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WHEN KING ARTHUR MET THE VENUS

Romantic Antiquarianism and the Illustration of Anne Bannerman's 'The Prophecy of Merlin'

Katie Garner



A ROMANTIC POEM WITH AN ARTHURIAN SETTING is a relatively rare thing. As Rob Gossedge and Stephen Knight have cogently summarised, in contrast to the Pre-Raphaelites and Victorians, 'the Romantic poets had no significant interest in the Arthurian myth'.¹ Anne Bannerman's gothic ballad, 'The Prophecy of Merlin' (1802), is one such Romantic rarity, made all the more remarkable by the fact that it is accompanied by an unusual engraving of the poem's subject.² The ballad's illustration shows a young King Arthur kneeling at the feet of a female figure who is entirely naked apart from a thinly draped veil encircling her arm and falling delicately and suggestively between her legs (Figure 1, overleaf).³ The statuesque pose of the woman aligns her, as one of Bannerman's contemporaries noted, with the figure of the Venus Anadyomene (Venus rising from the sea), but the sexual nature of the image nevertheless caused some outrage among the volume's early readers.⁴ The problematic engraving reportedly 'brought on Miss Bannerman such unmerited wit-cracking, and consequent inquietude' that arrangements were made to remove the engraving from the remaining unsold copies.⁵

'The Prophecy of Merlin' is the final poem in *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry*, a slim volume containing nine other gothic ballads and three further, much more demure, illustrations. The collection appeared anonymously, but most reviewers were aware that its author was the Edinburgh-born poet, Anne Bannerman (1765–1829), a literary figure 'already known for her poetical talents' following the resounding praise of her debut collection, *Poems*, in 1800.⁶ For one reviewer, Bannerman's *Poems* offered 'irrefragable proof that the ardour, whatever be its gender, which gives birth to lofty thought and bold expression may glow within a female breast'.⁷ Unfortunately, however, when *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* appeared two years later, the volume received far less glowing reviews. For the *Annual Register*, the *Tales* were only the latest in a line of 'fashionable fictions' to make use of familiar Gothic trappings, including '[h]ollow winds, clay-cold hands, clanking chains and clicking clocks'.⁸ The *Tales* were a failure in comparison to Bannerman's earlier poetic success, but did win her one important admirer in Sir Walter Scott. As Adriana Craciun has noted, Scott singled out Bannerman's work for praise in his 'Essay on Imitations of the Ancient Ballad' (1830):

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.⁹

This is high praise from Scott, but his commentary nevertheless continues to align Bannerman’s work with a sensational gothicism fit for a ‘lonely house’. In a similar tone, the *British Critic* recommended the *Tales* to ‘those who love to shudder o’er the midnight fire’.¹⁰

The strong focus on the gothic nature of Bannerman’s *Tales* in contemporary reviews has continued to obscure the extent to which her ballads—and particularly the Arthurian ‘Prophecy of Merlin’—engage closely with antiquarian scholarship and the revival of interest in medieval literature in the late eighteenth century. Emerging at the same time, the relationship between gothic literature and the Middle Ages is generally held to be tenuous at best; as Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall point out, ‘most Gothic novels have little to do with “the medieval world”’.¹¹ Anne Williams also carefully qualifies her assessment that gothic texts share an ‘antiquarian enthusiasm for the medieval (or rather for eighteenth-century fantasies of those “Dark Ages”’).¹² Gothic texts engage with the emerging fashion for antiquarianism and textual relics, but, as Williams reminds us, they also take a double perspective, adopting an imaginative distance from any such medieval past. However, while this reading of the gothic’s ultimately superficial medievalism might hold true for many novels, verse experiments in the gothic mode, such as Thomas Warton’s ‘The Grave of King Arthur’ (1777), often engage much more deeply with antiquarian scholarship, and the same is true of



FIG. 1. MACKENZIE AFTER E. W. THOMPSON, ‘THE PROPHECY OF MERLIN’ (1802)

the relationship between gothic literature and the Middle Ages is generally held to be tenuous at best; as Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall point out, ‘most Gothic novels have little to do with “the medieval world”’.¹¹ Anne Williams also carefully qualifies her assessment that gothic texts share an ‘antiquarian enthusiasm for the medieval (or rather for eighteenth-century fantasies of those “Dark Ages”’).¹² Gothic texts engage with the emerging fashion for antiquarianism and textual relics, but, as Williams reminds us, they also take a double perspective, adopting an imaginative distance from any such medieval past. However, while this reading of the gothic’s ultimately superficial medievalism might hold true for many novels, verse experiments in the gothic mode, such as Thomas Warton’s ‘The Grave of King Arthur’ (1777), often engage much more deeply with antiquarian scholarship, and the same is true of

Bannerman's 'The Prophecy of Merlin'. 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', and yet her appeal continues to resonate, not least with regard to the complexly gendered fantasies connected to 'The Prophecy of Merlin'.¹³ Much more remains to be said on the subject of the gothic's often very specific relationship to the medieval past.

