a layering of reproductions points towards the artificiality of the damsel's self-construction.

Locked into a poem intent on constructing such a painterly 'web of hues' (l. 36), Costello's Launcelot, though repentant, can only continue to 'paint' (l. 183) the damsel into the kind of visual aesthetic from which she springs, answering her posthumous request with the following reply:

And dost thou beg a grave of me? –
 Yes; in a spot of fairest ground,
 Where waves the freshest willow tree –
 Where turf is green, and flowers abound –
 Where fairies paint their nightly rings,
 And where the bird of sorrow sings –
 I'll make thy grave beside a stream,
 Whose waters shall thy emblem seem;
 As pure and sorrowful they flow,
 Meet image of thy love and woe. (ll. 179–88)

Here, Launcelot's initially arresting 'sight' of the damsel's 'pallid hue' (l. 146) is replaced with a more agreeable 'emblem' of the woman embodied in the landscape: she now exists in the 'turf', 'flowers', and 'stream'. The anaphoric patterning seeks to contain the image of the female corpse within an ordered surface, appearing to confirm exactly 'where' the damsel can be located (ll. 181–83), and seeking resolution and reassurance through the verse's slide into neat rhyming couplets. Like the fate of Wordsworth's Lucy, whose corpse is replaced by a similar natural trinity of 'rocks, and stones, and trees', or Thomas Moore's Sarah Curran, whose grave is 'where the sunbeams rest', the cold materiality of the damsel's death is superseded by the female's imagined affinity with the natural world and its circular

continuity.⁴³ The annual aesthetic, then, is crucial to the development of women's Arthuriana as it provides a discourse through which the Arthurian female could at last be visualised, or perhaps, feminised. The danger, however, as here, is that such a reliance on the visual and the material results in her final erasure, as she is disingenuously 'painted' into a landscape which – aside from a brief inclusion of a 'bird of sorrow' – is characterised by fecundity and endless renewal. Like the damsel's initial abandonment by Launcelot, we are led to believe that despite the knight's claims to penance, his vows remain still 'lightly made, and soon forgot!' (l. 136).

The annuals, then, presented women poets with a double-bind; in one sense, as Margaret Beetham notes, they offered new ways to represent an 'alternative femininity [...] defined in terms of both visibility and the materiality of the page', but on the other, their overwhelming emphasis on surface decoration encased medieval and Arthurian female figures in layers of painted symbolism, as well as simultaneously discouraging the open display of Arthurian scholarship.⁴⁴ The oblique title of Costello's poem did not give the *Forget Me Not's* readers any indication of its Arthurian content, nor was it accompanied by any extensive notes indicative of her serious investment in Arthurian themes. This might not be remarkable in itself (Tennyson was similarly equivocal on the subject of his inspiration for 'The Lady of Shalott')⁴⁵ were it not for the presence of several stylistic features which

⁴³ William Wordsworth, ['A slumber did my spirit seal'] (1800), in *Poetical Works*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson, rev. Ernest de Selincourt (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 149 (l. 8).

Compare the last stanza of Moore's 'She is Far from the Land', in *Irish Melodies* (1808–34):

Oh! Make her grave where the sunbeams rest
When they promise a glorious morrow;
They'll shine o'er her sleep, like a smile from the West,
From her own lovèd island of sorrow.

Thomas Moore, *Poetical Works; With a Life of the Author* (London: Routledge, [n. d.]), p. 230 (ll. 13–16). Costello was a strong admirer and sometime imitator of Moore's work; see her 'To the Poet' (dedicated to Moore), reprinted in *The Journal of Thomas Moore*, ed. Dowden, vol. 6 (1843–47), p. 2413 (entry for 1 January 1845), and Costello, 'Moore's Bessie', *Bentley's Miscellany*, 58 (Jul 1865), 378–79.

⁴⁴ Margaret Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own? Domesticity and Desire in the Women's Magazine, 1800–1914* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 39.

⁴⁵ In January 1868, Tennyson reflected on his conception of 'The Lady of Shalott': 'I met the story first in some Italian *novelle*: but the web, mirror, island, etc, were my own. Indeed, I doubt whether I should ever have put it

suggest that Costello's 'The Funeral Boat' is, like many annual contributions, 'more intelligent than [it] may at first appear'.⁴⁶ The use of a ballad metre (though irregular) indicates an attempt to replicate the style of Percy's Arthurian ballads which Costello knew from youth, and, like the various 'hues' and 'tints' which colour the damsel's posthumous journey to Arthur's court, subtle syntactic patterns in the poem allude to an Arthurian source additional to the acknowledged Italian *Novella*.

The damsel's 'testament', addressed to 'the Table Round', both exalts and decries 'Launcelot du Lake' as a knight

Whose hand is firm the sword to wield;
Whose plume is foremost in the field;
Whose foes, like leaves in Autumn, fall;
Whose smiles like sun-beams break;
But who is false as the treacherous ray
That loves in April's sky to play (ll. 165–70)

The anaphoric sequence of these lines contains strong echoes of Sir Ector's eulogy following Lancelot's death in Malory's *Le Morte Arthur*, which is similarly structured using repetitive and heaped clauses:

thou were never matched of erthely knyghtes hande; and thou were the curtest knyght that ever bare shelde; and thou were the truest frende to thy lovar that ever bestrade hors; and thou were the trewest lover, of a synful man, that ever loved woman[.]⁴⁷

Yet if Costello's lines indeed took their inspiration from this passage in Malory's text, they also heavily revise them. The intrinsic turn in the verse's argument – signalled by an important 'but' – occurs at the point where Costello departs from Malory's template and reverses the direction of the medieval text in both form and content; Launcelot is far from the 'truest lover', but rather 'as false as a treacherous ray' of Spring sunshine (ll. 169–70).

in that shape if I had been then aware of the Maid of Astolat in the *Mort Arthur*.' Cited in *The Poems of Tennyson*, ed. Ricks, vol. 1, p. 387 [notes to 'The Lady of Shalott'].

⁴⁶ Reynolds, 'Introduction I', *Victorian Women Poets*, p. xxvii.

⁴⁷ Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur, or, the Hoole Book of Kyng Arthur and of his Noble Knyghtes of The Rounde Table*, ed. Stephen H.A. Shepherd (New York: Norton, 2004), pp. 696–97.

Though the image is a rather banal one, it marks the feminine revision of the male-authored text, made in the sentimental language promoted by the annuals.

By yoking together Malory's chivalric praise of Lancelot with a pretty but ultimately 'false' image of a flirtatious sunbeam, Costello undercuts the values which the medieval text promotes in language appropriate to the context of her modern verse. Through this combination of past and present, her revisionist strategy replaces Lancelot, who 'liest' dead in Malory's text, with the damsel of Astolat, who lies dead in Costello's own verse. Finally, the layering of seasonal fluctuations onto Launcelot's accomplishments (the verse moves through Autumn leaves, to the 'sun-beams' of high summer, and finally to 'April's sky') suggest a similar cycle of gendered relationships in which men are continually 'false' to what Guenever refers to as 'women's truth' (l. 157). Like the symbolic 'treacherous ray', what Simpson calls the 'sentimental and didactic narrative' of 'The Funeral Boat' masks the poem's more serious engagement with the constructs of gender in Malory's romance.⁴⁸

5.2 Letitia Elizabeth Landon's 'A Legend of Tintagel Castle' (1832) and *Fisher's*

Drawing Room Scrap-book

As Simpson points out, Letitia Elizabeth Landon was well acquainted with the *Forget Me Not*, having published her own verses in the annual in 1826, 1827, 1828, and 1830.⁴⁹ In fact, although the annual market might have brought Landon and Costello into closer contact, the careers of the two poets had been strongly connected since the early 1820s. As is well known, Landon's rise to fame was conducted through the pages of William Jerdan's *Literary Gazette*

⁴⁸ Simpson, *Camelot Regained*, p. 198. See also similar views expressed in Roger Simpson, 'Landon's "A Legend of Tintagel Castle": Another Analogue to Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott"', *Tennyson Research Bulletin*, 4:4 (1985), 179–85 (180).

⁴⁹ See Simpson's meticulous research in 'Landon's "A Legend of Tintagel Castle"', 179–80, 184, n. 4.

wherein she first published her poetry under ‘the three magical letters of L.E.L.’.⁵⁰ Costello’s less illustrious early verse was also published in the *Gazette*; in an issue for October 1823, an untitled poem by Costello is followed immediately by L.E.L.’s ‘Songs of Love’.⁵¹ Like Landon, Costello published anonymously in Jerdan’s periodical under a set of initials, though her choice of pseudonym would appear more arbitrary (or, perhaps, more of a sly joke); in 1825, the *Gazette* proudly unveiled that she was the author of several ‘pleasing effusions’ signed ‘M.E.’.⁵² Laman Blanchard numbered ‘Miss Louisa Stuart Costello’ among the many ‘friendship[s]’ which Landon ‘enjoyed’, and Landon’s letters indicate that the two women were in correspondence as late as 1837.⁵³ Both had a mutual acquaintance in William Jerdan.⁵⁴ Given Landon’s close affinities with Costello, it seems all the more likely that ‘The Funeral Boat’ provided Landon with a model for her own Astolat poem, ‘A Legend of Tintagel Castle’.⁵⁵

In the summer of 1832, Landon wrote ‘A Legend of Tintagel Castle’ for inclusion in the next volume of *Fisher’s Drawing Room Scrap-book*, an annual that she had begun to edit upon its debut the following year. It was written to illustrate Thomas Allom’s painting of ‘Tintagel Castle, Cornwall’, which depicts a ruinous pile perched perilously on top of a sheer cliff face in stormy weather, while a band of men attempt to rescue survivors from a

⁵⁰ Edward Bulwer-Lytton, [Review], ‘Romance and Reality’, *New Monthly Magazine*, 32 (Dec 1831), 545–51. Repr. in Landon, *Selected Writings*, ed. Jerome McGann and Daniel Riess (London: Broadview, 1997), pp. 328–35 (p. 331).

⁵¹ See *Literary Gazette*, 350 (4 Oct 1823), 635–36.

⁵² Laman Blanchard, *Life and Literary Remains of L.E.L.*, 2 vols (London: Henry Colburn, 1841), p. 266. [Review], ‘Songs of a Stranger’, *Literary Gazette*, 434 (May 1825), 307. Henceforth Costello published in the *Gazette* under her own name throughout the remaining years of the 1820s and the early 30s.

⁵³ Landon refers to a ‘kind note’ she received from Costello during a short letter to Laman Blanchard. See Landon to Blanchard [late 1837], in *Letters by Letitia Elizabeth Landon*, ed. F.J. Sypher (Ann Arbor: Scholars’ Facsimiles and Reprints, 2001), p. 173. Landon also knew and corresponded with Costello’s brother, Dudley Costello (1803–1865), himself a writer and illustrator (see Landon to Dudley Costello [no date], in Landon, *Letters*, p. 202).

⁵⁴ William Jerdan, *The Autobiography of William Jerdan, with his Literary, Political, and Social Reminiscences and Correspondence during the last fifty years*, 4 vols (London: Arthur Hall, 1853), vol. 4, p. 25.

⁵⁵ Simpson thinks that Landon ‘very probably’ knew Costello’s ‘The Funeral Boat’ (Simpson, ‘Landon’s “A Legend of Tintagel Castle”’, 179–80). Broome Saunders is more insistent, and proposes that Landon ‘almost certainly’ knew of the earlier poem (Broome Saunders, *Women Writers and Nineteenth-Century Medievalism*, p. 129). McGann and Riess tentatively raise the possibility that Costello’s poem could have been Landon’s only source (Landon, *Selected Writings*, p. 284 [notes to ‘A Legend of Tintagel Castle’]).

shipwreck beneath (Figure 5). None of this informs Landon's poem, however; despite Tintagel Castle's familiarity in the minds of nineteenth-century audiences as the birthplace of Arthur,⁵⁶ her verses instead tell the tale of the maid of Astolat.

The Astolat story allowed L.E.L. to repeat a narrative that she had long found success with; as Richard Cronin puts it, 'Landon's poems tell over and over again the same story. A young woman is loved, returns the love, is abandoned, and dies'.⁵⁷ As much was recognised by Landon herself, who, addressing the 'blame and eulogy which have been equally bestowed on my frequent choice of Love as my source of song', confessed in 1829: 'I sometimes portrayed [sic] love unrequited, then betrayed, and again destroyed by death'.⁵⁸ The story of a 'maiden' who falls in love with Lancelot only for him to swiftly return to 'war', thereby prompting her spectacular death, easily conforms to this familiar pattern.⁵⁹ Moreover, when considered in the context of Landon's wider work, 'A Legend of Tintagel Castle' becomes a veritable pastiche of similes, images, and metaphors from other parts of her oeuvre. By 1832, Landon was well practised in the art of '[d]eriving her plots intertextually from medieval courtly love lyrics' which had inspired the title poems of *The Troubadour* (1825), *The Golden Violet* (1826), and *The Venetian Bracelet* (1829), and she drew on the same dialogue for the composition of her Arthurian tale.⁶⁰

Like Costello's earlier poem, as well as the overwhelming majority of Landon's poems for the annual market, 'A Legend of Tintagel Castle' cultivates an appearance of overwhelming beauty in both its form and content; the poem opens with a picturesque vision

⁵⁶ Simpson gives wide-ranging examples of contemporary references to Tintagel in 'Landon's "A Legend of Tintagel Castle"', 181.

⁵⁷ Richard Cronin, *Romantic Victorians: English Literature, 1824–1840* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 84. Anne K. Mellor offers a similar analysis of Landon's oeuvre: 'Once Landon accepted her culture's hegemonic definition of the female, she could only repeat the same story over and over' (Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 114).

⁵⁸ Landon (as 'L.E.L. '), 'Preface', to *The Venetian Bracelet, The Lost Pleiad, A History of the Lyre, and Other Poems*, (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown and Greene, 1829), pp. vi–vii.

⁵⁹ Landon, 'A Legend of Tintagel Castle', *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap-book. MDCCCXXXIII*, ed. Letitia Elizabeth Landon (London: Fisher and Son, [1833]), pp. 8–9. Repr. in Landon, *Selected Writings*, pp. 211–13 (ll. 18, 34). All further references are to this modern edition and are subsequently given in parentheses.

⁶⁰ Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender*, p. 113.

of a romanticised Lancelot riding, helmet in hand, against a backdrop of ‘dark foliage’ (ll. 1–12). The knight soon spies a ‘vision’ of a lady, ‘as lovely as lady can be’, in a nearby stream (ll. 17, 20). This part of the poem revisits the opening woodland landscape of *The Troubadour*, where another ‘noonlit stream’ is decorated with the same ‘water-flags’ (l. 15).⁶¹ We are still with the fairy encounter in *The Troubadour* when the maiden leads Lancelot to an ‘odorous cave’ (l. 25):

Where the emerald spars shone like stars in the wave,
And the green moss and violets crowded beneath,
And the ash at the entrance hung down like a wreath. (ll. 26–28)

The chiming couplets with their masculine rhymes create a smooth and regular rhythm which remains curiously undisturbed. Although the symbol of the ambivalent ashen ‘wreath’ on the boundary seems to foreshadow the lady’s approaching death, the anapaestic rhythm does not falter. This disjunction between form and content, as Jerome McGann and Daniel Riess note, accounts for much of Landon’s style: both ‘cold and sentimental, flat and intense’.⁶² Like Costello’s earlier poem, Landon’s is also highly decorated with ‘gems’ (l. 12) of ‘emerald’ and ‘gold’ (l. 19, 26), and an abundance of ‘flowers’ (ll. 5, 30), including ‘violets’ and lilies (l. 46) which connect the poem with its wider status as a ‘literary luxury’.⁶³

‘Months’ pass (l. 37), and, when Lancelot fails to return to the maiden, a barge ‘towed by two swans’ soon arrives at court (l. 47). Landon had used a similar arrangement in ‘The Enchanted Island’, an poem published in *The Troubadour* (1825) which featured another, similarly ‘lovely figure / [...] [b]orne on a car of pearl, and drawn by swans’.⁶⁴ Lancelot lifts the ‘pall’ to discover the contents of the barge (l. 51), and the language is unapologetically

⁶¹ Landon, *The Troubadour*, in *The Troubadour: Catalogue of Pictures, and Historical Sketches*, 2nd edn (London: Hurst, Robinson and Co., 1825), p. 5 (n. l.).

⁶² McGann and Riess, ‘Introduction’, to Landon, *Selected Writings*, pp. 11–33 (p. 29).

⁶³ Landon (as L.E.L.), ‘Introduction’, to *Fisher’s Drawing Room Scrap Book. With Poetical Illustrations by L.E.L.*, ed. Landon (London: Fisher, Son and Jackson, 1832), n. p.

⁶⁴ Landon, ‘The Enchanted Island’, in *Selected Writings*, pp. 84–85 (ll. 31–32).

that of the fairy-tale: ‘there lay a lady, the fairest of all’ (l. 52). Lancelot ‘weeps’ at the sight (l. 56), and the final stanza offers the following commentary on the events:

And these are love’s records; a vow and a dream,
And the sweet shadow passes away from life’s stream:
Too late we awake to regret – but what tears
Can bring back the waste to our hearts and our years! (ll. 57–60)

As McGann and Riess note, a shift to the plural first person in order to ‘underscore the contemporary relevance’ of lyrics located in legendary worlds was another familiar feature of Landon’s poetic style.⁶⁵ For Landon, recasting the medieval past was more about generating an alternative view of the present, than it was about recreating a credible medieval atmosphere. The maiden’s corpse is ‘pale as a statue’ (l. 53) in the manner of so many of Landon’s heroines when they are abandoned by their respective lovers; Ida, deserted by Julian in an inserted tale in *The Improvisatrice* becomes ‘a cold white statue’, and the similarly ephemeral Melusine, the protagonist of ‘The Fairy of the Fountains’ (1835), also ‘Sits [...] like a statue, pale and fair’ when forgotten by her knight.⁶⁶ The repetition of familiar images from Landon’s earlier corpus locates ‘A Legend of Tintagel Castle’ in a vaguely medieval landscape, but endows it with little that is singularly Arthurian, beside the presence of Lancelot and Genevra (Guinevere).

Reading Landon as a poet of ‘post-Romanticism’, Daniel Riess proposes that Landon was drawn to ““secondary” artistic models, such as mass-market representations [...] rather than the original’, as a way of maintaining her ‘continued popularity as a writer’ while avoiding ‘the label of “bluestocking”’.⁶⁷ Thus, Landon’s reproduction of a poem on a subject which Costello had already introduced to the annual market three years prior should come as no surprise. Costello’s previous Astolat poem was not only a marker of the subject’s potential

⁶⁵ McGann and Riess, ‘Introduction’, to Landon, *Selected Writings*, p. 17.

⁶⁶ Landon, *The Improvisatrice*, in *Selected Writings*, pp. 51–81 (l. 589); ‘The Fairy of the Fountains’ in *Selected Writings*, pp. 225–41 (ll. 369–70).

⁶⁷ Daniel Riess, ‘Laetitia Landon and the Dawn of Post-Romanticism’, *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 36:4 (1996), 807–27 (pp. 812–13).

popularity, but it provided Landon with a secondary model to imitate without drawing on any scholarly material. Furthermore, Landon already had good reason to believe that the Arthurian legend was a good fit for *Fisher's*, as it had already proved a handy solution to a previous 'difficulty'.⁶⁸ When assembling the debut volume of the annual the previous year, Landon's inspiration had faltered when she was faced with a print of 'St. Michael's Mount' requiring poetical illustration (Figure 6). She accordingly turned to a friend, the antiquary Thomas Crofton Croker (1798–1854), for help. Croker accommodatingly provided a short lyric nostalgic for the 'glorious days of old':

When Arthur and his champions bold,
With iron hand, from cup of gold,
 Drank to the Table Round!
Entranced beneath St. Michael's keep,
Now Arthur and his warriors sleep
Their charmed slumber, long and deep
 In magic thraldom bound.⁶⁹

Presumably Landon was unaware of the Cornish landmark's Arthurian connections, otherwise she would have written a similar poem herself; in the introduction to the debut volume of *Fisher's* she confessed, '[i]t is not an easy thing to write illustrations for prints', and earnestly expressed her willingness to take up 'any legend, train of thought &c. which the subject could possibly suggest'.⁷⁰ Croker's Arthurian poem provided a much-needed solution to a lapse in Landon's creativity, and, when faced with another (very similar) print of a Cornish castle to illustrate the following year, she took her inspiration from a different aspect of the same legend that had previously proved so fruitful.

One way of interpreting 'A Legend of Tintagel Castle', then, is as a convenient production for *Fisher's* which allowed its editor to quickly illustrate a print of 'Tintagel Castle' by drawing on her previous work. Rather than issuing from a 'spontaneous overflow

⁶⁸ See Letitia Elizabeth Landon to Thomas Crofton Croker, 22 September 1831, in Landon, *Letters*, p. 67. Serena Baiesi also notes Croker's assistance with Landon's workload for *Fisher's*; see Baiesi, *Letitia Elizabeth Landon and Metrical Romance: The Adventures of a Literary Genius* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009), p. 124.

⁶⁹ 'C.', [Thomas Crofton Croker], 'St. Michael's Mount', *Fisher's* (1832), pp. 8–9 (ll. 1–8).

⁷⁰ Landon (as L.E.L.), 'Introduction', *Fisher's* (1832), n. p.

of powerful feelings', or even from a deep-seated interest in the Arthurian legend, 'A Legend of Tintagel Castle' recasts an already "secondary" version of the story in a manner appropriately sentimental for her projected readership, and which allowed her to bypass any acknowledgement of a medieval source which might challenge her status as a popular poet of the heart rather than the head.⁷¹ Contemporary writers saw the poems that Landon produced for the annuals as inferior to her verse elsewhere; speaking of Landon's poetry for annuals, William Thackeray voiced the double-edged comment that '[a]n inferior talent [...] must sell itself to live – a *genius* has higher duties; and Miss Landon degrades hers, by producing what is even indifferent'.⁷² It might be tempting, then, to reduce Landon's 'A Legend of Tintagel Castle' to – in Thackeray's words – such an 'indifferent' piece of poetry, born of Landon's self-conscious production of a type of Arthurian verse which she knew (from the earlier successes of her long medieval narrative poems and her recent solicitation of Croker's 'St. Michael's Mount') would fit easily into *Fisher's* luxurious pages.

5.3 Romance and Reality (1831): Landon's Arthurian Interests Explored

Economic and market factors tend to receive little attention in discussions of women's medievalism, and perhaps deserve more, but such a reading of 'A Legend of Tintagel Castle' undoubtedly reduces Landon's interest in the Arthurian story purely to its saleable properties. A wider glance across Landon's oeuvre complicates a straightforward dismissal of 'A Legend of Tintagel Castle' as an 'indifferent' or thoughtless production for *Fisher's*. After all, Landon considered many of the poems she wrote for the annual to be her 'best', and

⁷¹ William Wordsworth, 'Preface', to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1802), in *Poetical Works*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson, rev. Ernest de Selincourt (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 734–41 (p. 734).

⁷² 'W.H.' [William Howitt], 'L.E.L.', in *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap-book. MDCCCXL. With Poetical Illustrations by L.E.L. and Mary Howitt*, ed. Mary Howitt (London: Fisher and Son, [1840]), pp. 5–8 (p. 5). William Makepeace Thackeray, 'A Word on the Annuals', *Fraser's Magazine*, 16 (1837), 757–63 (p. 763). Emphasis in original.

Thackeray's disdain for Landon's annual work did not prevent him from selling one of his own poems to *Fisher's*.⁷³ In many ways, the Arthurian content of 'A Legend of Tintagel Castle' is a logical extension of Landon's increasing interest in medieval chivalry, which she had developed through writing *The Troubadour* and *The Golden Violet*. In January 1826, she wrote an animated letter to Alaric Watts, the editor of the *Literary Souvenir*, expressing her current delight in a book on medieval chivalry:

I am deep in a subject which has taken great hold on my imagination. Mills's 'History of Chivalry' has perfectly enchanted me. One book led to another, and I was quite amazed at the variety of romantic incident, of wild adventure with which the annals of those ages are filled. I found my 'Troubadour' was a misnomer, and that the 'Golden Violet' was quite wasted in being used only as a denouement [sic]. A friend pointed out in Warton the passage which alludes to Clemenza, and remarked what a good subject for a poem the contest of the different minstrels would be. On this hint I acted, and am about half-way in a work which has, at least, most deeply interested myself.⁷⁴

'Mills's 'History of Chivalry', more properly known as Charles Mills's *History of Chivalry; or, Knighthood in its Times* (1825), was a popular two-volume account describing 'the institutions of knighthood [...] and [...] the history of chivalry in the countries of Europe'.⁷⁵

Landon had particular cause to read Mills's study, for its preface shone praise on 'the glories of chivalry' as they were 'sung' by herself in *The Troubadour*.⁷⁶ The work-in-progress she refers to is *The Golden Violet*, published in December the same year, and in which she duly acknowledged her 'debt of obligation and delight' to Mills's *History* and her use of Warton's *History of English Poetry* (1774–81).⁷⁷ Moreover, her new realisation that her treatment of medieval chivalry in *The Troubadour* was a 'misnomer' suggests that Landon – who wrote at

⁷³ Stephenson, *Letitia Elizabeth Landon*, p. 148. See also Vanessa K. Warne, 'Thackeray Among the Annuals: Morality, Cultural Authority and the Literary Annual Genre', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 39:2 (2006), 158–78.

⁷⁴ Landon to Alaric Watts, 31 January 1826, in *Alaric Watts: A Narrative of His Life*, ed. Alaric Alfred Watts, 2 vols (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1884), vol. 2, pp. 22–23.

⁷⁵ Charles Mills, 'Preface', to *The History of Chivalry; or, Knighthood and its Times*, 2 vols (London: Longmans, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1825), vol. 1, pp. iii–xix (p. vii).

⁷⁶ Mills, 'Preface', *History of Chivalry*, vol. 1, p. vii.

⁷⁷ Landon, *The Golden Violet, With its Tales of Romance and Chivalry and Other Poems* (1826; Philadelphia: H.C. Carey and I. Lea, 1827), p. 244.

a ferociously fast pace making few corrections⁷⁸ – accumulated more detailed knowledge of the medieval past during the late 1820s. The depth of her understanding of medieval chivalry varies significantly from the production of *The Improvisatrice* in 1824 to a late poem like ‘A Legend of Tintagel Castle’.

Both volumes of Mills’s *History of Chivalry* make anecdotal use of Arthurian material; the first includes detailed discussion of ‘The Round Table’ and the characteristics of ‘Sir Lancelot’ and ‘Sir Gawain’. Frequent extracts from Malory’s *Morte Darthur* also feature.⁷⁹ Croker’s *Fairy Legends and the Traditions of the South of Ireland* (1827–28), which Landon also admired, made similar cursory use of the legend.⁸⁰ She had also read and remembered the ‘enchanted castle’ in Sir Walter Scott’s Arthurian verse tale, *The Bridal of Triermain* (1813),⁸¹ and in her teenage years had expressed her admiration for Elizabeth Smith’s *Fragments in Prose and Verse* (1811) which contained Smith’s ‘Merlin’ poem.⁸² (‘I have borrowed Miss Elizabeth Smith’s *Fragments*, I like them so much’, Landon gushed to a friend.)⁸³ It was from these texts – a sporadic collection of contemporary lyrics, metrical romance, and scholarship in which Arthur was not the central focus – that Landon gathered her impressions of the legend.

Yet, in her animated description of her encounter with Mills’s *History*, Landon indicates that his text led her to consult others of a similar nature (‘one book led to another’), and there is reason to believe that this may have included some Arthurian romances. Several

⁷⁸ As Landon revealed in another letter to Watts, ‘I wrote *The Improvisatrice* in less than five weeks, and during that time I often was for two or three days without touching it. I never saw the MS. till in proof-sheets a year afterwards, and I made no additions, only verbal alterations’. See Landon to Alaric Watts, [n. d.], in *Alaric Watts*, vol. 2, p. 21.

⁷⁹ See Mills, *History of Chivalry*, vol. 1, pp. 374–79.

⁸⁰ For Landon’s response to Croker’s work in verse, see ‘Fancies, inscribed to T. Crofton Croker’ [originally published in *The Venetian Bracelet* (1828)], repr. in Landon, *Selected Writings*, p. 128. For Arthurian references in Croker’s *The Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland*, 3 vols (London: T. Davison, 1828), see vol. 2, pp. 111, 163; vol. 3, pp. 193–95.

⁸¹ See Letitia Elizabeth Landon, *Romance and Reality*, ed. Cynthia Lawford (*Silver Fork Novels, 1826–1841, Volume 2*) (1831; London: Pickering and Chatto, 2005), pp. 190, 494, n. 33. All further references are to this edition and are subsequently given in parentheses.

⁸² McGann and Riess, ‘Introduction’, to Landon, *Selected Writings*, p. 11. For Smith’s use of Merlin, see Chapter 2, 2.2.

⁸³ Blanchard, *Life and Literary Remains of L.E.L.*, p. 28.

Arthurian allusions occur within Landon's first prose work, the silver-fork novel *Romance and Reality* (1831), and utilise aspects of the Arthurian story which she could not have found in either Mills's or Croker's works. The novel charts the short life of Emily Arundel who falls in love with the dashing Edward Lorraine, but who also, like the Maid of Astolat (and so many of Landon's heroines), pursues a fatal course towards death when she realises that her love for Edward is unrequited. At the centre of the novel is a significant authorial aside which refers to one of Lancelot's specific adventures:

I do not think imagination an indulgence at all to be permitted in our present state of society: very well for poets and painters – it is their business [...] but in the common construction of characters and circumstances it is an illusion quite at variance with the realities on which we are to act, and among which we are to live. In a young man it unfits him for the rough career of life, as much as stepping within the castle's enchanted boundary unfitted Sir Launcelot for his encounter with the giant. The sword of action hangs idly in the unnerved hand. (pp. 215–16)

The paragraph forms part of a longer meditation, which, as Cynthia Lawford notes, distributes 'advice for romantic young adults, dividing them by gender'.⁸⁴ Young men, Landon declares, should prepare themselves for 'the rough career of life' and not enter trials 'unnerved' by the 'illusions' of the 'imagination' (which, as the anecdotal reference to Lancelot suggests, is a synonym for 'romance'). As Landon goes on to clarify: '[n]o romance is so hazardous as that of real life' (p. 216).

Lawford also shrewdly points out that Landon's description of Lancelot's encounter with the giant would appear to demonstrate her familiarity with Malory's tale of 'Sir Lancelot du Lake' in *Le Morte Darthur*.⁸⁵ It is more difficult, however, to ascertain precisely which episode Landon is referring to; when Lancelot enters a castle to fight with 'two grete Gyauntis [giants] well armed all save their hedys [heads], with two horryble clubbys in their hondys [hands]', he defeats both in a sequence which affirms, rather than questions his

⁸⁴ Cynthia Lawford, 'Introduction', to *Romance and Reality* ed. Lawford, pp. ix–xxvii (p. xv).

⁸⁵ Lawford's note to *Romance and Reality*, p. 498, n. 85.

knightly prestige.⁸⁶ In response, Lawford surmises that Landon may be conflating this episode with one in which Lancelot is held under enchantment by Morgan le Fay and imprisoned in Castle Charyot.⁸⁷ Indeed, Landon is not renowned for her accuracy, and many of the vast number of literary quotations she interlaces into *Romance and Reality* are inexact (presumably inserted from memory). The way in which she interspersed her Arthurian reading into her fashionable novel would appear to have been little different.

There is a further Arthurian allusion contained in *Romance and Reality*, this time concerning the circumstances of Arthur's death. A page prior to the invocation of Lancelot, Emily's older friend and chaperone, Lady Mandeville, concludes a romantic 'autobiography of herself' with the suggestion that 'like the ancient king' [Arthur] – but lacking a sword – she should throw her 'set of emeralds into the lake' as 'an offering to destiny' (pp. 213, 215).⁸⁸ The climax of the Arthurian story becomes the climax to Lady Mandeville's self-aware romantic 'narrative' of her own life (p. 213), in which she casts her younger self as suitably loved, abandoned, and finally rescued from her adopted 'melancholy' through her marriage to Lord Mandeville, using all the clichés of the romance plot (p. 215). This is supposed to warn Emily of the dangers of too much romance, but the ridiculousness of the Arthurian parallel is wholly lost on the younger girl, who 'could not but deprecate the emeralds being destined to any such preventative service' (p. 215).⁸⁹ Emily reads (Arthurian) romance as reality, and is punished by death because of it. As Adriana Craciun points out, Landon's sympathies lie not with the insipid Emily, but with the 'urbane and worldly' Lady Mandeville, 'who sees through the Romantic follies of the people and poets of her day'.⁹⁰ Landon's medievalism in *Romance and Reality* is carefully angled to critique high society

⁸⁶ Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. Shepherd, p. 165.

⁸⁷ Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, ed. Shepherd, p. 154. See Lawford's note to *Romance and Reality*, p. 498, n. 85.

⁸⁸ This allusion is also meticulously noted by Lawford; see *Romance and Reality* ed. Lawford, p. 496, n. 62.

⁸⁹ Though made in jest, Lady Mandeville's vision is not dissimilar to Tennyson's later invention of Guinevere's disposal of the twelve diamonds into the lake in 'Lancelot and Elaine' (1859). See Tennyson, 'Lancelot and Elaine', in *Idylls of the King*, ed. J.M. Gray (London: Penguin, 2004), pp. 168–205 (ll. 1226–35).

⁹⁰ Adriana Craciun, *Fatal Women of Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 214.

and more than a little tinged with cynicism; her knowing allusions to the Arthurian story reveal the romance's class allegiances, its high-blown gestures, and its curious behaviours. More broadly, the very presence of Arthurian allusions in *Romance and Reality* signal the myth's rehabilitation as a fashionable topic; if silver fork novels functioned as 'handbooks to the language of the beau monde', then Lady Mandeville's recasting of herself as the dying King Arthur demonstrated to Landon's readers that Arthurian romance was part of the 'day-to-day detail of fashionable living'.⁹¹ Medievalism (as distinct from the medieval) now had a very real role to play in the construction of 'fashionable' reality, however misplaced it might be to model oneself on Lancelot, or throw one's jewels into the nearest lake.

The dangers of romance for young women are typified in Emily, Landon's heroine, whose imagination invests her 'hero', Edward Lorraine, with over-idealised 'traits' (p. 216). For Landon, this type of imaginative idealising is very much a female attribute. Like the heroine of *The Improvisatrice*, who claims '[m]y power was but a woman's power', *Romance and Reality* extols a similar separation between the sexes, and marks out a clear distinction between the male imagination and the female equivalent:⁹²

A woman may indulge this faculty with more impunity, because hers is a generally passive, not an active feeling, and principally confined to the affections; all the risk of beau-idealising a lover too much, is, that of never finding one, or being disappointed when found. (p. 216)

Without the return of Lorraine's love, Emily eventually sickens and dies at the early age of twenty-one, sentenced to the very 'passive' life of 'beau-idealising' which Landon's narrator describes. The maiden in 'A Legend of Tintagel Castle' is also guilty of her fair share of 'beau-idealising'; like Emily, she creates her own illusions, and her imagination leads her to believe (wrongly) that 'every sun beam that brightened the gloom, [...] was the waving of Sir Lancelot's plume' (ll. 37–38). Landon's satirical use of Arthurian material in her first prose

⁹¹ Alison Adburgham, *Silver Fork Society: Fashionable Life and Literature from 1814 to 1840* (London: Constable, 1983), p. 1.

⁹² Landon, *The Improvisatrice*, in *Selected Writings*, 1. 26.

novel has never been brought to bear upon her treatment of Arthurian material in ‘A Legend of Tintagel Castle’, but her earlier critique of Lancelot in prose casts a decidedly cynical shadow over the later poem.

‘[D]eeply read in Byron’, Landon’s impressions of Lancelot may have been influenced by Byron’s criticism of his character in his ‘Addition to the Preface’ of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, in which he expressed his ‘fear that Sir Tristram and Sir Lancelot were no better than they should be, although very poetical personages and true knights “sans peur,” though not “sans reproche”’.⁹³ Landon’s Lancelot is certainly not *sans reproche*, as she takes care to stress his apparently sincere ‘love’ for the ‘maiden’ (ll. 21, 24, 29, 57), which is later exchanged for his love for Genevra, ‘whose image was treasured as hers once had been’ (l. 40). Thus, Landon condemns Lancelot’s fascination with ‘treasured’ images, rather than the realities of life and love – a critique that builds on her earlier arguments in *Romance and Reality*. As Elizabeth Fay notes, by ‘promoting medieval figurations as a kind of self-display and consumer commodity, Landon [...] rejects the Romantic recuperation of the past’.⁹⁴ Lancelot sees both maiden and Genevra as ‘beautiful [...] image[s]’, treasured for their ‘beauty’ in the same way that *Fisher’s* was by its readers.⁹⁵ Her maiden is never fully realised: she is nothing more substantial than ‘a vision’ (l. 17) and ‘a dream’ (ll. 17, 57). As Fay suggests, for Landon, ‘chivalry is dead rather than alive, and [...] history can be dreamed and lived only in the dreaming’.⁹⁶ Indeed, Landon selected Burke’s famous axiom, ‘the age of chivalry has gone’, for her epigraph to *The Golden Violet* (1826).⁹⁷ For Landon, a poet intimately concerned with masks, masquerade, and the dialectic between public and private

⁹³ McGann and Riess, ‘Introduction’, to Landon, *Selected Writings*, p. 11. Lord Byron, ‘Addition to the Preface’ of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, in *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann and Barry Weller, 7 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980–1993), vol. 2: *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 5–6 (p. 5).

⁹⁴ Elizabeth Fay, *Romantic Medievalism: History and the Romantic Literary Ideal* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 60.

⁹⁵ L.E.L., ‘Introduction’, to *Fisher’s* (1832), n. p.

⁹⁶ Fay, *Romantic Medievalism*, p. 60.

⁹⁷ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. L.G. Mitchell (1790; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 76.

values, Arthurian medievalism was yet another newly revived and fashionable shroud for tales about love which continued to confine women to aesthetic and passive roles.