For a long time overlooked, in recent years 'The Prophecy of Merlin' has been discussed increasingly by Arthurian and Romantic scholars.¹⁴ Alan Lupack and Barbara Tapa Lupack view the ballad's presentation of Arthur's death as a conservatively 'peaceful' counterpoint to later 'much more unusual' uses of Avalon by nineteenth-century women writers, whereas Gossedge and Knight place Bannerman within a Celtic strain of Romantic Arthurian writing emerging from 1800 onwards, encompassing writers 'who excavated and reworked Arthurian stories for their own self-consciously national political purposes'.¹⁵ These include Sir Walter Scott, Thomas Love Peacock and minor Cornish writers, such as Thomas Hogg and George Woodley, all of whom, as Gossedge and Knight demonstrate, offer works which specifically locate Arthur in Scotland, Wales or Cornwall.¹⁶ Yet, rarely do discussions of Bannerman's poem by Arthurianists extend to its accompanying engraving, and occasionally the image is ignored altogether.¹⁷ This is not the case, however, in the field of Romantic studies, where the material contexts for Bannerman's poem and its striking engraving have been admirably illuminated by Adriana Craciun. For Craciun, the engraving's representation of a classical Venus is strikingly at odds with the content of the *Tales*:

The engraving, by fixing in such precise lineaments an apparent unveiling of the divine (and feminine) truth, works against the rest of the *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry*, and their repeated suggestion that truth does not remain truth once it is unveiled.¹⁸

Craciun demonstrates how Bannerman's ballads employ, but also subvert, the gothic conventions of veiled women and ambiguous supernatural effects by never fully revealing the exact outcomes of successive staged hauntings or lifting the veils of her various *femme fatales*.¹⁹ The visual representation of the Venus, on the other hand, appears to play towards just that gratification by parting her veils and offering the viewer a different kind of 'naked' truth. The adjunction of such a revelatory symbol in the figure of the Venus, then, appears to violently contradict Bannerman's proto-feminist poetics.

Craciun provides an astute and compelling analysis of the disjunction between word and image in Bannerman's *Tales*. Yet by widening the impact of the engraving to the volume *en masse*, her analysis obscures the more singular medieval subject around which the disjunction occurs. The following discussion reads Bannerman's adoption of an Arthurian subject and the addition of the unusual engraving to her poem as two interrelated events, each the product of competing, and distinctly gendered, antiquarian forces at work in the poet's

native Edinburgh. J. Hillis Miller has written of the ‘disruptive power’ of illustrations and their ability to perform ‘a permanent parabasis, an eternal moment suspending, for the moment at least, any attempt to tell a story through time’.²⁰ By reading Bannerman’s ballad through the conventions of the female gothic and outlining the extent of her knowledge of Arthurian romance, the ‘disruptive’ engraving accompanying ‘The Prophecy of Merlin’ emerges as a visual addition to her volume by a male antiquarian, Thomas Park, who deliberately sought to disrupt her revision of the Arthurian story. If, as Hillis Miller suggests, illustrations can suspend a story, the engraving to ‘The Prophecy of Merlin’ seeks to suspend Bannerman’s feminine story of Arthur’s death, and assert, in its place, a visual manifestation of the desire at the root of the male antiquarian’s longing to expose the medieval past.

‘The Prophecy of Merlin’ and the Female Gothic

The narrative of ‘The Prophecy of Merlin’ 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 in Cornwall. Initially pictured ‘alone’ in a gothic turret, Arthur keeps watch over a strange light and then meets with Merlin, who takes the form of a ‘giant’ monk emerging from ‘underground’.²¹ 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. 169–70), 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.²² Diego Saglia has demonstrated how this type of ‘unfinished ending’ is a common feature of narrative poetry by Robert Southey, Mary Robinson, Lord Byron, Leigh Hunt, John Keats and Letitia Elizabeth Landon, as well as by Bannerman herself.²³ In the case of ‘The Prophecy of Merlin’, this open-endedness is particularly emphasised through the repeated negation that structures the final stanza (‘not’; ‘nor’; ‘nought’), and which leaves the possibility of Arthur’s return wholly unconfirmed.

As reviewers noted, Bannerman’s ballads in *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* all make use of stock gothic motifs and ‘The Prophecy of Merlin’ is no excep-

tion. 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 Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797), and Arthur anxiously watches an eerie light from a gothic tower in a manner that recalls the performances of multiple Radcliffean heroines.²⁴ 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 behaviour of the gothic heroine) is the king's hyperbolical expression of fear: haunted by a 'chill of death', he struggles to control his 'knocking knees' when hearing Merlin's prophecy (ll. 119, 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.²⁵

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. One of the most accessible poetic treatments of Arthur's death in the Romantic period was the ballad 'King Arthur's Death', first published in Bishop Thomas Percy's foundational three-volume anthology, *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765). Sourced from Percy's famous seventeenth-century folio manuscript, in this ballad 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 (who is tasked with disposing of Arthur's sword, Excalibur, in the lake).²⁶ 'The Prophecy of Merlin' explores some of the same events as 'King Arthur's Death' (including Arthur's final battle at Camlan, his wounding by Modred, and his subsequent departure from the world of the living), and may well have been Bannerman's source, but her poem places a very different emphasis on the shortcomings of knightly fealty.²⁷ In her poem, the Round Table are no more than a nameless and ultimately ineffectual band of knights who offer Arthur little support besides waving his 'witched sword, | [...] twice in Merlin's name' over his wounded body (ll. 73–75). Arthur is separated from the Round Table kinship—a group that functions as his patriarchal family—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 mysterious Queen of Beauty who greets him on her Yellow Isle. Their meeting is immortalised in the engraving, which

depicts the queen offering Arthur a drink from a cup as he kneels in her service (Figure 1; ll. 137–40). 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 manner that anticipates Keats’s ‘La Belle Dame Sans Merci’.²⁸ Yet, if the 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.²⁹ On her pastoral Yellow Isle, Arthur receives the resolution of his fate via liquid from the queen that contains the knowledge of his future rebirth, a transmission that prompts his realisation that ‘he would return | From Merlin’s prophecy’ (ll. 171–72). 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 revises the story of Arthur’s death through the addition of the Queen of Beauty, but, when combined with the poem’s feminisation of Arthur, provides an overall intensely female examination of the climax to the Arthurian story.³⁰

If, as Paula Backscheider has commented, Bannerman was indeed an ‘isolated poet’ then we can trace her lack of interest in portraying brotherly camaraderie, as well as the Queen of Beauty’s location on a marginalised island, to her own isolation as a woman writer from the centre of the Scottish literary scene.³¹ Craciun has explored Bannerman’s marginal position within ‘the most influential literary circle in Edinburgh’, where ‘[i]t is literally 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’.³² However, we can equally

relate the conventions Bannerman employs to her astute knowledge of female gothic tropes. Williams 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”’.³³ 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 queen connected to Arthur’s eventual rebirth. At the same time as it is sensational, however, Bannerman’s Arthurian gothic is also consciously scholarly, and the paratextual elements surrounding her poem support and reinforce the ballad’s female-centred narrative by offering a strong demonstration of the female poet’s knowledge of current antiquarian debates.

Bannerman’s Arthurian Scholarship

By far the most densely annotated of the ten ballads which make up the *Tales*, ‘The Prophecy of Merlin’ is accompanied by seven notes which together outline Bannerman’s interest in contemporary antiquarianism and Arthurian literature. For Stephen C. Behrendt, Bannerman’s annotations are a defensive practice:

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.³⁴

Behrendt sees the notes to ‘The Prophecy of Merlin’ as akin to the glosses of Coleridge’s ‘Rime of the Ancient Mariner’: only ‘seemingly’ scholarly and an ultimately superficial paratextual addition created to give credence to the ballad’s supernatural material. Indeed, written at the same time as Scott was compiling his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802–03) and in the wake of the controversy over James Macpherson’s *Ossian* forgeries, Bannerman’s *Tales* emerge from a particularly Scottish Romantic literary field highly concerned with imitation and textual recovery. As one reviewer remarked of the *Tales*, ‘an imitation of ancient simplicity seems everywhere to be intended’.³⁵ Sham-scholarship also seems to go hand-in-hand with the ‘*faux* medievalism’ of the gothic, which, as Diane Long Hoeveler notes, was often dictated 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’.³⁶ As simply another trapping of the gothic, the drive towards an impression of historical authenticity—*pace* Horace Walpole—encourages the use of scholarly appendages. Read from within the gothic’s reputation for the superficial, Bannerman’s notes signal her capacity for imitation, rather than her originality. Indeed, this impression was shared by a contemporary reviewer, who perceived in the *Tales* ‘more smoke than fire, more imitation than original genius’.³⁷

Yet, Bannerman's medievalism is a more serious enterprise, and her interest in medieval folklore, verse romances and ballad history definitively scholarly. 'The Prophecy of Merlin' utilises several eighteenth-century works of literary antiquarianism as well as earlier Renaissance treatments of Arthur to situate its narrative within a tradition of Arthurian writing. Bannerman's most frequent source is Michael Drayton's annotated topographical poem, *Poly-Olbion* (1612–22), the notes for which were compiled by John Selden. From this she took details of the decoration of Arthur's shield with an image of the Virgin, the location of Camlan in Cornwall and the belief that 'Arthur is to return to the rule of his country' ('Prophecy of Merlin', p. 144n.). She also cites Spenser's portrait of Merlin in Book III of *The Faerie Queene* (1754) 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. 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.