In sum, Landon's interest in Arthurian romance does not pervade her corpus in the same way as it does the work of Costello and Vardill (both of whom appear to have been captivated by the legend), and if – as it appears – she read Malory's *Morte Darthur* closely, it is surprising that she did not do more with it. Landon drew her impressions of the Arthurian world from fragments in wider works, and felt no pressure to retell aspects of the stories with any degree of fidelity. In many ways, it is ironic that Landon, alongside Hemans, is one of the best remembered of the Romantic women writers who showed an interest in Arthur, when her attention to the legend was relatively brief. What is crucial, however, is that the sheer weight of her popularity meant that her long-lasting influence on the shape of women's contributions to the legend was far greater than many of her contemporaries. 'A Legend of Tintagel Castle' was included frequently in Landon's *Poetical Works* and other posthumous collections,⁹⁸ and when the poem first appeared in *Fisher's*, it was well received: the *Literary Gazette* deemed it particularly 'touching' and reprinted it in full.⁹⁹ The inclusion of her Arthurian poem in *Fisher's* for 1833 also marked the beginning of a curious pattern, for Arthurian poems continued to appear in the annual long after the death of its first and longstanding editor.

⁹⁸ After its publication in *Fisher's* for 1833, 'The Legend of Tintagel Castle' was selected by Emma Roberts for a posthumous collection of Landon's annual poems, *The Zenana, and Minor Poems of L.E.L.*, ed. Emma Roberts (London: Fisher, Son and Jackson, 1839), pp. 85–89. It was thereafter reprinted in Landon's *Poetical Works*, ed. William Bell Scott (London: Routledge, 1873), and in an American edition of the same: Landon, *Poetical Works* (Philadelphia, 1845, 1855, 1867). More recently, the poem has been included in McGann and Riess's *Selected Writings* (pp. 211–13), as well as Lupack and Tapa Lupack's *Arthurian Literature by Women* (pp. 51–53).

⁹⁹ [Review], 'Fisher's Drawing-Room Scrap-book', *London Literary Gazette*, 820 (Oct 1832), 625–26.

5.4 Continuing Arthuriana in *Fisher's*: Mary Howitt's 'The Tomb of St. George' (1839)

After Landon's sudden death from prussic acid poisoning in West Africa in 1838, the editing of *Fisher's* fell to one of her close friends, the Quaker writer and educationalist Mary Howitt (1799–1888). Like Landon before her, Howitt's content was limited by Fisher and Sons' pre-selected plates, but, again, like her predecessor, the new editor allowed herself considerable flexibility in linking verse to image. Howitt's Arthurian poem, 'The Tomb of St. George' (1840), illustrates an engraving taken from one of Fisher, Son, and Co.'s foreign geographic publications, John Carne's three-volume *Syria, the Holy Land and Asia Minor, Illustrated* ([1836]). The engraving shows a one-time chapel in the Lebanon hillside 'commonly called the Tomb of St. George, our tutular saint' on account of it being close to the spot where the knight had his legendary encounter with the dragon (see Figure 7).¹⁰⁰ Largely ignoring the illustration's Arabian location, however, Howitt formulated a poem about English medieval romances, featuring not only 'good Saint George' (l. 22), but also Guy of Warwick, Charlemagne, Bevis of Hampton, Lancelot, and Arthur. For Howitt, the material remains of the medieval past have decayed beyond recognition:

Tintagel is a heap of stone;
And where Caerleon lay
We know not, all besides its name
Hath passed from earth away.¹⁰¹

The material loss of the legendary sites of Arthur's various courts symbolises the wider inaccessibility of the Arthurian past; Howitt's knights are long dead, and 'brave king Arthur' is no 'once and future king', full of possibility, but lies 'in the dust, [...] low as Charlemagne' (ll. 15–16). Even 'Sir Lancelot / [...] Would meet with no adventure now, / Worth lifting of

¹⁰⁰ John Carne, *Syria, the Holy Land, and Asia Minor, Illustrated*, 3 vols ([1836]; London: Fisher, Son and Co., 1840), vol. 3, p. 33.

¹⁰¹ Mary Howitt, 'The Tomb of St. George', in *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap-book. MDCCCXL. With Poetical Illustrations by L.E.L. and Mary Howitt*, ed. Mary Howitt (London: Fisher and Son, [1840]), pp. 49–50. The engraving appears preceding p. 49 (n. p.). All further references are to this edition and are subsequently given in parentheses.

the lance' (ll. 17–20). The regular tetrameter and trimeter rhymes and the end-stopped ballad stanzas create a sense of finality and order which emphasises the separation between past and present.

Yet while the Arthurian past is unobtainable to the poet's adult mind, it is far more accessible in youth. Towards the end of the poem, the speaker records:

How have I loved from childhood's years
 To call to life again
 Brave prince, and paladin, and peer,
 And those Caerleon men! (ll. 41–44)

The mind of the child is able to reanimate an alliterative throng of 'prince, paladin, and peer' and bring Arthur's knights ('those Caerleon men') back 'to life again'. Like Mary Morgan's impassioned visions of Prince Arthur and Merlin among the Carmarthenshire hills, Howitt's youthful 'I' receives a vision of Arthurian splendour that blurs the boundary between dreaming and reality, and the mythic and the real. The reminiscent tone continues in the next two stanzas:

To see the steeds on which they rode,
 It was a goodly sight;
 Such horses are not now-a-days
 So coal-black and so white!

Oh, 'twas a wondrous pleasant thing,
 When I was but a child,
 To live in those old times, to meet
 Adventure strange and wild! (ll. 45–52)

By this point in the poem, the child's experience is no longer a fantasy but almost a reality; they 'see' the various elements of the medieval landscape and 'live in those old times', divorced from the modern day.

This is the peak of the child's submersion, however, as in the following stanza the speaker laments with regret the waning of the 'goodly sight' in their now adult imagination:

And even still the charm is strong;
 But 'tis not now as then,
 For I see the tombs wherein they lie,

And not the living men!

(ll. 53–56)

The introduction of ‘tombs’ in this final stanza seeks to reconnect the poem with its paired engraving of ‘The Tomb of St. George’, a rather laboured shift which jolts the reader away from the more considered examination of the enhanced relationship between a child’s imagination and romance material. *Fisher’s* appears to have functioned as a malleable space in which its female editors could respond to their encounters with Arthurian romance, but they were never entirely free from the conditions of the role, which required some, if passable connections to be made between the pre-selected print and the editor’s poetical accompaniment.

The sentiments expressed in ‘The Tomb of St. George’ share some similarities with Howitt’s own childhood recollections recorded later in her *Autobiography* (1889). Her outline of memorable events from her ‘girlhood’ includes a record of her first meeting with Arthurian material as a consequence of a visit to Wales by her mother and elder sister, Anna, taken in the ‘late summer of 1813’ when Howitt was fourteen.¹⁰² Howitt stayed at home while her female family members travelled, but she recorded that the Welsh trip nonetheless produced ‘an effect which was as vivid and lasting on me as if I had accompanied them’.¹⁰³ Anna returned from Cardiff with a version of the Arthurian story to share with her younger sibling:

Through this visit to Cardiff, Anna and I became first acquainted with the romance of King Arthur. She had been taken to Caerleon, and told there the grand old story of the hero’s coronation at that ancient spot, of the knights who were his companions, and the institution of the Round Table. Our uncle, William Wood, seeing the interest which she felt in the legend, gave her a printed account. It must have been brought out by some Archaeological Society, for it was a quarto, containing fifty pages or so of large print. Caerleon figured in it largely. We both became perfectly imbued with the glorious historic romance, which never lost its effect on either of us.¹⁰⁴

Howitt provides a rare account of how a nineteenth-century woman writer ‘first became acquainted with the romance of King Arthur’ in the 1810s. Though specific in its details,

¹⁰² Mary Howitt, *An Autobiography*, ed. Margaret Howitt, 2 vols (London: W. Ibister, 1889), vol. 1, p. 89.

¹⁰³ Howitt, *Autobiography*, vol. 1, p. 89.

¹⁰⁴ Howitt, *Autobiography*, vol. 1, p. 92.

Howitt's experience encapsulates several of the wider trends in women's early knowledge of the myth. The first literary encounter with Arthur is not through Malory, but through a different, lesser known text (here an 'Archaeological quarto'); the fascination with the myth is strongly connected to an exploration of a certain space or place (for Howitt, Caerleon and Cardiff, and more broadly, Wales); and the introduction to the romance is mediated through a male figure (most commonly, a family member with antiquarian interests). Almost thirty years later, 'Caerleon' (ll. 10, 44) and its historical links with Arthur's court continued to play a large part in Howitt's poetic vision of medieval romance. Like Costello in 'A Dream' (1815), who asks 'what infant but the name of Arthur knows?', Howitt forges a strong connection between the Arthurian past and her childhood imagination which is regrettably 'not now as then' (l. 53).¹⁰⁵

Mary Howitt's literary career documents her life-long interest in the Arthurian myth. Her marriage to William Howitt (1792–1879) in 1821 would unite her not only with a lifelong collaborator and co-writer, but also with another Arthurian enthusiast: his own nostalgic lament for the Arthurian past, 'A Day Dream at Tintagel', appeared across two issues of the *Athenaeum* in July 1835.¹⁰⁶ Together, husband and wife compiled *The Literature and Romances of Northern Europe: Constituting a Complete History of the Literature of Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Iceland* (1852) and *Ruined Abbeys and Castles of Great Britain* (1862), both of which make anecdotal use of Arthurian material.¹⁰⁷ In particular, Mary developed a fondness for the figure of Sir Galahad, who appears as a point of

¹⁰⁵ Louisa Stuart Costello, 'A Dream', in *The Maid of the Cyprus Isle and Other Poems* (London: Sherwood, Neely and Jones, 1815), pp. 56–58 (l. 24).

¹⁰⁶ William Howitt, 'A Day-Dream at Tintagel' [2 parts] *The Athenaeum*, 403 (18 Jul 1835), 545–47, also *Athenaeum*, 404 (25 Jul 1835), 569–70. The piece was subsequently reprinted in William Howitt, *Visits to Remarkable Places: Old Halls, Battle fields, and Scenes Illustrative of Striking Passages in English History and Poetry* (London: Longman, Orme, Browne, Green, and Longmans, 1840), pp. 327–48.

¹⁰⁷ William and Mary Howitt, *The Literature and Romances of Northern Europe: Constituting a Complete History of the Literature of Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Iceland*, 2 vols (London: Colburn and Co., 1852), vol. 2, pp. 200–01, 255; *Ruined Abbeys and Castles of Great Britain* (London: A.W. Bennett. 1862), pp. 17–19, 22–23, 36.

comparison in her novel set in Wales, *The Cost of Caergwyn* (1864).¹⁰⁸ In the 1860s she also reprinted ‘Sir Galahad’s Quest of the Sangreal, from Caxton’s *Morte Darthur*’ in her anthology for children, *A Treasury of Old Favourite Tales, Introduced in the Story of Rockbourne Hall* (1860).¹⁰⁹ By this time, her medievalism had more in common with that of Charlotte Mary Yonge and Diana Mulock Craik, who similarly recast the myth for the Victorian child reader in ways which emphasised the Christian morality of the story.¹¹⁰

Yet her earlier Arthurian ballad for *Fisher’s* does not share this tone of Christian moralism, nor does it adopt the same form as Costello and Landon’s earlier Arthurian annual poems. Like Bannerman, Howitt strongly associated Arthurian romance with the ballad form, a verse type more restrained than the ode or broader lyric and drawn (through its focus on narrative) to more lucid expression. Although she had to wait until her marriage (which gave her access to a ‘large library’) to read ‘Percy’s Reliques of Ancient English Poetry’, she was a self-confessed ‘passionate admirer of ballad-poetry’ from childhood, when she had listened intently to the ‘old songs, and legends’ stored in the oral memory of her family’s German domestic servant.¹¹¹ ‘The Tomb of St. George’ pays tribute to the traditional ballad form, yet combines with it the language expected of a decorative ‘poetical illustration’, epitomised in the floral simile which opens the poem: ‘Oh wondrous days of old romance / Like summer flowers are fled’ (ll. 1–2). Similar sentiments emphasising the ‘pleasant’ nature of romance (l. 38) and its suitability for romanticised reading in ‘sunlit hours in summer bowers / For

¹⁰⁸ Mary Howitt, *The Cost of Caergwyn*, 3 vols (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1864), vol. 3, p. 198. For a general reference to ‘the days of King Arthur’, see vol. 2, p. 199.

¹⁰⁹ Mary Howitt, *A Treasury of Old Favourite Tales, Introduced in the Story of Rockbourne Hall* (Edinburgh: Gall and Inglis, 1860). This includes a version of ‘Sir Galahad’s Quest of the Sangreal from Caxton’s *Morte Arthur*’ (pp. 331–42). The volume also features Arthurian woodcut frontispiece by E. Evans, bearing the caption: ‘The old man lift up the cloth of the perilous siege, and found these letters: “This is the siege of Sir Galahad, the good knight”’.

¹¹⁰ ‘The Legend of Sir Galahad’, ed. Charlotte Mary Yonge, *Monthly Packet of Evening Readings for Younger Members of the English Church*, 4–6 (London: J. and C. Moseley, 1852–3), and Yonge, *The Heir of Redclyffe* (London: J. W. Parker and Son, 1853). Dinah Mulock Craik, ‘Avillion; or, The Happy Isles – a Fireside Fancy’, in *Avillion and Other Tales* (London: Smith, Elder, 1853), pp. 1–115.

¹¹¹ Mary Howitt, ‘Preface’, to *Ballads and Other Poems* (London: Longman, Browne, Green and Longmans, 1847), pp. v–viii (pp. v–vi).

winter-nights a theme!’ (ll. 39–40) are scattered throughout the poem. Such images are offset against stanzas which allude to the content of the medieval romances, and adopt a more sombre tone: Arthur is, after all, ‘in the dust’, Charlemagne ‘lies low’, and ‘the minstrels all are dead!’ (ll. 15–16, 4) Howitt’s poem struggles to negotiate between these two conflicting styles: that of the new ornamental annual poem, and the ‘old, traditional literature’ of the ballad.¹¹² Landon had shown that poems with their roots in Arthurian romance could be housed in *Fisher’s*, but that context still prescribed an engagement with the sentimental style which the annuals favoured.

When she took on the role of editor for *Fisher’s*, Howitt expressed considerable anxiety as to whether she could successfully manage a project ‘so associated [with Landon’s] name, and her peculiar sentiments and graceful poetry’.¹¹³ The severe contrast between the surface ornamentation and the bleak loss of the medieval literary past in ‘The Tomb of St. George’, then, can be seen as the result of Howitt’s efforts to try to minimise the ‘difference’ between her poetry and that of the formidably popular L.E.L.¹¹⁴ Reviewing Howitt’s first issue of *Fisher’s*, Christian Isobel Johnstone, the editor of *Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine*, perceived a similar tussle in Howitt’s work: ‘Mrs. Howitt enters upon her office in a spirit of anxious deprecation, which damps and represses her real powers. [...] She must now take courage, nor stumble at the threshold of the drawing-room’.¹¹⁵ Howitt later expressed her discontent with the poems she wrote for *Fisher’s*, admitting ‘I was not proud of the work [...] The payment was £100 per annum and sometimes I could write a poem in a day’.¹¹⁶ Keen to stress that her annual poems were quickly dashed off and motivated largely by financial gain, Howitt turned her back on her poetry for the annual. ‘The Tomb of St. George’, a ballad

¹¹² Howitt, ‘Preface’, to *Ballads and Other Poems*, p. v.

¹¹³ Howitt, ‘Preface’, *Fisher’s* (1840), n. p.

¹¹⁴ Howitt, ‘Preface’, *Fisher’s* (1840), n. p.

¹¹⁵ [Christian Isobel Johnstone] [Review], ‘The Annuals of 1840’, *Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine* (Dec 1839), 812–16 (812).

¹¹⁶ Howitt, *Autobiography*, vol. 2, p. 22.

about the poet's nostalgia for a lost Arthurian past, is itself forgotten and deemed unworthy of remembrance. For Linda H. Peterson, Howitt became an astute exploiter of the annuals, using them (as Killick suggests), primarily as a place 'to try out subject matter': she 'could' (and did) 'place poems in these venues for payment, gauge the response of her readers, and save up the best for published collections'.¹¹⁷ Several of Howitt's annual poems later reappeared in *Ballads and Other Poems* (1847) and *Hymns and Fireside Verses* (1837),¹¹⁸ but the absence of 'The Tomb of St. George' from these later anthologies suggests that its author remained ultimately unconvinced of the Arthurian myth's saleability.

There is a clear tension, then, between the role of the annuals as a formative and professionalising space for women writers, which 'helped women authors to establish reputations and a readership which could lead to single author publications', and the unavoidable limits of the annual format, which included writing for pre-prescribed plates, a demand for an ornamental style, and an overwhelming focus on feminine beauty.¹¹⁹ Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar note how often 'the woman writer feels herself literally or figuratively crippled by the debilitating alternatives her culture offers her', and in terms of Arthurian poetry, the crippling effect of the annuals can be located in the lack of performative knowledge of the legend and its sources in women writers' verse for annual publication.¹²⁰ Male poets publishing Arthurian poems in the annuals, such as William Lisle Bowles and Thomas Crofton Croker, seemed able make their scholarly knowledge of the legend at home within the form's predominately decorative aesthetic. Croker's 'St. Michael's Mount', a short ballad of only twenty lines, is overwhelmed with over sixteen lines of prose notes,

¹¹⁷ Killick, *British Short Fiction*, p. 30. Linda H. Peterson, *Becoming a Woman of Letters: Myths of Authorship and Facts of the Victorian Market* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 108.

¹¹⁸ Peterson, *Becoming a Woman of Letters*, p. 108.

¹¹⁹ Brown, 'The Victorian Poetess', p. 191. Aburgham, *Women in Print*, p. 236.

¹²⁰ Aburgham, *Women in Print*, p. 236. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, 2nd edn (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 57.

referencing (among others) Sir Walter Scott and Milton.¹²¹ Similarly, Lisle Bowles's 'Glastonbury Abbey, and Wells Cathedral' (1826), published in T.K. Hervey's *Friendship's Offering*, is accompanied by a substantial note clarifying that 'King Arthur was buried on the Isle of Avalon' and a Latin citation from John Leland's *Itinerary* (c. 1538–43).¹²² In contrast, Landon, Costello, and Howitt all struggled to articulate a similar erudition.

5.5 Further Arthuriana in *Fisher's*: Caroline Norton's 'Lord Fordwich' (1845)

Sarah Ellis (1799–1872) took up the mantle of editor of *Fisher's* for four years following Mary Howitt's departure in 1841, but it was not until the title fell under the pen of Caroline Norton (1808–1877; editor for *Fisher's* between 1846–49) that another Arthurian poem graced its pages. Norton was a well-practised editor, having previously occupied similar positions at *La Belle Assemblée and Court Magazine* (1832–37) and the *Keepsake* (1836).¹²³ Her paean to 'Lord Fordwich' (1845), the 'eldest son of Earl Cowper and the Lady Anne Robinson, daughter of Earl and Countess Grey', was written to accompany an elaborately framed angelic portrait of the young lord with a head of glossy dark curls (Figure 8).¹²⁴ Typically sentimental in its depiction of childhood innocence, the portrait is a reminder of the annual's deliberate cultivation of an interest in the upper classes among its aspirational middle-class readers. More unusual, however, is Norton's extensive adaptation of a passage from Malory's *Morte Darthur* to structure the second half of her poem.

¹²¹ In a rare examination of this little-known poem, Vanessa K. Warne also comments on the 'imbalance between "St. Michael's Mount" and its supporting materials' (although she ascribes the authorship of the poem and its notes to Landon). See Vanessa K. Warne, *Purport and Design: Print Culture and Gender Politics in Early Victorian Annuals* (Queen's University, Ontario, Canada: Unpublished Ph.D thesis, 2001), p. 52.

¹²² William Lisle Bowles, 'Glastonbury Abbey, and Wells Cathedral', *Friendship's Offering*, pp. 64–66.

¹²³ See Adburgham, *Women in Print*, p. 243; K.D. Reynolds, 'Norton, Caroline Elizabeth Sarah [other married name Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Stirling Maxwell, Lady Stirling Maxwell] (1808–1877)', *ODNB* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20339>> [accessed 9 Feb 2012].

¹²⁴ Caroline Norton, 'Lord Fordwich', in *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap-book. MDCCCXLVI* (London: Fisher, Son and Co., [1846]), pp. 26–27 ([headnote] p. 26). All further references are to this edition and are subsequently given in parentheses throughout the text. Like most annuals, *Fisher's* was published in the December of the year preceding the date given on its title page so that it could be purchased as a Christmas gift.

Norton's ode of thirty-eight lines in heroic couplets takes an appropriately reverent form to sing of the current praises and promised glories of the 'simple, pious child' (l. 33).

The opening lines embrace the decorous style and beauty expected from an annual poem:

Fair is thy youthful face, and well combines
 The different beauty of two lovely lines;
 Earnest the light that fills thy Poet-eyes,
 Thoughtfully turned towards the distant skies:
 In the rose-path of life thy fate hath found thee
 Beauty, and rank, and wealth, and love surround thee (ll. 1–6)

In contrast to the Arthurian poems by Croker, Landon, and Howitt, Norton's poem engages closely with the composition of the picture it illustrates, including a reference to the direction of the gaze of the pictured child 'towards the [...] skies'. Of all the attributes Norton gives to the young lord, it is his 'beauty' that dominates (ll. 2, 6). The images are comfortingly familiar, if trite; the child's eyes are filled with 'light' and he treads a 'rose-path' through life (ll. 3, 5). The second half of this first stanza begins to speculate on the boy's 'destiny' in 'riper years' (l. 7), and, by drawing on a Christian framework, the poet predicts both the success, and the inevitable suffering he will encounter in 'this world' but 'not the world beyond!' (l. 16)

Like Lord Fordwich himself, who represents the fusion of 'two families amongst the most renowned for beauty' ([Norton's headnote], p. 26), the poem attempts to combine the ornamental and reverent lines of its first stanza with medieval material introduced in the second:

And tho' in after days it should be told
 Of thee – as of the lovely Knight of old –
 Thou wert the fairest of the courtly throng;
 The gracefulest that led the dance along;
 The bravest man that ever drew a sword;
 The stateliest vision of a belted lord;
 The warmest heart that ever sued for love;
 The kindest, when Pity sought to move;
 The frankest friend that ever clasped a hand;
 The openest giver owning breadth of land;
 The sternest champion of thy country's laws;

The gentlest listener to the poor man's cause; (ll. 17–28)

As an accompanying note makes clear, Norton has a particular 'lovely Knight of old' in mind for her extended comparison, for these lines were modelled on 'the incomparable lament of Sir Ector over the body of Sir Lancelot du Lac' found 'in the "Morte D'arthur"' (Norton's note, p. 27). Costello had subtly alluded earlier to the same passage in her poem for the *Forget Me Not*, but Norton engages directly with Malory's text by reprinting the relevant passage as an addendum to her poem ([Norton's note], p. 27). Previously versified by Vardill in 'La Morte D'arthur', this part of Malory's romance was particularly popular with women poets from the 1820s onwards. Crucially, however, knowledge of this extract is not necessarily an indication that the poet had read Malory's text entire, as the passage had been reprinted frequently by a number of male antiquarians, including both Mills and Ellis. Mills thought it 'a beautiful lament', and Ellis described the same lines as a 'compendium of knightly perfection'.¹²⁵ Similarly referred to as an 'incomparable lament' by Norton (p. 27), her use of Lancelot as a heroic model for the young lord seems to be prompted largely, if not entirely, by her appreciation of this particular passage (made suitable for an annual context by its acknowledged beauty), rather than a broader reading of Lancelot's character across the *Morte Darthur*. Therefore, while for Landon and Costello, Lancelot is a flawed figure and a dishonest lover, by isolating this particular passage from its context, Norton is able to straight-forwardly redeploy the line in the romance which refers to Lancelot as 'the truest lover of a sinfull man that ever loved woman' to praise Lord Fordwich as 'the truest

¹²⁵ Mills, *History of Chivalry*, vol. 2, p. 373, and vol. 1, pp. 377–78. Ellis, ed., *Fabliaux or Tales, Abridged from French Manuscripts of the XIIth and XIIIth centuries by M. Le Grand, selected and translated into English verse by the late G.L. Way, Esq. With A Preface, Notes, and an Appendix by the late G. Ellis, Esq. A New Edition, Corrected*, 3 vols (London: J. Rodwell, 1815), vol. 2, p. 218). Ellis reproduces the passage but incorrectly cites Sir Bors as the speaker, rather than Sir Ector. The same extract is also appended to Ellis's summary of the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur*; see Ellis, *Specimens of Early English Metrical Romances, Chiefly Written During the Early Part of the Fourteenth Century*, 3 vols (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1805) vol. 1, pp. 386–87; also Chapter 4, 4.2. The popularity of these lines is not particular to the Romantic period, but a reflection of a wider trend: as P.J.C. Field notes, Ector's lament is *Le Morte Darthur*'s 'most quoted single passage' (see P.J.C. Field, 'Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*', in *The Arthur of the English: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval English Life and Literature*, ed. W.J.R. Barron (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), pp. 225–46 (p. 228)).

Christian, – so to speak / Of one by nature sinful made, and weak’ (ll. 35–36). Eliding Lancelot’s love for Guinevere, Norton’s line (and, indeed, Malory’s) emphasises only the sin allotted to all Christians, which allows her to project an unproblematic vision of the future Lord Fordwich as the ‘gracefullest’, ‘stateliest’, ‘kindest’, and ‘bravest’ man with ‘the warmest heart that ever sued for love’ (ll. 20–24).

In its confident articulation of its intertextual relationship to Arthurian romance within verses praised for their ‘exquisite dignity, pathos, and beauty’, Norton’s medievalist apostrophising of Lord Fordwich achieves the combination of articulate knowledge and decorous sentiment that Howitt’s earlier and more anxious poem sought to achieve.¹²⁶ The learned content of Norton’s annual poems was also noted by those reviewing her editorial debut for *Fisher’s*. In a statement which nevertheless demonstrates what Peter Manning identifies as the ‘endless self-reproduction of the world of the annuals’ in periodical reviews, the *Metropolitan Magazine* declared Norton’s 1845 volume ‘an elegant casket worthy of the precious intellectual jewels it contains’.¹²⁷ While praising the annual in the language of commodity fetishism, the reviewer nevertheless values its ‘intellectual’ content, and proceeds to remark on Norton’s notes, which offer a ‘full quota of interest and information’.¹²⁸ Back in 1828, the preface to the first volume of the *Keepsake* brazenly declared that its ‘pervading characteristic should be an elegant lightness’, but the reception of Norton’s volume of *Fisher’s* suggests that by 1845, annual consumers were now looking for more substance in their drawing-room reading, which included being more specific about the type of medieval romance informing the editor’s verse.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ [Review], ‘Fisher’s Drawing Room Scrap-book. 1846. By the Hon. Mrs. Norton’, *Metropolitan Magazine*, 44 (Dec 1845), 501–03 (501).

¹²⁷ Manning, ‘Wordsworth in the *Keepsake*’, p. 59. [Review], ‘Fisher’s Drawing Room Scrap-book. 1846’, *Metropolitan Magazine*, 503.

¹²⁸ [Review], ‘Fisher’s Drawing Room Scrap-book. 1846’, *Metropolitan Magazine*, 502.

¹²⁹ [William Harrison Ainsworth], ‘Preface’, to *The Keepsake for 1828* [ed. William Harrison Ainsworth] (London: Thomas Davison, [1828]), pp. v–viii (p. vii). Ainsworth has been identified as editor and author of the preface by Terence Hoagwood, Kathryn Ledbetter, and Martin M. Jacobson in their ‘List of Editors and Publishers for *The Keepsake*, 1828–57’, in *L.E.L.’s “Verses” and the Keepsake for 1829: A Hypertext Edition*,

Landon's earlier annual poems written to illustrate aristocratic portraits had often invoked the medieval past, but in much less specific terms. A precursor for Norton's later approach in 'Lord Fordwich' can be found in Landon's 'Verses' on a portrait of Georgiana, Duchess of Bedford, published in the *Keepsake* for 1829, which offer her subject a fanciful chivalric parallel:

If thou hadst lived in that old haunted time,
When sovereign beauty was a thing sublime,
For which knights went to battle, and her glove
Had even more of glory than of love; –
Hadst thou lived in those days, how chivalrie,
With brand and banner, would have honoured thee!¹³⁰

Where Landon's lines rely on the broad application of familiar tropes sourced from tournament etiquette and courtly love located in a vaguely 'old haunted time', Norton's later poem deliberately draws attention to the ways in which her verse adopts and adapts the language of the medieval past in order to praise a current figure. Landon's role was crucial, however, in establishing Arthurian romance as a 'fashionable' topic. As Glennis Stephenson notes, the annuals

were involved in the ongoing construction of the dominant ideology; as the conflicts they promoted over what constituted good taste suggest, they certainly did not simply express or 'mirror' a set of static and codified values.¹³¹

By adorning Arthurian subjects with the gems, flowers, and other beautiful ornaments necessary for their contextualisation within the annuals' gilded and decorated exteriors, Landon and her successors helped the Arthurian legend to finally cast off its associations with the crude and barbaric that had destined it to the shadows of the female literary imagination for much of the preceding century. Together, the annuals chart the 'ongoing construction' of Arthurian and medieval romance in the minds of their middle-class female readership, from

ed. Hoagwood, Ledbetter, and Jacobsen (Online resource: University of Maryland), <<http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/llel/keepsake.htm>> [accessed 28 June 2012].

¹³⁰ Landon, 'Verses', in *Selected Writings*, p. 135 (ll. 9–14). For another similar example, see Landon's 'Pile of Fouldrey Castle, Lancashire', *Fisher's* (1832), pp. 7–8 (esp. ll. 13–18).

¹³¹ Stephenson, *Letitia Elizabeth Landon*, p. 152.

the vaguer interest in the “medieval”, which characterises the early annual poems of the 1820s, to more articulate engagements with specific Arthurian texts which emerge in the 1840s.

5.6 Lasting Impressions: Landon, Tennyson, and Costello’s Arthurian Contribution to *The Tribute* (1837)

This gradual evolution in the annual form’s negotiation of Arthurian romance can also be mapped onto the contributions of a single figure, for Louisa Stuart Costello supplied not one, but two Arthurian poems to annual publications. ‘The Funeral Boat’ appeared in the *Forget Me Not* when the annual market was still rapidly growing, but almost a decade later, in 1837, she published ‘The Deaths of Tristan and Yseult’ in *The Tribute*, by which time the previously insatiable desire for annuals was beginning to slow.¹³² *The Tribute* was slightly distinguished from the by-then regular titles of the *Forget Me Not*, *Amulet*, *Bijou* and others by its status as a one-off, edited by Spencer Joshua Alwyne Compton, Lord Northampton, a popular patron of the arts, to raise money for the family of the poet, writer, and editor of the *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana*, Rev. Edward Smedley (1788–1836).¹³³ The presence of an aristocratic editor ensured an attractive contribution list which included Wordsworth, Southey, Thomas Moore, Joanna Baillie, Lisle Bowles, and Tennyson. Costello was by far one of the less illustrious contributors, and both her name and poem, perhaps unsurprisingly, passed unnoticed by the volume’s reviewers. On the whole, however, *The Tribute* was well

¹³² For the annuals’ extreme popularity in the late 1820s, see Ledbetter, *Tennyson and Victorian Periodicals*, p. 8. On their decline, Ledbetter writes: ‘The days of the annuals were finished by the 1850s in England: competition and high production costs had signalled their fate by the late 1830s’ (*Tennyson and Victorian Periodicals*, p. 42).

¹³³ See Lord Northampton, ‘Preface’, to *The Tribute: A Collection of Miscellaneous Unpublished Poems, by Various Authors*, ed. Lord Northampton (London: John Murray, 1837), pp. iii–vi; also Ledbetter, *Tennyson and Victorian Periodicals*, p. 35; G.F.R. Barker, ‘Smedley, Edward (1788–1836)’, rev. Clare L. Taylor, *ODNB* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/25747>> [accessed 10 July 2012]; and Jack Morrell, ‘Compton, Spencer Joshua Alwyne, second marquess of Northampton (1790–1851)’, *ODNB* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6037>> [accessed 10 July 2012].

received, and was named by the *Court and Lady's Magazine* as 'one of the most agreeable books of modern verse (transcending by many degrees the very best of the annuals) that has appeared in the present century'.¹³⁴

The form and style of Costello's poem for *The Tribute* suggests that, like Norton, by the late 1830s, she was able to exploit the publishing opportunities offered by the annual market without restricting her contributions to excessively ornamental and feminised subjects. Unlike her earlier poem for the *Forget Me Not*, the title of 'The Deaths of Tristan and Yseult' clearly advertised its status as an Arthurian text. The poem describes the climax of the pair's tragic love affair through a dialogue between Tristan and a deceitful maiden, who falsely tells the knight that she sees a boat with a black sail on the sea, indicating that Yseult is not coming to meet him:

A bark comes onward before the gale,
But no white banner is waving there,
Black is the pennon, and black the sail,
The colours of despair.
Turn thee, Knight, to rest again,
Thou sigh'st for Yseult la Blonde in vain¹³⁵

The monochrome palette is embedded in the plot of the medieval tale, but it also marks a move away from the glittering colours of Costello's earlier annual poem, and towards a more stark and restrained style more in keeping with the poem's tragic subject. Some similarities with 'The Funeral Boat' remain; echoing the damsel's demise, Tristan's death is also announced by a disembodied 'mournful cry' (l. 37), and like Costello's damsel of Astolat, Yseult becomes 'as pale and cold as snow' (l. 52) when she receives the news of Tristan's expiry. Instead of a glittering array of colours, the monosyllabic repetition of the black pennon and sail, combined with the truncated line, 'the colours of despair', work against the

¹³⁴ [Review], 'The Tribute', *Court and Lady's Magazine*, 11:5 (Dec 1837), 234.

¹³⁵ 'Miss Costello' [Louisa Stuart Costello], 'The Deaths of Tristan and Yseult', in *The Tribute*, pp. 289–92 (ll. 25–30). All further references are to this edition and are subsequently given in parentheses.

expectation for smooth decoration, and exploit the annual's preference for pictorialisation to create a new solemnity.

The poem also advertises its grounding in Arthurian scholarship in a manner absent from 'The Funeral Boat'. 'The Deaths of Tristan and Yseult' is prefaced by an explanatory headnote summarising the narrative of the poem (p. 289) and ends with a note directing readers to the 'ancient romance of "Sir Tristrem"' (p. 292). 'Sir Walter Scott perhaps first rendered the subject interesting to general readers', Costello observes, 'and M. Francisque Michel's valuable and learned work has lately recalled public notice to its merits' (p. 292). This annotation echoes the tone of her comments on the Tristan myth in *Specimens of the Early Poetry of France*, published two years earlier, and indicates how, by this time, Costello's scholarly and popular engagements with the Arthurian myth had become increasingly fluid.¹³⁶ By referencing Scott's edition of the romance and Michel's *Tristan: Recueil de ce qui reste des poèmes relatifs a ses adventures* (1835–39), Costello situates her poem firmly among contemporary British and French medieval scholarship. Both Costello and Norton's poems demonstrate how the annuals offered writers a 'safe space' to publish works which engaged with Arthurian texts and the research of male antiquarians.¹³⁷

'The Deaths of Tristan and Yseult' brings Costello's work into close contact with that of Alfred Lord Tennyson, whose 'Stanzas' (which would eventually become the much lengthier *Maud*), also appeared in *The Tribute*.¹³⁸ More immediately, this increases the likelihood that Tennyson was aware of Costello's contemporary interest in the legend. As both Broome Saunders and Simpson have demonstrated, there are numerous similarities between Tennyson's 'The Lady of Shalott' (1832 text), Costello's 'The Funeral Boat', and

¹³⁶ See Chapter 4, 4.4.

¹³⁷ Pulham, "'Jewels – delights – perfect loves'", p. 12.

¹³⁸ See Alfred Tennyson, 'Stanzas', in *The Tribute*, pp. 244–50. A poem by Tennyson's brother, Christopher, immediately follows Costello's 'The Deaths of Tristan and Yseult'. (See Rev. C.T. Tennyson, 'To a Lady', in *The Tribute*, p. 293.) For the relationship between Tennyson's 'Stanzas' and *Maud*, see Ledbetter, "'BeGemmed and beAmuletted'", 236.

Landon's 'A Legend of Tintagel Castle'.¹³⁹ The second part of Costello's poem describes the 'wide expanse of clouds, that lie / A broader iris on the sky' (ll. 34–35), and Tennyson famously begins his poem with a similar sentiment: 'On either side of the river lie / Long fields of barley and of rye / That clothe the wold and meet the sky'.¹⁴⁰ All three poems share common images: Tennyson's metaphor of the Lady of Shalott's cries, like 'dying swans wild warblings', seems to combine the 'mournful cry' of Costello's 'sea-bird' ('The Funeral Boat', l. 122) with the image of Landon's barge 'towed by two swans' ('Legend', l. 47).¹⁴¹ Both Costello's and Tennyson's poems feature a 'web' and a 'willow',¹⁴² and a broader parallel can be drawn between Tennyson's 'Elaine, the lily maid', in 'Lancelot and Elaine' (1859) and Landon's maiden, who is associated with the same flower ('Legend', l. 46).¹⁴³ So, too, do the crossovers between Landon's style and Tennyson's own extend to other Arthurian poems he worked on in the early 1830s. In Tennyson's 'Morte d'Arthur' (wr. 1833–4; pub. 1842), Bedivere hides Arthur's sword among 'the many-knotted waterflags' – the same aquatic plants in which the maiden of Astolat is 'hidden' in Landon's 'A Legend of Tintagel Castle' (l. 15).¹⁴⁴ While many more comparisons could be drawn between the Arthurian poems of Tennyson's female contemporaries and his early Arthuriana, the majority of any thematic,

¹³⁹ Comparison of the content of all three poems and their treatment of source material has dominated critical discussions of Costello and Landon's poems, to the extent that their status as annual poems has remained largely unexplored. See Simpson, 'Costello's "The Funeral Boat"', 130; also Broome Saunders, *Women Writers and Nineteenth-Century Medievalism*, pp. 127–28.

¹⁴⁰ Tennyson, 'The Lady of Shalott', 1842 text, in *Poems*, ed. Ricks, vol. 1, pp. 387–95 (ll. 1–3).

¹⁴¹ Tennyson, 'The Lady of Shalott', 1832 text, in *Poems*, ed. Ricks, vol. 1, pp. 387–95 (l. 139). Wordsworth would also use the same image of 'two mute Swans [...] / Drawing an ebon car' in 'The Egyptian Maid' (1835). This has close parallels with Landon's image of the maiden's swan-drawn boat in 'The Legend of Tintagel Castle', and suggests the pervasive influence of her aesthetic style. See Wordsworth, 'The Egyptian Maid', in *Poetical Works*, ed. Hutchinson, rev. de Selincourt, pp. 291–95 (ll. 177–79).