It is Bannerman's knowledge of Evans's scholarship which signals her interest in the connections between Wales and the Arthurian legend, the origins of which it is possible to trace to her friendship with the 'philologist, linguist, ballad collector and minor poet', John Leyden (1775–1811).³⁸ As Craciun has revealed, Leyden and Bannerman shared a close friendship from the mid-1790s onwards which grew out of their shared interests in Scottish balladry, but, in addition, the two authors also shared an active interest in Arthurian romance.³⁹ 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 *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* and also transcribed several Arthurian texts from Scott's Auchinleck manuscript, including *Arthur 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.⁴⁰ As Arthur Johnston points out, 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'.⁴¹ 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.⁴²

A year before the publication of Bannerman's *Tales*, Leyden had made public his theory that the 'romances [related] to 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).⁴³ 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) was 'strong proof of their high antiquity'.⁴⁴ As Johnston notes, Leyden held a 'Celtic theory of the origin of Arthurian romance', which pursued strong links

between Scotland and Wales.⁴⁵

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.⁴⁶

While we cannot be certain that Bannerman read Leyden's *Complaynt*, 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.⁴⁷ Moreover, like Bannerman's 'The Prophecy of Merlin', Leyden's *Complaynt* also mentions King Urien, and describes the king's 'encounter with the Black Knight of the Water'.⁴⁸ Bannerman cites Evans's *Specimens* (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' in the *Tales* (pp. 144, 111–19). Not only does this sharpen the correspondence between Bannerman's and Leyden's work, but it also draws attention to how other poems in her *Tales* were inspired by aspects of medieval history and legend less well known and less recognisable than the Arthurian story. When, in 'The Prophecy of Merlin', the Queen of Beauty conjures the 'mighty form of Urien [...] from the grave' (ll. 163–64), 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 theory of Arthurian romance 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).⁴⁹ 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'.⁵⁰ 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 Stephen Knight notes, the prophecies 'tended to validate an England-led Britain' and could therefore provide a rationale for aggressive colonisation.⁵¹ 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 argued in his introduction to

the *Complaynt* that ‘the English had employed the prophecies of Merlin as a political engine, to intimidate the minds of the Scottish nation’.⁵² In Leyden’s eyes, Merlin’s prophecies were intended to ‘dispirit the Commons of Scotland, and subjugate their courage, by familiarizing their minds to the idea of being conquered’.⁵³ As a modern rendering of a ‘Prophecy of Merlin’ by a Scottish woman writer that promotes the Celtic foundations of British medieval literature, Bannerman’s poem poses an indirect challenge to Scotland’s subordination to the English centre since the 1707 Act of Union.⁵⁴

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.

(‘Prophecy of Merlin’, p. 144n.)

Acknowledging Arthur’s circulation as a ‘national hero’, Bannerman is keen to stress that her treatment of the king is in opposition to those who seek to define his place in ‘legendary tradition’. Instead, her own practice is located on a new ‘fairy-ground’ that conjures images of fantasy and the supernatural intrinsic to the gothic. Bannerman ends her poem by appropriately prophesying that hostility will greet her work, a foresight that suggests she encountered antagonism from 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 its significant demonstration of female scholarship made it a triple threat towards male English antiquarians with their own interests in King Arthur. The addition of such an unusual and apparently contradictory engraving to the poem can be interpreted as a response to such a threat, as efforts were made to counteract Bannerman’s Arthurian mythmaking with an erotic image of female sexuality.

Sexual Politics: Arthur and the Venus

The engraving accompanying ‘The Prophecy of Merlin’ concentrates shamelessly on the figure of the naked Queen of Beauty. While the clothed body of Arthur is positioned in profile to the right of the composition, the exposed body of the queen blazes outwards towards the viewer, dramatically illuminated against the dark coastline behind. The sharp contrast of light and dark draws on traditional chiaroscuro aesthetics, but is exploited to maximise the focalisation of the gaze onto the woman’s flagrant pose and tantalisingly draped veil. The central positioning of her naked form is made in stark contrast to the presentation of the queen in Bannerman’s ballad, which overall has very little to say about her body. Besides observing that her ‘hand, of snowy white’, holds the mysterious cup (l. 137), Arthur’s attention is firmly concentrated on her facial features: ‘he

fix'd his eyes on that ladie's face' (l. 147). The queen's supernatural power lies in her gaze, and more specifically, in her 'eyes, of softest blue' where 'magic dwells, to lull the soul!' (ll. 149–50) Whatever the relationship between Arthur and the queen, it is certainly not conducted through his attraction to her physical body; when Arthur returns her gaze with 'raptur'd eyes' (l. 154), her ability to speak to his 'soul' suggests a meeting of minds, rather than physical ardour.

The sharp disjunction between text and image is indicative of the lack of influence Bannerman had on the illustration of her own work. Thomas Park (1758/59–1834), an antiquary, editor and former engraver, arranged for the publication of Bannerman's *Tales* with the London-based firm Vernor & Hood, and continued to act as a consultant to the publishers once the contract was secured. During his involvement with Bannerman's poetic career, Park was pursuing a number of medieval editing projects: 1801 saw him working with George Ellis on an edition of the early fourteenth-century romance, *Kyng Alisaunder*, and in 1804, Percy invited Park to edit his unpublished collection of romances, which included '[s]ome of the Songs of King Arthur'.⁵⁵ Scott also held a high opinion of Park's editorial skills and manuscript expertise.⁵⁶ As a significant literary antiquarian with a respected knowledge of medieval romance, Park would have recognised immediately the challenges Bannerman was making to patriarchal 'legendary tradition' by revising Merlin's prophecies and portraying Arthur in the manner of a gothic heroine. Somewhat surprisingly, then, Park never recognised Bannerman's own Arthurian interests, preferring to speak only of her 'ingenious imitations of the Gothic ditty'.⁵⁷ His management of the illustration of the *Tales* demonstrates a similar tendency to shift the focus of Bannerman's work away from its treatment of the Arthurian legend and towards more classical motifs.