¹⁴² Simpson notes the shared reference to a 'web' (Simpson, 'Costello's "The Funeral Boat"', 130). A willow also marks the site of the damsel's grave in 'The Funeral Boat' (l. 181) and the Lady of Shalott finds her boat 'Beneath a willow' in Tennyson's poem (1842; l. 124). A willow tree does not feature in the Italian Novella (see Roscoe, 'Novella LXXXI' in *The Italian Novelists*, vol. 1, pp. 46–47).

¹⁴³ Tennyson, 'Lancelot and Elaine', in *Idylls of the King*, ed. Gray, pp. 168–205 (cf. ll. 2, 28, 41).

¹⁴⁴ Tennyson, 'Morte d'Arthur', in *Poems*, ed. Ricks, vol. 2, pp. 3–19 (l. 63).

poetic, or linguistic similarities can be attributed to the prevailing taste for a poetry largely propelled by sentiment and ‘descriptive pictorialism’ and promoted by the annuals.¹⁴⁵

As Tennyson, Costello, and Landon all wrote numerous poems for the annual market it is hardly surprising that their poetry participates in a shared discourse. Several late twentieth-century critics saw Tennyson’s ‘escape into an ornately decorated past’ as proof of the influence of Keats and Shelley on his work, but more recently, the influence of Romantic women poets on Tennyson’s style has been given new consideration.¹⁴⁶ Richard Cronin astutely proposes that ‘Hemans and L.E.L. were two of the principal, if largely unacknowledged, influences on the early Tennyson’.¹⁴⁷ Despite outwardly declaring his distaste for the annuals, Tennyson contributed poems to the *Gem*, the *Keepsake*, the *Yorkshire Literary Annual*, and *Friendship’s Offering*, and, as Ledbetter notes, his ‘appearance in the books provided much needed exposure to a burgeoning new middle-class readership which included a large body of female readers’.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, Tennyson’s ‘Anacreontics’ (1830), a poem he wrote for the *Gem*, contains lines which he later revised for inclusion in ‘The Lady of Shalott’ (1832 text), and should therefore further prompt us to consider a connection between Tennyson’s annual work and his Arthurian verse.¹⁴⁹ In particular, one stanza which Tennyson later cut when he heavily revised ‘The Lady of Shalott’ in 1842 demonstrates his early fondness for the intense decoration promoted by the annuals:

¹⁴⁵ Erickson, *The Economy of Literary Form*, p. 41.

¹⁴⁶ Margaret A. Lourie, ‘Below the Thunders of the Upper Deep: Tennyson as Romantic Revisionist’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 18:1 (1979), 3–27 (5). See also Patricia M. Ball, ‘Tennyson and the Romantics’, *Victorian Poetry*, 1:1 (1963), 7–16.

¹⁴⁷ Richard Cronin, ‘Felicia Hemans, Letitia Landon, and “Lady’s Rule”’, in *Romantic Women Poets: Genre and Gender*, ed. Lilla Maria Crisafulli and Cecilia Pietropoli (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 209–39 (p. 218). Cronin adds: ‘if Tennyson’s poems derive ultimately from Shelley it seems clear that he reads Shelley through poems written by the women poets who succeeded him’ (p. 238). Cronin also presents a number of parallels between Tennyson’s work in *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical* (1830) and *Poems* (1833) (including ‘The Lady of Shalott’) (pp. 238–39).

¹⁴⁸ Ledbetter, *Tennyson and Victorian Periodicals*, p. 9.

¹⁴⁹ Tennyson, ‘Anacreontics’, in *The Gem, A Literary Annual for 1831* (London: Marshall, 1830), p. 131. See Ledbetter, *Tennyson and Victorian Periodicals*, p. 22. The similarities between lines 2–3 of ‘Anacreontics’ (‘And drooping daffodilly / And silverleavèd lily’), and lines 6–7 of the 1832 ‘Lady of Shalott’ (‘The yellowleavèd waterlily / The greensheathèd daffoldilly’) were first noted by Ricks in Tennyson, *Poems*, vol. 1, p. 313.

A cloudwhite crown of pearl she dight
 All raimented in snowy white
 That loosely flew, (her zone in sight,
 Clasped with one blinding diamond bright).¹⁵⁰

‘Cloudwhite’ is a striking poetic compound, but the lady’s clothing in ‘snowy white’ aligns her more rudimentarily with the ‘draped female figure’ common to the pages of the annuals.¹⁵¹ David Staines speculates that Tennyson removed these four lines to ‘distance his poem from the Italian source’, but the revision can also be seen to sever some of the poem’s closer ties to the annuals’ increasingly hackneyed discourse.¹⁵²

That Tennyson had a role to play in the establishment of such a recognisable, and easily mockable annual style seems to be affirmed by contemporary reviews. For all its derision of female poets and editors, William Makepeace Thackeray’s oft-cited satirical critique of the annuals seems to address itself closely to the language of Tennyson’s early work:

Miss Landon, Miss Mitford, or my Lady Blessington, writes a song upon the opposite page, about water-lily, chilly, stilly, shivering beside a streamlet, plighted, blighted, love-benighted, falsehood sharper than a gimlet, lost affection, recollection, cut connexion, tears in torrents, true-love token, spoken, broken, sighing, dying [...] The poetry is quite worthy of the picture and a little sham sentiment is employed to illustrate a little sham art.¹⁵³

Thackeray’s description of a typical annual ‘song’ is clearly a parody, but it is one that seems to echo in particular the ‘yellowleavèd waterlily’ and ‘greensheathèd daffodilly’ which ‘Tremble in the water chilly’ in ‘The Lady of Shalott’.¹⁵⁴ However, whether Thackeray had Tennyson’s lines in mind when he wrote his barbed attack on the annuals’ ‘sham art’ in fact matters less than the evident parallels which exist between ‘The Lady of Shalott’ and the

¹⁵⁰ Tennyson, ‘The Lady of Shalott’, in *Poems*, ed. Ricks, vol. 1, pp. 387–95, 1832 text, ll. 126–9.

¹⁵¹ Beetham, *A Magazine of Her Own?*, p. 39.

¹⁵² David Staines, *Tennyson’s Camelot: The Idylls of the King and its Medieval Sources* (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1982), p. 11. Alternatively, Gossedge and Knight suggest that Tennyson ‘toned down’ the ‘exoticism and passion’ of the original in the 1842 version on account of the Landon’s ‘much more positive account of Elaine, stressing the falsity of men’ (Gossedge and Knight, ‘Arthur of the Sixteenth to Nineteenth Centuries’, p. 113).

¹⁵³ William Makepeace Thackeray, ‘A Word on the Annuals’, *Fraser’s Magazine* (Dec 1837), 757–63 (758).

¹⁵⁴ Tennyson, ‘The Lady of Shalott’, 1832 text, in *Poems* ed. Ricks, vol. 1, ll. 6–9.

annuals' aureate and sentimental style. Tennyson's conception of the Lady of Shalott, as well as his later construction of the Maid of Astolat in 'Lancelot and Elaine', was irrefutably tied up with the female poetics of the annuals and their feminised pages.

Conclusion

The texts collated and examined in this thesis demonstrate how a widespread awareness of the Arthurian legend among women writers came into being in the Romantic period. Taking a range of forms (from poetry, novels, and translations, to travel guides, history books, and periodical satire), women's literary activities began to investigate and engage with the content of the Arthurian myth as never before. At the same time, women writers experienced a different version of the Arthurian legend to men, on account of the various ways in which they were separated from, or offered alternative versions of, some of the sources most central to the myth, including Malory's *Morte Darthur* and the Arthurian ballads in Percy's *Reliques*. The apparent seclusion of Malory's text from women readers before 1816, combined with the critical attacks faced by women writers when they attempted to engage with Arthurian romance in scholarly forms in the late-eighteenth century, discouraged any progression or accumulating interest in the myth, and pushed women's antiquarian engagements with Arthur into other genres, such as Gothic verse and travel writing.

These barriers to progression mean that, before 1816, it is difficult to speak of a tradition in women's Arthurian writing. Unable to access Arthurian manuscripts freely in research libraries, early Arthurian writing by women is characterised by tropes of frustration, separation, and isolation, epitomised in the sentiments expressed in Louisa Stuart Costello's 'A Dream'. Costello's determination 'to drive King Arthur from my brain / And live, content in darkness to remain' conceptualises the Arthurian legend as a literary territory which remains relatively unknowable for women writers.¹ Pre-1816, Arthurian writing by women

¹ Louisa Stuart Costello, 'A Dream', in *The Maid of the Cyprus Isle and Other Poems* (London: Sherwood, Neely and Jones, 1815), pp. 56–58 (ll. 56–57).

suffers from the same trials and disruptions that Elaine Showalter sees as characteristic of the female literary tradition as a whole. For Showalter:

[E]ach generation of women writers has found itself, in a sense, without a history, forced to rediscover the past anew, forging again and again the consciousness of their sex. Given the perpetual disruption, and also the self-hatred that has alienated women writers from a sense of collective identity, it does not seem possible to speak of a 'movement'.²

Within this broader sphere of women's literary activities, writers such as Matilda Betham, Elizabeth Smith, Anne Wilson, Mary Morgan, Anne Bannerman, and Anna Sawyer were independently 'rediscovering' a more specifically Arthurian 'past anew', and the ways in which they did so reflect the alienation of the woman writer as Showalter describes it. The female characters in women's Arthurian poetry are all isolated figures: Betham's Albina stands alone on the hillside, abandoned by Arthur; Bannerman's Queen of Beauty is the only inhabitant of her Yellow Isle, and Wilson's Geneura is left alone in her domestic prison, with only '[h]er flowers to tend or else the shuttle throw'.³ These women, who are all alienated or marginalised in some way, stand in for the Arthurian poet herself who experiences a similar sense of dislocation. Occasionally, the experiences of the poet are more directly dramatised: like Costello, who finds herself in troubling darkness, Mary Morgan is metaphorically blinded by her vision of Arthur and Merlin in Carmarthenshire, and Anna Sawyer openly laments the loss of Arthurian lays which lie frustratingly beyond her grasp.⁴

It is important, however, not to retrospectively overemphasise the marginalisation of women writers who were nevertheless situated at a remove from the centre of Romantic antiquarianism and Arthurian studies. The majority of women examined in this thesis held some form of correspondence with a male writer or scholar interested in Arthur: Costello

² Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Writers from Charlotte Brontë to Doris Lessing*, revised edn (London: Virago, 2009), p. 9.

³ Anne Wilson, *Teisa: A Descriptive Poem of the River Teese, its Towns and Antiquities* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Printed for the author, 1778), l. 991.

⁴ See Anna Sawyer, 'Glastonbury Abbey. A Poem', in *Poems on Various Subjects* (Birmingham: Printed for the Author, 1801), pp. 21–33 (l. 88).

wrote to Sir Frederic Madden and Francisque Michel and discussed her plans for *Specimens of the Early Poetry of France* with Sir Walter Scott; Betham corresponded with Robert Southey on the subject of Marie de France's *lais*; Anna Jane Vardill knew William Gunn, the translator of Nennius's *Historia Brittonum*; and Bannerman was well-acquainted with the Scottish antiquarian Thomas Park. Felicia Hemans wrote to Reginald Heber, the author of several Arthurian poems in the period, and Letitia Elizabeth Landon was influenced by the Arthurian interests of Thomas Crofton Croker. There is little to suggest that these men did not take the medieval interests of their female correspondents seriously; in particular, Scott and Michel actively encouraged Costello to work with medieval texts and develop her interest in Arthurian romance, and Southey cited Anne Plumptre as an authority on Breton beliefs about Merlin in his introduction to the 1817 edition of Malory's *Morte Darthur*.⁵ While it was undoubtedly more difficult to undertake research into medieval topics in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as a woman, those female scholars who did so were not entirely cut off from developments in the field. Women began to make their mark on Arthurian studies as the nineteenth century progressed, exemplified by the scholarly rigor and success of Lady Charlotte Guest's translations of Welsh Arthurian material in *The Mabinogion*.

It is more appropriate to identify a popular tradition, or movement, in women's Arthurian writing from the 1820s onwards, as this decade saw the emergence of a focalisation on the figure of the Maid of Astolat (three female-authored poems on the subject were produced in eleven years). The Astolat theme thus provides the first recognisable trend in women's Arthurian writing. In addition, the literary gift books and annuals which monopolised the poetry market in 1820s and 1830s proved a suitable home for Arthurian experiments by women poets, and their enormous popularity helped to forge a shared style.

⁵ Robert Southey, 'Introduction', to Sir Thomas Malory, *The Byrth, Lyf, and Actes of Kyng Arthur; of his noble knyghtes of the rounde table, theyr mervyllous enquestes and adventures [...] With an Introduction and Notes by Robert Southey, Esq.*, [ed. William Upcott] 2 vols (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1817), vol. 1, pp. i–lxiii (p. xlviiii).

The sentimental, decorative, and illustrative aesthetic promoted by the annuals unites Costello's 'The Funeral Boat', Landon's 'The Legend of Tintagel Castle', Mary Howitt's 'The Tomb of St. George', and Caroline Norton's 'Lord Fordwich', all of which share a strong emphasis on the visual appearance of their Arthurian subjects.

Also present from the 1820s onwards is a new awareness of female experiments with Arthurian material among other women writers. As I argued in Chapter Five, an interest in the Arthurian legend was shared by those literary women who successively took up the role of editor of *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap-book*. Similarly, by the 1840s, women writers with a scholarly interest in Arthurian literature were beginning to recognise and respond to the work of their female contemporaries. Despite Vardill's early efforts, a scholarly expression of interest in the Arthurian legend did not get fully underway until the 1830s, but women were quick to acknowledge those pioneers in the field: both Hannah Lawrance in *A History of Woman in England, and her Influence on Society and Literature from the Earliest Period* (1843), and Costello in *The Falls, Lakes, and Mountains, of North Wales* (1845), singled out Guest's recent translations of the Welsh Arthurian romances for praise.⁶

The period 1775 to 1845 saw some major achievements in women's Arthurian writing (Guest's translation of the Three Romances being one of them, and the production of the first poetic rendering of the Astolat story another). Yet the level of interest which women showed in the legend should not be overstated. No woman poet wrote an Arthurian epic in this period, nor did a female writer attempt a substantial Arthurian work in prose.⁷ Nevertheless, the existence of over a hundred allusions to Arthurian material in women's writing between 1775 and 1845 provide strong evidence for a feminine writing culture with an at least cursory

⁶ Hannah Lawrance, *A History of Woman in England, and her Influence on Society and Literature from the Earliest Period* (London: Henry Colburn, 1843), p. 19. Louisa Stuart Costello, *The Falls, Lakes, and Mountains, of North Wales* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1845), p. 147.

⁷ The most significant Romantic Arthurian prose work remains Thomas Love Peacock's *The Misfortunes of Elphin* (1829). See Gossedge, 'Thomas Love Peacock's *The Misfortunes of Elphin* and the Romantic Arthur', *Arthurian Studies*, 23 (2006), 157–76.

knowledge of the Arthurian story.⁸ Critics have long commented on the Arthurian significance of Virginia Woolf's Percival in *The Waves* (1931), and in the light of the greater evidence for mainstream knowledge of the Arthurian legends that this thesis has uncovered, details previously overlooked on account of the Romantic period's lack of interest in Arthur are ripe for re-examination. Against the backdrop of a female reading public familiar with the Arthurian story, the nominal use of Arthurian patronyms in novels such as Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801, rev. 1811) and Anne Plumptre's *Something New* (1801), acquires new significance as part of how such texts construct their impression of fashionable life.⁹

Of course, it is in the second half of the nineteenth century, where this study ends, that the real explosion in Arthurian enthusiasm in Britain begins. While the dominant form for Romantic women writers' engagements with Arthur is poetry, from the 1850s onwards writers such as Dinah Mulock Craik, Charlotte Mary Yonge, and Eleanora Louisa Hervey turned increasingly to prose forms – the novel and the short story – for their treatments of the legend.¹⁰ There are yet further diversifications. While there are no female Arthurian illustrators before 1850, Clare Broome Saunders has recently drawn attention to the work of Eleanor Fortescue Brickdale, Jessie Marion King, and Florence Harrison, all of whom produced illustrations in response to, or to accompany the Arthurian poetry of Tennyson or Morris.¹¹ Broome Saunders focuses on how Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* influenced women writers and artists, but, by drawing attention to the similarities between women's Arthurian

⁸ See Appendix. Though the parameters of the Appendix stretch further, to include texts written between 1700 and 1850, only fifteen items fall outside of the 1775–1845 timeframe that forms the main focus of this study.

⁹ See Gillian Beer, 'Introduction', to Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*, ed. Gillian Beer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. xii–xxxvi (pp. xxviii–xxix). For full details of the Arthurian allusions in Edgeworth and Plumptre's novels, see Appendix, entries 37 and 94.

¹⁰ Dinah Mulock Craik, 'Avillion; or, The Happy Isles. A Fireside Fancy', in *Avillion and Other Tales*, 3 vols (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1853), vol. 1, pp. 1–115; Charlotte Mary Yonge, *The History of the Life and Death of the Good Knight Sir Thomas Thumb: With Divers Other Matters Concerning the Court of Good King Arthur of Britain*, ill. J. B. [Jemima Blackburn] (Edinburgh: Thomas Constable, 1855); Eleanora Louisa Hervey, *The Feasts of Camelot, With the Tales that were Told There* (1863; London: R. Washbourne, 1877).

¹¹ Clare Broome Saunders, 'Rereading Guinevere: Women Illustrators, Tennyson, and Morris' (Chapter 7), in *Women Writers and Nineteenth-Century Medievalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009), pp. 153–83.

poetry and Tennyson's early Arthurian work, this study prompts further consideration of the reverse of that relationship.

Yet there are also consistencies to be found across the earlier period (1775–1845) and beyond. In February 1850, Elizabeth Gaskell wrote to her friend, Eliza Fox, explaining what she saw as the potential for conflict in a woman's domestic and artistic life by way of a particular analogy:

One thing is pretty clear, *Women*, must give up living an artist's life, if home duties are to be paramount. It is different with men, whose home duties are but a small part of their life. However we are talking of women. I am sure it is healthy for them to have the refuge of the hidden world of Art to shelter themselves in when too much pressed upon by daily small Lilliputian arrows of meddling cares; it keeps them from being morbid as you say; and takes them into the land where King Arthur is hidden, and soothes them with its peace. I have felt this in writing, I see others feel it in music, you in painting, so assuredly a blending of the two is desirable. (Home duties and the development of the Individual I mean) [...] I have no doubt that a cultivation of each tends to keep the other in a healthy state.¹²

For Gaskell, Avalon ('the land where King Arthur is hidden') becomes a symbol for the role of art in a woman's life: it offers a transformative space to escape the potentially 'morbid' nature of domestic life and concentrate on 'the development of the individual'. None of the women writers examined in this study speak as openly as Gaskell does about the function of Avalon in terms of women's creativity and her relationship with art, but her sentiments make plain what her Romantic predecessors imply. With a firmness equal to Gaskell's own, Anne Bannerman defends her right to imaginatively (re)write the Arthurian story by stating: 'it is all fairy-ground, and a poetical community of right to its appropriation has never been disputed'.¹³ Both Gaskell and Bannerman associate Arthur with an alternative 'hidden', or 'fairy' world in which creative and imaginative freedom can be exercised, unfettered by the constraints of the gender of the writer.

¹² Elizabeth Gaskell to Eliza Fox, [?] February 1850, in *The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, ed. J.A.V. Chapple and Arthur Pollard (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966), p. 106. Emphasis in original.