Park appears to have taken a particularly active role in the arrangement of the volume's illustrations, possibly on account of his own background in the engraving trade. Early on in the production process, Bannerman's own views on illustration were sought, but her request to illustrate the volume with woodcuts was rejected by the publisher, the woodcutters being 'very idle as well as much engaged in different contracts'.⁵⁸ Instead, Park reported that one of the publishing partners, Thomas Hood, proposed 'to get four plates handsomely executed from four of the subjects which he thinks it would be wise for the authoress herself to point out'.⁵⁹ However, Park's later correspondence with Dr Robert Anderson, editor of the *Edinburgh Magazine* and another of Bannerman's early supporters, suggests that he ignored Hood's advice. In a letter to Anderson from November 1802, Park reflected on the recent protests against the nudity of the Queen of Beauty in 'The Prophecy of Merlin' engraving and took full responsibility for the problematic plate. As he gallantly told Anderson, '[w]hatever of censure may be incurred, let it fall on *me*, for having selected the subject which has excited their jocularity'.⁶⁰ According to Park, Bannerman was entirely 'blameless' for the controversy surrounding the image, which suggests that she was ultimately party to neither its production nor design.⁶¹

In the wake of the public objections to the plate, Park also came forward with a more personal offer to defend Bannerman, couched in metaphors that playfully invoked the themes of the work under siege:

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.⁶²

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 to the Royal Literary Fund on Bannerman's behalf, he repeated his desire to protect the poet from unnecessary 'exposure'.⁶³ Yet, when given the opportunity to influence the engravings for the *Tales*, it seems that female exposure was precisely what Park had in mind. The printing of the volume and the design of the engraving in London, where Park resided, also served to further distance the Edinburgh author from the production of her work. Park, too, admitted that he could have paid greater attention to the engraver's final design, reproaching himself 'for having been less vigilant than I ought to have been in seeing that the artist exceeded not his just limits'.⁶⁴ While Park was outraged on Bannerman's behalf, the publisher, Hood, was far less perturbed when Park confronted him about the matter at his London offices:

finding Hood at home, I taxed him with having committed an outrage *contra bonos mores* [against good morals] in ornamenting the production of a female writer with an engraving, which had been described to me by Dr Anderson, as 'offensive to decency'. Utterly unconscious, I am sure, of having so trespassed, he produced a copy of the book and confessed that a little more drapery would have made the Queen of Beauty more decorous—though from the usual hurry in which the work of the designer engraver passed before his eyes, he had not perceived that the figure presented so complete a nudity, tho' it did not *then* strike him as very objectionable.⁶⁵

For Park, Bannerman's identity as a 'female writer' is essential to the 'outrage', and implies a close connection between the female-authored text and the female author's body which Ina Ferris has recognised as a reoccurring trope in Romantic period reviews.⁶⁶ Completed in a 'hurry', the full extent of the nudity depicted in the image seems to have passed into print unnoticed by publisher, commissioner and author. Though reluctant to accept responsibility for the public 'outrage', under Park's duress, Hood nevertheless agreed to 'banish that plate from the publication'.⁶⁷

Later in the same letter, Park further defended his artistic 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 is still 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.⁶⁸


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’ suggests that ‘there is little to excite’ in Bannerman’s poetry, either. Finally, Park’s concern with the ‘classical’ nature of the ‘piece of statuary’ passes over the engraving’s Arthurian context, and suggests that her ballad, like the illustration, also reproduces an appropriately ‘statuary’ stock narrative. As Craciun observes, again 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’.⁶⁹ This shift in focus extends to the Arthurian content of ‘The Prophecy of Merlin’, as the Venus figure encourages the viewer to identify Arthur (not named in the engraving’s caption) with Paris, Cupid, Mars or other classical figures better known for their visual encounters with the goddess.

The latter part of Park’s earlier meditation on the Venus, however, seems less sure of the figure’s concrete and conservative identification with ‘unparalleled’ high art. 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 ‘[t]he double nature of Venus’: her ability to function as both ‘low and high’ art.⁷⁰ Contemplating the Venus always involves a ‘constant switching between ostensibly aesthetic and avowedly erotic desires’.⁷¹ The very duplicity of the Venus, in fact, might signal her potential to align herself with Bannerman’s poetic principles at the same time as her presence appears to undermine them. 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’.⁷² 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 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, [...] potentially *ad infinitum*’.⁷³ Park’s description verbalises that doubling effect, inherent in the engraving, by presenting multiple of ways of reading the female (body): as Venus, siren, enchantress or prostitute. While appearing to define ‘something’ far from Bannerman’s meaning—what

Craciun terms a desire for '(feminine) truth'—Park's intentions also backfire.⁷⁴ Masquerading as both classical Venus and denuded prostitute, the engraver's representation holds the potential to embody the very 'something' 'betrayed' by the poem's elusive queen. Furthermore, unlike the depiction of the Queen of Beauty, the physical rendering of Arthur in the engraving is much more consistent with Bannerman's poetics. While the male subjects depicted in the other engravings in the *Tales* share strong facial features and aquiline noses, Arthur is drawn with much smaller, feminine features and pert rosebud lips in keeping with his feminisation in the poem. This unusual portrait of Arthur was wholly overshadowed by the presentation of the queen as Venus, whose naked body was the sole subject of the controversy surrounding the volume.