¹³ Anne Bannerman, [notes to] 'The Prophecy of Merlin', in *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* (London: Vernor and Hood, 1802), p. 144.

Gaskell's metaphorical application of the legend within her social commentary also has similarities with Landon's deployment of Arthurian metaphors in *Romance and Reality*, although Landon's view of the role of romance in cultivating the 'imagination' is far more cynical. Arthurian romance does not provide a soothing escape from real life, but offers a dangerous alternative, for it constructs a set of false expectations which can never be fully realised. Landon's novel is a reminder that early uses of the Arthurian myth by women writers can be as distrustful as they are idealistic, and provides an antecedent (or even, perhaps, an influence) for Elizabeth Barrett Browning's bathetic use of the legend in *Aurora Leigh* (1856).¹⁴ Utilised by Romantic and early nineteenth-century women writers in a wide variety of ways, both scholarly and popular, the Arthurian legend provided challenging but malleable material for the female writer's exploration of her identity, and her own (literary) history, well before the second half of the nineteenth century.

¹⁴ [...] King Arthur's self
 Was commonplace to Lady Guinevere;
 And Camelot to minstrels seemed as flat
 As Fleet Street to our poets.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh*, ed. Kerry McSweeney (1856; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 5. 210–13. Barrett Browning was an admirer of Landon's poetry; see Barrett Browning, 'L.E.L.'s Last Question', *Athenaeum* (26 Jan 1839), repr. in Landon, *Selected Writings*, ed. Jerome McGann and Daniel Riess (London: Broadview, 1997), pp. 365–67.

Appendix: British Women Writers and the Arthurian Legend, 1700–1850:

An Annotated Bibliography

Key

[*] denotes an item not currently listed in extant Arthurian bibliographies.

Works examined in detail in the thesis proper are not annotated; instead, directions are given to the appropriate chapter and section.

The following abbreviations have been used to denote previous listings:

- AA* Daniel P. Nastali and Phillip C. Boardman, ed., *The Arthurian Annals: The Tradition in English From 1250 to 2000*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)
- ALW* Alan Lupack and Barbara Tapa Lupack, ‘Bibliography of Arthurian Fiction by Women’, and ‘Bibliography of Arthurian Poetry and Drama by Women’, in *Arthurian Literature by Women*, ed. Lupack and Tapa Lupack (New York and London: Garland, 1999), pp. 361–74, 375–82.
- Howey/Reimer* Ann F. Howey and Stephen Ray Reimer, ed., *A Bibliography of Modern Arthuriana 1500–2000* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006)
- Marsh* Katherine Marsh, ed., ‘Women of the Arthurian Tradition Index’, *The Camelot Project* (University of Rochester)
<<http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/authindx.htm>> [accessed 17 August 2012]
- Simpson* Roger Simpson, ‘List of Poetry, Drama and Prose Fiction concerned with the Arthurian Legends’, and ‘List of Poetry, Drama and Prose Fiction containing Minor Allusions to the Arthurian Legends’, in *Camelot Regained: The Arthurian Revival and Tennyson 1800–1849* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1990), pp. 255–61, 262–66.

1. [‘A Lady’], **Ancient Ballads: Selected from Percy’s Collection; with Explanatory Notes, taken from Different Authors, for the Use and Entertainment of Young Persons. By a Lady* (London: Vernor, Hood and Sharpe, 1807), pp. 88–130. Contains bowdlerized versions of four of Thomas Percy’s six Arthurian ballads printed in his *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*: ‘Sir Lancelot du Lake’, King Ryence’s Challenge’, ‘The Marriage of Sir Gawaine’, and ‘King Arthur’s Death’. See Chapter 1, 1.3.

2. Bannerman, Anne, 'The Prophecy of Merlin', in *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* (London: Vernor and Hood, 1802), pp. 125–39, notes pp. 142–44. Repr. in *ALW*, pp. 43–50.
AA, p. 73; *Simpson* p. 256; *Marsh*; *Howey/Reimer*, p. 17.
 See Chapter 2, 2.3.

3. Barbauld, Anna Letitia, *'On the Origin and Progress of Novel-Writing' (1810), in *Anna Letitia Barbauld: Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. William McCarthy and Elizabeth Kraft (Ormskirk: Broadview Press, 2002), pp. 377–416 (p. 382).
 Mentions Geoffrey of Monmouth, his *Vita Merlini*, and Walter Map.

4. Barrett Browning, Elizabeth, 'The Fourfold Aspect' (1844), in *The Complete Works of Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, 6 vols (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1890), vol. 2, pp. 217–22, ll. 51–54.
Simpson, p. 262.
 'King Arthur' and the 'Sangrael' are briefly mentioned.

5. Beale, Anne, *The Vale of the Towey; or, Sketches in South Wales* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1844), pp. 39–40.
Simpson, p. 68.
 The author's arrival in Dynevor Park prompts the quotation of two lines from the 'prophetic conversation of Merlin with Britomart' from Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.

6. Betham, Matilda, 'Arthur and Albina', in *Elegies and Other Small Poems* (London: W. Burrell, 1797), pp. 3–13.
AA, vol. 1, p. 70.
 See Chapter 2, 2.1.

7. Betham, Matilda, *The Lay of Marie* (London: Rowland Hunter, 1816), Canto II, p. 44, appendix (pp. 149–276) and notes (pp. 149, 152).
AA, vol. 1, p. 82; *Simpson*, p. 262.
 Marie recalls how she once sang of 'British Arthur's earlier reign', which 'gave wilder licence to my hand' (p. 44). A note refers to material from *Arthour and Merlin*, cited from Scott's *Sir Tristrem* (p. 152).
 The appendix contains a full translations of all of Marie de France's lays, including 'Lanval' and 'Chevrefoil', collated from Ellis's *Specimens*, Way's *Fabliaux*, and Scott's notes to *Sir Tristrem* (p. 149).

8. Bowen, Melusina, *Ystradffin: A Descriptive Poem, with an Appendix, Containing Historical and Explanatory Notes* (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1839), Part IV. p. 107.
Simpson, p. 262.
 Refers to Carmarthen as 'Merlin's City'.

9. Bowles Southey, Caroline, and George Cruikshank, **The Cat's Tail; Being the history of the Childe Merlin. A Tale* (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood and T. Cadell, 1831).
 Contains no further Arthurian material besides the use of the name Merlin:
 The name of this kitten – 'twas Merlin! "Oh dear,
 What a comical name!" Ay, comical codger

Was he who once bore it. “What was he – a soldier?
Or a king? or a cat? or—” Stop, stop, little dears!
Remember, we’ve only *one* tongue and *two* ears –
Two stories at once is one more than I reckon’d,
And I’m telling you that of Childe Merlin the Second.

(p. 12; emphasis in original)

10. Bradburn, Eliza W., *Legends from Spenser’s Fairy Queen, for Children* (London: John Mason, 1829).
AA, vol. 1, p. 89, *Howey/Reimer*, p. 385.
[Not seen.]
Contains ‘The Knight of the Red Cross’ and ‘Sir Guyon’ adapted from the first two books of *The Faerie Queene* (AA; *Howey/Reimer*).

11. Bray, Anna Eliza, *A Description of the Part of Devonshire Bordering on the Tamer and Tavey; its natural history, manners, customs, superstitions, scenery, antiquities, biography of eminent persons, &c, &c, in a series of letter to Robert Southey, Esq.*, 3 vols (London: John Murray, 1836). Repr. as *Traditions, Legends, Superstitions, and Sketches of Devonshire on the borders of the Tamar and the Tavy, illustrative of its manners, customs, history, antiquities, scenery, and natural history, in a series of letters to Robert Southey, Esq.*, 3 vols (London: John Murray, 1838).
Simpson, p. 154.
Letter five reprints extracts from writings by Bray’s husband, Edward Atkyns Bray, in which he describes inscribing rocks near Bairdown hill, Dartmoor, with druidical inscriptions which can be deciphered by the use of ‘Merlin’s wand’. The planned inscriptions include one ‘To Merlin’ and a recess is dubbed ‘Merlin’s cave’ (vol. 1, pp. 78–80). Anna Eliza Bray includes a note on Merlin’s birth and history (vol. 1, p. 80). Letter twenty-five contains a two-page description of ‘Prince Arthur’ which begins: ‘[t]hat Arthur was an extraordinary prince, a light amongst darkness, cannot be doubted’ (vol. 2, pp. 84–85 (p. 85)). The landmarks ‘Arthur’s Stone’ (vol. 1, pp. 126–27, 145), ‘Arthur’s Seat’ (vol. 1, p. 276) and ‘King Arthur’s Oven’ (vol. 1, p. 298) are also mentioned.

12. Bray, Anna Eliza (as Mrs. Charles Stothard), *Letters Written during a Tour through Normandy, Brittany, and Other Parts of France, in 1818: Including Local and Historical Descriptions; With Remarks on the Manners and Character of the People* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1820), pp. 220, 240.
Simpson, p. 68, 95–96.
Mentions Merlin, and a castle at Auray, said to be built by King Arthur.

13. Bray, Anna Eliza, **The Protestant: A Tale of the Reign of Queen Mary*, 3 vols (London: Henry Colburn, 1828), vol. 2, p. 56.
Makes a jocular reference to ‘King Arthur’s round-table’.

14. Bray, Anna Eliza, **‘The Adopted’*, in *Trials of the Heart*, 3 vols (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1839), vol. 3, pp. 72–89.
The plot incorporates some ‘prophecies of Merlin’, spoken by a ‘death-woman’ from Brittany (p. 73).

15. [Brereton, Jane] (as 'Melissa'), 'Merlin: A Poem, Humbly Inscrib'd to Her Majesty Queen Guardian', in *Merlin: A Poem, Humbly Inscrib'd to Her Majesty. To Which Is Added, The Royal Hermitage: A Poem. Both by a Lady* (London: Edward Cave, 1735), pp. 3–9. Repr. in *Poems on Several Occasions by Mrs Jane Brereton. With Letters to Her Friends, and An Account of Her Life* (London: Edward Cave, 1744), pp. 181–87].
 ALW, pp. 375–76, *Marsh; Howey/Reimer*, p. 38.
 Written in celebration of Queen Caroline's Royal Hermitage at Richmond, known as 'Merlin's Cave'. After an appeal from the poet that she may 'borrow strength to rise, from *Merlin's* fame' (l. 7, emphasis in original), Merlin appears, and describes his various deeds, including the formation of Stonehenge (l. 56). At the end of the poem, Merlin accepts Melissa as his modern successor ('*Melissa!*—try this fav'rite Lyre; / And *Merlin* will the grateful Song inspire' (ll. 94–95, emphasis in original)).
16. Brereton, Jane, 'To the Queen', in *Merlin: A Poem, Humbly Inscrib'd to Her Majesty. To Which Is Added, The Royal Hermitage: A Poem. Both by a Lady* (London: Edward Cave, 1735), pp. 9–10. Repr. in *Poems on Several Occasions by Mrs Jane Brereton. With Letters to Her Friends, and An Account of Her Life* (London: Edward Cave, 1744), pp. 187–88.
 AA, vol. 1, 56.
 Celebrates Queen Caroline for her ability to 'restore to fame / From dark oblivion, Merlin's name' (ll. 13–14).
17. [Brereton, Jane] (as 'Melissa'), 'Merlin's Prophecy. Humbly Inscrib'd to his R.H. The Prince of Wales', in *Merlin: A Poem, Humbly Inscrib'd to Her Majesty. To Which Is Added, The Royal Hermitage: A Poem. Both by a Lady* (London: Edward Cave, 1735), pp. 11–12. Repr. in *Poems on Several Occasions by Mrs Jane Brereton. With Letters to Her Friends, and An Account of Her Life* (London: Edward Cave, 1744), pp. 189–91.
 ALW, p. 376, *Marsh; Howey/Reimer*, p. 38.
 The poet adopts Merlin's voice to prophesise the prince's future match with a 'Virtuous *Bride*' (l. 3, emphasis in original).
18. Brereton, Jane, 'To Miss W——ms, Maid of Honour to the late Queen', in *Poems on Several Occasions by Mrs Jane Brereton. With Letters to Her Friends, and An Account of Her Life* (London: Edward Cave, 1744), pp. 123–25.
 AA, vol. 1, p. 56.
 [Not Seen.]
 'Thirty-six lines in praise of Anna Williams, who waited upon Queen Caroline, cast as a prophecy by a bard "from Merlin sprung"' (AA, vol. 1, p. 56).
19. Calcott, Lady Maria, **Little Arthur's History of Great Britain* (London: John Murray, 1835), vol. 1, pp. 28–30.
 Gives a brief introduction to the Arthurian story for young children, which begins: 'King Arthur [...] was one of the bravest knights in the world, and he had some friends who were called his knights [...]'.
20. Costello, Louisa Stuart, 'A Dream', in *The Maid of the Cyprus Isle and Other Poems* (London: Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1815), pp. 56–58.
 AA, vol. 1, p. 81; *Simpson*, p. 256; *ALW*, p. 376; *Marsh; Howey/Reimer*, p. 83.

See Chapter 1, 1.4

21. Costello, Louisa Stuart, 'The Funeral Boat', in *Forget Me Not: A Christmas and New Year's Present for MDCCCXXIX*, ed. Frederic Shoberl (London: R. Ackermann, 1829), pp. 185–92
AA, vol. 1, p. 89; *Simpson*, p. 256; *ALW*, p. 376.
See Chapter 5, 5.1.
22. Costello, Louisa Stuart, ed. and trans., 'Lai of the Eglantine' and 'Lai du Mort du Tristan', in *Specimens of the Early Poetry of France, from the time of the Troubadours and Trouveres to the reign of Henri Quatre* (London: William Pickering, 1835), pp. 22, 61–67, following p. 40 [n. p.], 268, 294–95. Repr. in *The Book of French Songs to which is added Miss Costello's Early French Poetry* (London: Fredrick Warne and Co., 1886), pp. 324–29 (with new illustrations).
AA, vol. 1, p. 93; *Simpson*, pp. 177, 224.
See Chapter 4, 4.4.
23. Costello, Miss [Louisa Stuart], *'The Deaths of Tristan and Yseult', in *The Tribute: A Collection of Miscellaneous Unpublished Poems, by Various Authors*, ed. Lord Northampton (London: John Murray, 1837), pp. 289–92.
The same poem was published later in *A Summer Amongst the Bocages and the Vines* as 'The Legend' (see below). It appears here with two additional notes by the author on the subject of the Tristan legend.
See Chapter 5, 5.6.
24. Costello, Louisa Stuart, 'The Legend' ['The Deaths of Tristan and Yseult'], in *A Summer Amongst the Bocages and the Vines*, 2 vols (London: Bentley, 1840), vol. 1, pp. 297–98 (prose summary of Tristan and Isolde story); pp. 299–301 (poem).
AA, vol. 1, p. 96; *Simpson*, p. 256; *ALW*, p. 376.
See Chapter 3, 3.4; Chapter 5, 5.6.
25. Costello, Louisa Stuart, trans., 'Merlin the Enchanter', in *A Summer Amongst the Bocages and the Vines*, 2 vols (London: Bentley, 1840), vol. 1, pp. 62–63, 303–04.
AA, vol. 1, p. 96; *Simpson*, pp. 87, 224.
Simpson identifies this as Costello's translation of a Breton ballad collected by Theodore Hersart de la Villemarqué in his *Barzas-Breiz, Chants Populaires de la Bretagne* (1839) (see *Simpson*, p. 87). Costello provides a note establishing Merlin as a popular figure in both Wales and France (vol. 1, p. 303).
- Costello also visits 'Tumbe Helène', a mountain near Mont St. Michel, which she notes an 'ancient historian' holds to be the site where King Arthur killed the giant responsible for the death of Helen, his niece (though she acknowledges that this legend may be 'more romantic than probable') (vol. 1, p. 62).
26. Costello, Louisa Stuart, **A Pilgrimage to Auvergne, From Picardy to Le Velay*, 2 vols (London: Bentley, 1842), vol. 1, pp. 43, 87.
Contains a reference to Morgana (Morgan Le Fay) (vol. 1, p. 43), and Tristan and Yseult (vol. 1, p. 87).

27. Costello, Louisa Stuart, *‘The Druid Lover’, in *Béarn and the Pyrenees: A Legendary Tour to the Country of Henri Quatre*, 2 vols (London: Bentley, 1844), vol. 2, pp. 34–35.
See Chapter 3, 3.4.
28. Costello, Louisa Stuart, *The Falls, Lakes, and Mountains, of North Wales* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1845), pp. 34, 167, 219–20.
AA, vol. 1, p. 101; *Simpson*, p. 75.
Chapter sub-headings include ‘Merlin’, and ‘Viviana’. At Nant Gwynant and Dinas Emrys, Costello tells the tale of Vortigern, Merlin, and the Red and White Dragons (pp. 120–23). Also included is an English translation of the medieval Welsh poem, ‘The Bard’s Ode to the Beautiful Myfanwy’, probably taken and adapted from Evan Evans’s *Some Specimens of the Poetry of the Ancient Welsh Bards* (1764) (pp. 219–21). Costello has added two footnotes explaining the poem’s Arthurian allusions.
29. Costello, Louisa Stuart,* *A Tour To and From Venice, by the Vaudois and the Tyrol* (London: John Ollivier, 1846), p. 414.
Refers to a statue of King Arthur found in Innsbruck.
30. Costello, Louisa Stuart, *‘Sketches of Legendary Cities and Towns: Hereford’, *Bentley’s Magazine*, 17 (Jan 1845), 605–15 (605).
Some general remarks on the fecundity of apple and pear trees in this part of Britain prompt the author to offer the following anecdote: ‘No wonder that Merlin the bard was enamoured of his unrivalled apple-trees, and laments the destruction of his orchard by an enemy in the most moving strains; for the inexpressible beauty of these valuable and ornamental groves is greater than any other can present’ (605). Costello seems to have had Merlin’s laments in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Vita Merlini* in mind.
31. Costello, Louisa Stuart, *‘The Cities of Gloucester and Cirencester, Past and Present’, *Bentley’s Miscellany*, 20 (Jul 1846), 390–400 (396).
Costello informs readers that: ‘No vestige but the west gate remains of the once strong walls of Gloucester, which it was thought nothing but supernatural skill could have constructed. Merlin by his art caused them to rise from the ground, and he deserted not the city, which he protected with his magic, till after the Restoration’.
32. Cowley, Charlotte, *The Ladies History of England; from the Descent of Julius Caesar, to the summer of 1780. Calculated for the Use of the Ladies of Great-Britain and Ireland; and Likewise Adapted to General Use, Entertainment and instruction* (London: Printed for the proprietors and sold by S. Bladon, 1780–01)
AA, vol. 1, p. 64.
[Not seen.]
Cowley alerts readers to King Arthur as the hero of Richard Blackmore’s *Prince Arthur* (1695) and *King Arthur* (1697) (AA, vol. 1, p. 64).
33. Dacre, Lady Barbarina, **Ina: A Tragedy in Five Acts* (London: John Murray, 1815), p. 5.
Features a minor character named Mordred.