Through overseeing the addition of the realised Venus figure to the ballad, Park 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 voicing a production which seemed to encroach on traditionally patriarchal areas of antiquarian enquiry. As the engraving precedes the ballad on the page, the reader approaches 'The Prophecy of Merlin' with a firm image of the Queen of Beauty as a classical nude already in mind. Bannerman's creativity was thus superseded by a masculine creative act which perpetuates the 'circulation of woman as the beautiful, mysterious, desired and loved image for the desiring masculine gaze'.⁷⁵ As Jacqueline Rose states, 'we know that women are meant to *look* perfect, presenting a seamless image to the world so that the man, in that confrontation with difference, can avoid any apprehension of lack'.⁷⁶ With his own antiquarian project concerning *Alisaunder* failing to progress, Park encountered Bannerman's very different, feminine-centred claim to her '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 more threatening maternal and antiquarian knowledge—for a visual, concrete and 'statuary' version of woman as Venus.⁷⁷ As much as a desire for beautiful women is intimately connected to the Arthurian medievalism of the Pre-Raphaelites, Park's interruption into Bannerman's female 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 and artist, and replaces her with 'woman as sign'.⁷⁸ The sexual controversy surrounding the engraving is a rare, visual manifestation of the repressed sexual desire that might be seen to drive the antiquarian's search for the past in order to possess it.

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. The disruptive engraving undermines Bannerman's scholarly investment on many counts; 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.

Bannerman's greatest addition to the events surrounding Arthur's death is her realisation of his encounter with a powerful, maternal figure. In so doing, she creates a literary dialogue between Arthur and the queen that calls for the recognition of the feminine in the Arthurian story in much the same way that her final note offers 'fairy ground' as an alternative to patriarchal 'legendary tradition'. 

NOTES

1. Rob Gossedge and Stephen Knight, 'The Arthur of the Sixteenth to Nineteenth Centuries', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend*, ed. by Elizabeth Archibald and Ad Putter (Cambridge: CUP, 2009), pp. 103–19 (p. 108).
2. Roger Simpson has identified only seven Arthurian illustrations based on original poetry, including 'The Prophecy of Merlin', produced between the years 1800 and 1850. See Simpson, 'Appendix E: List of Graphic and Other Works Concerned with the Arthurian Legends [1800–1849]', in *Camelot Regained: The Arthurian Revival and Tennyson 1800–1849* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1990), pp. 274–75.
3. The most comprehensive survey of the Arthurian legend in art is Muriel Whitaker's *The Legends of King Arthur in Art* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1990). Christine Poulson's *The Quest for the Grail: The Arthurian Legend in British Art, 1840–1920* (Manchester and New York: MUP, 1999) also covers several Romantic-period works. For an accessible collection of free-to-access Arthurian illustrations, see Alan Lupack's index of 'Artists', *The Camelot Project* (University of Rochester) <www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/artmenu.htm> [accessed 4 Apr 2012].
4. National Library of Scotland, MS 22.4.10, ff. 232–33; Thomas Park to Robert Anderson, 29 Nov 1802.
5. NLS MS 22.4.10. f. 233; Park to Anderson, 29 Nov 1802. The efforts to remove the problematic plate appear to have been only partially successful. From her examination of sixteen copies of the poem, Adriana Craciun records that only five are lacking the accompanying illustration—see *Fatal Women of Romanticism* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003), p. 184.
6. *British Critic*, 21 (Jan 1803), 78–79 (p. 78). Bannerman's birth and death dates given here follow those provided by Adriana Craciun in her entry for Bannerman in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1312> [accessed 8 Apr 2013]; and her discussion of Bannerman's work in *Fatal Women*, pp. 156–94 (p. 156). However, Katie Lister has recently proposed that Bannerman's birth should be alternatively placed sometime between 1775 and 1780, as comments made by Bannerman's friend, the editor Dr Robert Anderson, consistently refer to her as particularly young poet. As Lister points out, 'were Bannerman born in 1765 she would have been 35 years old when she began to publish in 1800'—see 'Femmes Fatales and Fatal Females: Anne Bannerman's "The Prophecy of Merlin"', in *The Survival of Myth: Innovation, Singularity and Alterity*, ed. by Paul Hardwick and David Kennedy (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), pp. 166–85 (pp. 168–69).
7. *Critical Review*, 31 (Apr 1801), 435–36 (p. 435).
8. *Annual Review*, 1 (Jan 1802), 720–21.
9. Sir Walter Scott, 'Essay on Imitations of the Ancient Ballad' (1829), in *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, ed. by T. F. Henderson, 4 vols (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1902), IV, 1–53 (pp. 25–26).

10. *British Critic*, 21 (Jan 1803), 78–79 (p. 79).
11. Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall, ‘Gothic Criticism’, in *A New Companion to the Gothic*, ed. by David Punter (Oxford: Blackwell, 2012), pp. 267–87 (p. 272).
12. Anne Williams, *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 13.
13. Cora Kaplan, *Sea Changes: Essays on Culture and Feminism* (London: Verso, 1986), p. 146.
14. ‘The Prophecy of Merlin’ has achieved wider notoriety in Arthurian circles since the 1990s. See e.g. Simpson, *Camelot Regained*, pp. 149, 171, 174–75, 223, 235, 251; Stephen Knight, *Merlin: Knowledge and Power through the Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), pp. 136–37; and Gossedge and Knight, ‘The Arthur of the Sixteenth to Nineteenth Centuries’, p. 110. The poem is also listed in the most exhaustive bibliography of Arthurian literature to date: Daniel P. Nastali and Phillip C. Boardman’s *The Arthurian Annals: The Tradition in English from 1250 to 2000*, 2 vols (Oxford: OUP, 2004), I, 73.
15. Alan Lupack and Barbara Tapa Lupack, ‘Arthurian Literature by Women: The Forgotten Tradition’, in *Arthurian Literature by Women*, ed. by Lupack and Tapa Lupack (New York: Garland, 1999), pp. 3–30 (p. 24); Gossedge and Knight, ‘The Arthur of the Sixteenth to Nineteenth Centuries’, p. 109.
16. Gossedge and Knight, ‘The Arthur of the Sixteenth to Nineteenth Centuries’, pp. 109–11.
17. The illustration is absent, for example, from the reprinting of ‘The Prophecy of Merlin’, in Lupack and Tapa Lupack’s anthology, *Arthurian Literature by Women*, pp. 43–49.
18. Craciun, *Fatal Women*, p. 187.
19. Craciun, *Fatal Women*, pp. 159–84.
20. J. Hillis Miller, *Illustration* (London: Reaktion, 1992), p. 66.
21. [Anne Bannerman], ‘The Prophecy of Merlin’, in *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* (London: Vernor & Hood, 1802), pp. 125–39 (ll. 1–4, 15, 8). All further references are to this edition and are given parenthetically in the text.
22. Thomas Warton, ‘The Grave of King Arthur’, in *Poems. A New Edition* (London: Beckett, 1777), pp. 63–72.
23. Diego Saglia, ‘Ending the Romance: Women Poets and the Romantic Verse Tale’, in *Romantic Women Poets: Genre and Gender*, ed. by Lilla Maria Crisafulli and Cecilia Pietropoli (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 153–67 (p. 159).
24. See Ann Radcliffe, *The Italian; or, the Confessional of the Black Penitents* (1797), ed. by Frederick Garber (Oxford: OUP, 1998), esp. p. 221.
25. Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 104.
26. ‘King Arthur’s Death’, in *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry; Consisting of Old Heroic Ballads, Songs, and Other Pieces of a Later Date*, ed. by Thomas Percy, 3 vols (London: Dodsley, 1765); facsimile reprint with a new introduction and notes by Nick Groom (London: Routledge, 1996), III, 28–36 (see esp. ll. 77, 25, 7–16, 117–76).
27. Bannerman makes reference to another Percy ballad, ‘The Heir of Lynne’, in a separate note to the *Tales*, which suggests that she had a strong familiarity with the *Reliques* and would have been aware of ‘King Arthur’s Death’—see *Tales*, 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 her friend, Dr Robert Anderson) as an indication of Percy’s admiration for her poetry. See *The*

- Correspondence of Thomas Percy and Robert Anderson*, ed. by W. E. K. Anderson, vol. 9 of *The Percy Papers*, general ed. by Cleanth Brooks and A. F. Falconer, 16 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 136: Percy to Anderson, 21 Oct 1803; also p. 153: Anderson to Percy, 26 July 1804.
28. 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. by John Barnard (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 334–36.
 29. Robert Miles, 'Introduction', *Women's Writing*, 1.2 (1994), 131–42 (p. 131).
 30. Ellen Moers, *Literary Women* (1976; London: Women's Press, 1986), p. 109.
 31. Paula Backscheider, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and their Poetry: Inventing Agency, Inventing Genre* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2005), pp. 41, 350.
 32. Adriana Craciun, 'Romantic Spinstrelsy: Anne Bannerman and the Sexual Politics of the Ballad', in *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism*, ed. by Leith Davis, Ian Duncan and Janet Sorensen (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), pp. 204–24 (p. 207).
 33. Williams, *Art of Darkness*, p. 100.
 34. Stephen C. Behrendt, *British Women Poets and the Romantic Writing Community* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2009), p. 230.
 35. *British Critic*, 21 (Jan 1803), 78–79 (p. 79).
 36. 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 (p. 98).
 37. *New Annual Register*, 23 (Jan 1802), 318.
 38. 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.
 39. From her analysis of Leyden's letters and journals, Craciun concludes that 'he and Bannerman were close friends from at least the mid-1790s'—Craciun, *Fatal Women*, pp. 188–89 and p. 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's 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 *Correspondence of Percy and Anderson*, p. 136: Percy to Anderson, 21 Oct 1803. The *Critical Review* likened Bannerman's poems to 'Dr. Leyden's ballads' in their review of the *Tales*—*Critical Review*, 38 (Jan 1803), 110.
 40. See Arthur Johnston, *Enchanted Ground: The Study of Medieval Romance in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Althone, 1964), p. 134.
 41. Merriman, *Flower of Kings*, p. 149.
 42. 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. by H. J. C. Grierson et al., 13 vols (London: Constable, 1932–79), 1 (1787–1807), esp. p. 110: Scott to Ellis, 27 Mar 1801 and pp. 117–18: Scott to Ellis, 13 July 1801.
 43. John Leyden, *The Complaynt of Scotland. Written in 1548. With a Preliminary Dissertation and Glossary* (Edinburgh: Constable, 1801), p. 265.
 44. Leyden, *Complaynt*, p. 266.
 45. Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, p. 58.
 46. Leyden, *Complaynt*, p. 268.
 47. NLS MS 3381, f. 5: letter from Margaret Anderson (1812)—cited in *Correspondence of Percy and Anderson*, p. 40, n. 9.