34. Dobson, Susannah, trans., **Memoirs of Ancient Chivalry, to which are added the Anecdotes of the Times, from the Romance Writers and Historians of Those Ages* (London: Dodsley, 1784).
See Chapter 1, 1.2.
35. Dobson, Susannah, **Historical Anecdotes of Heraldry and Chivalry* (Worcester: Holl and Brandish, 1795), p. 52, 58, 190.
Includes a paragraph in praise of Arthur and the Round Table:
The knights of the Round Table long shone with unrivalled splendour; of them there were but four and twenty; they were seated at a round table to prevent disputes which might have arisen concerning claims of precedency [sic]. To this fraternity none were admitted but such as had become renowned for virtue and arms. (p. 190)
Dobson also uses the ‘the time of King Arthur’ as a historical benchmark for the length of time that certain nobilities ‘have borne the[ir] said arms’ (pp. 52, 58).
36. Edgeworth, Maria, **Castle Rackrent: A Hibernian Tale in Castle Rackrent, Irish Bulls and Ennui*, ed. James Desmarais, Tim McLoughlin and Marilyn Butler (1800; London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999), p. 61.
In a note on fairies in Ireland, Edgeworth quotes the first line from Thomas Parnell’s poem, ‘A Fairy Tale, in the Ancient English Style’ (from *Poems on Several Occasions*, 1772), beginning: ‘In Britain’s isle, and Arthur’s days’.
37. Edgeworth, Maria, **Belinda*, ed. Siobhán Kilfeather (1801; rev. 1810, 1811 text; London: Pickering and Chatto, 2003), pp. 225, 397, n. 107.
The novel includes a family with the surname ‘Percival’, and mentions ‘Fata Morgana’, a meteorological illusion which occurs in the Straits of Messina, Italy, and is named after Morgan le Fay.
38. Edgeworth, Richard Lovell, and Maria Edgeworth, **Readings on Poetry*, 2nd edn (London: R. Hunter, 1816), pp. 177–78.
Contains a reading of Thomas Gray’s ‘The Bard’ (1757), which quotes the line referring to Arthur (‘No more our long-lost Arthur we bewail’) (p. 177) followed by an explanation of this section of the poem: ‘he [the bard] calls upon his countrymen to be comforted with his announcing to them that they need no longer bewail the loss of their favourite British king Arthur, for a new and genuine race of British kings sprung from the race of Tudor, shall possess the throne’ (pp. 177–78).
39. [Egerton, Mary Margaret,] Countess of Wilton, **The Art of Needle-work From the Earliest Ages; Including Some Notices of the Ancient Historical Tapestries*, 3rd edn (1840; London: Coburn, 1841), pp. 78, 129–32, 171–72, 181–84.
A section on ‘Needlework of the Times of Romance and Chivalry’ discusses Geoffrey of Monmouth, Warton, and Malory. Percy’s ‘King Ryence’s Challenge’ is reprinted in full (pp. 129–31). A synopsis of the Grail story is also provided (pp. 182–83).
40. [Flaxman, Mary Ann] (as ‘Crystalina, Fairy of the Grott’), **‘The Elphin Harp’*, in the unpublished papers of *The Attic Chest*, 69, 7th season, 7 December 1814 [n. p.]. On Deposit. Derbyshire Record Office, Matlock. D3311/18/13–22.
A fanciful narrative poem based on Scott’s ballad of Thomas the Rhymer. Flaxman’s Thomas is a harper ‘by Merlin taught’ (l. 7), and revealed to be the anonymous ‘boy’

who brings the magic mantle to Arthur's court in Percy's 'The Boy and the Mantle'. 'Tristram bold' and 'Sir Lancelot' are also mentioned (ll. 16–17).

41. Fielding, Sarah, **The History of the Countess of Dellwyn* (1759; Whitefish, MT: Kissinger Publishing, 2004), p. 39.
Refers to King Arthur and Queen Dollalolla as they appear in Henry Fielding's play, *The Tragedy of Tragedies* (1730–31).
42. Gaskell, Elizabeth, to Mary Howitt, 18 August 1838, in *The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, ed. J.A.V. Chapple and Arthur Pollard (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), pp. 28–33 (p. 32).
Gaskell writes to Howitt: 'if you were on Alderley Edge, the hill between Cheshire and Derbyshire, could I not point out to you the very entrance to the cave where King Arthur and his knights lie sleeping in their golden armour till the day when England's peril shall summon them to her rescue [?]'.
43. Gaskell, Elizabeth, to Eliza Fox, [?] February 1850, in *The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, ed. J.A.V. Chapple and Arthur Pollard (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 106.
Gaskell uses Avalon ('the land where King Arthur is hidden') as a metaphor for the seclusion and escape from domestic responsibilities which women are granted through artistic practice.
See Conclusion.
44. Guest, Lady Charlotte, ed. and trans., 'Part I. Containing the Lady of the Fountain', *The Mabinogion from the Llyfr Coch o Hergest, and Other Ancient Welsh Manuscripts: With an English Translation and Notes* (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1838)
AA, vol. 1, pp. 94–95; ALW, pp.75–94; Marsh.
See Chapter 4, 4.5.
45. Guest, Lady Charlotte, ed. and trans., 'Part. II. Containing Peredur the Son of Evrac', *The Mabinogion* (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1838)
AA, vol. 1, p. 94; Marsh.
See Chapter 4, 4.5.
46. Guest, Lady Charlotte, ed. and trans., 'Part III. Containing Geraint the Son of Erbin', *The Mabinogion* (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1840)
AA, vol. 1, p. 96; Marsh.
See Chapter 4, 4.5.
47. Guest, Lady Charlotte, ed. and trans., 'Part IV. Containing Kilhwch and Olwen', *The Mabinogion* (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1842)
AA, vol. 1, p. 97; Marsh.
See Chapter 4, 4.5.
48. Guest, Lady Charlotte, ed. and trans., 'Part V. Containing the Dream of Rhonabwy, and the Tale of Pwyll Prince of Dyved', *The Mabinogion* (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1843)
AA, vol. 1, p. 99; Marsh.

See Chapter 4, 4.5.

49. Grant, Anne Macvicar, to Matilda Fielding, 10 September 1808, in **Memoirs and Correspondence of Mrs. Grant of Laggan*, ed. J.P. Grant, 3 vols (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1844), vol. 1, pp. 160–64 (p. 162).
Grant refers disapprovingly to John Leyden’s wish to ‘Scottify everything eminent and illustrious, even to *Merlin* himself’.
50. [Hackett, Maria], **A Popular Description of St. Paul’s Cathedral; Including a Brief Description of the Old and New Cathedral*, 17th edn (1816; London: J.B. Nichols and Son, 1828), p. 113.
Contains a reference to ‘Arthur’s Seat’, Edinburgh.
51. Hanway, Mary Ann, **Andrew Stuart; or, The Northern Wanderer. A novel*, 4 vols, (London: Minerva Press, 1800), vol. 2, p. 260, 294.
Mentions Arthur’s Seat, Edinburgh (p. 260), and praises the defences of a castle in terms of its ability to withstand ‘the attack of King Arthur, and all the knights of the Round Table!’ (p. 294).
52. [Hawker, Charlotte E., and] Robert Stephen Hawker, ‘The Wreck’, in *Poems: Containing the Second Series of Records of the Western Shore* (Stratton: J. Roberts, 1836). Repr. in *Ecclesia: A Volume of Poems* (Oxford: T. Combe, 1840), ll. 29–40 (stanzas 7–10).
AA, vol. 1, p. 94; *Simpson*, p. 263.
Nastali and Boardman record that a marginal note in the author’s copy of *Ecclesia* indicates that ‘his wife Charlotte wrote all but the three concluding stanzas’ (AA, vol. 1, p. 94).
The poem alludes to Tintagel Castle (‘Old Arthur’s stern and rugged keep’ (l. 30)), and repeats the Cornish belief that Arthur lives on after death in the form of a raven or rook (l. 33)).
53. Haywood, Eliza, [and William Hatchett], *The Opera of Operas; or, Tom Thumb the Great. Alter’d from the Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great and Set to Music after the Italian Manner* (London: William Rayner, 1733). Repr. in *Selected Fiction and Drama of Eliza Haywood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 170–220.
AA, vol. 1, p. 53; *ALW*, p. 377; *Marsh*.
An adaptation of Henry Fielding’s *Tragedy of Tragedies* which increases Merlin’s role and reverses the original ending, in which the entire dead cast are revived by Merlin’s ‘magick spell’ (p. 216).
54. [Heber, Amelia], ‘Notes to [Heber’s] *The Morte Darthur*’, in *The Life of Reginald Heber, D.D., Lord Bishop of Calcutta. By his widow* (London: John Murray, 1830), 2 vols, vol. 2, pp. 571–72.
The notes are signed ‘ED.’. Amelia Heber’s main source of Arthurian information is Malory. She also recalls reading an Italian stanza centring on Merlin, Tristan, and Isolde to her husband, which apparently subsequently inspired him to write his ‘Morte D’Arthur’ (vol. 2, p. 14).
55. Helme, Elizabeth, **The History of England related in familiar conversations, by a father to his children interspersed with moral instructive remarks and observations*

on the most leading and interesting subjects, 2 vols (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1818), vol. 1, pp. 24–25.
Contains a brief summary of Arthur's reign.

56. Hemans, Felicia (as Felicia Browne), *England and Spain; or Valour and Patriotism* (London: J.M. McReedy and Cadell and Davis, 1808), ll. 129–30.
Simpson, p. 263.
See Chapter 3, 3.6
57. Hemans, Felicia, 'The Green Isles of the Ocean', in *A Selection of Welsh Melodies with Symphonies and Accompaniments by John Parry and Characteristic Words by Mrs. Hemans* (London: J. Power, 1822). Repr. in *Poems of Felicia Hemans: A New Edition* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1849), p. 146.
Simpson, p. 263.
The prefatory note to the poem mentions 'Merddin Emrys and his twelve bards'. Hemans's sources are William Owen Pughe's *Cambrian Biography* and the *Cambro-Britain*.
See Chapter 3, 3.5.
58. Hemans, Felicia, 'The Lament of Llywarch Hen', in *A Selection of Welsh Melodies with Symphonies and Accompaniments by John Parry and Characteristic Words by Mrs. Hemans* (London: J. Power, 1822). Repr. in *Poems of Felicia Hemans: A New Edition* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1849), p. 147.
A prefatory note explains that Llywarch Hen was a 'celebrated bard and chief in times of Arthur'.
59. Hemans, Felicia, 'Taliesin's Prophecy', in *A Selection of Welsh Melodies with Symphonies and Accompaniments by John Parry and Characteristic Words by Mrs. Hemans* (London: J. Power, 1822), p. 37. Repr. in *Poems of Felicia Hemans: A New Edition* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1849), pp. 148–49.
AA, vol. 1, p. 85; *Simpson*, p. 263; *ALW*, p. 377; *Marsh; Howey/Reimer*, p. 176.
See Chapter 3, 3.5.
60. Hemans, Felicia, 'Owen Glyndwyr's War Song', in *A Selection of Welsh Melodies with Symphonies and Accompaniments by John Parry and Characteristic Words by Mrs. Hemans* (London: J. Power, 1822). Repr. in *Poems of Felicia Hemans: A New Edition* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1849), p. 149.
AA, vol. 1, p. 85.
Contains four lines describing Merlin as 'a prophet' residing in 'Snowdon's caves', and a note: 'Merlin, or Merddin Emrys, is said to have composed his prophecies on the future lot of Britain, amongst the mountains of Snowdon'. Hemans's source is Pennant's *Walks in Wales*.
See Chapter 3, 3.5.
61. Hemans, Felicia, *'Eryri Wen', in *A Selection of Welsh Melodies with Symphonies and Accompaniments by John Parry and Characteristic Words by Mrs. Hemans* (London: J. Power, 1822). Repr. in *Poems of Felicia Hemans: A New Edition* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1849), p. 151.
Contains a stanza on Merlin, and a note: 'Dinas Emrys, [...] a celebrated rock amongst the mountains of Snowdon, is said to be so called from having been the

residence of Merddin Emrys, called by the Latins Merlinus Ambrosius, the celebrated bard and magician: and there, tradition says, he wrote his prophecies concerning the future state of the Britons’.

See Chapter 3, 3.5.

62. Hervey, Elizabeth, **The Church of St. Siffrid*, 4 vols (London: G.G. and J. Robinson, 1797), vol. 2, pp. 13–14, 18.
The characters attend an opera in which Merlin plays a principal role.
63. Howitt, Mary, *‘The Tomb of St. George’, in *Fisher’s Drawing Room Scrap-book, MDCCCXL*, ed. Mary Howitt (London: Fisher, Son and Co., 1840), pp. 49–50.
See Chapter 5, 5.4.
64. Howitt, Mary, *‘Anien Rhaa: A Fairy Tale’, in *Howitt’s Journal of Literature and Popular Progress*, 2 (1847), 415–16 (p. 416)
A didactic narrative verse tale for children in four parts. It describes the visit of the young female protagonist, Anien Rhaa, to fairy land, where she is kept captive. When persuaded by the fairies to visit their court, Anien reveals: ‘I have seen King Arthur and his knights’. The fairies reply: ‘Thou shalt see better than they, shalt see our fairy-men!’
65. Jewsbury, Maria Jane, *‘Cursory Remarks on Old Ballads’, in *Phantasmagoria: or, Sketches of Life and Literature*, 2 vols (London: Hurst, Robinson and Co., 1825), vol. 1, pp. 279–309 (p. 289).
Refers to Percy’s copy of the ballad ‘The Marriage of Sir Gawaine’.
66. Landon, Letitia Elizabeth, ‘The Legend of Tintagel Castle’, in *Fisher’s Drawing Room Scrap-book*, ed. Letitia Elizabeth Landon (London: Fisher, Son and Co., 1833), pp. 8–9. Repr. in Landon, *Selected Writings*, ed. Jerome McGann and Daniel Riess (London: Broadview, 1997), pp. 211–13.
AA, vol. 1, p. 91; *Simpson*, p. 258; *ALW*, pp. 51–54, 378; *Marsh*; *Howey/Reimer*, p. 225.
See Chapter 5, 5.2.
67. Landon, Letitia Elizabeth, *Romance and Reality*, ed. Cynthia Lawford (1831; London: Pickering and Chatto, 2005), pp. 215, 216.
Simpson, p. 264.
Contains allusions to Arthur’s return of Excalibur to the lake (p. 215) and Lancelot’s encounter with a giant guarding an enchanted castle (p. 216). (*Simpson* notes only the second allusion.)
See Chapter 5, 5.3.
68. Lawrance, Hannah, ‘Lady Jane’s Merlin: A Tale of Windsor Castle’, in *The Literary Souvenir; or, Cabinet of Poetry and Romance*, ed. Alaric A. Watts (London: Hurst, Robinson, and Co., 1826), pp. 219–40 (p. 231).
Simpson, p. 264.
Lady Jane’s ‘merlin’ is a bird, rather than the Arthurian enchanter, but the short prose tale makes reference to the romance of ‘Syr Lybeus Disconius’, the protagonist of which is Gawain’s son.

69. Lawrance, Hannah, **Historical Memoirs of the Queens of England; from the commencement of the twelfth century*, 2 vols (London: Edward Moxon, 1838–40) Volume one makes frequent reference to King Arthur and Lancelot in a section titled ‘Influences and Romances of King Arthur’ (see pp. 4, 165, 190, 248, 263–64, 279–83, 300–02, 427). Volume two contains less Arthurian material, used mainly as a point of comparison (see pp. 166, 190, 256, 326, 331).
70. Lawrance, Hannah, **A History of Woman in England, and her Influence on Society and Literature from the earliest period* (London: Henry Colburn, 1843), pp. 19, 35–36, 261, 331–32.
Lawrence praises Guest’s translation of *The Mabinogion* and uses an extracts from “Geraint ab Erbin” and ‘Kiluch and Olwen [sic]’ to show the ‘inferior station assigned to women’ in the texts (p. 19). Also includes a discussion of Wace’s *Brut* (pp. 331–32).
71. Lawrence, Mrs [Rose], *‘The Last Autumn at a Favourite Residence’, in *The Last Autumn at a Favourite Residence, with Other Poems: And Recollections of Mrs. Hemans* (Liverpool and London: G. and J. Robinson and John Murray, 1836), [notes] pp. 259–60.
Lawrence’s notes to the poem draw on Cervantes and others for the legend that Arthur was transformed into a rook after death.
72. Lawrence, Mrs [Rose], **Pictures, Scriptural and Historical: or, The Cabinet of History* (Liverpool: Evans, Chegwin and Hall, 1831), pp. 148–55.
Includes a discussion of ‘The Grave of King Arthur Discovered’, which reprints Warton’s ‘The Grave of King Arthur’ (1777) in full. Annotations are provided for the child reader.
73. Leapor, Mrs. [Mary], *‘Advice to Myrtillo’ (1748), in *Poems Upon Several Occasions, by Mrs. Leapor of Brackley in Northamptonshire* (London: J. Roberts, 1748), pp. 167–70.
A light-hearted poem containing two Arthurian lines: ‘If knights are wanting in the dusty breed / *Arthur’s* round table will supply your need’.
74. Lee, Harriet, and Sophia Lee, ‘Pembroke’, in **The Canterbury Tales* (1797–1803; London: Pandora, 1989), pp. 1–109 (p. 27).
Contains a reference to ‘King Arthur’s’ table’.
75. Lennox, Charlotte, *‘Essay on the Original Inhabitants of Great Britain’ [Continued]’, in *The Lady’s Museum, by the Author of the Female Quixote*, 2 vols (London: J. Newbury, 1760), vol. 2, pp. 514–28, 519–21.
Discusses Arthur, Ambrosius, Hengist, and Cerdic. Lennox also tackles the issue of Arthur’s historicity:
But what shall be said of King Arthur? Or at what time shall we suppose he reigned? Since his very existence itself is call’d into question; and since he has unfortunately been celebrated by so many fabulous writers, that his true history can never be known. That he existed is beyond all doubt, and that he reigned is a point which many authors have sufficiently proved: but the actions of this prince, although in themselves brave and glorious, are so outrageously magnified, that the real soldier is lost in the fictitious giant killer; and the genuine and noble form

of the hero is utterly dissolved, that from a substance, it becomes a shadow. (pp. 519–20)

76. Llwyd, Angharad, **A History of the Island of Mona, or Anglesey; Including an Account of its Natural Productions, Druidical Antiquities, Lives of Eminent Men, the Customs of the Court of the Antient Welsh Princes, etc* (Ruthin: R. Jones, 1833) Shows detailed knowledge of the ‘romance of the Sangrael’ (pp. 235–38). Arthur, and the various legendary artefacts associated with him are frequently granted mention, including Arthur’s crown (pp. 53, 115), a cromlech called “‘Coeten Arthur”, i.e. “Arthur’s Coit”” (p. 208), and ‘a high hill, with a large plat of table land upon the top, called “Bwrdd Arthur”” (pp. 217, 284, 222). ‘[A] prophecy, said to be one of Merlin’s’ is also cited (p. 180).
77. McLeod, Miss [E.H.], **Tales of Ton: The Second Series*, 4 vols (London: A.K. Newman and Son, 1821), vol. 3, p. 7 (‘The Loves of Sir Tristram’), and a Gawain poem, ‘Song’, on pp. 18–21.
See Chapter 2, 2.5.
78. Mitford, Mary Russell, ‘Silchester’, in *Poems*, 2nd edn (London: F.C. and J. Rivington, 1811), pp. 248–54.
AA, vol. 1, p. 79.
See Chapter 3, 3.6.
79. Mitford, Mary Russell, *Letter to Sir William Elford, 13 December 1812, in *The Life of Mary Russell Mitford: Told by Herself in Letters to her Friends*, ed. Rev. A.G.K. L’Estrange, 2 vols (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1870), vol. 1, pp. 170–72. Mitford recalls her recent reading of Warton’s ‘The Grave of King Arthur’, and accuses Scott of borrowing closely from the poem for *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*:
you will be amused to trace the decadence from the grand and sublime agents and objects of Warton, his King Henry and King Arthur, with the gigantic armo[u]r, and the gifted Kaliburn, to the old dead wizard, the moss-trooper, and the Book of Choice magical Receipts of Walter Scott! Oh, how much he has lowered it! [...] What would the critics, who accuse me of imitating Mr. Scott, say if I did so? (p. 171).
80. Montagu, Lady Mary Wortley, ‘The Court of Dulness. A Fragment’, in *The Letters and Works of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Edited by her Great-Grandson Lord Wharncliffe*, 2 vols (Paris: A. and W. Galignani, 1837), vol. 1, pp. 304–06.
AA, vol. 1, p. 94.
A satirical poem in which the Goddess of Dulness recalls a prophecy ‘by Merlin sung, and part long since prov’d true’ (l. 34). It predicts that a new type of ‘Learning shall be born’ which will eradicate dullness from literature and the arts (ll. 36–39).
81. Morgan, Mary [Mrs.], **A Tour To Milford Haven, in the Year 1791* (London: J. Stockdale, 1795), pp. 145–47, 152–53, 159–90.
See Chapter 3, 3.2 and 3.3.
82. Morrington, Isabella, *Fashion’s fool; or, The Cottage of Merlin Vale* (London: Printed by Seales and Bates, and sold by Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1809)

2 vols.