48. Leyden, *Complaynt*, p. 227.
49. Lister also comments on the political implications of Bannerman's chosen title and its allusion to Geoffrey's works in 'Femme Fatales and Fatal Females', p. 177.
50. Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain [Historia Regum Britanniae]*, ed. and trans. Michael A. Faletra (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2008), p. 131.
51. Knight, *Merlin*, p. 98.
52. Leyden, *Complaynt*, p. 199.
53. Leyden, *Complaynt*, p. 193.
54. For Diane Long Hoeveler, 'Bannerman subscribes to the Whig nationalistic enterprise of uniting Scotland, Wales and England as one country'—'Gendering the Scottish Ballad', p. 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.
55. See Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, pp. 135 and 155–56; Percy to Hailes—cited in Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, p. 94.
56. Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, p. 188.
57. NLS MS 22.4.10: Park to Anderson, 30 Jan 1801—cited in Craciun, 'Romantic Spinstrelsy', p. 186.
58. NLS MS 22.4.10, f. 218: Park to Anderson, Jan 1802.
59. NLS MS 22.4.10, f. 218: Park to Anderson, Jan 1802.
60. NLS MS 22.4.10, f. 232: Park to Anderson, 29 Nov 1802 (emphasis in original).
61. NLS MS 22.4.10, f. 232: Park to Anderson, 29 Nov 1802.
62. NLS MS 22.4.10, f. 233: Park to Anderson, 29 Nov 1802.
63. *Archives of the Royal Literary Fund*, compiled by Nigel Cross (London: World Microfilms Publications, 1982), case file 170: Thomas Park to RLF, 15 May 1805.
64. NLS MS 22.4.10, f. 232: Park to Anderson, 29 Nov 1802.
65. NLS MS 22.4.10, f. 232: Park to Anderson, 29 Nov 1802 (emphasis in original).
66. Ina Ferris, *The Achievement of Literary Authority: Gender, History, and the Waverley Novels* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 42.
67. NLS MS 22.4.10, f. 232: Park to Anderson, 29 Nov 1802.
68. NLS MS 22.4.10, f. 233: Park to Anderson, 29 Nov 1802.
69. Craciun, *Fatal Women*, p. 187.
70. Caroline Arscott and Katie Scott, 'Introducing Venus', in *Manifestations of Venus: Art and Sexuality*, ed. by Arscott and Scott (Manchester and New York: MUP, 2000), pp. 1–23 (p. 6).
71. Arscott and Scott, 'Introducing Venus', p. 5.
72. Arscott and Scott, 'Introducing Venus', p. 7.
73. Hillis Miller, *Illustration*, p. 111.
74. Craciun, *Fatal Women*, p. 187.
75. Griselda Pollock and Deborah Cherry, 'Woman as Sign in Pre-Raphaelite Literature: The Representation of Elizabeth Siddall', in Griselda Pollock, *Vision and Difference: Feminism, Femininity and the Histories of Art* (1988; London: Routledge, 2003), p. 161.
76. Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London: Verso, 1986), p. 232.
77. Both Park's editing projects, in fact, amounted to little: Park eventually turned down Percy's offer, and the edition of *Alisaunder* never reached the press—see Johnston, *Enchanted Ground*, pp. 94 and 156.

78. I draw this term from Pollock and Cherry; see 'Woman as Sign in Pre-Raphaelite Literature', pp.128–62; and Pollock, 'Woman as Sign: Psychoanalytic Readings', in *Vision and Difference*, pp. 166–211. Pollock and Cherry are themselves strongly influenced by Elizabeth Cowie's 'Woman as Sign', *M/F*, 1 (1978), 49–63.

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Fig. 1 © MacKenzie after E. W. Thompson, 'The Prophecy of Merlin', *Tales of Superstition and Chivalry* (1802), Shields Library Kohler Collection 1:54, Special Collections, University of California, Davis. Image reprinted with the permission of the British Women Romantic Poets Project, General Library, University of California, Davis.

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