[Not seen.]

A rare title (see the entry for Morrington in Peter Garside, Jacqueline Belanger and Sharon Ragaz, *Database of British Fiction* (Cardiff University) <<http://www.british-fiction.cf.ac.uk/titleDetails.asp?title=1809A050>> [accessed 22 August 2012]). The *Database* records a description of the novel as 'A Rational, Moral, Sentimental, Literary, and Entertaining History, founded on Facts'. From this description it seems unlikely that the work is singularly Arthurian.

83. Norton, Caroline, *'Lord Fordwich', in *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap-Book*, ed. Caroline Norton (London: Fisher's, 1845), pp. 26–27.
See Chapter 5, 5.5.
84. Owenson, Sydney, **The Wild Irish Girl: A National Tale*, ed. Claire Connolly and Stephen Copley (1806; London: Pickering & Chatto, 2000), pp. 99, 294, n. 240.
Contains an interpolated quotation taken from Warton's 'The Grave of King Arthur'.
85. Parker, Mary Elizabeth, **Orwell Manor: A Novel*, 3 vols (London: Printed for the author, at the Minerva Press, 1795), vol. 1, pp. 208–11.
Mentions Merlin as a character from the popular stage.
86. Peacock, Lucy, **The Adventures of Six Princesses of Babylon, in their Travels to the Temple of Virtue* (London: Printed for the Author, 1785), p. 41.
A didactic adventure for children loosely based on Spenser's *Faerie Queene* which incorporates a visit to the 'Cave of Merlin'.
87. Penny, Anne, *'Taliesin's Poem to Prince Elphin', in *Poems, with a Dramatic Entertainment* (London, Printed for the author, sold by J. Dodsley, P. Elmsly, T. Davis, and P. Newbery, [1771]), p. 13.
Mentions 'Modred'.
88. Philipps, Janetta, *'Edmund and Bertha, A Tale', in *Poems* (Oxford: Collingwood and Co., 1811), pp. 39–49. An earlier version of the poem appears in [Philipps], *Delaval. A Novel*, 2 vols (London: Printed at the Minerva Press for William Lane, 1802), vol. 1, pp. 85–91.
See Chapter 2, 2.4.
89. [Pilkington, Mary], **Rosina: A Novel*, 5 vols (London: William Lane, 1793), vol. 1, p. 90.
During a discussion about nobility, a character named Sir Gregory remarks: 'if King Arthur had been my great-grandfather and all his worthies my near relations, now that they are all dead and rotten in their graves, I do not see what good it would do me[...]'.
Mentions 'Modred'.
90. Piozzi, Hester Lynch, **Observations and Reflections Made in the Course of a Journey through France, Italy, and Germany*, 2 vols (London: T. Cadell, 1789), vol. 1, p. 27.
Piozzi's observations on French living include an analogy between the contrasting appearance of French towns by night and day and the fluctuating appearance of the enchanted wife of 'Sir Gawaine' (in Percy's 'The Marriage of Sir Gawaine').

91. Piozzi, Hester Lynch, **The Intimate Letters of Hester Piozzi and Penelope Pennington, 1788–1821*, ed. Oswald G. Knapp (London: John Lane, 1914), pp. 228–30 (p. 229).
A letter from Piozzi to Pennington from August 1801 announces the birth of Piozzi's grandchild, [Thomas] Arthur [Bertie Mostyn], and prompts a fanciful suggestion that he will 'fill his round table with knights, and revive the spirit of Chivalry'.
92. Piozzi, Hester Lynch, **Retrospection; or, a Review of the most Striking and Important Events, Characters, Situations and their Consequences which the last Eighteen hundred years have presented to the view of mankind*, 2 vols (London: John Stockdale, 1801), vol.1, pp. 142, 153, 218.
Includes a brief summary of Arthur's birth, as well as remarks concerning the Fata Morgana meteorological illusion and Morgan le Fay (vol. 1, pp. 142, 153). Piozzi notes that Arthur's round table is a feature of the myth inherited from Charlemagne (vol. 1, p. 218).
93. Plumptre, Anne, *A Narrative of A Three Years' Residence in France, Principally in the Southern Departments, from the year 1802 to 1805. Including some Authentic Particulars respecting the Early Life of the French Emperor, and a General Inquiry into his Character*, 3 vols (London: J. Mawman, 1810), vol. 3, p. 187.
Simpson, p. 223.
Discusses the legends of King Arthur and Merlin as material common to the Bretons and the English. Mentions Arthur's Round Table at Winchester, and recounts a Breton belief that Merlin was born on the isle of Sein and still resides there, enclosed in a tree.
94. Plumptre, Anne, **Something New; or, Adventures at Campbell-House*, ed. Deborah McLeod (1801; Ormskirk: Broadview, 1996), p. 37.
Besides featuring characters named Arthur (Williams) and Percival (Altham), the novel contains a dialogue referencing multiple romances which includes the following comparison: 'Not a hero has for centuries past existed in the world, that can hold a candle to a Godfrey, a Charlemagne, or an Arthur!'
95. Porden, Eleanor Anne, *The Veils; or, The Triumph of Constancy* (London: John Murray, 1815), Book 2. 11; 3. 841–42, and notes (p. 142).
Simpson, p. 265.
A male character is favourably compared to 'Sir Gawaine, '[t]hat gem of arms, and 'Flower of Courtesie!' (3. 843). A substantial accompanying note praises Gawain as 'the model of courtesy and eloquence to all the knights of the Round Table', and claims that he still lives in fairy-land where he protects human travellers from the tricks and pranks of fairies (Porden's note, p. 142).
96. Porden, Eleanor Anne, *Coeur de Lion; or, The Third Crusade* (London: G. and W.B. Whittaker, 1822), Book 3. 689–95; 6, 263–80; 8. 126–32 and notes, vol. 1, pp. 43-31. AA, vol. 1, p. 85; *Simpson*, p. 265.
In Book 3 a bard sings of tales 'of Arthur's pomp' and describes Gawain's various adventures (3. 689–95). Porden's source is the Gawain romances included in Way and Ellis's *Fabliaux*. Book 6 describes how Richard I exhumed Arthur's grave at Glastonbury and acquired his sword, Caliburn (Excalibur) (6. 263–80). Porden's notes

clarify that it was Henry, not Richard, who discovered the grave (vol. I, pp. 430–31). In Book 8, Richard's wife, Berengaria (disguised as a minstrel), offers to sing tales of Merlin's 'magic' and 'Great Arthur's peers' (8. 126–32).

Further minor Arthurian references appear throughout: see 3. 375, 529; 6. 26–32, 384; 7. 707; 8. 86, 610, 650; 12. 129–33, 157; 16. 336.

97. Porden, 'Ode to the King's Most Excellent Majesty', in *Coeur de Lion; or the Third Crusade*, 2 vols (London: G. and W.B. Whittaker, 1822), pp. vii–xiii (p. ix).
Simpson, p. 265.
See Chapter 3, 3.6.
98. Porden, E[leanor] A[nne], **Charity; A Second Contribution in Aid of the Bedford Free School*. (London: [Private Printing], 1821), p. 2.
A chivalric ode which contains a reference to 'elder Arthur's fame'.
99. Porden, Eleanor Anne [as 'Mrs Franklin'], *'The Wren; A Manx Legend', in *The Annual Biography and Obituary for the Year 1826*, vol. 10 (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1826), pp. 354–58.
Originally a private contribution to Porden's literary coterie, the poem was later appended to her obituary. It describes Sir Gawain's encounter with a shape-changing fay on the Isle of Man.
100. Porter, Jane, **The Scottish Chiefs: A Romance* (1810; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), pp. 328, 421–24.
Chapter sixty-three is entitled 'Arthur's Seat' (pp. 421–24): the action takes place on the mountain in Edinburgh. Another episode features a performance of an Arthurian ballad by a peasant farmer and makes a favourable comparison between William Wallace and Arthur:
As he gave the last notes of 'King Arthur's Death in Glory', the worthy cottar raised his head from the spade on which he leaned, and asked whether he could not sing about the present glory of Scotland? 'Our renowned Wallace', said he, 'is worth King Arthur and all the knights of his round table; for he not only conquers for us in war, but establishes us in happy peace. Who, like him of all our great captains, took such care of the poor, as to give them not only the bread that sustaineth the temporal, but that which supports the eternal life?' (p. 328)
101. Porter, Anna Maria, **The Barony*, 3 vols (London: Longman, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1830), vol. 1, p. 35.
Contains a description of 'Tintagel, well known as the birth place of King Arthur'.
102. Radcliffe, Ann, **The Mysteries of Udolpho*, ed. Bonamy Dobrée (1794; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 333, 369–70.
Features a guardsman named 'Lancelot'.
103. Radcliffe, Ann, **Gaston de Blondville; or the Court of Henry III. Keeping Festival in Ardenne, A romance [and] St Alban's Abbey. A Metrical Tale; with some poetical pieces*, 4 vols (London: Henry Coburn, 1826), vol. 1, p. 62.
Mentions manuscripts containing 'Merlin's Prophecies', and 'Sir Tristram'.

104. Reeve, Clara, **Memoirs of Sir Roger de Clarendon, the natural son of Edward Prince of Wales, commonly called the Black Prince; with anecdotes of many other eminent persons of the fourteenth century*, 3 vols (London: Hookham and Carpenter, 1793), vol. 1, p. 37.
A harper performs a summary of the Arthurian legend, mentioning ‘Arthur [...] Sir Gawaine, the prophecy of Merlin’, Tristram, Modred, and several other Arthurian characters.
See Chapter 1, 1.2.
105. Reeve, Clara, **The Progress of Romance; and the History of Charoba, Queen of Egypt* (1785; New York: Facsimile Text Society, 1930), pp. 42–45.
See Chapter 1, 1.2.
106. Sawyer, Anna, *‘Glastonbury Abbey. A Poem’, in *Poems on Various Subjects. With Notes, Historical and Explanatory* (Birmingham: Printed for the Author, 1801), pp. 21–33.
See Chapter 3, 3.6.
107. Scott, Sarah (as Mrs. Murray), **A Companion and Useful Guide to the Beauties of Scotland* (London: Printed for the Author, 1799), p. 123.
Describes Arthur’s Seat in Edinburgh.
108. Shelley, Mary, *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* (1818; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 209.
Simpson, p. 266.
Mentions the ‘Round Table of King Arthur’ as a role-play game played by the young Victor Frankenstein and Henry Clerval. (This was added when Shelley revised the novel in 1831.)
109. Sinclair, Catherine, **Hill and Valley: or, Hours Spent in England and Wales* (Edinburgh: W. Whyte, 1839), p. 249.
Mentions Arthur’s Seat (Edinburgh), Round Table (Winchester), and Arthur’s Chair (Wales).
110. Smith, Charlotte, **Rambles Farther: A Continuation of Rural Walks: in dialogues. Intended for the use of young persons*, 2 vols (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1796), vol. 2, pp. 69–72.
Contains several references to the ‘miracles of Merlin’ (p. 70); however, this is not strictly an Arthurian allusion but a reference to the popular exhibitions by the Belgian inventor, John-Joseph Merlin (1753–1803), a maker of mechanical toys.
111. Smith, Elizabeth, ‘A Supposed Translation from a Welsh Poem, Lately dug up at Piercefield, in the same spot where Llewellyn Ap Gryffyd was Slain, Dec 10th 1281’, in *Fragments in Prose and Verse: by Miss Elizabeth Smith, lately deceased. With some account of her life and character*, ed. H.M. Bowdler (1808; London and Edinburgh: Printed by Richard Cruttwell; sold by Cadell and Davies, and S. Cheyne, 1809), pp. 17, 20–23.
AA, vol. 1, p. 78; *Simpson*, p. 260.
See Chapter 2, 2.2.

112. Smith, Elizabeth, *‘Imitation of Ossian’, in *Fragments in Prose and Verse: by Miss Elizabeth Smith, lately deceased. With some account of her life and character*, ed. H.M. Bowdler (1808; London and Edinburgh: Printed by Richard Cruttwell; sold by Cadell and Davies, and S. Cheyne, 1809), pp. 119–25. Repr. as ‘A Gaellic Legend’ in *La Belle Assemblée* (Sept 1816), 116–18.
Features a benevolent character named Mordred.
113. Spence, Elizabeth Isabella, **Summer Excursions, through parts of Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire, Herefordshire, Derbyshire, and South Wales*, 2 vols (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1809), vol. 1, pp. 12, 22–23; vol. 2, pp. 80–82.
Relays Arthur’s fight with a giant at Mont St. Michel from Williams’s *Survey of Monmouthshire* (vol. 1, p. 12); describes Cadair Arthur (Arthur’s Chair) and quotes Arthurian material from William Camden’s *Britannia* (vol. 1, pp. 22–23). Volume two conveys the legend that Merlin’s hill and cave are to be found at Towy, quoting Camden and Spenser (pp. 80–82).
114. [Stanley, Louisa Dorothea], ‘The Iron Gates: A Legend of Alderley’, in *Alderley Edge and its Neighbourhood* (Macclesfield: J. Swinnerton, 1843).
AA, vol. 1, p. 100; *Simpson*, p. 92.
[Not seen].
The poem, which locates Arthur and his sleeping knights in a cave at Alderley Edge, is unsigned; Simpson notes that Stanley ‘reprints the poem, saying it has long been “out of print”’. (see J.R. [Roger] Simpson, “King Arthur’s Enchanted Sleep: Early Nineteenth Century Legends’, *Folklore*, 97:2 (1986), 206–09 (p. 209, n. 8)).
115. Strickland, Agnes [and Elizabeth Strickland], **Lives of the Queens of England, from the Norman Conquest; with Anecdotes of their Courts*, 12 vols, 4th edn (1840–48; Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1852)
The introduction rejects Guinevere as a suitable starting point for the *Lives* on the basis that ‘Guiniver, the golden-haired queen of Arthur, and her faithless successor and namesake, have been so mixed up with the tales of the romance poets and troubadours, that it would be difficult to trace a single fact connected with either’ (vol. 1, p. xv). Notice is given to Richard I’s discovery of Caliburn in Arthur’s grave at Glastonbury (vol. 2, p. 11), and ‘Brutus and Arthur, ancient kings of Britain’ (vol. 2, p. 219). Further minor comparisons with Arthur’s reign occur throughout (vol. 2, p. 67; vol. 2, p. 115), as well as references to various prophecies of Merlin (vol. 1, pp. 134, 199; vol. 2, pp. 97, 199).
116. ‘T.B.G.’, *‘The Maid of Ascolot. A Romantic Fragment’, *Lady’s Monthly Museum*, 13 (Mar 1821), 173–74.
See Chapter 4, 4. 1.
117. ‘V.’ [Vardill, Anna Jane], *‘La Morte D’arthur; or, The Legend of Sir Launcelot’, *European Magazine and London Review*, 79 (Jun 1821), 553–55.
See Chapter 4, 4.2.
118. ‘V.’ [Vardill, Anna Jane], ‘Christobell, A Gothic Tale’, *European Magazine and London Review*, 67 (Apr 1815), 345–46.
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See Chapter 2, 2.5.

119. 'V.' [Vardill, Anna Jane], *'Sir Locrine: A Northern Ballad', *European Magazine and London Review*, 74 (Nov 1818), 439–40.
Vardill's note identifies Sir Locrine as 'King Arthur's son'.
120. 'V.' [Vardill, Anna Jane], *'The Annals of Public Justice: The Western Assize Court in 1689', *European Magazine and London Review*, 77 (Apr 1820), 297–301.
Vardill's tale features a Welsh 'pedagogue' who owns several Arthurian texts:
The riches of his house consisted of numberless traditionary volumes of Welch romance, especially a genuine copy of the *Historia Brittonum* ascribed to Nennius, and edited in the tenth century by Mark the Hermit; probably the original of that celebrated MS. lately discovered in the Vatican, after having graced the library of Queen Christina. (p. 297)
This learned protagonist also 'knew all the tales of Merlin's ship of glass; and, in short, whatever proves the abundance of fiction in Wales' (p. 297). Later, an excavated pot of copper coins is fancied to be the 'gift of some second Merlin' (p. 298).
121. 'V.' [Vardill, Anna Jane], *'M. Denon's Hundred Days in England: Extracted from his Journal [Part 1]', *European Magazine and London Review*, 80 (Jul 1821), 6–12 (11–12).
Comments on romances featuring Merlin.
See Chapter 4, 4.3.
122. 'V.' [Vardill, Anna Jane], *'M. Denon in England [Part 2]', *European Magazine and London Review*, 80 (Aug 1821), 127–33 (esp. pp. 129–33).
Describes history of Merlin and Marie de France's *Lais*; also namechecks Giraldus, 'Chrestien de Troyes', Geoffrey de Ligny, Chateaubriand, William of Malmesbury, Geoffrey of Monmouth, Froissart, Ritson, Pinkerton, Percy, 'Sir W.S.' [Walter Scott], 'Merlin's glass', the 'Harleian MSS. No 798', and the Auchinleck MS.
See Chapter 4, 4.3.
123. 'V.' [Vardill, Anna Jane], *'The Last Leaf of the Parish Register' [in three parts] *European Magazine and London Review*, 80 (1821), 310–13, 412–16, 511–16.
See Chapter 4, 4.3.
(Only parts 1 and 2 feature Arthurian material.)
124. Wardle, Charlotte, **St Aelian's; or, The Cursing Well* (London: Printed for the Author, 1814).
See Chapter 2, 2.4.
125. Wilson, Anne, **Teisa: A Descriptive Poem of the River Teese, its Towns and Antiquities* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Printed for the author, 1778), pp. 38–44.
Contains an embedded Arthurian episode featuring Uther Pendragon, Arthur, Merlin, Cerdic and an enchantress named Geneura.
See Chapter 3, 3.3.
126. Yonge, Charlotte Mary, *Abbeychurch; or Self Control and Self Conceit* (London: James Burns, 1844), pp. 141, 287.

Simpson, p. 266.

The two child protagonists, Anne Merton and Elizabeth Woodbourne, mention 'Sir Galahad' (p. 141) and are keen to find out 'whether King Arthur's Round Table were knights or not' (p. 287).

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